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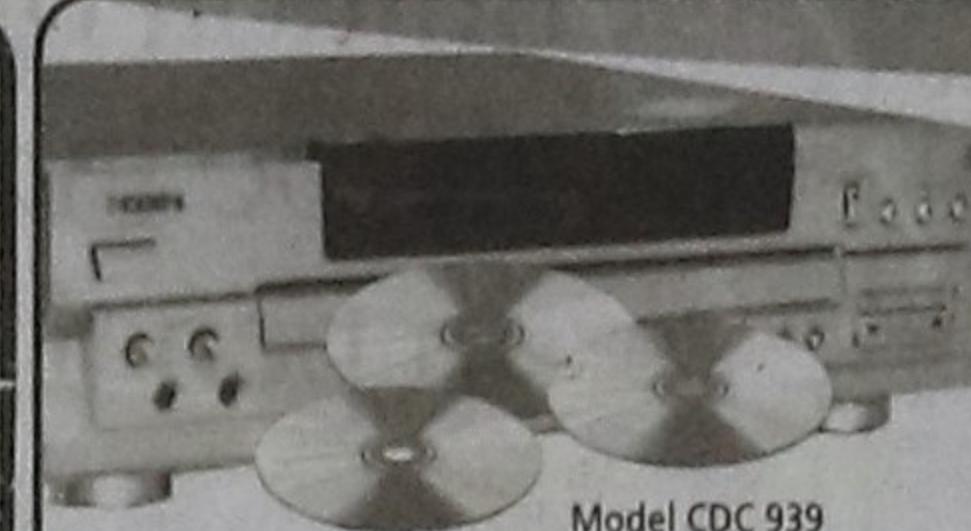
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PM to answer people's questions on radio today

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will directly reply to questions from people of all walks of life through Bangladesh Betar today, report agencies.

"She will answer questions on important national issues, to be broadcast from all centres of Betar simultaneously," State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed told a press conference at the Jatiya Betar Bhawan in the capital yesterday.

Bangladesh Television (BTV) and Ekushey Television (ETV) will also live telecast the programme, titled "People's Question: Prime Minister's Answer," scheduled to be aired at 8:30 pm today.

The contact telephone numbers are: 8128244, 8128245, 8128246, 8128247, 8128248 and 8128249.

11 of an Islamic group held in Barisal

From Staff Correspondent
BARISAL, Sept 19: Police arrested 11 activists of an Islamic group, Hizbut Tawhid, from Agarpura village under Baganjan thana of the district yesterday afternoon.

The arrested were identified as Soharab Hossain, 45, Mohammad Saheen, 22, Abu Bakar, 18, Anwar Hossain, 55, Eskander Ali, 57, Ismail Khan, 32, Sanaullah Nuri, 35, Tausiful Islam, 25, Delwar Hossain, 36, Abdul Mannan Mir, 45 and Azizul Islam, 20.

Kuwaiti PM's special envoy calls on Hasina

A special envoy of the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Kuwait here yesterday handed over a message of goodwill to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, reports UNB.

The envoy, Commerce and Social Affairs Minister of Kuwait Abdul Wahab Al Wazzan, called on the Prime Minister at her office and discussed bilateral matters with her.

He said they are eagerly waiting for her visit to Kuwait that would consolidate further the existing friendly relations between the two countries.

The Prime Minister said Kuwait is a good friend of Bangladesh and hoped that the friendly relations between the two countries would be expanded further in future.

Labour minister's son, brother-in-law sued under PSA

From Our Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Sept 19: A case was filed with the Chittagong CM's Court against nine people including the son and brother-in-law of Labour and Employment Minister for forcibly occupying land here.

The court ordered the thana concerned to take action under Public Safety Act.

The Assistant General Secretary of Shujan Abasik Kalyan Samity Md. Hossain filed the case with the court of Metropolitan Magistrate Golam Kibria.

The plaintiff in the case alleged that the accused including Labour Minister M A Mannan's son Abdul Latif Tups and his brother-in-law Md. Musa Zakir illegally occupied some half acre of land worth around Tk. 1.5 lakh belonging to him at Shujan Abasik Elaka at Chandmari Road under Khulshi Thana.

He also alleged that the accused with the help of local musclemen erected a thatched house on his land.

The court directed Khulshi Thana to take immediate action under PSA after investigation.



Xiaomin Chen of China performs during the women's 63kg weightlifting competition at Sydney yesterday. Chen won the gold medal and set new world and Olympic records.

- AFP photo



Amanda Phillips of Australia performs during the women's 63kg weightlifting at Sydney Olympics yesterday. She finished sixth.

