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VOL. VIII NO. 177 REGD. NO. DA 781 INTERNET: <http://www.dailystarnews.com> SRAVAN 7, 1405 BS DHAKA WEDNESDAY JULY 22, 1998 RABIUL AWAL 27, 1419 HIJRI 16 PAGES : PRICE TAKA 6.00

201 pvt firms owe Tk 1535 cr to different banks

A total of 201 private firms owe Tk 1,535 crore to different banks, according to a document available from the Privatisation Board yesterday, reports BSS.

Of the total volume of outstanding loans, Tk 1,265 crore is owed by the 77 firms that have overdue loans; 33 firms have outstanding but no overdue loans, and 18 firms have neither outstanding or overdue loans.

On an average, each firm has an outstanding loan of nearly Tk 14 crore while the average overdue loan is nearly Tk 7.4 crore.

The document reveals that a few privatised firms have substantial amount of overdue and outstanding loans.

It said the accumulation of overdue loans indicates the inability or unwillingness of the management of the firms to service their loans.

These firms are unwilling or unable to service their loans

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Kalparanjan given charge of CHT affairs ministry

Prime minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday nominated Kalparanjan Chakma, minister without portfolio, as the minister-in-charge of the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs, a government announcement said yesterday, report agencies.

Earlier, the government in a gazette notification on July 15 set up the new ministry in fulfillment of the commitment made in Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord.

Among the 18 functions, the ministry will deal with administrative issues of the CHT and counsel the local government bodies on selective basis.

BNP Standing Committee to meet today

By Staff Correspondent
BNP has deferred the crucial adjourned meeting of its Standing Committee which was scheduled to begin at 8 pm yesterday at the Minto Road official residence of Begum Khaleda Zia, party chief and Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad.

The meeting will now be held tomorrow with its time and venue remaining unchanged, a party spokesman said yesterday evening quoting Begum Zia.

However, he could not mention any reason for the deferral, announced just before the meeting was due to start.

Newsmen and press photographers were told of the deferment when they visited the Minto Road residence of Begum Zia. Besides, phone calls were also made to the newspaper offices to communicate the party decision.

Later, BNP also issued a press release mentioning the changed schedule but without showing any reason.

The Standing Committee meeting was adjourned on July 16 for four days after several

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A flood-affected family in a low-lying area of the city leaving their house for a safer place yesterday. — Star photo

WB warns against rising domestic debt Budget to be helpful for pvt sector development

By Inam Ahmed

The World Bank (WB) has said the budget for fiscal 1998-99 contains several proposals which, if implemented effectively, could improve fiscal sustainability and result in further improvement of the macroeconomic environment.

However, it also pointed out that there are areas where the budget does not go far enough, like prioritising expenditures, and containing increased requirement for domestic borrowing.

Despite these shortcomings, the Bank feels that the budget would be specially helpful for the private sector development accelerating manufacturing and export growth.

The views were expressed in the Periodic Economic Update, July 1998 of the WB.

The Bank felt that there are scopes for the government to net in more revenues by improving transparency, simplicity and enforceability of the tax system.

On the expenditure programme, it said the ADP continues to contain projects of questionable priority. On the recurrent expenditure side, it said the proposed increase in subsidies is difficult to justify on economic grounds while the allocations for operations and maintenance need to be increased.

To put the budget on a more sustainable footing, it will be important for the government to consider ways of mobilising additional revenues and better prioritising expenditures in order to contain the growth of

domestic indebtedness," the update said.

The Bank said the FY '99 overall budget deficit target is unchanged from the revised budget target of FY '98. The budget deficit for FY '99 is projected at Tk 9302 crore or approximately 5.3 per cent of the projected GDP.

The country's overall fiscal deficit as a proportion of GDP has not changed significantly during the past three years. Given the large amounts of concessional aid flows, Bangladesh has in recent years been able to finance this deficit in a non-inflationary manner, it noted.

But the Bank warned that there has been a steady increase in the stock of domestic debt, which has risen from Tk 166

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Sudden downpour paralyses life in city

By Special Correspondent

A sudden burst of clouds yesterday evening disrupted city life, flooded more areas in the suburbs and swamped many streets, leaving the rush-hour traffic in a mess.

After a respite on Monday, the Met Office recorded 38 mm rainfall from 6 am to 9 pm yesterday in the metropolises.

The sky remained grey and it rained also in the morning and early afternoon.

The heavy rains in the evening flooded many streets in the southern and eastern parts of the city. The Shantinagar area, already wet under the past few days downpour, was inundated. There was knee-deep water on the Outer Circular Road, Streets in Mogbazar, Motijheel, Kamalapur and Basabo were also swamped.

