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## Tofail urges business leaders Press political parties to respond to PM's no-hartal call

Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed asked business leaders to create public opinion pressuring political parties to respond to Prime Minister's "no-more-hartal" offer for securing a sound economic and investment climate, reports UNB.

He made the call when top business leaders of the country called on him yesterday at his office to convey that they expect more tolerant and democratic practices from both the government and opposition parties and a combined action against terrorism.

"Bangladesh has a bright prospect with her natural and human resources. Now politicians will have to take the lead," Tofail said, seeking support from political parties, business community and opinion leaders to the government's gesture towards building a business-friendly peaceful situation.

"It is not possible for the government alone to do it. We need support from all of you," the minister told his business audience.

The business leaders hailed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's unilateral 'no-hartal' declaration and hoped it would pave the way for ending undesirable political and social disorders, enabling external and internal trade and foreign investment.

FBCCI vice-president M A Mumin, DCCI president Rashed Maksud Khan, MCCI president Laila Rahman Kabir, FICCI president A K M Shamsuddin, BGMEA president Mostafa Gola Quddus, BTMA president M Shahjahan, BJMA president Mirza Behrouz Isphani, BKMEA president Manzurul Haq and Frozen Food Exporters Association representative

Ferdous Alam attended the meeting.

They hailed government decision exempting export-support services of VAT and requested sector-wise incentives to make local export products more competitive. The business people informed that Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Thailand offered lower export price for readymade garments (RMG), specially sweaters, as they enjoy government's special incentives and backward-linkage support.

In response, the minister stressed building up backward-linkage industries to make RMG sector self-reliant and help it sustain post-2005 competition in a quota-free business world.

He also assured government's sector-wise incentives, including that for frozen foods and jute goods, to foster export earnings.



DEFYING THE LAW OF AVERAGE: Dangerously close to rail lines in the city's Kawranbazar slum, they take their chances to do the daily things dodging trains. But a split-second error can prove disastrous. — Star photo

## Changes to JMBA law

From Page 1

stained from voting. During the walkout, there was none in the front row of the Opposition Bench where presence of MPs was very thin.

The walkout followed a brief but heated debate between Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid and MK Anwar over acceptance of three amendments in a single form submitted by the BNP legislator.

The Chair allowed the floor to Anwar to talk about one of his amendments saying three amendments in a single form was not acceptable. The BNP member claimed there was no bar in the JP Rules of Procedure in submitting more than one amendment in a single form. He also referred to the Kaul and said the Chair had accepted such notice in the past.

In reply, the Deputy Speaker said the convention was to use one form for each amendment proposal.

However, Anwar did not discuss his amendment proposal and his microphone was switched off after the time—two minutes— allotted for him was over.

He led other BNP lawmakers to walk out as soon as the Deputy Speaker put six

amendments to vote. The House rejected all the six amendments as well as the proposals for soliciting public opinion on the bill and sending it to the select committee, all moved by the Opposition members.

Earlier, the Opposition members observed that the JMBA bill required President's approval as it was a money bill and said the proposed authority would impose tax. They were also critical of the bill's provision for two police stations at the Bangabandhu bridge site and their control vested on a body, instead of the Home Ministry that takes care of police stations across the country.

But the communication minister rejected the Opposition contention saying the JMBA would be a statutory body which would mobilise its own fund.

On the Opposition's proposal to rename the authority as the Multipurpose Bridge Authority dropping the name Jamuna, the minister argued the JMBA earned reputation at home and abroad. Establishment of the JMBA will help materialise many dreams like the bridge over the Jamuna," the minister noted.

## 3 get life term for kidnapping boy in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, Nov 18: A special tribunal on Woman and Child Repression here today convicted three people and sentenced them to life term imprisonment on an abduction case, reports UNB.

The convicts are Muhammad Yunus of Burichhar in Hathajari, Muhammad Parvez of South Mohra in Chandgaon and Muhammad Alamgir of Sheikhpura, Raozan.

According to prosecution, the accused picked up Lokman Hakim, 8, son of Abul Hashem of Nazir Bazar in Chandgaon, on September 9, 1995 and demanded a Tk 2 lakh as ransom.

Five days after the abduction, police rescued Lokman and arrested the kidnapers from an old house in Pahartali area.

