

PM to visit a number of countries in next 3 months

By M Anwarul Haq

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will undertake a number of bilateral and multilateral visits in the next three months.

She will pay a three-day official visit to Australia from October 20 to 22. She will attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGAM) in Durban, South Africa from November 12-15 and the 11th SAARC Summit in Kathmandu from November 26 to 28. A visit to Brunei is being planned during her trip to Australia, sources concerned said.

A bilateral trip to the United States is being planned for December but the itinerary is yet to be confirmed.

The Prime Minister will be visiting Australia at the invitation of Prime Minister John Howard. This will be the first visit by a Bangladesh head of state or government to Australia.

Hasina will lead a large entourage that will include top officials and businessmen. She will hold official talks with her Australian counterpart in Canberra and also visit Sydney and Melbourne.

The Prime Minister is likely to seek increased Australian investment in Bangladesh and address an Investors Conference.

Bangladesh-Australia trade is 'insignificant' now. The trip is expected to increase the bilateral trade.

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Some councillors of DSE out to discredit management

By M Shamsur Rahman

In a desperate bid to block the management's tough steps against stock brokers, some Dhaka Stock Exchange councillors are trying to question the credibility of the management, sources said.

The sources said the councillors were telling general members that officials at the DSE clearing house were involved in pumping forged share certificates into the market.

These councillors, some of whom are allegedly involved in the scam, were trying to prove that the management was not keen on fixing the clearing house loopholes, the sources said.

The Council yesterday held a closed-door meeting with general members when some councillors pushed "these agenda", the sources said.

The DSE Council on Thursday last suspended three brokers for dealing in forged shares of JH Chemical and Sinobangla.

The Council decision was conveyed to the suspended brokers by the management. Two days later, on Saturday, one of them -- T Masifu, a young broker -- allegedly threatened DSE.

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Prayer Timings

September 30		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4:30	5:00
Zohr	12:45	1:30
Asr	4:30	4:45
Maghrib	5:55	6:00
Esha	7:45	8:15

Source: Islamic Foundation

Dangerous double planning

The story of flouting construction rules

By Morshed Ali Khan

Most constructions in the city, particularly of commercial buildings, are completed with two plans — one popularly known as 'DIT sheet' for Rajuk approval, followed by a 'working plan' to do the actual construction work, according to an investigation.

The double planning has been practised for years, leaving the city with thousands of buildings with plan that deviated from original ones. The irregularity is not only causing serious environmental degradation but also affecting the social behaviour, giving rise to crimes and health disorders.

Experts concerned said the country's building construction

rules have been made considering the environment and available civic amenities, if the rules are flouted, those factors are sure to suffer most.

Architects and engineers involved in designing and constructing said when a land owner submits the DIT sheet to Rajuk for approval, the plan outlines everything according to the law. But as soon as the plan is approved, the 'owner' gets the 'working plan' designed by an architect or by a simple draftsman on which the designer does not put any name.

In the working plan, parking spaces, required distance from the adjacent building or road, permissible overhung structure,

fire exit, required size of stairs and many other components are simply wiped out.

When construction of the building is completed, it is difficult to trace the offender.

"When we ask for explanation, the owner pleads innocence saying he depended on the site engineers and contractors, the engineer says he has done it according to the plan he had been provided with and the contractor points his finger at the engineer and the original 'DIT sheet' designer says it is not their duty to oversee if the work is being done according to their plan," explained a top Rajuk engineer.

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Hundreds of buildings including high-rise ones are being constructed in the city. Are all these properly planned? — Star photo

Withdrawal of VAT, tax demanded

Water transport owners threaten indefinite strike from today

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Water Transport Owners Unity Council has threatened an indefinite strike of all river transports from midnight tonight, if the sector is not exempted from paying VAT and some other taxes.

"The strike would paralyse river communications and power stations and hinder irrigation," Council leader KM Mahmudur Rahman said at a press conference at a city hotel yesterday.

The demands of the Council include withdrawal of 15 per cent VAT and three per cent tax on all types of water transport, reintroduction of 50 per cent tax on motor launches more than five years old compared to that on new vessels, withdrawal

of pre-survey advance compulsory tax collection and reintroduction of the previous rate of survey fee, registration fee and transfer fee.

Mahmudur Rahman alleged that the government imposed a 15 per cent and 4.95 per cent VAT on the river transport sector and ship building industry through Statutory Regulatory Ordinance (SRO) after announcement of the national budget for 1999-2000.

The decision was taken without any consultation with people involved in these sectors, he alleged.

"So we were compelled to call the strike and the authorities will have to bear its consequences," Rahman said.

"The sector is already reeling under the impact of 400 per cent increase in operation cost which includes maintenance cost, salary of the crew, survey fee, registration fee, transfer fee and surveyors' overtime," another Council leader said.

The leaders termed imposition of VAT on the sector especially on fuel transportation illegal and said, "VAT is always paid by end users and we are only carrier of the product. So this sector should not come under VAT net."

