



## PM lays foundation of Comilla EPZ today

COMILLA, July 14: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will lay the foundation of Comilla Export Processing Zone tomorrow, reports UNB.

Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed, Commerce Minister Abdul Jalil, Law Minister Abdul Matin Khasru, Chairman of the Public Administration Reforms Commission, ATM Shamsul Huq, Whip Mujibur Huq and local MPs will attend the function.

The project was approved by ECNEC in a meeting in May 1999 after submitting a Project Concept Paper (PCP) in February the same year.

To establish the country's third EPZ, some 133 acres of fallow land, belonging to Comilla Airport, were handed over to the BEPZA while 125 acres acquired from private landowners.

Work for infrastructural development began in April last year with an estimated cost of Tk 83.56 crore and the first-phase area is expected to be completed in 2001, officials said.

Some 208 industrial plots will be set up in the EPZ.

The authorities hope the EPZ will create employment opportunity for 40,500 people. Besides, goods worth Tk 550 crore would be exported from the Comilla EPZ every year, 25 per cent (Tk 148 crore) of which would be earned as VAT.

"On the other hand, the BEPZA would earn Tk 9.5 crore in direct income every year from the project in terms of land rent and service charge," a project official told the news agency.

The Comilla Airport will be modernised to facilitate air traffic for the investors and easy transportation of export items.

## Bus service on Dhaka-Sylhet route remains suspended

From Staff Correspondent  
SYLHET, July 14: Bus service on Dhaka-Sylhet highway remained suspended for the seventh day today due to strike by transport workers.

The transport workers went on strike for an indefinite period since Saturday morning protesting collection of illegal toll from the vehicles by an organised gang at Saidabad terminal in Dhaka and assault on the transport workers there, sources said.

Office bearers of the Sylhet District Road Transport Workers Union alleged that some innocent transport workers were manhandled by the criminals at Saidabad terminal during the last few months.

The officials of the union said, several complaints were lodged in this connection with the Transport Owners Association and Terminal Workers' Committee but the authorities concerned did not take action against any of the accused.

No measures have yet been taken to stop such unwanted activities, officials of the union alleged further.

A source, however, said a meeting is likely to be held tomorrow to settle the issue.

## Inside Today

### Article

#### Gas: A question of prioritisation

By Syed Muhammad Hussain  
Page 4

### Supplement

One page supplement on the foundation laying ceremony of Comilla EPZ on Page 10

### Business

Bangladesh to face problems in RMG export: CPD study  
US, Vietnam sign landmark market opening pact  
Pages 8 & 9

July	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
July 15		6.49 pm
July 16	5:21 am	

### Prayer Timings

July 15		
Fajr	4:15	4:45
Zohr	12:45	1:30
Asr	5:00	5:15
Maghrib	6:55	6:58
Esha	8:15	8:45

Source: Islamic Foundation

## AIDS will orphan 44m children by 2010

DURBAN, South Africa, July 14: Tens of millions of children will be orphaned by AIDS over the next decade, creating an unprecedented humanitarian tragedy that will linger for decades, according to new estimates published yesterday, reports AFP.

A US study released at the 13th International AIDS Conference here predicted that by 2010, there will be 44 million children aged under 15 who will have lost one or both parents from AIDS or other causes.

"The HIV/AIDS pandemic is producing orphans on a scale unrivaled in world history," said the report, compiled by the US Agency for International Development (USAID). "Our experience with orphaning as a social problem is limited. Historically, large-scale orphaning has been a sporadic, short-term problem caused by war, famine or disease."

"AIDS has transformed it into a long-term chronic problem that will extend through the first third of this century." The overwhelming majority of the orphans will be in sub-Saharan Africa, which for the past two years has seen a catastrophic increase in HIV infection.

In at least eight countries in this region, between 20 and 35 percent of children under 15 have lost one or both parents.

The USAID figures suggest the AIDS orphan crisis may be far worse than an estimate issued less than a month ago by the UN agency UNAIDS.

UNAIDS put the current number of orphans at 13.2 million globally, whereas USAID put the 2000 tally at 34.6 million in 34 developing countries. The USAID definition includes parental deaths from causes other than AIDS, although the disease is by far the biggest single killer. Neither of these sets of figures includes HIV-positive infants and children.

John Williamson, co-author of the USAID report, told a press conference that AIDS was "changing the social landscape" in some countries.

The death of parents is a risk to children's health, safety and survival, exposing them to psychological trauma, abuse, exploitation and malnutrition. The burden especially falls on older children, who have to abandon their schooling in order to take care of their brothers and sisters.

