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CPA backs out, won't deposit money to govt exchequer

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, May 2: The Chittagong Port Authority today decided not to deposit Tk 150 crore to the government's exchequer from the port's fund.

Chairman of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) Commodore Golam Rabbani disclosed this while presiding over a coordination meeting of the leaders of various port users' organisations at Bandar Bhaban.

The chairman said the decision to deposit the money to the government fund was withdrawn after a fruitful discussion with Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria on April 30.

Various workers' associations have been waging movements demanding cancellation of the decision of the Finance Ministry, which ordered the CPA to deposit the money.

Case against 23 BNP MPs shifted to higher court

CHITTAGONG, May 2: A case filed in 1997 against 23 BNP leaders on charge of unleashing terrorism in the port city has been shifted to the Metropolitan Sessions Judge court, reports UNB.

The Metropolitan Magistrate Court today referred the case to the higher court after 11 of the accused, who were granted bail last month, appeared through their lawyers.

Twelve others who did not appear before the court have been summoned through a public notification.

The case was filed after two people were killed in clashes between supporters of government and opposition in the port city on November 27, 1997 during a visit of BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia.

Among the 23 accused are BNP leaders Col (ret'd) OI Ahmed, Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, Giasuddin Quader Chowdhury, Moshed Khan and Mir Nasir.

Felling of trees stopped

By Staff Correspondent

Authorities of the Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP) under the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) have cancelled plans to fell trees along the Kemal Ataturk Avenue after intervention from the 'highest authority'.

DCC sources said 'directive' See page 11 col 8

Our new numbers

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Prayer Timings

May 3

| | | |
|-----|-----------|----------|
| May | Sun Rises | Sun Sets |
| 3 | 5:22 am | 6:28 pm |
| 4 | 5:22 am | 6:28 pm |

Fajr

| | | |
|---------|-------|--------|
| Fajr | Azan | Jamaat |
| Zohr | 12-45 | 1-30 |
| Asr | 5-00 | 5-15 |
| Maghrib | 6-25 | 6-30 |
| Esha | 8-00 | 8-30 |

Source: Islamic Foundation



Divers look for survivors and bodies at Lalpur yesterday after two passenger launches caught in a storm sank in the Meghna River on Monday. —Star photo

Two launches sink: 43 drown, 200 missing

From Our Correspondent

NARSINGDI, May 02: At least 43 people including some women and children drowned and about 200 were missing as two passenger launches sank in the mighty Meghna amid a nor-wester yesterday afternoon.

Official sources said that the over-loaded launches carrying over 200 passengers each sank at about 4 pm yesterday within a distance of few kilometres from each other.

Forty-three bodies were recovered till this evening. Officials and local people said more bodies are trapped in the sunken launches.

The Brahmanbaria-bound launch, ML Bengal Bird, sank at Mirzacheri soon after it sailed from its stoppage at Maniknagar under Nabinaagar thana while Ashuganj-bound ML Khokon sank at Lalpur.

Witnesses and boatmen told The Daily Star that people from nearby villages rushed to the

spot with 20 to 30 country boats and rescued some passengers as the Bengal Bird sank.

Local people recovered 16 bodies till six pm today and said 30 people swam ashore. At least 90 of its passengers are still missing, they claimed.

Twenty-seven bodies from among the victims of ML Khokon were recovered till this evening. Over 100 passengers of the launch are still missing, local people claimed.

Identities of 14 of the victims could be known so far. Four of them are from Nabinaagar in Brahmanbaria district. They are: Jamahuddin, 26, son of Phul Mia, Narayan Saha, 60, Komol Shil, 30, and Morium Begum, 32, wife of Abdul Matin.

The ten others from Raipura in Narsingdi district are: Jamal Mia, 30, son of Ohid, Sharifa Begum, 35, wife of Abdul Matin, Noorjan Begum, 38, wife of Abdul Quasem, Jalal Mia, 24, son of

Shahid Mia, Shahiduddin, 60, and his son Billal Mia, 35, Rukia Begum, 30, and her son Harun, 8, Selim Mia, 28, son of Karim, and Suhel, 35, son of Sobhan.

Bodies of two minor girls could not be identified.

The district administration here said that Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) was informed about the disasters.

BIWTA Traffic Inspector Shamsul Alam said this evening that its salvage ship 'Rustam' started from Narayanganj but was yet to reach the spot.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina last night expressed her deep shock and sorrow at the death of launch passengers. She conveyed her sympathy to the members of the bereaved families and prayed for the peace of the departed souls.