Other low lying areas, where residents had already been grappling with the problem of safe drinking water, found it hard to get.

The rains increased the mis-

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Diarrhoea in many areas Flood grips 29 dists, 64 lakh affected

Flood situation in the country worsened again yesterday with fresh onrush of hill waters from across the border and incessant rains, report agencies.

The official death toll rose to 48 yesterday with four new deaths reported from Faridpur, one from Rangpur and one from Jamalpur.

Incessant rain swelled most of the major rivers.

Official sources said the situation deteriorated again with fresh floods in the north, northwestern districts and inundation of new areas in central districts following 'significant' rainfall.

The flood officials cautioned that the situation in the Brah-

maputra, Ganges and Meghna basins, which cover the entire north, northwestern, central and northeastern districts, will continue to deteriorate during the next 48 hours.

The breakup of official 48 deaths is: 11 in Chittagong district, six each in Rangamati and Rajbari, five each in Gaibandha and Jamalpur, four each in Cox's Bazar, Kurigram and Madaripur, and one each in Bogra, Rangpur and Naogaon.

According to the Flood Control Room, about 64 lakh people in 29 districts have been affected by the flood till yesterday.

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Barisal-5 by-polls

Winner, loser both allege foul play

From Nurul Kabir and Aroop Talukder

BARISAL, July 21: Both the winner and his nearest rival in the by-election in the Barisal-5 constituency of the Jatiya Sangsad accused each other's party of foul play in the polls but none demanded re-polling in any of the 93 polling centres.

Majbar Rahman Sarwar of

5 contestants lose security deposits

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, July 21: Five out of the eight candidates who contested the by-election in the Barisal-5 constituency of the Jatiya Sangsad on Monday have lost their security de-

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BNP who won the seat in yesterday's by-election by about 10 thousands votes told The Daily Star this morning that the margin would have been much larger had there been no "irregularities" by Awami League.

They created panic among BNP supporters the day before the polls, resisted many from coming to the polling centres on the election day and harassed many party activists," Sarwar said. "Afraid of the AL hooliganism, BNP activists had to work for me with AL badges on their torso."

The last allegation, however, resembles the one brought by Awami League candidate Mohiuddin Ahmed who secured the second position by bagging more than 36 thousand votes.

The BNP activists misled

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PM leaves for Colombo July 28

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will leave here July 28 for Colombo to attend the 10th SAARC Summit schedule to be held there July 29-31, reports UNB.

At the Colombo Summit, the heads of state or government will review the progress on the decisions of the 9th Summit held in Male in 1997 and will give a policy directive with a vision to establish the position of this region at a respectable level in the next millennium.

The summit will deal with the problems and prospects of expanded trade, transition from SAPTA to SAFTA, promotion of intra-SAARC trade investment, cooperation in the

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Zillur slates BNP statement on by-election

Awami League General Secretary and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman has condemned the statements of Begum Khaleda Zia and Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan about the by-election in Barisal-5 constituency, reports UNB.

"They should either reject the result of the election and make allegation of rigging or apologise for bringing such false and imaginary allegations," he said in a statement in the city yesterday.

The Deputy Leader of the House said BNP raised such imaginary and early allegations as it's accustomed to vote

decoy and rigging. Zillur accused the Leader of the Opposition Begum Zia of violating the election code of conduct and said people will give a befitting reply to her conspiracy.

Carmichael College closed sine die

RANGPUR, July 21: The Carmichael University College has been closed for an indefinite period after some admission seekers went on a rampage on the campus today, reports UNB.

Witnesses said a group of students, who could not qualify in the admission test, went berserk, demanding that the college authorities admit them against 140 vacant seats.

As per the rules of the National University, the students who will fail to obtain 36 marks in the admission test are not eligible for admission to any honours course.

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DU students gherao VC's residence

Students of Dhaka University gheraoed the residence of the Vice Chancellor last night, protesting the decision to raise tuition fee and other charges of the university, reports UNB.

The angry students gheraoed the VC's residence at about 10:30 pm and were demonstrating till five till the report at 11:45 pm.

They will also stage a demonstration on the campus today.

30 public toilets for 80 lakh city dwellers!



Participants at The Daily Star mini-roundtable on 'Public Toilets in City' held at the conference room at its office yesterday. — Star photo

The Daily Star public debate

By Staff Correspondent

Discussants at the mini roundtable on "Public toilets in city," yesterday said that lack of public toilet facilities is making the urban environment extremely hazardous, posing a threat to public health.

