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Privatisation Bill passed

Parliament yesterday passed three bills, including the much expected Privatisation Bill-2000, to eliminate legal obstacles to sell out the losing state-owned enterprises, reports UMB.

Under the new law, a Privatisation Commission will be formed with the authority to take independent decision while selling and handing over a government-owned mill or factory to the private entrepreneurs.

Provisions have also been incorporated in the new law to deal with the private owners, who after purchasing a mill or factory, will not comply with the terms and conditions of privatisation.

Education Minister A S H K Sadiq, who is in-charge of parliamentary affairs of the Cabinet Division, moved the Bill in the House. It was later passed by voice vote.

The dacoits numbering about 10 were in a boggy of the train in the guise of passengers. When the train reached at a place between Kankonhat and Lalitnagar, they swooped on the passengers of the boggy, beat them up and looted cash and other belongings, GRP sources said.

At least 30 passengers were injured in the attack.

The dacoits got down from the slowly moving train near Lalitnagar Station.

The train was running from Rajshahi to Chapainabganj. See page 12 col 1

Dhaka plans land reclamation in the Bay

221 hectares of cropland deplete a day

By Reaz Ahmad

Bangladesh is seeking foreign assistance for land reclamation in the Bay of Bengal in the wake of fast depletion of agriculture land in the country, official sources said.

As farmlands are shrinking by an astounding rate of one million hectares per decade, the government finds land reclamation the only effective way to face the emerging problem of food insecurity.

As a stopgap 'land austerity' measure, the government also adopted a policy to acquire less land for construction of administrative buildings at district and thana levels.

Agriculture Minister Motta Chowdhury told the Daily Star yesterday that the government was seeking foreign aid and investment for land reclamation in the Bay because "days are ahead when our food production would decrease due to land scarcity despite increased pro-

ductivity per hectare." "Every day we're losing 221 hectares of cropland owing to industrialisation, urbanisation and river erosion," the minister said.

However, she is hopeful about emergence of a huge chunk of fertile land from deep down the sea and "that may be as big as Bangladesh is." "We've to explore the possibility and we need money for reclamation from the donor countries."

Singapore reclaimed a vast land area over the last one decade. UAE, Kuwait and the Philippines also benefited immensely from land reclamation in recent past, the sources said.

Anticipating the looming danger of land scarcity, Bangladesh first approached for Dutch assistance back in 1974 for land reclamation. Later on, Dhaka again tried to hammer on the reclamation issue during 1996 Food Summit

in Rome. But never before had Bangladesh been so desperate for land reclamation. The desperation can be put down to colossal loss of prime agricultural lands due to industrialisation and urbanisation.

The just drafted Land Use Policy of the government prohibits use of prime agricultural land for purposes other than farming. The draft policy that is awaiting cabinet approval follows concern over decrease of per capita arable land, which has come down to 0.18 acre from 0.30 acre in 1974.

The policy also suggests for vertical expansion instead of horizontal advancement in construction of houses, hospitals, educational institutions and other structures to ensure best possible use of scarce land.

According to official statistics, the area of cropland was See page 11 col 7



Cameroon's soccer legend Roger Milla poses in front of the South African delegation stand yesterday in Zurich. Milla is lobbying in favour of the South African bid to host the 2006 World Cup. The country hosting the 2006 FIFA soccer World Cup will be designated today in Zurich by the FIFA executive committee. — AFP photo

'Definition' of defaulters BB succumbs to pressure to change rules

By Imran Ahmed

As pressure on the central bank mounted to relax the present bar on giving loans to defaulters, Bangladesh Bank has tried to safeguard the banks by suggesting some changes in the rules.

According to sources concerned, the finance ministry was under tremendous pressure from a vested group to change the definition of a defaulter. The group felt that Section 5 of the Bank Company Act should be changed to allow giving loans to companies related to a defaulting company or person.

Currently, if a company or

person becomes a defaulter, other companies related to the company or person are also denied fresh loans.