Power from barge-mounted plants costing govt excessive tariff

By Sharier Khan

Power from private barge-mounted plants is costing the government crores in excessive tariff since they use imported fuel oil instead of gas.

Three such power plants, with a generation capacity of around 300 MW put together, have been operating since late 1998, and the government has paid them about Tk 500 crores in bills to date.

Had these plants used natural gas instead of fuel oil as raw material, the bill would have been no more than about Tk 400 crores, said a Power Development Board official, preferring not to be named.

All the barge-mounted plants were built on an emergency basis. The projects were initiated in late 1996 and expected to start operation from late 1997. However, the first project came into operation in late 1998 and the rest in 1999.

The plants are pledge-bound to have gas conversion system within one year of their inception of commercial production for the sake of lower tariff and environment.

The oil-fired power costs 5.5 cents per kilowatt hour, that is an unit, while the tariff would have gone down to 4.4 cents per unit had these plants used gas.

Of the plants, the 114 MW Khulna Power Company Ltd. — the country's first private power plant — did not install any gas conversion system in the plant as there is no gas supply in Khulna.

The two other plants — the Baghabari Westmont 90 MW plant and the Haripur NEPC — have not installed the conversion system citing various reasons.

PDB is purchasing power from Baghabari Westmont plant, not exceeding 50 per cent of its production capacity during the peak hours. In other times, it buys about 20 per cent.

"This is because Westmont failed to install the promised gas conversion system in the plant," said an official and attributed the failure to lack of funds.

The Haripur NEPC 100 MW barge-mounted plant is also not using gas as raw material on the ground that the gas available in

the area is not "pure."

NEPC does not have any gas purchase agreement with any authorities. The PDB has repeatedly suggested NEPC to purchase gas from Titas systems. But NEPC declined, saying Titas systems' gas was 'impure' or had mixed elements which were unsuitable for the Haripur plant.

"If it had a contract with Titas, Titas would have given NEPC the gas as per its specifications," the official added.

As a result, the PDB is declining to purchase all the power the plant produces despite pressure by NEPC which says it is the government who is at fault for being unable to provide gas.

"There are three barge-mounted plants and if we purchase maximum power from these plants as per the agreements, it will cost us around Tk 50 crore a month. But by installing gas conversion system in these plants, this monthly bill can come down to around Tk 40 crores," said a PDB official.

Meeting fails to set date for reopening CU

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, May 2: Chittagong University authority held a marathon meeting with the leaders of Chhatra Dal, Chhatra Shibir and syndicate members for 9 hours from 12 noon today to discuss on the ways to break the stalemate, campus sources said.

But the meeting that ended at 9 pm tonight at the CU conference room failed to set a date for reopening the university, sources said.

CU authorities in a message sent to the press, however, claimed that the agitating student organisations agreed to withdraw the siege programme from May 8. The administration would take steps as per the reports of the probe committees before that date, it added.

The other demands of the agitating students would be implemented in phases, the CU administration sources said.

Chittagong university remained closed for the last four months following a clash between Shibir and BCL activists on December 19 last year.

ISP hacked second time in 4 days

By M Shamsur Rahman

The domain of BRAC BD-Mail was hacked yesterday for the second time in four days, scaring the country's Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

BRAC BD-Mail Ltd., which had temporarily solved the problem by setting a new domain address, has virtually gone down to its knees asking the hackers what they want in exchange of its domain.

However, the unknown hackers have bluntly said its not money but 'transparency, unity and quality service from the ISPs' that has driven them into the act.

In an e-mail to all the ISPs, they said the domain will be returned if their conditions are met. The conditions are: BRAC BD-Mail shall have to acknowledge the fact that its domain was hacked and apologise to all their clients through an advertisement in the front page of every newspaper.

All the ISPs must come to a deal on client services, security and defaulter-client management etc. "ISP Forum has not done anything except eating and gossiping in the name of meeting. Do something useful. Besides, why do you take Tk 5000 from each ISP for a meet-

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Four killed, 250 injured as storms hit 5 districts

At least four people were killed and 250 injured as nor-wester lashed five districts Monday night, reports UNB.

Around 12,000 kutcha houses and standing crops on more than 15,000 hectares were damaged in Tangail, Natore, Dinajpur, Sirajganj and Rajshahi districts.

