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Bus service

One-way fare around Tk 530

Fixing Dhaka-Calcutta one-way bus fare at 11 US dollars (Tk 530 app.), operators from India and Bangladesh yesterday signed agreed minutes containing details of a road transport deal for approval by their respective governments, reports UNB.

After a marathon four-hour meeting at BRTC Bhaban here, the two sides finalised the nitty-gritty of commercial bus operations. Santonu Goswami, Managing Director of West Bengal Surface Transport Corporation, the team leader of the visiting Indian delegation, told journalists.

The Bangladesh delegation headed by Abdul Matin Akand, director of Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation, visited Calcutta April 6-8 in a trial run of cross-border bus service and held negotiations there. In return journey, the Indians travelled to Dhaka Thursday for the final talks.

Two buses from each side will run between Dhaka and See Page 12 Col 4

Dhaka, Delhi talk water sharing

NEW DELHI, Apr 9: Bangladesh and India today reviewed the sharing arrangement of the Ganges water under the historic accord of 1996 at a ministerial level meeting of the Joint Rivers Commission (JRC), reports BSS.

Bangladesh's Minister for Water Resources and Irrigation, Abdur Razzaq, and the Indian Minister of State for Water Resources, Sompal led their respective sides in the talks held at the Sram Shakti Bhaban here.

Prior to the formal talks, Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzaq and his Indian counterpart Sompal had an exclusive meeting which lasted for an hour.

A Bangladesh official described today's talks as "extremely fruitful" and said both sides expressed satisfaction at the talks which will resume tomorrow.

The two sides, the official said, discussed the sharing of waters of eight other common rivers, including the Teesta.

The two ministers agreed to hold frequent meetings of the JRC.

The Bangladesh minister sought Indian cooperation for flood forecasting and warning to which the Indian side readily agreed.

Abdur Razzaq will call on Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee tomorrow.

Niger's president assassinated

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast, Apr 9: Niger's president Ibrahim Bare Maïnassara was assassinated today in an apparent coup attempt in the West African country, Radio France Internationale reported, reports Reuter.

A correspondent for the radio reporting live from Niamey said the president's body had been taken to a clinic in the capital after he was fired upon by soldiers at the capital's airport.

Mainassara, a former army chief, seized power in a military coup in January 1996.

He transformed himself into a civilian president later in 1996 in a polls marred by disputes after he scrapped the independent election commission.

The move triggered long-running political tension at home and condemnation from western donors.

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Prayer Timings

April 10		
Azan	Jamaat	
Fajr 5:30	5:35	
Zohr 12:45	1:20	
Asr 4:30	4:35	
Maghrib 6:20	6:23	
Esha 7:30	7:35	

Source: Islamic Foundation



Palestinian president Yasser Arafat being greeted at Zia International Airport yesterday by President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. — Star photo

Nor'westers lash city, 11 dists: 1 killed, 100 hurt

By Staff Correspondent

At least one person was killed, five were missing and over hundred others injured when nor'westers lashed parts of the city and different areas in eleven districts yesterday.

Parts of Bhola, Bagerhat, Kushtia, Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Madaripur, Jamalpur, Jhenaidah and Natore districts came under the forays of nature that also tossed kutcha houses, uprooted trees and electricity poles, disrupting power supply at places.

The nor'westers however triggered welcome showers at most places, cooling the heat and drenching crop lands to the delight of farmers.

In Tojumuddin thana in Bhola, fierce winds blew away one Rezaul Haq into a canal where he drowned, and capsized a fishing boat in the mighty Meghna, leaving five fishermen untraced, our correspondent reported quoting police. Police were searching for the missing fishermen till 8 in the evening.

In the city, winds rising up to 70 kph snatched power supply at places and also on the outskirts.

Meanwhile, Met office

sources here said nor'westers with squalls up to 70 kph may sweep different areas in Jessore, Kushtia, Rangpur, Dhaka, Tangail, Comilla and Sylhet districts during the next 18 hours from 6: P.M. yesterday.

Our Staff Correspondent in Chittagong reports: Nor'wester lashed the port city and its surrounding areas yesterday afternoon.

Thirty people were injured in the storm that lasted for one and a half hours from 4 pm disrupting normal life.

At least seven cargo ships lost anchors and reached the mid channel forcing suspension of ship movement for some time, port sources said.

Traffic movement came to a halt and power supply remained snarled.

Police said two trucks collided and skidded off the road at Rajakali during the storm.

A severe storm at a speed of about 80 km per hour swept over the Rajshahi city. The storm lasted for about held an hour.

Three persons were injured and some 200 houses collapsed,

according to our correspondent.