After examining the records and witnesses, the Judge handed down the verdict.

## Bodies of four Bangladeshis returned to BDR

SHERPUR, Nov 18: The Indian authorities today returned the bodies of four Bangladeshis, shot dead by BSF in the bordering Nalitabari and Jhinaigati thanas, to BDR on Monday night and today, reports APB.

The body of Nurul Zaman, 30, who was gunned down by BSF near pillar No 1107 at a frontier village in Jhinaigati on Monday, was handed over to Bangladesh Rifles after a flag meeting at 2 pm today. BDR and police sources said.

BDR battalion Major Sabir Ahmed and OC of Jhinaigati thana, Mahmudul Haque, represented Bangladesh side at the flag meeting. Family members received the body of the victim who hailed from village Barorangia.

Earlier the bodies of three other victims — Anwar Hossain, 25, Samar Ali, 22, and Babul Mia, 20 — were received by BDR at about 7 pm on Tuesday night.

They were shot dead by the Indian border guards when they went near the border to cut wood in Nalitabari thana.

BDR authorities handed over the bodies of the three villagers to their respective families, the sources added.

## Oxy starts

From Page 1

gas field in Lakkatura in early 1999.

The Jalalabad gas field was originally drilled by Scimitar, a foreign company that was sued by the government for misappropriation of funds and forging official documents in the early 90s.

Occidental started re-drilling of Scimitar's wells which were left sealed and completed the drillings earlier this year.

According to Scimitar's assessment, the Jalalabad field has about 1.5 trillion cubic feet of recoverable gas reserve. But Occidental and Petrobangla estimate that there is about 1 (one) tcf recoverable gas here.

The price of Jalalabad gas would be around 1.8 dollars per unit. This gas would be purchased by Petrobangla in dollars and sold locally at 1.1 dollar — subsidising the loss.

Meanwhile, Occidental has started drilling of an appraisal well in Bibiana. It has already drilled about 3000 meters and it expects to complete the appraisal well in next two months.

The US company has also started mobilising equipment for the country's first ever three-dimensional seismic survey at Bibiana to confirm the gas reserve there.

Occidental struck gas in Bibiana field earlier this year. According to Occidental's analysis, the gas field might have a reserve of around four tcf of gas. The actual reserve would be confirmed after drilling of the appraisal wells and conducting of the three-dimensional survey.

## Six projects involving Tk 199.18cr approved

A meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) yesterday approved six projects with an involvement of Tk 199 crore 18 lakh 10 thousand, including project aid component of Tk 48 crore 63 lakh 40 thousand, reports BSS.

The projects include modernisation of different centres of Bangladesh Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR) at a cost of Tk 11 crore 10 lakh eight thousand, shrimp harvour service centre at a cost of Tk 16 crore 45 lakh and 15 thousand and protection and maintenance project of the left bank of the river Teesta from Teesta bridge to Chandbari with an involvement of Tk 16 crore one lakh 14 thousand.

Other projects approved yesterday are: Overhauling and repair of principal and subsidiary pumps of Ganga-Kobabak irrigation project at a cost of Tk 54 crore, 91 lakh 87 thousand, asphalt carpeting and runway light installation of a Zia International Airport at a cost of Tk 50 crore 69 lakh 86 thousand and expansion and rehabilitation of sewerage system at a cost of Tk 50 crore.

The meeting was presided over by Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria.

Committee members including ministers, cabinet secretary, principal secretary to the prime minister, secretaries concerned, members of the Planning Commission and other high officials attended the meeting.

## Ctg police to start case against arrested ATTF activist

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Nov 18: Police authorities here have decided to start a case against the ATTF activist arrested here under Section 54 from a city market.

Police sources said that preparations were underway to start a case of illegal trespassing against the ATTF (All Tripura Tiger Force) activist Monjit Dev Berma who used a Pseudonym as Sunil Tripura, hailing from Khowal district of India.

The arrested is now in the jail custody.

ATTF started a separatist movement for liberation of Tripura state of India.

A Naga insurgent was arrested last year from the city along with a wireless set. He is also now in Chittagong jail as the trial continued.

## 3 killed, 5 hurt in city road accidents

By Staff Correspondent

Three persons were killed and five others injured in road accidents in the city yesterday.