Power supply was snapped in the affected areas as electric poles were uprooted. Two of the deaths were reported from Tangail and one each from Sirajganj and Dinajpur.

Khandaker Mahmudul Amin alias Tota Mia 75, and Basanti Rani 80 of Phulki village in Basal thana died under the collapsed house in Tangail. Mansur Ali, 48 of village Kalkapur in Kazipur upazila of Sirajganj also died in house collapse. A young man died by lightning in Dinajpur could not be identified.

In Tangail the nor-wester swept over 5 thanas of the district in which at least 20 people were injured.

Reports from affected areas said more than 2000 dwelling houses and educational institutions were damaged. IRRI-Boro paddy and jute plants on a large area were damaged. The affected upazilas are Basal, Kallhati, Bhuapur, Ghatail and Sadar.

Eight of the injured were admitted to Tangail General Hospital.

In Sirajganj, the worst affected areas are Kazipur, Tarash, Belkuchi, Rayganj and Kamarkhand upazila where at least 15 people were injured.

Around 1,000 house and educational institutions were damaged, huge number of trees and electric poles in many places uprooted and standing crops of a vast track of land were damaged by the storm.

In Natore, at least 100 people

were injured and over 5,000 kutcha houses damaged in the nor-wester that lashed Lalpur, Shingra and Gurudaspur upazilas.

The two-hour long storm started at about 6 pm at a speed of 80-100 kmph, damaging standing crops on about 7,000 hectares. A large number of trees were also uprooted.

Power supply in the affected areas was snapped as electric poles were uprooted. The power supply could not be restored till writing of this report last night.

In Dinajpur, an unidentified man was killed by lightning and 20 others were injured when the storm accompanied by hailstorm lashed the district at a speed of 100 km per hour.

Our Rajshahi Correspondent reports, at least 100 people were injured and more than 1000 houses damaged as nor-wester lashed Rajshahi city and its adjoining areas on Monday.

1996 share scam cases SC grants leave to appeal against HC verdict

By Staff Correspondent

The Supreme Court yesterday granted leave to appeal against the High Court judgement regarding the 12 accused in the 1996 share market scam cases.

The 12 included Runa Alam of SES company who was acquitted by the High Court in its judgements delivered in June last year.

A Full Bench Appellate Division of the Supreme Court led by Chief Justice Latifur Rahman granted the leave against the HC judgements.

The 11 others are Abu Tayeb, Rakibur Rahman and ASM Sahidul Haque Bulbul of Chittagong Cement Clinker Imtiaz Husain of Imtiaz Husain & Company, Rizwan Bin

Farouk of First Capital Securities, Mustaque Ahmed Sadeque, Sharif Ataur Rahman, Syed Mahub Murshed, Hemayet Uddin Ahmed and Ahmed Iqbal Hassan of HMMS and Associates and Nurunnabi of Rupon Oil and Feeds.

The decision of the Appellate Division followed criminal petitions for leave to appeal by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), challenging the High Court judgements.

The High Court had quashed proceedings against Runa Alam, Chief Executive Officer of SES Company and MKM Mohiuddin of First Capital Securities Ltd and directed transfer of five other share scam cases to a

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Death reference Order today for inclusion of documents

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangbandhu murder case will appear in the cause list of the High Court today for hearing and order on the petitions filed by Maj (Ret'd) Bazul Huda, one of the convicts in then case.

A Division Bench of the High Court comprising Justice M Ruhul Amin and Justice ABM Khairul Huq passed the orders when Special Public Prosecutor Serajul Haq mentioned the death reference in the case yesterday.

During the 20 minute proceedings, Bazul Huda's counsel Advocate Mahbubur Rahman MP drew the attention of the court to his pending petitions.

One of the petitions is for inclusion of certain documents on Huda's service records and other related documents.

The other is for giving permission to examine the case records to prepare a 'complete list of papers' as certain documents were not included in the paper book earlier.

Khaleda took huge kickback: PM

By Staff Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, May 2: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has snubbed her predecessors, Khaleda Zia and H. M. Ershad, for dubbing her government "corrupt."

They don't deserve to talk about corruption since both of them are facing corruption charges while in office, she told a huge public meeting at Osmani Stadium here on Monday.

Deposed president Ershad has been found guilty in more than one corruption cases, the prime minister said. "Ershad is known worldwide for massive corruption and misuse."