Meanwhile, Rajshahi region experienced welcome showers Thursday midnight and yesterday morning 136 days after the last rain on November 23. Local Meteorology Department measured 9.4 mm rains.

In Khulna, a severe storm accompanied by rains lashed the district in the afternoon.

The showers that continued for about 35 minutes were welcomed, but the storm damaged more than 300 pucca and semi pucca houses across the district. It also badly affected some 50 shrimp ghers.

Some five people were reportedly injured during the storm.

More than 200 thatched houses were razed to the ground, many trees were uprooted in the Gourandhi, Agajhara and Babujan thana areas in Barisal during the storm.

Electricity supply remained snarled at many places in the town. Besides, Barguna, Betagi, Bakerganj, Nalchity and some other places plunged into darkness.

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The first nor'wester of the season hit the city just after 8 am yesterday, enveloping it with thick dust. The drizzle that followed lasted only minutes. — Star photo by Sheikh Enamul Haque.

Power from Haripur plant to be costlier

Imported fuel oil, not locally produced gas to be used

The government has asked the US-based NEPC Consortium Power Ltd to use expensive imported fuel oil instead of locally produced gas, to operate the 115 MW Haripur (Narayanganj) barge mounted power plant, making the power costlier, sources said.

NEPC would be supplying power to the National Grid from May 28. Besides, a Malaysian company, Westmont Power, which is setting up a 115 MW barge mount plant at Baghabari, is scheduled to begin operation from April 30.

Price of power produced by using imported fuel will be 5.4 cents per unit while that produced from gas will be around 4.5 cents. Power generated by PDB costs 2.25 cents each unit.

Unlike other companies, NEPC has been given special contractual advantages which include ensuring a high-pressure gas supply to the Haripur plant site at Petrobangla's cost. However, while making such a special deal, PDB did not consult officials of Petrobangla whether it will be able to supply such high-pressure gas, the sources claimed.

PDB took this move to "accommodate certain type of power generators" which will be used by NEPC. Usually, PDB sets the technical criterion of power generator.

Later, Petrobangla refused to provide the gas at a pressure of 350 Per Square Inch Gas (PSIG). 4.5 cents. Power generated by PDB costs 2.25 cents each unit. The PDB has also agreed to provide "free fuel" to NEPC at the initial operation period of the plant and "tax-free imported fuel" later. No other company was offered such facilities before for setting up of barge mounted plant, the sources said.

Meanwhile, the barge See Page 12 Col 8

Ten more DB men questioned

By Staff Correspondent

Ten more DB men, including two inspectors, were interrogated yesterday by CID investigators in connection with the killing of Jalal Ahmed Shaif.

The decomposed body of Shaif was found in the rooftop water tank at the DB office at Mintoo Road in the city on March 25 and it was identified on March 31.

Meanwhile, the arrested five were yet to confess their alleged involvement in the killing till last night, sources said. The arrested five — Inspector Zia, SI Shajahan, Havildar Belal, constable Rob and canteen man Anwar are now on remand under CID custody.

"We are putting emphasis on collecting evidences against the arrested", a CID official said last night.

Seven of the ten DB men approached the investigators yesterday morning after CID summoned them. They are Inspector Sirazullah Bhuiyan, Inspector Shajahan and constables Nurul Abedin, Nurul Islam, Abdur Razzak, Mizanur Rahman and Nuruzzaman.

CID interrogated the seven till the afternoon and released them on certain conditions condition.

See Page 12 Col 3

Girl rescued in city, 2 arrested

By Staff Correspondent

A teenage girl into sex trading was rescued from a house at Fakirpool in the city late Thursday night after a human rights organisation lodged a complaint with police.

The 19-year-old victim, a resident of Alamdanga in Kushtia, was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for examination. She appeared at the SSC examinations last year.

Two persons, Fazila and Kamrul, were arrested for their alleged involvement in the matter.

Alena Khan, a human rights activists, said, "I got a telephone call at about 10:30 pm and the caller told me about the girl." She immediately called Motijheel thana and the girl was rescued.

The victim was brought to the capital by Fazila Khatun about five months ago saying that she would manage a job in garments factory for the victim. Khan added.

But Fazila held her hostage in a house in Arambagh area and forced her into prostitution. Later the victim was shifted to a house at Dhan-

See Page 12 Col 3

Bid to sell teenage girl: 2 arrested

From Our Correspondent NARAYANGANJ, Apr 9: Local people adjacent to the red light area caught hold of two youths his afternoon while they allegedly tried to sell off a teenage girl.

According to witnesses, two youths, Babul, 25, and Moslem, 25, brought Etl, 15, a student of Khilgaon Model School to Tanbazar red light area by an autorickshaw. But local people, observing their suspicious movement, challenged them and asked about the purpose of their arrival there.