A cross-section of people including students, business executives and professionals attended the meeting held at the conference room of The Daily Star yesterday evening. Jointly organised by The Daily Star and the Centre For Alternatives, it was moderated by Mahfuz Anam, editor of the daily.

Almost non-existent public toilet facilities are forcing the people to respond to the call of nature on street corners and vacant places, which is not only polluting the environment but also adding to the spread of

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District judges may be given status of jt secy

By Mizan Ali

The government is considering giving the district and sessions judges the status of joint secretary and providing them with body guards, highly placed officials sources said yesterday.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina recently directed the law ministry to place proposals in this regard. The directive followed her meeting with the office bearers of the BCS Judicial Association, the sources said.

Two separate proposals are being prepared by the law ministry and will be sent to the PM's Secretariat shortly, the sources added.

District and sessions judges are already getting salary equivalent to joint secretaries and giving them the status of joint secretary will not create any extra financial burden for the government, they added.

The court of district and sessions judge functions as an appellate court for district magistracy as well as the five courts

of chief Metropolitan Magistrates.

But under the existing warrant of precedence, the rank and status of the district judge and the district magistrate at district level is equivalent to that of deputy secretary. The rank and status of CMM in the metropolitan areas is above that of the district judge, the

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Vajpayee, Sharif meet in Colombo July 29 India to propose 'no first use' nuclear pact with Pakistan

NEW DELHI, July 21: India will propose to Pakistan a nuclear no-first-use agreement when the two prime ministers meet next week, a senior official said today, reports AP.

Discussions on an agreement not to use nuclear weapons first could later be broadened to a regional level, said the Foreign Ministry official, without specifically naming China. India has said China's nuclear power was its primary concern when it decided to go nuclear.

Atal Behari Vajpayee of India and Pakistan's Nawaz Sharif will meet at a summit of seven heads of state next week in Colombo, the Sri Lankan capital. It will be their first meeting since the two countries conducted nuclear tests in May, each declaring itself a nuclear

weapons state. The tests provoked international condemnation and economic sanctions.

Vajpayee, elected just two months before authorising the tests, and Sharif also are expected to try to end a deadlock over resuming high-level bilateral talks on the disputed territory of Kashmir and other issues that have kept tensions high for decades, said the official, who cannot be identified under the rules of the briefing.

They are scheduled to meet July 29 after the inaugural session of the three-day summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

Since Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited the Pakistani capital in 1989, the leaders of the two countries have met only in third countries during international meetings.

The SAARC countries are India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and the Maldives.

Because of Indo-Pak tensions, the regional grouping is falling behind schedule to create a free trade area by the year 2001 or take up investment in joint ventures in economic field.

US, Pakistan try to bridge differences

ISLAMABAD, July 21: Pakistan and the United States were trying to bridge their differences in talks today, with the Pakistan arguing against US-led economic sanctions and the Americans expected to push for a ban on nuclear testing, reports AP.

US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott held a first round of talks with Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Shamsah Ahmed this evening. More substantive talks were planned for tomorrow with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub.

Talbott, who arrived in Pakistan from neighbouring India is on a mission aimed at preempting a nuclear arms race in South Asia, following the underground nuclear tests that both India and Pakistan conducted last May.

"Pakistan understands US concerns over the increasing threat of an arms race and esca-

lation, and welcomes US interest in preventing further deterioration of the security situation in South Asia," said a foreign ministry statement issued late Tuesday.

During Talbott's talks with Ahmed, Pakistan pressed for world involvement in settling the volatile Kashmir dispute that has been the cause of two wars between Pakistan and India.

The two neighbours fought a third war over Bangladesh or what was then East Pakistan. India has rejected international mediation in the Kashmir dispute. Both countries lay claim to a united Kashmir, divided between Pakistan and India by the departing British in 1947.

"The Pakistan side emphasised the need for the effective engagement of major powers with the security issues and help Pakistan and India resolve

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RAJUK COMMERCIAL PLOT AUCTION NOTICE

This is for information of all intending persons that most suitable (1) Commercial Plot No. 85 having Road facilities on two sides at Dhaka-Mymensingh Road in Sector No. 7 of Uttara Model Town, Dhaka measuring more or less 12 Katha, (2) Commercial Plot No. 5A, Sector No. 3 of Uttara Model Town, Dhaka near Dhaka-Mymensingh road measuring more or less 10 kathas and (3) Plot No. 5 of Road No. 2 of Motijheel Extension Commercial Area, Dhaka measuring more or less 10 kathas of land will be allotted for 99 years lease on open auction.

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