- AFP photo

Privatisation Biman reviews information memorandum

By Special Correspondent

The Management Board of Bangladesh Biman yesterday reviewed the Information Memorandum for prepare the bid documents for off-loading the 49 per cent shares of the airline which offers 40 per cent stakes to a Strategic Partner.

The memorandum was presented before the board by the consultants from the Citibank of New York working on the restructuring and commercialisation programme of the Biman.

The meeting also authorised the Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism to finalise the memorandum in consultation with the Biman management and the visiting consultants.

50 houses damaged as storm hits Shakhipur

By Staff Correspondent
One person was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital after being injured during a storm at Shakhipur under Tangail district, hospital sources said yesterday.

The injured, identified as Abdul Malek, told medical sources that the storm hit the village at about 5.30 pm, damaging at least 50 houses and injuring several others.

Many trees and electric poles were also uprooted by the storm, hospital sources said quoting the victim.

Interrogation of gunman Azad continues

A Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC) yesterday quizzed Abul Kalam Azad, the gunman who held 14 officials hostage at Khagrachari DC's office on September 11, reports BSS.

Officials said a four-member team comprising members of Special Branch of Police (SB), National Security Intelligence (NSI) and Directorate of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) interrogated Azad at the SB Head Office at Malibagh in the city.

Fuel price hike pushes up prices of essentials

By Staff Correspondent

Prices of most of the essentials except those of rice and a few other commodities soared at the city markets in the last two weeks.

Wholesalers and retailers say the price hike is due to increase in transport cost following enhancement of fuel prices as well as the massive devaluation of taka against dollar last month.

While visiting a number of city markets yesterday, it was found that prices of sugar, edible oil (Soyabean), powder milk, chick pea, vegetables, masur, pulse and spices have increased.

Prices of rice, flour, baby food, meat and tea were almost unchanged. Prices of different varieties of fish remained high

Double-murder DB to question suspended policemen today

By Staff Correspondent

The Detective Branch of Police who took over the Sutrapur double murder case, will interrogate the three suspended policemen today, sources said.

Shahidul Islam, Mahbubur Rahman and Lilaquat Ali, sub-inspectors of Sutrapur police station are suspected to have concealed information regarding the killing of two teenaged boys, the sources said.

Monwar Begum, mother of Mirhsin, one of the two victims, had alleged that these policemen had refused to rescue her son despite repeated requests.

Meanwhile, the seven arrested including four FIR-listed accused in this case were remanded for four days yesterday.

16 killed, over 80 hurt in Islamabad market blast

ISLAMABAD, Sept 19: A powerful bomb placed in a crate of grapes ripped through a crowded market this morning, killing 16 people and wounding more than 80 in Pakistan's capital, police said, reports AP.

The blast was the deadliest of 40 bombings that have rocked Pakistani cities this year, and Pakistan's government has blamed archival India for many of the previous attacks.

Pakistan's military ruler Gen. Pervez Musharraf condemned the "dastardly act of terrorism," but did not make any accusations of blame.

Ambulances rushed to the scene to carry away the wounded, some of whom lost limbs, while the army and police cordoned off the scene.

"But most of the victims were sent to hospitals by private vans," said Tahir Ayub, another shopkeeper. "People of the area carried away most of the dead and helped the wounded."

News Analysis

Mamata's move to project her party as the only alternative

From Pallab Bhattacharya

NEW DELHI, Sept 19: What is essentially a political battle between West Bengal's ruling CPI(M) and Trinamool Congress led by firebrand Mamata Banerjee has now expanded into a war of words between the CPI(M)-led Left Front government in the state and the BJP spearheaded National Democratic Alliance (NDA) coalition ruling India.

Mamata has for the past few weeks stepped up her demand for dismissal of Jyoti Basu government in West Bengal accusing it of "Murdering" democracy in the wake of prolonged clashes between activists of CPI(M) and Trinamool Congress in Midnapore, Bankura, Burdwan and Hooghly districts of the state.

However, the government of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpeyi does not appear to fa-

vour of dismissal of Basu government mainly for three reasons. First, they feel it would be a political blunder to remove the Left Front government just six months ahead of fresh assembly elections in West Bengal. Second, NDA lacks majority in the upper house of Parliament which has to approve of any dismissal of a state government. Third, constituents of NDA are divided on the issue of dismissal of a duly-elected state government without a genuine breakdown of constitutional machinery there.

Yet, the NDA did not like to be seen as doing nothing to stand by its constituent Trinamool Congress in its battle against the Left Front. That is why, NDA convener and Defence Minister George Fernandes was sent to tour Midnapore district, worst hit by political

violence between CPI(M) and Trinamool supporters and Indian Home Ministry and Home Minister L K Advani shot off four letters to Basu government expressing concern over the political violence in West Bengal.

