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Officers begin 15-day strike: DU administrative work suspended

By DU Correspondent
All administrative work at the Dhaka University (DU) were suspended yesterday, the first day of a 15-day strike by the Bangladesh Inter-University Officers' Federation to press home their four-point demand. The central library of the university also remained closed. The demands of the Officers' Federation, which represents about 4,000 officers of 10 universities of the country, include representation of the officers in different university bodies like Senate and Syndicate, amendment to their pay scale, increase in the age-limit for re- See Page 12 Col 1

Transfer order of two Ctg customs officials postponed

CHITTAGONG, July 19: Authorities today postponed the transfer order of two officials at Chittagong Customs House in the face of agitation by the members of Customs Officials and Employees Coordination Council (COECC), customs sources said. Commissioner of Chittagong Customs House, Abul Kasem said, "The order has been postponed till July 30 to facilitate the holding of COECC's biennial conference and it will again be executed after that date." He said the agitating members of the coordination council had sieged his office and staged demonstration today demanding postponement of the order till July 30. Earlier, authorities issued the order of transfer and release of the two officials within 24 hours from the issuance of the order on Thursday last angering other members of the coordination council.

No progress in talks with trade unions at Ctg port

By Special Correspondent
Talks between the Ministry of Shipping and the trade unions at Chittagong Port on the latter's opposition to the country's first private-sectored container terminal project near the port ended inconclusively last night. The government earlier invited the representatives of 22 trade unions including the ruling party-backed Collective Bargaining Agent (CBA) at Chittagong Port for talks on their ultimatum for cancellation of the project by July 31. Held at the shipping ministry, the meeting began at 4 pm and ended at 9-35 pm. According to meeting sources, Shipping Secretary Mufazzal Karim explained the background of the project, which had been cleared by the government. He told the labour leaders See Page 12 Col 2

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Cairn poised to strike 'big' gas reserve at Halda

By Sharier Khan
(Chittagong Hill Tracts), in Block 15. US company Occidental has also made a similar discovery in Bibiana in Block 12, which, Bibiana's 'gas sand' has already been tested but Occidental is yet to make any official announcement regarding the discovery. Cairn is also working on some more exploratory gas wells in Sonadia and Mathabari in blocks 15 and 16. It made significant progress in Sonadia but stopped drilling there because it struck an 'unexpected high pressure zone'. Sources said, Cairn is now mobilising a different rig for drilling in the 'high pressure zone'. The sources also said that Cairn has purchased, for the first time, its own rig. But it is renting the rig out to a contractor. This has spoiled a chance to cut exploration costs, the sources said. There is a 'big dispute' between Cairn and Petrobangla regarding escalation of the budget for Sangu gas field. Cairn has escalated Sangu's approved budget of 178 million US dollars to 264 million dollars. See Page 12 Col 6



A bewildered flood victim casting an empty look at the gushing waters submerging crops and homesteads. The Gumbi embankment breached at Darikandi in Muradnagar thana of Comilla. — Star photo

Flood situation continues to deteriorate in central dists

The flood situation continued to deteriorate in the central districts with the inundation of fresh areas yesterday, report agencies. The situation in the flood affected districts in northern and south-eastern hill basins has improved further with the recession of water of the rivers Brahmaputra, Muhuri, Halda and Matamuhuri. According to the Flood Information Centre, the districts in the central region of the country may suffer further with inundation of more areas by flood waters with the Padma flowing above danger level at Goalunda and Bhagyakul. The flood situation in the district along the Meghna basin remained unchanged, the centre said. Official sources said 30 people lost their lives in the week-long flood caused by heavy showers and onrush of hilly water. The sources said about 60 lakh people in 138 thanas under 27 districts were affected by the flood. The affected districts are: Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat, Rangpur, Sirajganj, Kurigram, Pabna, Bogra, Naogaon, Jamalpur, Mymensingh, Manikganj, Tangail, Cox's Bazar, Chittagong, Rangamati, Bandarban, Feni, Faridpur, Magura, Rajbari, Madaripur, Joypurhat, Moulvibazar, Comilla, Chandpur, Munshiganj and Sherpur. The flood situation in the central districts including Magura, Madaripur, Jaipurhat, Comilla, Chandpur, Munshiganj and Sherpur deteriorated further due to heavy showers and onrush of waters from the northern districts. Official sources from greater Faridpur, Dhaka, Mymensingh and Comilla said flood waters have entered vast areas inundating standing crops. Officials from Magura said low-lying areas of four thanas of the district have gone under water due to heavy rain causing serious damages to crops. In Joypurhat, many houses have been submerged while a large number of families were marooned as the low-lying areas of five thanas of the district have gone under water due to heavy shower. Officials from Comilla said water of the Gomti river are flowing above the danger level due to heavy shower and onrush of hilly water. Jahapur along with nine unions of Muradnagar thana under Comilla district have been submerged at the damage of Gombi embankment at Darikandi area. In Sherpur, some parts of the sadar thana and other low-lying areas of the district have gone under water inundating a large number of houses and crop lands. In Kushitia, the flood situation remained unchanged though the water in the Ganjes and the Gorai recorded a further rise. Water stagnation in some areas of Bheramara and Khoksa remained unchanged See Page 12 Col 8