They said that due to VAT, this sector will not be 'at all viable'.

Rahman said the river transport sector contributes

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Special team formed to interrogate Shikdar

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Sept 29: The Ministry of Home Affairs has formed a three-member special team to interrogate Ershad Shikdar in Khulna on October 6 and his bodyguard Noor-e-Alam on October 7.

According to a reliable source in the KMP, Masudul Haq, Director of NSI, will head the team.

Other members of the team are AIG Abdus Sattar and a top-ranking officer from the Army intelligence. The purpose of forming this new joint interrogation team is to ensure an impartial role in dealing with Shikdar's case, the source said.

Earlier the fairness of the

joint interrogation cell (JIC) in Dhaka was questioned as some of its members including an additional IG had served in the KMP since 1990, the source said.

The team will question Ershad, among other things, about who were his financial beneficiaries in the police department and in political circles, the source informed.

Meanwhile, another murder case was filed with Khulna thana against Ershad Shikdar today for allegedly killing one Akimul Ali. With the latest case the total number of murder cases against Shikdar stood at

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Strike today CU students lay siege to VC's office

From CU Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Sept 29: Ganotantik Chhatra Oikya (GCO), Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS), Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and Chhatra Federation at Chittagang University (CU) laid a siege to the Vice-Chancellor's office today to press their demands including resumption of bus service for the students.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) announced that it would oppose tomorrow's strike at the university called by GCO, JCD and Chhatra Federation.

A day-long strike was called at CU tomorrow demanding re-

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Public Security Act: President's advice to be 'extra-cautious'

By Reaz Ahmad

President Shahabuddin Ahmad has advised the government to be extra-cautious in enacting a new law styled 'Public Security (Special Provision) Act, 1999' aimed at curbing terrorism.

Highly placed sources told The Daily Star yesterday that the presidential advice was conveyed to the government recently amidst growing concern expressed by major opposition parties regarding the proposed act.

Main opposition BNP has been expressing fear for the last several weeks that the Public Security Act, if enacted, might be used by the government as a tool to harass the political opponents.

Sources close to the law making process said that the note of caution sounded by the President would appease the opposition to a great extent.

When approached last night for his comment, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Abdul Matin Khasru told The Daily Star that in recent weeks he had audiences with the President on several occasions and "we discussed many things including the planned new laws". He refused to elaborate.

However, Khasru said that the proposed law was undergoing a vetting process and that the process would hopefully be completed by another week's time.

"We'll scrutinise the draft act in such a way that there would remain no scope for harassing

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Heroin haul: Interpol's help sought

By Staff Correspondent

The Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) yesterday sought assistance of Interpol to investigate the country's biggest ever heroin haul, DNC sources said.

"It is not possible to investigate the racket in Pakistan. So we felt that Interpol would be able to continue the process of the investigation into the matter," one source said, adding racketeers from more than two countries were involved in the drug trafficking.

A consignment of 24.1 kg of heroin wrapped in Lux soap packs was recovered from three Pakistanis from Hotel Isa Khat in the capital September 20. The arrested -- Ibrahim, Alefzan and Rais -- now in the Dhaka Central Jail.

Two others -- Nurul Afsar and Mir Hossain -- were also sent to the jail after they were arrested on charge of helping two suspects to flee the capital late Monday.

DNC has so far arrested five persons in connection with the heroin haul. But it is yet to arrest the main accused -- Abul Kalam, Mohiuddin and Jahangir, all of them businessmen -- involved in the drug trafficking.

Sources said the hunt for the accused was going on across the country. They said the suspects went into hiding after the heroin seizure.

Meanwhile, DNC could not attach the movable property of the businessmen. The CMM's Court issued warrant of arrest of the three businessmen and attachment of their property on Tuesday.



GOLDEN GIRLS: (L-R) Kazi Shahana Parvin(L), Sabrina Sultana (C) and Lovely Chowdhury showing the 'V' sign after winning the 50-metre small bore sports rifle event at the SAF Games yesterday. — BPJA photo by Amran Hossain

Girls grab gold in shooting

From Hasan Masood

KATHMANDU, Sept 29: After three barren days, Bangladesh finally bagged a gold when three shooters — Kazi Shahana Parveen, Sabrina Sultana and Lovely Chowdhury — clinched the top spot in the women's 5m short bore sport rifle team event at the BIS Complex range here this afternoon.

The trio collected 1716 points, one point more than the Indians.

Sri Lanka won the bronze with 1714 points.

Sabrina, the leading Bangladesh female shooter, scored highest among the three

with 576 points out of 600, which also gave her a silver in the individual competition of the same event.

Sri Lankan Irene Pushpamali got the individual gold with the top score of 578.

"We are very proud with the result that gave our country at least something to celebrate," said the trio after the competition.

"We were not that confident initially. We did not have a good score before coming here. But today we were mentally motivated to do something," they added.

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Opposition to lay siege to EC office today

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP-led opposition alliance will lay siege to the Election Commission office today to press its various demands, especially immediate resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner.