Another report says, the world's pharmaceutical indus-

try, cast as the villain at the AIDS Conference here because of its high AIDS drug prices, takes in some 400 billion dollars a year, far more than the revenue of many developing countries.

The industry's sales to Africa, home to more than 70 percent of the world's 34.3 million HIV-sufferers, represent only 1.3 percent of its income, or 3.5 billion dollars, against 100 billion in Europe and 169 billion in North America, according to figures given by Richard Laing of the University of Boston in Massachusetts.

The companies often justify high prices by the expense of their research and development, but not all put a huge proportion of their income into R and D.

Merck, whose sales last year were worth 32 billion dollars, spent just 6.3 percent of that amount on R and D, whereas Novartis, with identical sales, spent twice that proportion—13.1 per cent, according to US Securities and Exchange Commission figures.

They show that the companies spending the most on R and D were Amgen (27 percent of sales), Genentech (35 per cent) and Biogen (35.6 per cent).

## Discord over contesting polls alone Top JP leaders threaten to desert Ershad

By Rezaul Karim

Jatiya Party led by H M Ershad is facing a serious crisis as majority of its senior leaders have opposed the party's apparent move to break away from the BNP-led four-party opposition alliance and participate in the next parliamentary polls alone, party sources said.

Most of the JP Presidium members, MPs and senior leaders of the central executive committee of the party have threatened Ershad to desert him if he decides to back out from the combine and split it, the sources pointed out.

More than 30 top leaders of the party met Ershad on Tuesday night to know his attitude towards the alliance and his election strategy. During the meeting that continued till 1.30 am, many of the leaders had hot exchange of words with Ershad, threatening to desert him, an aide to Ershad told this correspondent. "It was a demonstration by top leaders before the party chief," he added.

Party insiders said the July 8-9 council session of the party has further intensified conflict within it as a section of party men favoured contesting the next polls alone. But most of the Presidium members and MPs want to participate in the election under an electoral alliance led by BNP.

The aide said at Tuesday night's meeting, the leaders present strongly protested holding of the council session without their participation.

They also briefed Ershad on the overall political situation, future perspectives, the party's real position and various other issues.

The leaders argued that JP would be greatly benefited even if it can contest from 60 constituencies, remaining in the alliance. It would not be possible for the party to win even 30 seats if it contests alone, they said.

But Ershad reportedly dis-

See page 11 col 8

## Home minister tells rally in Ctg Jamaat-Shibir politics should be banned

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, July 14: Protests continued against the incident that left eight people, including six BCL activists killed here on Wednesday.

Chittagong city unit of Awami League organised a protest rally at Laldighi maidan this afternoon which was addressed, among others, by Home Minister Mohammad Nasim.

Addressing the rally the home minister ordered the police to start combing operation here like south-western region to nab terrorists and recover illegal arms.

He asked the police administration to arrest the killers and their masterminds immediately.

The home minister categorically said that all measures would be taken to root out terrorism.

UNB adds: Nasim accused Jamaat-Shibir axis of killing the eight and expressed the opinion that their politics should be banned.

He said the defeated forces of 1971 are again indulging in acts of terrorism with all motives.

Politics of these evil forces should not be allowed in the country, Bangabandhu had banned their politics, but Zia Ershad and Khaleda rehabilitated them in politics," Nasim said.

"The killers of 1971 and anti-liberation forces will be rooted out from the soil of Bangladesh," the minister warned.

Minister for Public Works, Housing and Civil Aviation Engineer Mosharraf Hossain,

See page 11 col 8

## BNP rules out possibility of joint rally, procession on July 25

By Staff Correspondent

BNP yesterday ruled out the possibility of holding a joint rally and mass procession in the city on July 25 and decided that the alliance partners would stage demonstrations and bring out mass processions separately.

Sources said there was a move by the Central Liaison Committee to hold the programme jointly, but BNP has denied to hold it in a single platform following Jatiya Party's apparent move to break the alliance and participate in next general election alone.

As part of the programme, the BNP will hold a public meeting on July 25 at Paltan Maidan at 4 pm where BNP Chairperson and leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia will address.

She will also lead a mass procession to protest various issues including deterioration of law and order, politicisation of administration and election commission and to press the demands for cancellation of the Zila Parishad Act and resignation of the government.

Other component parties of the alliance are yet to finalise their meeting venue, sources said.

