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Kibria admits downturn in major indicators

Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria has hinted an economic downturn in the country caused by global economic recession, reports UNB.

We were passing through a stable economic situation . . . but it's not possible to avert the impact of the global slump," he told a day-long national semi-nar here yesterday.

"Rest of the world, barring USA, is suffering from the recession," Kibria said adding that the growth rate of international trade has dropped by 2-3 per cent last year.

He said USA has enjoyed an economic growth continuously for last eight years, but their trade deficit is now going up day

"Our export growth has fallen and it affected the industrial production . . . I think, the growth of investment has also fallen," he said. "We could maintain stability in the rural economy due to our right macroeconomic steps."

Details on page 6 BDR, BSF clash for 3rd day at Belonia

From Our Correspondent FENI, Aug 24: More villagers fled their homes today as BDR and BSF continued exchange of fire for the third day today.

BDR sources said Indian Border Forces (BSF) resumed firing at Belonia border this morning which continued till dusk. BDR replied from two border outposts.

Witnesses said more panic-stricken people from Kawtali, Uttar Kawtali Barkuma, Bawarpathar, Guchagram, Rangamati, Champaknagar vil-See page 11 Col 7

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Prayer	Timings
AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PERSON	

August 25		
8.	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-10 -	4-15
Johr	12-50	1-25
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-40	6-45
Esha	8.00	8-30
Source: Is	slamic Fo	oundation

WB reduces lending plan for '99-2000

The World Bank has drastically reduced its lending plan for Bangladesh for fiscal 1999-2000, reports UNB.

The Bank's lending plan is

now almost half of the last year's actual approval excluding flood-related assistance. In 1998-99, the Bank approved about 653 million US dollar while the flood-related assistance was about 367.8 million dollar totaling its involvement at 1020.8 million dollar.

Its Bangladesh office planned for only 310 million dollar credit line for the current fiscal year. The standby credits have been estimated at 215 million dollar.

World Bank Country Director Federick T Temple yesterday disclosed the plan at a meeting with the State Minister for Planning Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir and senior officials of the Planning Ministry at the ministry's conference

room. The WB Country Director briefed the meeting also about the latest board meeting of the Bank that discussed the Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) for Bangladesh.

The Ministry vehemently opposed the World Bank's reduced lending plan saying it would affect the country's development agenda.

The State Minister for Planning told the WB country director that Bangladesh should not suffer due to the Bank's extended lending programme in Eastern Europe, especially Russia and South Asian country Indonesia.

Referring to the Bank's shifting of policy time and again, the minister said. "We have done mistakes, you have also done mistakes. Šo, we should jointly judge the mistakes. Why only the recipient end would suffer.

However, the country director said that the plan was prepared following the Bank's latest policy based on outcome or performance.

The minister urged the WB official to reconsider the projected plan and avoid reducing the lending plan. In reply, the country director said it was not final. "It would be made final only after discussing with all the parties concerned.

Pointing out Bangladesh's slow reform process, the country director said the Bank has two broad-based objectives achievements in the financial sector reform and human de-See Page 12 Col 3



BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia waves at supporters at a public meeting in Lalbagh in the city yesterday.

Squatters leave court premises



Some of the several thousand squatters leave the Supreme Court premises, their home for six days, yesterday morning. -Star photo by Anisur Rahman

By Special Correspondent

The squatters ended their six-day presence in the Supreme Court premises yesterday as police prod them out after a High Court order on Monday. The court had asked the Home Minister to clear the premises within 24 hours.

The squatters also folded their makeshift homes from the pavement in front of the residence of Dr Kamal Hossain, an eminent lawyer who filed petitions in court challenging eviction of slum dwellers.

Police on Monday night had asked the squatters to vacate the SC premises by early yesterday morning.

Witnesses said at about 7am police arrived at the spot. At about 9am, they used loudspeakers asking the squatters to clear the premises quickly. Amid some prodding from baton-wielding police, hesitant squatters rolled their belongings and started melting away in the busy street.

Leaders of the Bangladesh Bastuhara Samity which organised the squatters' occupation first of the Osmany Udyan See Page 12 Col 2

Gunfight at Demra: Police informer killed

By Staff Correspondent An informer of police was shot dead allegedly by criminals during a gunfight with Demra police in the city's Ja-trabari area early hours of yes-

Police and hospital sources identified the victim as Sumon, 24, son of Akkel Ali Khalifa, a resident of North Jatrabari. Ibrahim, one of the crimi-

nals, sustained bullet injury during the gunfight. He was undergoing treatment at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) under police cus-tody, sources said.

According to police, a team of Demra police, along with their informer Sumon on broad a tempo was looking for a wanted criminal in Jatrabari area at about 1:45 am.

When the tempo came near a mosque at Abbasuddin Road they found a gang of three young men roaming suspiciously there. When challenged, they opened fire on the police team, police said.