Of the dead, two were identified as Shahidul Islam, 6, and Abdul Kadir Dewan 38, while the another 40-year-old woman could not be identified. The injured were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, according to police.

Shahid was crushed under the wheels of a speeding truck while he was crossing the road in front of Gabtali cattle market at about 7:30 am. Mirpur police said.

Shahid died on the spot.

In another incident, Abdul Kadir, Billal and Habibur were injured when a Dhaka bound minibus and an airport bound

## BCS (Ansar) Assoc team meets PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the responsibilities and importance of Bangladesh Ansar will be enhanced with the strengthening of local government bodies through administrative decentralisation, reports UNB.

"The government has already taken steps for administrative decentralisation," she said while speaking to a delegation of Bangladesh Civil Service (Ansar) Association as they called on her at her office in the city yesterday morning.

The delegation, led by President of the association Mohammad Khallur Rahman and Secretary General A B M Ruhul Azad, apprised the Prime Minister about some of the problems faced by the cadre members and sought her help in resolving these.

Hasina said the government has already taken some steps for resolving some of the problems faced by the members of Ansar cadre and will take all possible measures about other problems.

She urged the members of BCS (Ansar) cadre to work hard with sincerity, devotion and patriotism for achieving economic development and strengthening local government bodies.

## Amartya Sen to visit Bangladesh in December

Nobel laureate Prof Amartya Sen is expected to visit Bangladesh in the middle of next month at the invitation of BRAC, reports APB.

Prof Sen, who won the Nobel Prize in Economics this year, will present the keynote paper at an international conference on "Global Health and Equity Initiative" on December 17.

Jointly organised by the BRAC and the ICDDR,B, the conference will be held at the BRAC Centre for Development Management at Rajendrapur.

International experts on health and poverty-alleviation from a number of countries are expected to participate in the conference.

## FFs' list: Second phase of drive begins today

By Staff Correspondent

The second phase of verification and selection of freedom fighters for preparing a list of "Real Freedom Fighters" begins tomorrow, says a press release issued by Bangladesh Mukti-joddha Sangsad (BMS) yesterday.

Representatives of the Central Command Council of the BMS will visit Sylhet, Sunamganj, Moulvibazar, Brahmanbaria, Naogaon, Chapainawabganj, Bagerhat, Chuadanga, Rajbari, Jhalakathi, Barguna, Shariatpur and Madaripur as part of the drive.

The drive began on November 1 and the first phase has already been completed with the selection and verification of freedom fighters of nine districts, the release said.

The dead were identified as Mobarak Ali, 65, and Abdur Rafique, 45, both inhabitants of village Fakerkhal under Toakul Union.

Local sources said they died in an encounter over the occupation of a *beel* (marsh) called Bhangar Khan near Nayapara at 9 am Tuesday. Fifteen others were also injured in the fierce clash.

An aggrieved party filed a case with Goyainghat thana. Police recovered the bodies from the spot.

Of the injured, Arab Ali with critical condition was being treated at Goyainghat Thana Health Complex. Some others were admitted to the Sylhet Osmani Hospital.

In another incident at Ekura village, seven people were injured in a clash over a *khas* land this morning.

## RUCSU polls in April

RAJSHAHI, Nov 18: The overdue election to Rajshahi University Central Students' Union (RUCSU) will be held in April, 1999 after a lapse of 8 years, reports UNB.

RU Vice Chancellor Dr Abdul Khaleq made the disclosure yesterday.

## Asma

From Page 1

in charge of the nephrology department, when contacted said Asma's condition deteriorated due to 'excess' intake of fluid during the last 24 hours.

"We took out four litres of 'excess' fluid by dialysis from Asma's body today. We have restricted her fluid intake to only half a litre per day," said Dr Rahman.

"Any excess fluid may end Asma's life," another doctor said. But the fluid intake is not being supervised by any nurse, her mother said.

Dr Shahidul Islam said, "Asma is at great risk and her case is being considered as a special one."

Asma's mother, Zahura Begum, alleged that doctors were still not taking proper care of her daughter. "All they do is come and pay courtesy visits", she said.

Asma was sent to BMH from DMCH for 'better treatment', the director of DMCH had told this correspondent earlier. But her condition deteriorated after admission to BMH.