The four-party combine termed CEC Muhammad Abu Hena 'subservient' to the Awami League government and accused him of 'conspiring' to prolong AL rule by allowing rigging and manipulation of polls.

Its other demands are restructuring of the EC, correction and updating of 'faulty voters' list and voters' identity cards and inclusion of voters who have not been enlisted.

The alliance is going for the EC siege programme as part of its one-point oust government movement as well as to press its

demands for early national elections and resignation of the AL government.

BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) will march towards the EC office to lay siege to it in the morning.

Meanwhile, the government has imposed a 24-hour ban from 6 am today on any gathering, procession and demonstration in the areas around the EC office.

The areas are: Bangla Motor crossing to Mahakhali rail crossing, Western part of Bangla Motor link road to Sonarganga Road SAARC fountain crossing, East end of Panthapath to Green Road and Farmgate, Shyamoli cinema hall to Dhanmondi Road-27.

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Bangladesh sneak into semis

From Hasan Masood

KATHMANDU, Sept 29: Bangladesh made it to the 8th SAF Games football semi-finals with a solitary-goal win over Sri Lanka in their last Group B match at the Dasharath Stadium this evening.

Skipper Jewel Rana, scored the all-important match-winner through a penalty 33 minutes into the first half.

The outcome of tonight's match enabled Bangladesh to finish group runners-up behind Maldives with a win and a defeat in two matches.

Maldives, who trounced Sri Lanka 4-0 in their first match and then handed Bangladesh a 1-2 defeat, topped the group.

In the October 2 semi-finals, Bangladesh will either meet hosts Nepal or India from group B. Both Nepal and India have equal six points to their account. They will face each other for the group championship in their last group match at the same venue tomorrow.

It was yet another disappointing day for Bangladesh as

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Imam of mosque shot dead

By Staff Correspondent

A sixty-year-old imam of a mosque was shot dead in his flat at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar staff quarters in the early hours of yesterday.

The dead was identified as Maulana Muhammad Imamuddin, imam of Agargaon Jam-e-Mosjid, police and hospital sources said.

The miscreants numbering about four shot him in the mouth point-blank that resulted in his death on the spot.

Maulana Imamuddin along with his family members was staying in the staff quarters though he had gone on LPR since December, police said.

In the meantime, the FWD authorities appointed Faizur Rahman as imam of the mosque and allotted him the same flat where Imamuddin was staying.

Faizur could not perform his duty as imam of the mosque as local people did not accept him.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Young Entrepreneurs and Professionals Forum
and
The Daily Star

Seminar on

Starting Your Own Business: How to Get the Finance

In association with **The British Council**

The Daily Star and Young Entrepreneurs and Professionals Forum
Cordially invite you to attend the above seminar to be held
Today (30 September 1999)
at **The British Council Auditorium**
from 5:00PM to 8:00PM

Speakers from banks and other entrepreneurship development institutions will make brief presentations on how to finance your business. Our target group includes individuals who are or who want to be entrepreneurs and who need to finance their ventures through bank loans but don't know how to meet the loan requirements.

If you are interested to attend the Seminar, please register immediately (which is free but mandatory) by sending us your 1. Name 2. Organization
Fax: 886061/9564723 or Tel: 9882240/885214.
Email: yepf@email.com

We look forward to seeing you!

PlaNet to speed up growth of micro-credit thru' internet

By Inam Ahmed

A new international institution called PlaNet Finance will go into operation next spring to use the internet as a tool to revolutionise the micro-credit programmes worldwide.

"We will use internet to fight world poverty. The use of internet will speed up the growth of micro-credit. The new technology will link micro finance institutions with the international financial market," said Dr Jacques Attali, a leading European thinker and President

of PlaNet Finance. Dr Mohammad Yunus is a member of its board.

Attali was also founder President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development from 1991 to 1993.

Initially, PlaNet Finance will establish web sites of 7000 micro finance institutions (MFIs). These institutions will then be rated so that they can earn trust of the formal financial markets.

"Once we can rate the institu-

tions and earn trust of the market, micro credit will then become very much integrated with the mainstream banking. We will no more be isolated from the world market. PlaNet Finance will be an intermediary between the micro-finance institutions and the market sources," said Dr Attali in an interview with The Daily Star.

In association with banks, financial institutions and international donors, PlaNet Finance will evaluate and analyse

MFIs' credit applications and according to the results, participate in their funding.

It will also propose guarantees to international as well as local banks wishing to invest in the micro-finance sector.

"We will also provide direct credit lines to these micro-finance institutions from next spring with the support of the World Bank, European Union and private sponsors including private banks."

PlaNet Finance does not

look at micro credit as an isolated element to eradicate poverty.

There are at least four pillars to eradicate poverty. The first one is democracy. No development will take place without democracy, without the freedom of knowledge, information and the freedom to criticise and change government. The second element is efficient social services, third is education and the fourth element is

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