But Babul introduced the girl as his lover but failed to give any satisfactory answer for coming there. Then the mob beat the youths and handed them over to sadar police.

Palestinian state

Dhaka extends total support

Hasina, Arafat hold official talks

Bangladesh has extended its total support to the Palestinian stand to declare it an independent and sovereign state, reports BSS.

The support came during official talks between Bangladesh and Palestine held yesterday at the VVIP Lounge of the airport just after the arrival of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and President Yasser Arafat led the respective sides in the talks.

After the talks, the Press Secretary to the Prime Minister told newsmen that Arafat informed the meeting that Palestine was going to announce a date for declaration of its independence.

Arafat said he discussed this issue with a number of coun-

tries and received good response and support in favour of this stand.

Hasina said Bangladesh always stood in favour of just and legitimate cause of the struggling Palestinian people.

The official talks over, Hasina and Arafat held an exclusive meeting.

The Prime Minister was assisted by Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr. S. A. Samad and Foreign Secretary C. M. Shaif Sami while Arafat was assisted by Dr. Nabeel Shaath, minister for international cooperation, Dr. Saab Erakat, chief negotiator and minister for local government and Nabeel Abu Rudinah, advisor to President Arafat.

Earlier, Arafat called on See Page 12 Col 4

Hundreds of complaints, action against 3

Twenty-eight years of BMDC

By Naimul Haq

Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council (BMDC) has taken action against only three doctors for negligence of professional duties although hundreds of complaints were filed with it during the last 28 years.

Even many members of the doctor community have expressed utter disappointment at the role played by the council.

"It is pointless having such a body which is responsible for taking action against doctors when needed but does little in this regard. In this situation, doctor's virtually have no accountability," a senior doctor said.

Following allegations from patients and relatives in this regard, The Daily Star conducted an investigation into affairs of BMDC.

The 1980 BMDC act states "The council may refuse to permit the registration of any person or direct the removal altogether or for a specified period from the Register the name of any registered medical practitioner who has been convicted of any such offence as implies in the opinion of the council."

The council's 'Code of Medical Ethics' states that it may take disciplinary action that may be required for criminal convictions or serious professional misconduct of a medical practitioner. The council is not an association or union for protecting professional interests.

The code also stated for disregard of personal responsibility to patient, for example, for gross negligence in respect of his professional duties to his patient may be regarded as misconduct sufficient to justify the suspension or removal of the name of a medical practitioner from the register.

"When we receive a complaint, our disciplinary or action committee starts investigating the allegation. But very sadly, due to lack of sufficient documentary evidence, most of the cases end up without any result," a BMDC source said seeking anonymity.

The action committee would only forward its findings to the executive committee if enough evidence is gathered to prove See Page 12 Col 1

Tk 913cr loans overdue with tannery owners

By Rafiq Hasan

Four nationalised banks have Tk 1349.31 crore outstanding loans with tannery owners, of which Tk 913.43 crore are "over-due" since February this year, according to sources in Bangladesh Bank.

Sonali Bank has Tk 156.07 crore outstanding loans, Janata Bank Tk 524.85 crore, Agrani Bank Tk 386.36 crore and Rupali Bank Tk 283.03 crore.

The Janata has the biggest amount of Tk 448.26 crore over-due loans, followed by Agrani with Tk 201 crore, Sonali Tk 138.25 crore and Rupali Tk 124 crore.

A big chunk of the loans that have fallen over-due was disbursed for procurement of raw leather after the Eid-ul Azha, the sources said.

Out of Tk 207 crore disbursed during last year's Eid, Tk 172 crore was realised by the banks and Tk 35.25 crore remained outstanding.

Sources in the banks however claimed that frequent policy change, damages caused by natural calamities and fall in the prices of leather in the international market were the main reasons for such a huge amount of over-due loans.

Huge loans become stuck up after the government banned export of wet blue leather in 1990, they said.

When contacted, Commerce and Industries Ministry Tofail Ahmed said, "The government has no intention to allow export of wet blue leather again. The ban will continue till at least 2002."

He blamed the tannery owners for keeping bank loans outstanding "intentionally". "The trend of giving loans from bank started during the rule of Jatiya Party and BNP. We have stopped it," the minister said.

He also told The Daily Star that the government was thinking of providing some incentives to exporters of finished leather and leather goods.

"The incentives would be declared in the next budget," Tofail said.

Sonali Bank sources said that they have filed cases against 21 companies for Tk 108.26 crore defaulted loans. Most of the cases have been filed with the Artha Rinu Adalat.