Health minister Salahuddin Yusuf had also given instruction for her special care.

When contacted and made aware of her condition over telephone yesterday, the minister said, "Please give me time until Thursday evening to make any comment about Asma's treatment."

## Yeltsin may scrap his India visit

MOSCOW, Nov 18: Russian President Boris Yeltsin will probably scrap his planned visit to India on December 6 and 7 and send Prime Minister Yevyey Primakov instead, Itar-Tass news agency reported today, says APB.

The agency quoted informed Russian sources in Kuala Lumpur, where Primakov is attending the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit.

Yeltsin had originally been due to attend the forum, but he

pulled out of the meeting after he was forced to take three weeks off work suffering from nervous exhaustion.

The agency said an unexpected stopover by Primakov in India on his way to Malaysia was apparently linked to Yeltsin's decision not to go to New Delhi, Itar-Tass said.

A week ago Russian Defence Minister Igor Sergeev cancelled without explanation a trip to India he was to have made from November 24 to 27 to prepare Yeltsin's visit.

The Kremlin press service said at the time that the Russian president, who has cancelled a number of official engagements in the past few weeks because of his parlous health, would make up his mind at the last minute whether to go to India.

## Pabna by polls: All 4 nomination papers found valid

PABNA, Nov 18: The nomination papers of all four candidates for the by-election in Pabna-2 constituency were found valid today, reports APB.

The candidates are ruling party's Air Vice Marshal (Retd) A K Khandaker, A K M Selim Reza of BNP, Saifuddin Hossain Bachchu of Jatiya Party and Krishak Samrak party Chairman Krishak Mohammad Sadeq.

## Fireworks

From Page 1

ern sky where it was all happening.

As the sky cleared before dawn, the fireworks reappeared. But many had returned home by then.

Hundreds of Dhakaites traveled to Ashulia on the outskirts of the city to have a clear view, but clouds marred their hopes.

## Three alleged terrorists held in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, Nov 18: Double Mooring police today arrested three alleged terrorists from Halishahar B-Block here today, reports BSS.

Of the alleged terrorists, Salahuddin alias Sumi was wanted in six criminal cases while the rest two Sagal and Seraj were wanted in three cases respectively, police sources said.

## Girl roasted alive, 35 houses gutted in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Nov 18: A four-year-old girl was roasted alive in a fire that gutted about 35 hatched houses in city's Nasirabad area today, Fire Brigade sources said.

The victim, identified as Hiron Akter, was trapped inside a house when the fire engulfed the entire area, Fire Brigade sources said.

The loss of property in the fire that continued for about an hour from 1:30 pm was estimated at Tk 40,000/-. The sources added.

The origin of fire could not be known.

## Where is my son?

Star Report

For six long years, she's been waiting for her son to come home.

Watching and sharing the pain of the inconsolable woman is her poor husband, the helpless five years of the sturdy, music-loving son.

If still alive, Syed Nadim Mahmud alias Pappu is 31 years old today.

The mother wails, wakes up every night to any knock — real or unreal — at the door. Is that my son?

The nightmare never ends. The father moves from door to door of the powerful and the useful while trying to console back home an increasingly despairing mother.

The then home minister promised help, so did the city police chief. Pappu didn't come back.

Missing since June 15, 1992, the 25-year-old was a happy drummer with the Happy Touch band. The father, S N Mahmood, a general manager at a private firm, informed Sutrapur police on June 27 and then filed a case with the thana on July 12 naming three of his bandmates — Lucky Akand, Tapan and Shyamol.

Last seen in that area where he reportedly went to see his bandmates from his father's Dhanmondi residence (House No 13/8 and Road No 13/2), Pappu was searched, first by local police, then by the city detectives and finally by the CID.

The father was far from happy when CID gave his "final report" on May 17, 1997, roughlly five years after the 5-foot-10-inch young man disappeared. He believes that the police efforts were 'inadequate'.

"I have nothing against anybody. All I want is to know if he is alive," says Mahmood, "I can't handle his mother anymore."

Pappu's only sister — their only child now — conceals her grief to spare the parents.

"The uncertainty is killing us."

Their sighs only reverberate their Elephant Road apartment.



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