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Govt accepts Agran MD's resignation

By Staff Correspondent

The government has accepted the resignation of Agran Bank managing director A K M Nazmul Haq and asked Rabul Hossain the senior most general manager of the bank to take charge until further order, according to finance ministry sources.

The sources said that Rabul Hossain was not given current charge but was asked only to run the bank in the absence of a managing director.

Nazmul Haq tendered his resignation on July 12 reportedly after facing criticism from the government regarding a mass-transfer order of bank officials at the beginning of this month.

Haq had ordered a mass transfer order of its 76 officials or what he termed as streamlining the bank's operation. But it immediately raised controversy as it was perceived to be motivated. The transfer orders from Dhaka were immediately followed by the return of many officials and given responsibility of important branches. They were earlier charged with corruption and given punishment post outside Dhaka.

Later, the MD stayed the transfer orders under political pressure and expressed his desire for early retirement.

Lunar eclipse on Wednesday

A partial lunar eclipse will take place on Wednesday (July 28), reports BSS.

According to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, the moon will enter umbra at 1622 BST and come out of it at 1845.5 BST, an ISPR press release said. The eclipse will begin before moon rise. The moon rise will occur in Dhaka at 1841.9 BST in the day. So, the eclipse will be visible in Dhaka for 3.6 minutes only, the press release added.

Bangabhaban

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kept at a posh Gulshan residence declaring the same as a 'sub-jail'. At the initial stage, arrangements of food were not there in the Gulshan residence but the then Acting President took initiatives to reach food to the imprisoned former President from Bangabhaban and inquired about him through his (Shahabuddin's) personal staff. The Acting President was, however, personally sorry for putting the former President behind the bar which he told many, including the former Attorney General. But he never told anybody that he sought apology to Ershad for putting him behind the bar in the interest of the state.

Gas

From Page 1

power plants. All these projects will be completed between 2003 and 2004.

"In one word, we will be needing an additional gas supply of 450 mcmd to 550 mcmd within the next five years. The existing active and prospective gas fields do not ensure more than 350 mcmd additional gas supply."

Presently different government operated gas fields and two foreign operated gas fields (ether supply around 1000 mcmd gas. This demand is rising by 10 per cent a year.

In future, gas production in Sangu and Jalalabad gas fields will increase to 160 mcmd and 150 mcmd respectively.

The only gas field to be developed within a few years by PSC operators is at Bibiyana. The Bibiyana gas field is said to be the biggest under PSC, but it will take at least three years for Occidental/Unocal to develop it even if they start work right now, the sources maintained.

The other gas fields that may be developed in near future by PSC operators (subject to approval of Petrobangla) include those at Kafra and Ratna in the Surma basin and Semutang in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

"Kafra appears to be an oil field," said a source. Exploration activities at Ratna is still going on. Exploration activities by Cairn and Occidental were abandoned due to their failure. In other blocks, no major exploration activity has been initiated so far.

Floor crossing Appeal Hearing on 2 BNP MPs begins

The appeal hearing on two BNP MPs, who recently joined the government, began at the Appellate Division yesterday, reports UNB.

A High Court bench earlier directed the Speaker to refer the floor crossing matter of Dr Md Alauddin and Hasibur Rahman Swapan to the Election Commission.

Attorney General Mahmudul Islam submitted the petition and began his argument yesterday.

The hearing will resume on Tuesday.



The Barisal-bound "Launch March", as the Ershad-led Jatiya Party called it, on the Buriganga yesterday.

—Star photo by A K M Mohsin

Flood waters recede

By Special Correspondent

A less active monsoon contributed to improvement in flood situation in the country yesterday.

The Padma flowing above danger level at Bhagyakul started falling yesterday for the first time since it went into spate three weeks ago.

The Meghna continued to stay above its red mark, up by 17 cm at Bhairab Bazar, fed by the Surma and Kushiya which also remained above their respective danger levels.

According to Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC), the Brahmaputra-Jamuna registered slight rise upstream but fell downstream. The Padma registered fall at almost all places.

Reports from India said the Ganges was rising in Bihar where flood situation turned bad following heavy rains in Nepal.

The FFWC, in its forecast for 48 hours beginning at 6 am tomorrow, said the Padma may rise at all points, the Brahmaputra may rise at Chilmari and the Meghna may rise by 1 cm and flow 19 cm above danger level.

There were no rains in the country yesterday.

The Meteorological Department in its forecast until 6 pm today said that rain or thunder shower accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely over few places in Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions and one or two places in Dhaka and Rajshahi divisions, with moderate or heavy fall at places in Chittagong division.

Morocco's new king weds secretly

RABAT, July 25: King Mohammed VI, named successor to the Moroccan throne after his father succumbed to a heart attack on Friday, was secretly married hours after the death of Hassan II, government sources said today, reports AP.