## Ctg killing Jamaat refutes charges, demands judicial probe

By Staff Correspondent

Jamaat-e-Islami has refuted the allegation of its involvement in Wednesday's killings in Chittagong and demanded a judicial inquiry into the incident.

Eight persons including six activists of the ruling Awami League's student front Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) were gunned down by unidentified assailants.

Addressing a hurriedly called press conference at the Jamaat central office in the city yesterday, party Secretary General Matiuur Rahman Nizami said the AL government

See page 11 col 5

## 5 ISPs to start using V-Sats next month at much cheaper rate

By Inam Ahmed and Sharier Khan

Internet users in Bangladesh would be finally enjoying the benefit of an end to the V-Sat monopoly of Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) as five leading Internet Service Providers (ISPs) would start using V-Sat at a much cheaper rate within a month.

At user level, this would mean a sharp cut in Internet service rates. Some 35,000 Internet users in Bangladesh pay more tariff per minute than that in any other country.

"We expect that per minute tariff would be cut by at least 50 poisa," said an official of an ISP that has more than 2,500 users. The rates charged by ISPs are between Tk one and Tk two now. Only Grameen Cybernet offers service at 25 poisa per

minute on Friday nights. The government withdrew BTTB's monopoly right on V-Sat in February last. According to officials of some ISPs based in Dhaka, at least five ISPs have unilaterally cancelled their five-year contracts with the T&T department to avail the benefit of the withdrawal. They would start using V-Sats next month at one fourth of the rent charged by BTTB.

But, due to contractual obligations which compel the ISPs to use V-Sats through BTTB for a monthly charge of 10,000 US dollars, those could not immediately reap the benefit of the government decision.

"Only the new ISPs having no such contractual obligation would reap the benefit of the

withdrawal," said an official of a leading ISP requesting anonymity. "In fact the decision left the existing ISPs confused about their next course of action."

"When we contacted BTTB for some specific guidelines, its officials said the decision will be official only when it will be gazetted. However they asked us to contact the P & T Ministry."

The ministry suggested us to cancel the contract and negotiate on our own the V-Sat rental with Singapore-based service providers," the official added.

V-Sat (Very Small Aperture) is used by the ISPs to transmit data to and from Singapore, from where Bangladesh Internet users can

See page 11 col 7



**Another type of onslaught on city roads:** Irresponsible developers, in total disregard of law, city traffic and needs of the pedestrians, take possession of city roads while constructing commercial buildings. Photo shows a developer at New Elephant Road near Science Laboratory occupying the footpath and a portion of the street with building materials, causing traffic problem. It also exposes pedestrians to great risk as they are forced to walk on the street. We urge the authorities concerned to urgently look into the matter before any accident occurs.

— Star photo by Sheikh Enamul Huq

## Two trawlers sink in Bay: 23 fishermen rescued

BARISAL, July 14: Twenty-three fishermen were rescued from the Bay of Bengal after their trawlers sank in high waves on Thursday, reports BSS.

Police said the trawlers — FB Habib and FB Tin Tara sank in the Bay, 25 km from Kuakata. Another Trawler FB Al-Amin rescued the fishermen nearly 24 hours after the incident.

## Newsprint prices swelling Acute crisis for newspapers & publishing houses

By Shehab Ahmed

Newsprint prices have been rising over the past six months, making it difficult for newspapers and publishing industries to cope with the situation.

Newsprint of Khulna Newsprint Mill (KNM) now sells at Tk 30,800 per tonne in the city market.

Marker sources said the ex-mill price of KNM newsprint has been raised to Tk 29,800 from Tk 25,000 per tonne. The

price of imported newsprint also rose to Tk 53,300 - Tk 55,000 from Tk 34,000, depending on quality, they said yesterday.

They said the crisis is due to a slump in production in KNM, run by Bangladesh Chemical Corporation (BCC), creating an opportunity for importers to raise the prices.

But importers said that they did not raise the prices on their

own. Newsprint price rose to 1040 dollars per tonne (C&F Chittagong) in June from 650 dollars in December, they claimed.

Fluctuation in Dollar-Taka value and imposition of 5 per cent supplementary duty in February also added to the price rise in retail market, they added.

The crisis began to build up. See page 11 col 7

## Camelia BEAUTY SOAP

### The Beauty Bath Soap for the Whole Family

Camelia offers an unique Beauty Bath soap with exciting new fragrances.

- Jasmine (White)
- Bouquet (Pink)
- Lemon (Yellow)
- Peach (Peach)
- Spring Garden (Green)

Your whole family will love to use

**Camelia**  
a Family Soap

Marks & Allys Ltd.