SAARC needs parallel security forum, say regional experts

COLOMBO, July 19: A meeting of regional strategic affairs experts here has advised the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to have a parallel security forum to take up members' concerns about the Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests, reports India Abroad News Service. The security conference, attended by leading experts from six South Asian nations, excluding Bhutan, also appealed to the Indian and Pakistani prime ministers to start a serious dialogue at the July 29-31 Colombo SAARC summit to ensure early steps are taken to keep the region free of nuclear weapons. The Conference on Future of Security Studies in South Asia, held at Ahungalla, 76 km south of Colombo, by the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS), saw sharp clashes between the Indian and Pakistani delegates and among pro and anti-nuclear protagonists from both nations. Former Pakistani foreign secretary Niaz A Naik proposed setting up of a South Asian Security Forum at the head of state level to discuss security and political issues. "Such a forum is essential because of the crippling limitations excluding discussion of bilateral and contentious issues in SAARC," he told IANS. Pointing out that other regional organisations like the ASEAN (Association of South-east Asian Nations) and the European Union (EU) have separate forums for security and political issues, Naik said that South Asian security forum meetings could be held during the SAARC summits. Former SAARC secretary general Ibrahim Zaki suggested that the leaders should make the maximum use of the proposal adopted at the last SAARC summit in Male allowing them to take up contentious matters during the SAARC retreats. Zaki, who is the Tourism Minister of the Maldives, told the news service that the Indian Ocean archipelago faced a threat of complete submergence in the event of a nuclear conflict which could trigger a sudden rise of global temperature. About 1,000 of the 1,900 islands making up the Maldives are threatened with submergence over the next decade due to global warming. "South Asian leaders should put a firm stop to nuclearisation of our region," he said. Although all the 40 analysts present were unanimous in criticising nuclear weapons, there were differences of opinion between the Indian and Pakistani delegates and also within delegates. Former Indian envoy to Laos, S D Muni's defence of the Indian nuclear tests was sharply criticised by other delegates. "It is a positive step, because the nuclear powers would now seriously think of amending the discriminatory clauses of the CTBT (Comprehensive See Page 12 Col 2

SAARC FMs to finalise summit agenda July 27-28

COLOMBO, July 19: Senior official and ministerial meetings of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries will discuss agenda of the summit and review the draft SAARC declaration for 1998 in Colombo from July 23 to 28. Foreign Ministry sources said here today, reports Xinhua. The sources said the SAARC senior official meeting will be held on July 23 and 24 under the SAARC Secretary General Naim U Hassan. The foreign secretaries of the SAARC states will meet on July 25 and 26 while the SAARC foreign ministers meet on July 27 and 28 to finalise the agenda and prepare the final draft for the summit. The highlight of the summit See Page 12 Col 1

Barisal-5 by-polls Polling today, foul play apprehended

From Nurul Kabir and Arup Talukder
BARISAL, July 19: Polling in Barisal-5 constituency of the Jatiya Sangsad begins at 8 am tomorrow amid apprehensions by candidates of major parties about rigging of votes. Voting in the by-election will continue till 4 pm without any break. The day will be a public holiday in the constituency. Deputy Commissioner of Barisal Mohammad Alauddin however claimed this afternoon that the administration, presently running at the dic- tates of the Election Commission, had taken adequate measures to ensure free and fair polls. There are more than two lakhs voters in the constituency. About 50 per cent of them are women. Although seven candidates are contesting for the seat, local people believe that it would eventually be a fight between the ruling Awami League and the major opposition party, BNP. The Jatiya Party candidate See Page 12 Col 5

PM at Businessmen's Confce Compete in open market without being dependent on state support

By Staff Correspondent
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has urged businessmen to strengthen private sector enterprises so that they may thrive in a competitive market of free enterprise without being dependent on state subsidy or support. She also asked private entrepreneurs to take necessary risks and earn confidence of the consumers and assured them of a congenial atmosphere. "The government cannot take the responsibility of making industries, businesses and trades risk-free", she said. "You have to compete taking the risks. I assure you that the government will always remain beside the bold entrepreneurs." The Prime Minister was addressing the opening session of the Businessmen's Conference at Hotel Sheraton in the city yesterday. Hasina said private sector should be ready to take necessary risks in the open market economy. If the government has to provide funds from the national exchequer in every step to sustain the private sector, the world's free market competition will become meaningless, she said. Finance Minister SAMS Kibria, Commerce and Indus- tries Minister Tofael Ahmed, FBCCI President Yusuf Abdullah Harun and some other business leaders also spoke. Hasina sought cooperation from the businessmen to push economic growth rate to six or seven per cent from over five per cent now. In turn, she also assured allout support of the government to the business sector. She said despite the economic turmoil in South East Asia and South Asia, Bangladesh has remained untouched. Explaining the economic policy of the government, the Prime Minister said efforts are on to ensure both social justice and high growth rate. In this regard, she mentioned steps like old age allowance, employment bank and special fund for the disabled and repressed women and children which, she noted, are aimed at ensuring social justice. Hasina laid emphasis on export-oriented industries which, she said, could foster quick growth of the economy. She also assured the business community that the government would give highest priority to export-oriented industries. "It is no more possible to See Page 12 Col 1