The new king, who announced his father's death on state television Friday, was married the same evening to fulfill Moroccan, and Muslim, dynastic tradition requiring a head of state be wed. The sources said on condition they not be identified by name.

The identity of King Mohammed's bride was not provided. The government refused to confirm the report of the marriage, saying only that the wedding was "logical" given Moroccan rules of dynastic succession.

Students damage vehicles in front of Dhaka College

By Staff Correspondent

A group of students of Dhaka College damaged some vehicles in front of the college last night. Witnesses and police on the spot told this correspondent that the group of about 15 students of the college went to New Market at about 8 pm to collect toll from traders. When the traders chased the group, they ran back to the college and began to damage motor vehicles that were crossing the area at the time, sources said.

At least five vehicles were damaged during the incident and traffic movement on the road was disrupted for about half an hour.

Traffic movement was restored after police arrived. Additional policemen were deployed in the area.

Tanbazar eviction termed illegal Sex workers plan to go to court

By Staff Correspondent

The Tanbazar Movement Solidarity Council said yesterday they would go to court to challenge the 'illegal' eviction of sex workers from Tanbazar and Nimtoli brothels at Narayanganj on Saturday.

"We are planning to legally challenge the illegal eviction within a couple of days as the authorities had no court order as required for eviction," Advocate Alina Khan said at a press conference in the city.

Speaking on behalf of the Council, she termed the 'forcible' eviction 'illegal and state-sponsored terrorism and condemned the 'assault' on sex workers during the eviction.

The press conference was organised by 52 human and women's rights organisations that formed the Council recently. It is protesting the way the government is going ahead with its 'rehabilitation plan' for the sex workers and is trying to realise their demands.

Putting forward a four-point demand, Convenor of the Council Mahbuba Mahmud said the

government has violated human rights and fundamental rights of sex workers.

She alleged that Sathi, a leader of sex workers, was 'hijacked' during the eviction.

The Council leader said that the government must take the opinion of sex workers before going for any plan for rehabilitation. "The present government seems to have no specific plan."

At the press conference, Sathi's mother who was present at Tanbazar when police forcibly picked up her daughter expressed her concern that Sathi was still untraced.

Sex workers' demands include bringing back the evicted inmates to their respective brothels, payment of compensation to them, removal of the DG of Directorate of Social Welfare, action against the OC of Narayanganj thana for 'negligence of duty' and rehabilitation of sex workers as per the plan given by them.

They have suggested 'social

rehabilitation' and allowing them to stay at the brothels till their rehabilitation.

Among others, Advocate Habibunnessa, Rashida Hossain and Roslin De Costa were present at the press conference.

Meanwhile, Sammita Nari Samaj (SNS) yesterday termed the eviction of sex workers from the Tanbazar and Nimtoli brothels a "blatant fascist action and a serious violation of fundamental human rights."

In a statement, SNS said "Using a politically motivated directive from the Prime Minister to 'rehabilitate' the inmates of Tanbazar, local political mastans and the police have joined hands in this dastardly act, leaving thousands of women and children helpless and on the streets."

SNS demanded an immediate inquiry into the incident, safety of all sex workers 'missing' since Saturday's eviction and compensation at least Tk one lakh each to those evicted.

Power disaster feared in 4 western districts

From Delwar Kabir

JHENIDAH, July 25: Power supply in four districts from Jhenidah grid sub-station here may collapse any moment if dilapidated equipment of the station are not replaced, it is apprehended.

According to Power Development Board sources, the grid sub-station was installed in 1965 and it was 'rehabilitated' in 1991. But the spares used were allegedly of poor quality. As a result the sub-station developed trouble frequently since its rehabilitation.

Breaker, Isolator, 11 and 33 KV panel board, relay, Buscoupler and some other important equipment of the station are now almost damaged.

The station supplies power in Jhenidah, Magura, Chudanga and Meherpur districts.

When contacted, an official of PDB requesting anonymity said, "The breakers are in such

a bad shape that six 11 KV feeders and four 33 kv feeders may collapse any moment, causing suspension of power supply for an indefinite period."

He further said five mega volt ampere (MVA) of Kaliganj feeder has been inoperative since long disrupting power supply in the area.

Rehabilitation of the grid sub-station by a Chinese company — CHICO — was not done properly. As a result, spares are being damaged fast, some sources alleged.

Shyamal Kumar Ghosh, Executive Engineer of PDB at Jhenidah, said that the capacity of the grid is only 40 MW while the requirement of the grid area is about 60 MW. The supply at present is 32 MW.

PDB sources said Jhenidah power distribution division collected Tk 16.50 crore revenue last year.

Where have the hilsas gone?

By Morshed Ali Khan

Where have all the hilsas gone? This is the question now being asked by millions of people around the country, and particularly by those along the coastal areas who depend on this delicious fish at this time of the year for a living.