But the vested business group felt that due to this rule, many good companies are denied funds just because one company related to them has defaulted loans. This condition, they claimed, is also making others sick.

The business group first expressed the concern when the central bank started cracking down on defaulters in 1997 and many big business groups were See page 11 col 4

She knows magic!

By Nazmul Ashraf

The prime minister knows magic! She can change a man into woman or vice versa!

Sounds incredible? Well, no longer will it be so if you go by the words of a ruling party lawmaker.

Shamsul Haq, an elderly lawmaker in parliament yesterday described Sheikh Hasina as a magician in a metaphorical expression of her performance as head of the government.

"People believe she can do magic. She can turn a man into woman and a woman into man," Haq said, evoking laughter in an otherwise dull proceedings.

The comment brought in the light Haq's intention to get the prime minister convinced of his demand for a pay hike for the teachers of non-government primary schools.

Unaware of the fact that the government had already raised See page 11 col 8

Alleged mugger beaten to death, blacksmith murdered

By Staff Correspondent

Two persons were killed in two separate incidents in the city yesterday.

An alleged mugger died after mass beating while a blacksmith was murdered by unidentified people, said police and hospital sources.

A 25-year-old alleged mugger who was mercilessly beaten up Tuesday night, died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday morning.

The victim along with two others had intercepted an auto-rickshaw near the Ramna Police Station at 8:45 pm Tuesday night. When the passengers of the rickshaw started screaming same pedestrians to the spot and started beating the gang.

Two of the gang members, however, managed to flee. Binol Kumer Roy, a blacksmith, was murdered by some unidentified assailants. His body was left on the street in front of WAPDA Guest House in Demra Tuesday night. Police recovered the body in the early hours Wednesday.

Wife of the victim filed a case but none was arrested.

Muggers stab 2 traders, take away Tk 40000

By Staff Correspondent

Muggers stabbed two traders and took away Tk 40,000 from them near the Sayedabad footover bridge at about 3:30 p.m. yesterday.

Ashraf and Abdur Rahman, 30 and 42 respectively, brought jackfruits from Tangail and sold those in the city. The incident took place when the traders were returning home after collecting their money from the merchants, hospital sources quoted the victims as saying.

Ashraf was stabbed in both hands while Abdur Rahman got stabbed in the right. Both the victims were admitted to the DMCH yesterday afternoon.

Police said no case was registered and none was arrested.

In another incident, miscreants cut off the tendons of an auto-rickshaw driver and left him near the under construction Buriganga bridge at Babubazar, said police and hospital sources.

Police rescued the victim identified as Mizanur Rahman from near the bridge at about 11:30 p.m. on Tuesday and took him to the DMCH.

BIMSTEC to launch its economic forum today

By M Anwarul Haq

A BIMSTEC Economic Forum is due to be launched at the 3rd ministerial meeting of the five-member regional organisation in Delhi today.

A four-member team led by State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury was scheduled to leave Dhaka last night for the Indian capital to attend the meeting.

The delegation includes former president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry M A Kasem. He is likely to be nominated to represent Bangladesh in the new Economic Forum which is supposed to work in tandem with both government and private sectors to promote trade and investment among the member countries. The body is also ex-

pected to identify impediments to regional trade and find ways to boost it.

The Economic Forum would be the launching pad for greater economic and commercial co-operation among the five-member countries of BIMSTEC, launched in Bangkok on June 6, 1997. The members are Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

The third ministerial meeting of BIMSTEC will launch the Economic Forum and address the issues of mobilising greater private sector investment in the region. It will discuss several aspects of trade, investment and tourism. Abul Hasan Chowdhury told the Daily Star. Chowdhury is the outgoing See page 11 col 7

Protest rally 'Act fast to save Buriganga'

By Staff Correspondent

Representatives of different NGOs, a political leader and residents of the city's Postogola and Shyampur urged the government yesterday to act fast to save the Buriganga from encroachment.