On his return from Midnapore, Fernandes submitted a report to Indian Home Ministry voicing grave concern about "threats" to democracy and political adversaries allegedly posed by the Marxists in West Bengal.

West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu dismissed Fernandes' report as "pack of lies" and "politically-motivated" and said the state government had taken adequate measures to cope with whatever violence had taken place.

Advani responded to Basu

Garments fire Lack of safety measures led to death of 12 workers

By Staff Correspondent

Lack of safety measures led to the killing of 12 workers in an incident of fire at the Globe Garment Factory at Banani in the city recently, according to a report of the Fire Service and Civil Defence Department.

The report said, of the two staircases in the seven-storey building, one is at its front side and the other is at the rear. The garment factory occupies five floors of the building.

The door of the backside staircase remains closed for movement of people as it is used for carrying materials from the ground floor to upstairs.

There is an iron ladder on the front side of the building but all the doors leading to the ladder are sealed from inside. The gate of the spinning section leading to the iron ladder is also sealed permanently.

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L/C interest BB can save forex, says BGMEA

By Staff Correspondent

BGMEA yesterday observed that the Bangladeshi Bank can save around 100 million dollars foreign currency a year by developing a mechanism related to L/C interest during garment export.

Garment owners pay around 100 million dollars every year as interest against Letter of Credit document. The amount can be saved if the central bank evolves a mechanism, said Anisur Rahman Sinha president of the BGMEA.

He was addressing a seminar jointly organised by Standard Chartered and Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

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Another shown arrest in Kotalipara incident

A young man was shown arrest yesterday in the bomb planting case at Kotalipara, who was earlier arrested by Special Branch (SB) of police in connection with kidnapping of a madrasah student, reports BSS.

Official sources said, a team of City SB arrested Marfath Ali alias Wasim Akhter along with four others from Fatullah area of Narayanganj district in connection with a kidnapping case last week. Police rescued the madrasah student from their hostage. The gang kidnapped the student from Palabi area demanding Taka three lakh as ransom.

Marfath Ali was a close associate of Mufti Hannan, the mastermind of Kotalipara bomb planting incident, and a member of Harkatul Jihad, Palabi police said.

A team of CID yesterday interrogated Marfath at Palabi thana and will bring him to their custody today.

For booking please contact :

Resolution of KAFCO issue

Marubeni using Meghnaghat plant to pressurise govt

By Sharier Khan

Japanese company Marubeni had been using the 450 MW Meghnaghat phase 2 power plant to put pressure on the government to resolve the Karanphuli Fertiliser Company Ltd. (KAFCO) issues, sources said.

A major stakeholder of KAFCO, Marubeni had insisted last year that the government award the second phase of the Meghnaghat phase-II power plant to it bypassing the bids.

The Japanese company had committed to the government to set up this power plant as per the standard and at the same cost of the Meghnaghat phase-I, now being built by the US power company AES.

Despite agreeing to start the project earlier than schedule in the light of the country's future power needs and investment crisis, Marubeni started delaying work on drafting of various contracts and designs for the power project from early this year.

When Power Development Board (PDB) asked it about the status of the Meghnaghat power plant in March last, Marubeni had replied that the project would not start unless and until the KAFCO issues were resolved.

"As you know well, this Meghnaghat project will be de-

veloped based on not only the feasibility of the project itself but also your Government guarantee. And due to KAFCO issues, which are beyond our control, it is very regretful to say that creditworthiness of your Government guarantee is now in question in the international financial market, including JBIC (Japan Bank of Investment Corporation). Marubeni informed the ODB in a letter on March 3.

It continued: "Even though we understand the emergency (urgency) of this project and that financing the project is our responsibility, the delay caused by Kafo issues is not our fault and, therefore, we wish you to assume such delay and urge you to assist your Government to work out Kafo issues amicably as soon as possible."

Marubeni reiterated its position in a letter issued in mid-August and early this month. The company in its mid-August letter added, "We understand that a satisfactory resolution to the Kafo issue is imminent... Please be assured that once the Kafo situation is satisfactorily resolved we will expedite our due diligence process to finalise the documentation of Meghnaghat-II and ensure the timely and suc-

cessful implementation of this important project."

Ironically, while Marubeni refused to go ahead with the Meghnaghat-II power project, it vigorously pursued two overpriced 50 MW power projects in Kaptai.

Sources said the government was also enthusiastic about this project that outlines a budget at least Tk 140 crore more than actually required.

The government took a hard stance on KAFCO for the last one year as the venture was incurring huge losses due to its poor construction and contractual flaws including the clause that provides for subsidised gas tariff to the company.

Marubeni is one of the leaders and builders of the plant that was built at a cost of at least 100 million dollars more than required.