Fishermen, hawkers, wholesalers, coolies, transport workers, small fish traders, ice producers, and money lenders in their thousands — all wait and even offer prayers for the hilsa to hit the nets as it has been happening for centuries. The elderly people of Kuakata, Kalapara, Amtoli, Patharghata and Barguna say they have not seen anything like this in their lifetime.

Fisheries Department officials and people involved in the hilsa trade, blamed indiscriminate plundering of the sea by bagda fry catchers, catching of huge amount of *jhalka* or hilsa fries and the effect of El Nino.

Along the shores, thousands of fishermen brave the rough sea every day, some with their sea-going fishing boats and some with small boats hoping to net a catch. As some of them return in the evening, hawkers wait anxiously at the shore with their weighing balance and cash to buy the catch. But the somber faces of the returning men say it all. The hulls of the boats are almost empty — so are the hopes of thousands who even take financial advances from 'parties in Dhaka' with the promise to pay back through the catches.

"I do not know what has happened to the sea, last year at this time we used to bring several maunds of hilsa at one go," said a fisherman at Kalapara who had just returned from the sea with only two hilsas weighing about 500 grams each. He said he was worried about the future as his investment this year was made on the amount of last year's catch.

The fishermen's frustration and helplessness has been such that there were reports of attempted suicide. At Chardano union, under Pathorghata thana one Abdul Jalil, son of Anis Ali attempted suicide on July 7 by taking poison after he

failed thrice to pay back Tk one lakh loan money he had taken for his fishing trips to the sea.

At Kalapara, one kg of hilsa was being sold at Tk 100 at the hawker level. The price rose to Tk 120 at the wholesale market while in the retail market it was being sold at Tk 150 per kg. Local people said last year at this period a kilogram of hilsa cost between Tk 30 and 40 at the retail level.

Many local people blamed thousands of bagda fry catchers for the scarcity of hilsa in the sea. Thousands of men, women and children comb the shores of the sea with the finest possible hand-pulled nets for catching bagda fries which sell between Tk 0.60 and 1.50 each. In the process of catching the fries, they pull out all sorts of tiny marine life from the sea and dump them on the sand to die after carefully picking the bagda fry. It is believed, for every bagda fry caught some 1,000 marine life is destroyed. These arrays of life include microscopic creatures, plants and fries of many other fishes.

Others blame the indiscriminate catching of *jhalka* or hilsa fries throughout the year for its near depletion. Fisheries department sources said although law protects the *jhalka*, several thousand tonnes of *jhalka* is killed in the country every week.

Fisheries official also blame the siltation and change in major river courses for the hilsa to change routes. Hilsa prefers strong currents and many famous rivers along the coast have now become slow-flowing ones due to siltation.

But the fisheries department officials failed to point out why millions of deep sea hilsas failed to rush to the coastal sweet waters every year to lay eggs. They said last year unusually large hilsas were caught throughout the coastal belt and this might have caused the stock to suffer.

Others point out that global warming and the El Nino effect might have caused the hilsa to change character altogether. With the change of water temperature the hilsa stocks might have been disillusioned which resulted in the change of schedule.

According to reports reaching Dhaka, small schools of hilsa is appearing at the Cox's Bazar point and also at some places of Bhola, Patuakhali and Borguna. But their number is very low and the sizes are unusually small.

Oxy: Damage deal

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"contingency expenditure" with any other party.

Occidental had sent a letter to Petrobangla early last month informing it about a deal with Unocal. Under the deal, Unocal would "take over" Occidental's operatorship in blocks 12, 13 and 14.

In response to the letter, Petrobangla told the American company last week that processing and finalisation of the transfer of operatorship would require "some time".

But Petrobangla did not say that it would not approve the transfer of operatorship unless Occidental settled the compensation issues, the sources said.

The Environment Ministry has requested the Energy Ministry not to approve Occidental's transfer of operatorship till it settles the compensation issue.

Environment Ministry claimed a compensation of Tk 612 crore for the environmental damage caused at Magurchara by the blow-out due to careless operation by Occidental. The compensation is payable in 50 years.

Under the deal, Occidental will wind up its operations in Bangladesh and take over some concerns of Unocal in the Middle East.

Occidental signed Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs) with Petrobangla for these blocks in 1995.

Meanwhile, Petrobangla has sought legal aid documents from Cairn and Shell regarding their deal for transfer of operatorship in blocks 15 and 16.

Unless these documents are given, the transfer of operator-

ship can not be approved by the government, Petrobangla told Shell and Cairn.

Petrobangla has suspended Cairn/Shell for the gas it purchased from Sangu field for the month of May on the ground that the process for transfer operatorship has not yet been completed.

AL drama

From Page 1

said, "We may meet her later sometime."