They condemned the encroachment on the lifeline of the capital.

POROSH, an NGO working for the conservation of environment, organised the rally following a report published in the Daily Star on Tuesday that the Senakalyan Sangstha and others were filling up several acres in the Buriganga.

Following the rally, the protesters took out a procession carrying banners and walked up to the middle of the Buriganga Bridge.

The speakers at the rally said although the government has a policy and proper law to protect the river from encroachment, the laws are not being implemented.

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Bangalees are a mixed up race. We are self righteous regarding others yet quite liberal about our own vices. This week's cover story of the Star Weekend Magazine delves into the mind of the idiosyncratic Bangalees.

Inside Today

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Autonomy plan for Kashmir

Farooq Abdullah Showing Muscle to Delhi

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Business

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Prayer Timings

July	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
July 6		6-50pm
July 7	5-16am	

Prayer Timings

July 7	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-45
Zohr	1-00	1-20
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-50	6-55
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Bushra's father tells newsmen The killers came through a door, not window

By Staff Correspondent

Serajul Islam, father of slain college student Bushra Islam Phool, yesterday brushed aside the idea that the killers of his daughter entered her bedroom through the window.

The killers came through the door that connects Phool's room with the drawing room, said Islam who returned from the US yesterday.

Phool, 18, the only daughter of retired police official Serajul Islam, was killed by unidentified persons at their residence at DIT Road, Hajipara, in the city late Saturday night.

Islam who has experience of working with the CID showed this correspondent the broken part of the window of his daughter's room and asked, "Is it possible for a grown up man to enter the room through that small hole?"

About his brother-in-law Abdul Kader, who started living in that house after the death of his step brother, Islam said, "I do not have any personal problem with him, but the conflicts between us cannot be ignored."

Kader is a local leader of the ruling party.

Islam avoided a direct reply when asked whether he had any dispute with Kader regarding the house. "Relevant documents

are available and one can easily ascertain the truth if these are scrutinised properly," he said.

Meanwhile, the Metropolitan Court of Sessions (MCS) yesterday placed on a three-day remand those arrested on suspicion in connection with the killing of Phool.

Detective Branch of Police which investigating the murder yesterday prayed to the MCS for remand since the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court had earlier rejected its remand prayer on Tuesday.

The CMM's Court had rejected the remand prayer on the ground that the accused were detained by police as suspects in the murder under Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

The three arrested — Shawkat Ahmed Ruhul, brother-in-law of Abdul Kader; Sufia Begum, domestic help and Mintoo, an alleged criminal in the area — might have knowledge about the murder, DB said in its remand prayer See page 11 col 6

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Frequent power disruptions make life miserable

By Staff Correspondent

The country's power situation worsened further yesterday due to high demand fuelled by hot and humid weather.

The city dwellers are facing acute shortage of water due to frequent power disruptions. "We can't even pump water from basement tank due to frequent power failures," a resident at the New Elephant Road said. "Life has become miserable as electricity goes off several

times for several hours every day."

Situation was almost similar in Uttara where electricity went off as many as three times in the morning alone, said another resident of the area.

Production in mills and factories also suffered tremendously. Large number of the city areas plunged into darkness last night due to power outage. The Daily Star office at Kawran

Bazar also faced power failure five times yesterday.

Sabnam Rahman, a housewife at Tongi residential area, told the Daily Star over telephone that electricity supply failed four to five times in the whole area since evening.

A Mohammadpur resident said that power failure lasts at least for three hours every day in his area. Residents of Mug-

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Sultry weather due to low in Bay

By Staff Correspondent

Rain is not likely to come down to cool down the hot and humid weather before a couple of days, meteorological department said yesterday.

A low, which formed in the west central Bay of Bengal near the Andhra coast of India and a typhoon brewing up in the southwestern Pacific, brought the sudden change in weather for the past few days.

The low, which was formed on Tuesday, sucked away the

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