During the exchange of fire, Sumon was hit by bullet in his See page 11 Col 7

Rehabilitate slum dwellers in CHT: Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Žia yesterday advised the government to rehabilitate the city's slum dwellers in Chittagong Hill Tracts as there are huge fallow lands in the hills.

Addressing a mammoth public meeting at Lalbagh Azad ground in the city the former prime minister said the government could construct houses in the CHT and rehabilitate them there with VGF cards. "More people are needed to develop the hill region".

Lalbagh, Kamrangirchar and Hazaribagh thana units of BNP jointly organised the public meeting to protest government's decision to provide "corridor facility to India in the name of transshipment".

Begum Zia criticised the government for evicting the slum dwellers without any rehabilitation plan. "It is inhuman. Allah will not tolerate it," she said. The slum dwellers were evicted to allot the lands to

Awami League men, she alleged Tens of thousands of people - men, women and children attended the meeting and chanted slogans against the government move to provide transshipment. BNP activists

but never give transit to India. Amid repeated slogans and clapping Begum Zia said, "We didn't fight for independence to fall victim to hegemony. The patriotic people of Bangladesh will resist the conspiracy to sell the country".

and supporters chanted slo-gans: We will lay down our lives

The former prime minister said India has long been seeking transit facility to transport troops and military hardware to suppress independence movement in its north-eastern

"The government has already handed over one-tenth of he country's territory in the CHT and our right on the Ganges water. After giving transit, it may offer Chittagong port and gas to India. It is con-

spiring to hand over the country to India "

Referring to BNP's 'mass procession in Chittagong on Monday, she said the people there have expressed their noconfidence in the government and vowed to resist its move to give transit.

She called upon the people to make the opposition's August 30 'mass procession' in the city and September 12 sit-in demonstration before the Secretariat successful.

She said law and order in the country has deteriorated alarmingly and people have became hostage in hands of "Awami terrorists". She called for intensifying the current movement to oust the "terrorists, subservient and autocratic" government.

Terrorists sheltered by an Awami League MP have created a reign of terror in Lalbagh and its adjoining areas. Theses terrorists, besides committing crimes, are encroaching the See Page 12 Col 6

Petrobangla stops payment for Sangu gas Legal problems due to change in operatorships in Blocks 15,16

By Sharier Khan

Petrobangla has suspended payment for Sangu gas for the months of May and June due to legal complexities following change in operatorship in blocks 15 and 16 which include the off-shore Sangu field.

Petrobangla approved the change in operatorship in these two blocks from Cairn to Shell Oil in July. But the Energy Ministry, which is scrutinising the transfer of operatorship, is yet to clear it. Petrobangla is now seeking

legal opinion regarding payment for Sangu gas in the light of transfer of operatorship. "This situation has been created since there is virtually no operator in these two blocks now because it is a transition

said a source. Cairn has sold out most of its concerns in Bangladesh to Shell without informing

period for Cairn and Shell."

Petrobangla. It completed handing over its "full operatorship" in these two blocks to Shell on July 1. Since the legal procedures

for transfer of operatorship is incomplete, there is virtually no exploration-development activities in these blocks now. Petrobangla is also unoffi-

cially pressing Cairn and Shell to resolve the dispute over the budget for development of Sangu gas field before the government clears the transfer of operatorship. Petrobangla had originally

approved a budget of 178 million dollars in 1996 for development of the Sangu field. But in late 1997, Cairn came up with a revised budget of 264 million dollars saying that its fearlier calculations were wrong.

Petrobangla refused to accept this revision while Cairn,

backed by Shell, remained firm about the unilateral budget

"But this issue must be resolved once for all," commented a source. However, Petrobangla has not yet issued any official letter to Cairn or Shell specifically asking them to resolve

However, Petrobangla is continuing purchase of gas from the Sangu field and Cairn, which is maintaining a very small office now, is sending monthly gas bills. In another development,

Petrobangla has detected "gross irregularities" in Cairn's audit report on expenditure for 1997, submitted to Petrobangla earlier. Petrobangla rejected the report. Auditors have been appointed to re-examine Cairn's

The auditors are also examining documents of Halliburton

Brown and Roots, which was Cairn's partner in Sangu field and financed purchase and installation of equipment there. the sources said

The production sharing contracts (PSC) for blocks 16 and 15 were signed in 1994 and 1995 respectively. Cairn struck gas in Sangu field in early 1996 and brought in Shell and Halliburton to develop it. Gas extraction in Sangu began in June last year. Cairn then decided to "sell" its operatorship to Shell and quit Bangladesh.

After Sangu, Cairn also drilled exploratory wells in Sonadia and Halda. But Cairn abandoned operation in both the places due to technical problems arising out of faulty design and use of faulty rig.

Cairn was also committed to develop the earlier discovered Semutang gas field but did not keep its commitment.

Two BNP MPs submit replies

EC likely to fix date of hearing today

By Staff Correspondent

The Election Commission is likely to fix the date of hearing on the allegation of floor-crossing by the two BNP MPs today, EC sources said.

