

The Daily Star

COMMITTED TO
People's Right to Know

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XI No. 44

DHAKA TUESDAY MAY 28, 2002

www.dailystarnews.com

FALGUN 16, 1407 BS

ZELHAJ 3, 1421 HIJRI

16 PAGES PRICE: Tk 6.00



Zidane thump for world champs

INTERNET

France's World Cup hopes were dealt a heavy blow by news that Zinedine Zidane will miss the first two games of the defence of their crown.

The high price of France's warm-up win over South Korea became clear as French Football Federation head Claude Simonet confirmed the extent of the thigh injury sustained by the world's best player.

Zidane will sit out the World Cup curtain-raiser against Senegal, and the crucial Group A fixture against Uruguay.

Simonet said: "I have some slightly worrying news."

"I've been told the results of the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

ADP gets bigger

INAM AHMED

The government is settling for even a bigger annual development programme (ADP) than envisaged earlier for the next fiscal.

According to the brief prepared for the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC), the planning commission has mentioned the size of the next ADP at Tk 19,500 crore. If approved, this would be the largest ever ADP with a 21 per cent growth from the revised ADP of this fiscal. The ECNEC will meet on May 29.

The new ADP includes Tk 11,566 crore local currency component and Tk 7,540 crore project aid. It also has a Tk 394 crore food programme component.

A special project has been taken up for a project to

increase the number of goats.

According to sources, the government had initially planned a smaller ADP because of resource scarcity and also because it wanted to keep the development programme more focussed by keeping low-priority projects and 'projects with political considerations' out of it.

But this created deep schism within the ruling BNP and its lawmakers felt that a low-key ADP would put them in political difficulty. In a recent meeting with Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman, they also reminded him that squeezing the ADP too much would put the BNP in a disadvantaged position.

Finally, Saifur had to give in to the pressure and as a result, the new ADP is now set at Tk 19,500 crore.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Power division bent on costly power project

STAR REPORT

The Power Division of the energy ministry and the Power Development Board (PDB) has once again advocated for going ahead with the decade-old and costly 109 MW Haripur Power Plant Expansion project that is being funded by Japan.

Last month, the project was sent to the Cabinet Purchase Committee for approval. But when the committee came to know that the briefing of the project concealed several issues including a Japanese study and an observation by the Economic Relations Division (ERD), it sent back the project to the

ministry asking it to clear the scheme from the ERD.

The PDB sought the committee's approval to open bidding proposals of three bidders. Floated in August 8, 1999 the bid remains suspended because of disagreements between the PDB, the Japanese financier and the ERD.

The Japanese study, namely the SAPI report, suggested that instead of undertaking the expansion scheme it would be much more cost effective to set up a new power plant at the same cost. The ERD also subscribed to this view and suggested the PDB to pursue an alternative plan for conversion to Combined Cycle Plant.

Last week, the Power Division in a note to the ERD said it was more rational to continue the ongoing project than pursuing an alternative plan for combined cycle plant.

It however added that complications have arisen at different levels of the project because of difference of opinion between the PDB, Power Division of the Energy Ministry, project's Japanese financier JBIC, the project's consultant and the ERD.

"To resolve these complications it's logical to re-tender the project. But in that case the consent of the JBIC is required," the ministry noted. It would still be logical to go

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Feeble dialogue prospect

NAZMUL ASHRAF and REAZ AHMAD

Chances of a government-opposition dialogue are fading fast as the Awami League (AL) is reluctant to enter into a formal discussion with the ruling BNP amid what it says continued persecution of the opposition activists.

Instead of responding to the latest BNP offer for an official dialogue aimed at resolving the political standoff, the AL may explain its reservation about joining the proposed talks at a press conference soon, opposition sources said yesterday.

AL chief and Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad Sheikh Hasina may speak at the planned news conference, the sources added.

The BNP invited the AL several times to sit across the table in the past few weeks. BNP Secretary general and LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan phoned Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid and AL presidium member Abdus Samad Azad while Finance and Planning Minister M. Saifur Rahman also talked with the two AL leaders.

The ruling party offer aims to take the AL to the parliament in its budget session beginning June 4 amid mounting pressure from the donors who want a full strength House.

"They're repeating their invitation for a dialogue though they are yet to show any signs of a let up in persecution on our activists," Abdus Samad Azad told The Daily Star last

night.

Referring to the 'attempt' on the life of AL leader and former home minister Mohammad Nasim, MP, hours after he received a 'formal invitation' for talks from Bhuiyan on Saturday, Samad Azad questioned what kind of gesture it was.

"The BNP did not stop repressing our leaders and workers at least for a day to show its sincerity about a meaningful dialogue," the AL leader said. He added that the BNP offer was still being discussed in his party.

However, he did not make it clear if he would call back Bhuiyan to let him know the party's position about the proposed talks.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Non-confirmation of judges Senior lawyers fail to get president's date

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Senior lawyers yesterday failed to get an appointment with the president for a meeting to discuss the issue of non-confirmation of the three judges at the High Court division ignoring the recommendation of the chief justice.

The aggrieved lawyers are continuing their efforts to get a presidential appointment of the President. They would hold a meeting today to decide their next move.

Meanwhile, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed told the press yesterday that the non-confirmation of the three judges did not violate the constitution. There was no constitutional obligation to appoint

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Shanu freed on parole to take oath

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Golam Mawla Shanu, a 'listed criminal' against whom court framed charges in a murder case yesterday morning, took oath as Khulna City Corporation (KCC) ward commissioner in the evening.

He was released from Khulna district Jail on parole for the oath-taking. Shanu in handcuffs was brought to the KCC conference room at about 6 pm amid tight security. He was sent back to the jail at 6:10 PM after taking oath.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Three listed criminals nabbed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) arrested three 'listed' criminals, 68 'wanted' criminals and two absconding convicts in 48 hours till 6 pm yesterday.

The listed criminals are Abdur Rouf, Chandu Masum and Momin alias Bachhu and the two convicts are Ali Akbar and Masud, a police press release said last night.

The DMP also held 96 people for various offences and another 398 for their 'suspicious' movement. A revolver, a pipe-gun and a gun were recovered during the special drive in the city.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8



PHOTO: STAR

People wade through stagnant rainwater that inundated the Faridabad Lane in the city after yesterday's downpour. The flooding-out of streets with rainwater is commonplace in Old Dhaka.

Subha salvage uncertain

Lack of proper equipment stalls rescue operation

MORSHED ALI KHAN and AROOP TALUKDAR, in Barisal

Lack of proper equipment for deep-water diving has apparently forced the authorities to give up the hope of salvaging any time soon the MV Subha now lying some 110 feet under water on the bed of river Baleshwar with an unspecified number of bodies trapped inside.

Instead, divers of the Bangladesh Navy Ship (BNS) Teesta, now help-

ing with the salvage of the ill-fated passenger launch that sank Thursday evening, have asked the BIWTA and the Department of Shipping for a 'sketch map' of the vessel so that they could go down to recover the trapped bodies.

The operation is however becoming more and more difficult with the river getting increasingly rough due to bad weather, officials said.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Warnings go unheeded

MORSHED ALI KHAN, back from Southern region

Defying repeated warnings by the authorities, overloading of passengers in all vessels plying between Barisal and Dhaka continued even in bad weather.

Operators of vessels did not care the prevailing bad weather on Sunday. At Barisal launch terminal on Sunday evening, all vessels leaving for Dhaka were seen highly overloaded with passengers.

Khaboruddin, Inspector of the Department of Shipping posted at the launch terminal, was absent from the terminal during the whole day on Sunday. As overloaded vessels were leaving the terminal, there

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

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