26 prisoners on hunger strike at Sylhet jail

From Staff Correspondent
SYLHET, July 19: Twenty-six prisoners are continuing to observing a hunger strike for the last three days at the Sylhet Central Jail, a jail official said tonight. About 40 prisoners began a hunger strike on Friday to press for their immediate transfer to the Dhaka Central Jail or to their respective district jails. The jail authorities assured them of taking necessary measures after discussion with the high officials. But they failed to pacify most of the striking prisoners. However, the official said, four prisoners broke their hunger strike yesterday while 10 others also took food today after a meeting with the jail authorities. A total of 244 convicted prisoners from the Dhaka Central Jail, Faridpur District Jail and Mymensingh District Jail were sent to the Sylhet Central Jail in the months of February and March this year. The jail official said that the striking prisoners have been separated from the rest of the prisoners.

Trial of 2 cases against Anup Chetia begins

By Court Correspondent
Trial of two cases against ULFA leader Anup Chetia and one case against two of his associates began in the court of Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka, yesterday. The two cases against Chetia were filed under Section 11 (b) of the Passport Act and Section 14 of the Foreigners Act respectively for illegally possessing Bangladeshi passport and unauthorised stay in the country. Chetia's two associates — Babul Sharma and Laxmi Prashad — are charged under the Foreigners Act. M Farid Ahmed, Sub-Inspector of Mohammapur police station, who is also the com- See Page 12 Col 7

Muktijoddha KC, Abahani to get land in city

Post and Telecommunications, Works and Housing Minister Mohammad Nasim yesterday announced that the Muktijoddha Sangsad Krira Chakra and the Abahani Limited would be allotted lands in Dhaka city, reports BSS. The Mohammad Sporting Club have their own land in the metropolis, but the Abahani and the Muktijoddha Sangsad don't have their own land, he said. Nasim said these two clubs would be given lands, as per desire of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The minister was speaking as the chief guest at a reception accorded to the Muktijoddha Sangsad Krira Chakra at the Jatiya Press Club in the city for becoming champions in the Metropolis Cup, Premier Division Football League and McDowell Cup in Calcutta.

Khaleda demands release of party leaders, workers

BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday demanded unconditional release of all leaders and workers of her party and its front organisations, including vice-president of Dhaka City Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal Nasiruddin Patwari, reports UNB. In a statement, she alleged that the 'autocratic and fascist' government started repression on her partymen immediately after coming to power. In its two years' rule, she said, 'the government killed more than two hundred leaders and workers and detained numerous ones under repressive laws. She also accused the government of filing 'false cases' against several thousand BNP men. "Many BNP activists had to leave their houses in the face of repression by Awami terrorists." Begum Zia said the terrorism and oppression by the ruling party are not only undemocratic, but also contrary to human rights. The fascist way of oppression resorted to by the AL government is unprecedented under any democratic system, she said. She warned of a tougher movement if her partymen were not released immediately.

Services of 135 ASPs being regularised defying court verdict

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi
The government seems to be playing with fire as more than 200 police officers in strategic positions are entangled in a fight over promotions, a crisis fueled by a clear case of contempt of court by the Ministry of Home Affairs. Defying a Supreme Court verdict and violating Public Service Commission rules, the Home Ministry has ordered that services of 135 "officiating" assistant superintendents of police (ASPs) be regularised with retrospective effect. The order, issued on February 3, 1998, has touched off widespread resentment among affected officers who were di- See Page 12 Col 3

Election Commission Secretariat
Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka

Revision of Voters' List for Voter ID Card

It is necessary to correct errors in voters' list to prepare an accurate voter ID Card. With this end in view arrangement have been made to display the voters' list of each Ward of City Corporations and Union Parishads. Assistant Registration Officer will remain present in each Ward on two or more pre-announced days between July 1st to July 31st, '98 to receive applications regarding correction of information in the existing voters' list as well as inclusion of new voters. Prescribed forms for correction of voters' list and for inclusion of new voters have been made available locally in each Ward. Deputy Secretary (Election) of the Election Commission Secretariat may be contacted if any clarification is required in this regard. Co-operation of all concerned is sought for preparing an accurate and up-to-date voters' list.

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Election Commission Secretariat

Body found in sack yet to be identified

By Staff Correspondent
The man, who earlier identified the body of a woman, found in a sack at the city's Khilkhet area on Thursday as his sister informed police yesterday that his sister, Ferdousi, was alive. However, Alamgir, an army sepoy, did not come to Cantonment thana. Police suspect that he intentionally claimed the dead woman as his sister to harass the family of his sister's Ferdousi husband due to previous enmity. The identity of the woman who was allegedly strangled and then thrown into the pond was yet to be known. Police are looking for Alamgir who earlier alleged that his sister, Ferdousi, had been killed by her husband Abbas Ali and his parents. Alamgir yesterday also told See Page 12 Col 4