The two BNP lawmakers who joined the government of Sheikh Hasina in February last year one as state minister and the other deputy minister, submitted replies to EC queries on the issue yesterday, the last date of the extended deadline.

"The lawyers of the two MPs separately submitted the replies yesterday afternoon," said additional secretary of the EC secretariat Aziz Ahmed Chowdhury. "The Commission is likely to hold a meeting tomorrow to decide the date of hearing on the case."

According to the sources

closed to the MPs, they have defended their previous position that joining Awami League's cabinet did not amount to violating the Constitution.

BNP has been claiming that the two MPs' conduct is tantamount makers. Hence, it is asserting that the MPs in question should

State minister Mohammad Alauddin and deputy minister Hasibur Rahman Swapan have been accused in the controversial floor-crossing case, as the

to violation of the constitutional provision that bars crossing of floor by the lawlose their seats in parliament. But Alauddin and Swapan

have been rejecting their party interpretation of the Constitution since the beginning of their See page 11 Col 7

Bus workers in N'ganj clash: One killed From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Aug 24: One person was killed and 30 others were injured as bus and minibus workers clashed for two hours on the Narayanganj-Demra road in Adamjee Kadamtali area today.

The clash started at around 4 pm following a brawl between the workers over picking up passengers.

Noor Alam, 23, a rickshaw van driver was crushed under the wheels of a car while fleeing the area along with hundreds of

President of Adamjee Minibus Sramik Union Salauddin, 40, and another transport worker Shaheen, 25, were seriously injured and rushed to clinics in Dhaka in critical condition. At least 20 cars were dam-

aged by the transport workers during the clash which spread

over three kilometres area over

the Narayanganj-Demra road.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Daily Star

Young Entrepreneurs and Professionals Forum Seminar on

in the New Millennium In association with The British Council

Employer-Employee Expectations

The Daily Star and Young Entrepreneurs and Professionals Forum cordially invite you to attend the above Seminar to be held on Thursday, 26 August 1999

at The British Council Auditorium

from 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM

Representatives from following areas will speak/ share their insights on the topic: (i) corporate sector, (ii) NGO community, (iii) multi-national, (iv) GOB, and (v) joint venture company. Our target audience includes employer, existing & prospective employee from

different sectors as well as fresh graduates. If you are interested to attend the Seminar, please register immediately (which is free) by sending us your 1. Name 2. Organisation. Please fax: 886061, e-mail: <rescir@citechco.net>or telephone: 885214, 9339521

We look forward to seeing you!

Jayalalitha's latest sleight angers Sonia's party



capricious queen of Indian politics targeted Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee for more than a year- throwing tantrums and reeling off tough demands until she finally toppled his government in April, reports AP.

party chief Sonia Gandhi-Vajpayee's main challenger. Jayaram Jayalalitha, a film star-turned-politician revered by an army of fanatic followers in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, was scheduled to attend a much hyped campaign rally with Sonia in the tiny town of Villupuram on Sunday.

Sonia Gandhi, accompanied

Now it seems her latest tar-

get is her newest ally, Congress

hour in a government office waiting for her ally. Jayalalitha finally telephone to say she wouldn't make it.

Her aides say she was held up by 'a sea of humanity' at roadside rallies on the way. But reporters said she never left home in time for the appearance with Sonia, then lingered on the way. As Jayalalitha's disap-

pointed supporters left the rally in droves, Sonia Gandhi delivered a hurried 30-minute speech, and flew off in a heli-Local newspapers have interpreted the sleight as the be-

ginning of a rift between

Jayalalitha's party, All India

Anna Dravida Munnethra

by her son, Rahul, waited for an See Page 12 Col 1 Court urged to debar Sonia from polls

MUMBAI, Aug 24: A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) today urged the Mumbai High Court for directions to the Chief Election Commissioner MS Gill to debar Congress president Sonia Gandhi from contesting Lok Sabha polls from Bellary constituency on the ground that she was allegedly holding dual citi-

zenship, reports PTI.

The PIL, filed by city lawyer Pushkraj Ghordge, will be men-tioned tomorrow before the bench headed by Chief Justice Mr Y K Sabrahwal. The PIL, prayed for a direc-

tion to the union home min-

istry to call for all the documents regarding her alleged Italian citizenship. It also urged for seeking information on Sonia's alleged Italian citizenship from the Indian embassy in

Besides, the petitioner prayed that pending the hearing of PIL, the election to Bellary parliamentary constituency be postponed or results thereof According to petitioner the Election Commission should

have scrutinised Sonia's nomi-

nation thoroughly and con-

sulted the union home ministry

and the Italian Consul General to check whether she holds Italian citizenship as well. The petitioner submitted

that Sonia had married in 1968 and after several years she applied for Indian citizenship. He contended that whenever a foreign lady applied for Indian citizenship, she had to furnish proof of her revoking the nationality of her country of ori-

The PIL argued that Article 102 of the Constitution debarred a person who was not an Indian citizen from becoming a member of parliament.

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