They however said, it is very difficult to recover loans by See Page 12 Col 8

BCL-JCD gunfight in Feni: 24 injured

FENI, Apr 9: At least 24 activists of the student wings of both the ruling Awami League and the main opposition BNP were injured in a gunfight at Daganbhanjura thana headquarters today, reports UNB.

Police said the clash erupted at about 8 am as a sequel to a clash Thursday night between BCL and JCD activists that left 15 injured.

Thursday's clash occurred following a rumour that two BCL activists had been kidnapped.

During today's clash that lasted about 6 hours, the feuding groups fired about 100 rounds of gunshots and exploded crackers, forcing traffic movement on Feni-Majidi and Feni-Bashurhat roads suspended for the period.

The clash also spread to nearby villages that created panic among the people.

Armed police brought the situation under control at about 2 pm. They used several rounds of gunshots and lobbed tear gas shells to disperse the feuding groups.

Sporadic bomb explosions were heard from different places even late in the evening. A tense situation was prevailing in the area.

The police arrested three youths from the spot, but they were later released. Police did not disclose their names and identity.

The injured BCL activists included Alauddin, Selim, Swapan, Mannan, Zia, Ashraf, Rintu, Wahidur, Rahman, Shippu, Ripon, Monir, Khokon and Mainuddin and JCD activists Kamal, Miru, Nasu, Mamun, Sabuj, Bachchu and Nurul Amin.

They were admitted to different private clinics.

None will be allowed to rig polls: Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia has warned that her party with the help of the people would resist any attempt to rig and manipulate any election in future.

"The people had given their verdict in favour of BNP in the 1996 elections but that verdict was snatched through rigging and conspiracy. From now on we will not give any opportunity to any one to rig the polls and we will make all our efforts to foil any conspiracy," she said.

The former prime minister was addressing an Eid reunion organised by the Doctors' Association of Bangladesh (DAB) at Engineers' Institute in the city yesterday evening.

"The 1996 general elections were rigged and they snatched the people's verdict from us as we didn't know how they rigged and hatched conspiracy. Now we know those and also know how to resist rigging and foil See Page 12 Col 4

Chhatak blast: 20 interrogated

From Staff Correspondent SYLHET, Apr 9: The CID has got some information regarding bomb blast at the residence of ruling party MP Muhiur Rahman Manik at Chhatak thana headquarters on March 15, said an official tonight.

The CID officials have so far interrogated about 20 people, including Mujibur Rahman elder brother of Manik, family members of the two young men killed in the blast and leaders of both the rival groups of Chhatak thana Awami League.

CSP Aminul Islam of Comilla, who is also in charge of Sylhet zone have been conducting the investigation since April 3.

Besides, the CID officials talked to the Deputy Commissioner, Additional District Magistrate, SP, Civil Surgeon, Assistant Commissioner (Land), TMO and officer in Charge of Chhatak thana.

Among these people, some gave statements to the Investigating Officer, said an official source.

However, Abul Lais Choudhury, a cousin of MP Manik is yet to open his mouth to the CID officials.

Lais was critically injured in the blast and is now under police custody at Sylhet MAG. Dharmy Medical College Hospital, Doctors at the hospital hoped that the condition of Lais would improve within two weeks.

Students of BUET Architecture Deptt postpone programme

By Staff Correspondent

Students of Architecture Department of BUET postponed their fast-unto-death programme yesterday evening following requests from eminent citizens.

The students have been demanding implementation of decisions of BUET Chancellor and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina regarding change in admission process and setting up of a separate Architecture Institute.

The citizens comprising poet Shamshur Rahman, artist Quayum Chowdhury and architects Mazharul Islam and Rabiul Hossain along with a number of other architects visited the fasting students at Architecture Faculty premises at BUET and expressed solidarity with them at around 6 pm yesterday. They assured the students of all-out help and cooperation in resolving the problems and promised to discuss the matter with the Chancellor.

The students in a press release, however, said yesterday that they would continue other agitation programmes to reshape their demands.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Sthapati Samaj (Architect Society of Bangladesh) in a press release yesterday said it would stage a token hunger strike at BUET during the admission tests scheduled to be held today.

India beat England by 20 runs

Star Report

India beat England by 20 runs in the Champions Trophy at Sharjah last night, according to DD Sports monitored in the city.

Batting first, India managed 222 for five in the 50 overs. Captain Mohammed Azharuddin topscored with 74.

However, the Indians managed to restrict the Englishmen to 202 all out in 47.5 overs to book their first win in the tournament.

Stand-in captain Ajay Jadeja took three wickets giving away the runs in the sensational 46th over to turn the match India's way. He was later adjudged the man-of-the-match.