Responding to BNP chief's allegation that the government resorted to corruption in the purchase of MIG-29s, Hasina said Khaleda took huge kickback from a foreign company to buy Airbus during her rule.

The Khaleda government purchased Airbus for 150 million US dollars whereas the actual price was 130 million US dollars, she alleged.

"Where did the 20 million dollars go? Who has stolen the money? You (Khaleda) have taken a huge amount in com-

plaint against 5 ministers: Report shortly

By Staff Correspondent

Motijheel police in the city is likely to submit the final report in connection with the complaint against five ministers and an Awami League leader in a day or two, police sources said yesterday.

Statements of more than 150 people of Motijheel and adjacent areas have been recorded during investigation, the sources said. The people said that they did not feel scared by the 'stick procession' led by the ministers, the sources said.

Golam Kibria, a Supreme Court lawyer, filed a complaint on April 25, accusing five ministers and an AL leader for making remarks against higher court judges in connection with the death reference in the Bangbandhu murder case and for terrorising people by bringing out a 'stick procession'.

The accused are Forest and Environment Minister Sajeda Chowdhury, Foreign Minister

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Student in custody for 7 yrs: Rule issued on govt

By Staff Correspondent

The High Court yesterday issued rule upon the government to show cause why a Madrasah student had been kept in custody for long seven years without any specific case against him, reports UNB.

A division bench comprising Justice Mohammad Golam Rabbani and Justice Latifur Rahman issued the rule and directed the government to produce the boy before the court at 10:30 am on May 22.

The order came upon a writ petition filed and moved by Barrister Abdur Razzak on a report published in the Daily Ittefaq on May 1.

The report said that Madrasah student Anwar Hossain alias Alamgir was arrested by Feni police 7 years ago when he was a student of class VI. Since then he had been kept in custody without any case against him.

Barrister Razzak challenged the detention of Anwar.

The court in its rule and order asked the Home Secretary, DIG prison and DC Feni to show cause why detained Anwar Hossain should not be brought before the court so as to satisfy that the boy is not detained or kept in custody without any lawful authority.

Opposition calls hartal in Ctg protesting mayor's oath-taking

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, May 2: The All Party Action Committee of the four opposition parties called a dawn-to-dusk hartal in greater Chittagong on May 4 to protest the swearing in of the mayor and commissioners elected in January 3 Chittagong City Corporation election, party sources said.

The swearing in ceremony was held in Dhaka today.

The BNP, JP, Jamaat and IOJ boycotted the January 3 CCC election and staged agitation to resist the polls.

Local Government Minister Zillur Rahman administered the oath to newly elected Chittagong City Corporation Mayor ABM Mahiuddin Chowdhury and 53 ward commissioners, Labour and Employment

Minister MA Mannan, Civil Aviation, Tourism and Public Works Minister Mosharraf Hossain were present in the swearing in ceremony at Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) auditorium at Agargaon.

Ahah ABM Mahiuddin Chowdhury was re-elected on January 3 as he was the lone contestant for the post.

The 13 women ward commissioners who took oath are: Ferdous Begum, Jobaba Nabilis Khan, Hasina Jafar, Shahinaj Malik, Shaheda Khasem, Mamtaz Khan, Nilufar Rahman, Rehana Begum (Rani), Rabeya Rahman, Noor Jahan, Afroza Kalam, Anzali Kunda, and Shahanur Begum.

Other ward commissioners who also took oath are: Mohammad Jafar Alam Chowdhury and 53 ward commissioners. See Page 12 Col 3

Photojournalist beaten up by police at DU

By DU Correspondent

A photo journalist of Daily Manabzamin was injured when police allegedly barred journalists from taking snaps while female students of Bangladesh-Kuwait Moitry Hall of Dhaka University were staging a demonstration in front of the Vice Chancellor's residence on the campus protesting acute water shortage at the hall.

Kazi Borhan Ahmed was injured when a policeman reportedly hit him on the face with walkie-talkie.

He was treated at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Residents of the hall went to the VC's residence in a procession from their hall.

Police put up a barricade in front of VC's residence. The students staged a demonstration and pressed Vice Chancellor to visit their hall. The VC visited the hall and asked the authorities to solve the problem immediately, sources on the campus said.



Students of Bangladesh-Kuwait Moitree (friendship) Hall of Dhaka University lay siege to the vice-chancellor's residence yesterday, demanding adequate power and water supply. The blood-stained press photographer of daily Manabzamin Kazi Borhan after police beat him (inset). —Star photo