Defending their action, Azam said, "We have acted as per the authority given to the district committee by the party constitution. We have suspended Rashed Mosharraf on specific grounds. We have not done anything wrong as claimed by some central leaders."

Asked if the suspension may be withdrawn, he said, "It depends on the central AL's action and Mosharraf's reply to our show cause notice. We will decide our fresh course of action in the next meeting of the district committee."

Reached by telephone, Rashed Mosharraf said that he did not get the show cause notice.

Criticising Jamalpur AL leaders, he alleged that the party chief in the district and an MP masterminded his suspension to hide their misdeeds.

Referring to the dispute over the new leadership in Jamalpur Krishak League, AL's peasant wing in the district, Mosharraf said he, along with some central leaders tried to resolve the crisis.

IFIC's long wait for chairman

By M Shamsur Rahman

IFIC Bank has been running without a chairman since its Annual General Meeting on July 5 and sources in the bank said the process of electing one is deliberately being delayed.

The adjourned meeting of the Board of Directors of the bank for electing a chairman has been postponed indefinitely. The sources said this would remain so till a certified copy of the Supreme Court judgement could be obtained.

On July 12, the Supreme Court upheld a High Court verdict that rejected a petition by directors of the bank, Sohail Rahman and Salman Rahman, challenging a notice asking them to repay their defaulted loans.

In a letter to the managing director of the bank, Sohail and Salman said that the High Court judgement did not forbid them to act as director of the bank.

They also said that their lawyers could not advise them without going through the certified copy of the Supreme Court judgement.

But bank insiders now question the necessity of waiting for the certified copy of the judgement for electing a chairman.

They contend that following every AGM of IFIC, the newly constituted board of directors had always elected a new chairman, who was often an ex-

chairman re-elected. The board, according to Article 115 of its Articles of Association, can elect a chairman irrespective of the status of directorship of Sohail or Salman.

"Under such circumstances, it now seems that the reason for delaying the board meeting indefinitely is to allow an opportunity for the Rahman brothers to be eligible for election as chairman," one insider said.

Others are now questioning the role of the government directors who have voting rights.

The government is by far the biggest shareholder of IFIC Bank having a 40 per cent stake and has four directors on the board.

But the board, including the government directors, failed to play any effective role in safeguarding the interests of the depositors. Huge amounts of money were taken out by sponsor directors as benami loans without the knowledge of the board and inland bills were purchased illegally without the board's approval.

Insiders feel that the government directors should now play a more effective role in protecting the depositors' interests from further potential abuse by sponsor directors. It may be mentioned that the government directors never participated in the election of a chairman.

Salahuddin Quader indicted for kidnapping UP chairman

CHITTAGONG, July 25: Opposition MP Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury was today indicted for kidnapping and attempting to murder a UP chairman, reports UNB.

Primary charge was framed in the court against Chowdhury under Section 364 and 114 of Bangladesh Penal Code, court sources said.

First Additional Sessions Judge Ali Mansur framed the charge in his court in presence of Chowdhury at about 11 am.

Earlier, police had charged sheeted Quader Chowdhury and his accomplice Elias Chowdhury for abducting and making an attempt to kill chairman of West Guara UP in Rajan thana Nurul Haq on March 3, 1991.

After charge framing, Chowdhury's counsellor Advocate Zahurul Haq submitted the petition before the court seeking permanent bail for his client.

"As Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury is an MP and a respected citizen, there is no chance of his disappearance while at large on bail," the pleader pleaded.

Opposing a permanent bail, Public Prosecutor Kamaluddin Ahmed argued that as the accused is an influential person, there were chances of unleashing threat to the plaintiff.

After hearing the arguments, the court granted permanent bail to Chowdhury.

Murder at Bashabo

By Staff Correspondent

A couple allegedly killed a 25-year-old maid at south Bashabo in the city in the early morning yesterday.

But police and local people had separate versions about the death of the maid Jahanara Begum, daughter of Ali Ashraf, a resident of Laksam, Comilla.

She was working in the house of Faruk Ahmed, an insurance official.

Local people and neighbours alleged that they heard a woman screaming before Jahanara fell from the rooftop of the three-storey building, where Faruk's flat is located.

The local people, however, could not confirm if Jahanara was thrown from the rooftop. They confirmed, however, that Jahanara was fatally injured after falling from the building.

Jahanara had been working as a maid at the flat for the last four years, police and hospital sources said. Police arrested Faruk and his wife Rukhsana in the evening, yesterday, in connection with the murder.

But quoting the FIR filed by Hajera, the sister of the dead, Shabubagh police said that Jahanara was tortured to death by Faruk and his wife following an altercation over cooking of dinner Saturday night.

Before the filing of the murder case in the evening yesterday, the on duty officer of Shabubagh thana had a different version. They had claimed that Jahanara died from a fall.

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SEMINAR

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Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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