

Barapukuria coalmine

FROM PAGE 12 vehicle tried to get away making a U-turn, but we managed to catch it within a few minutes.

"The packed bodies of the two miners were recovered from beneath the seat of the vehicle", said the security officer, who was on duty during the incident.

According to the security officer, when asked the Chinese men replied that the bodies were being taken to Dinajpur hospital.

A member of the third probe committee set up by the China Machinery Import and Export Corporation (CMC)—the Chinese firm constructing the mine— informed The Daily Star that they were aware of this incident. They also said they were convinced that the Chinese developers were taking the deceased to the hospital 'as per the norms in their country', during such situations.

But a member of one of the other two committees was far from convinced. "Dead men being taken to hospitals in plastic bags for treatment!" was what he said to express his doubts over the Chinese statement.

A Chinese probe committee member said, of the two surviving witnesses one is a mentally challenged miner and none should depend upon his words. The other survivor is in hiding. Moreover, the Chinese developers denied all the allegations raised by the Bangladeshi labourers.

Two miners — Kamruzzaman Zamal, son of Kafuiddin of East Sherpur village and Nirmal Mandi, son of Laxmiram Mandi of Ramchandrapur village in Parbatpur upazila— were killed when the roof collapsed on them.

The roof of the tunnel collapsed when the compressed air-driven drill machine was being geared for use in shaping a newly blasted tunnel into a secured concrete tunnel 430 metres below the ground.

The mine will have an 18 kilometre long tunnel, of which about eight kilometres have already been completed.

The US \$194 million coalmine project was signed in February 1994 and it came into effect in June 1994. Of the total project cost, US \$109 million has been arranged under the supplier's credit system at a five per cent interest rate. After the completion of the project, Bangladesh will have to pay back the loan in 11 consecutive years. The first three years will be free of any interest.

The construction of the mine began in June 1996. The project was scheduled for completion in June 2001. But the Chinese company had to redesign the project

layout to produce one million tons of coal per year and to reschedule the completion date following a sudden flood inside the mine on April 1998.

According to the project officials, about 60 per cent work has been completed and since last April, the project developers have started extracting 40 to 50 tons of coal daily.

The project developers target to go on commercial production by October 2003 and after completion of the project in October 2004, the project is likely to start producing one million tons of coal per year.

About 83 per cent of the coal produced will be used in the Barapukuria 2 x 125 MW Power Project which is being implemented with top priority.

The remaining amount of coal will be used in domestic markets. Meanwhile, on an average 1.2 million tons of coal is imported every year and the brick field owners are the major consumers.

To check any unwanted flooding, the project developers have installed eight highly powered water pumps inside the mine. Of the pumps, five were installed at 260 meters below underground and another three were installed at 430 meters below. Each of the pumps is able to drain out 5000-cube water per hour.

Dacoits beat up policeman, snatch away shotgun

UNB, Noakhali

A police havilder was beaten up and his shotgun taken away by dacoits at Banglabazar in Companyanj upazila Saturday midnight.

Havildar Jahangir Alam along with two constables was on patrol at Banglabazar when the dacoits in a surprise attack held him and snatched away the gun.

The two constables who were yards away thought that armed miscreant surrounded them and fled away.

Another police team later rescued the havilder. But his gun could not be recovered.

The dacoits looted a number of shops in the bazaar.

Police arrested Abdur Rahim, Nur Alam and Jafar Alam. On their statement 20 people along with a fishing trawler were held suspecting their involvement.

9 Sarbahara Party activists arrested from Chalan Beel

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Police arrested ten Sarbahara men including their local commander Mozai, 37, from Chalan Beel areas in Shingra upazila yesterday.

Of them, three are accused in several criminal cases, police said.

Policemen from Natore, Bogra and Sirajganj jointly launched the operation in Chalan Beel area and nabbed the nine.

They were produced before a magistrate's court at Natore yesterday. The court sent them to jail habitat.

Bangladeshi shot dead by BSF in Patgram

UNB, Lalmonirhat

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) of Bejajama camp shot dead a Bangladeshi youth on Kuchlibari frontier of Patgram upazila Saturday morning.

Sources said Rezaul Karim, 22, son of Nabir Ali of South Kuchlibari was killed while he fishing in Gira river near pillar no 805. The body was taken away by BSF.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Rifles protested the killing of the Bangladeshi youth inside Bangladesh territory and continued company level contacts to bring back the body.

PM assures help

FROM PAGE 12

circumstances. The family members cried as they narrated the incidents of murder to Khaleda Zia. Stirred by the emotion-charged environment, Newton's four-year-old child in the lap of her mother Misti also sobbed.

The prime minister also became emotional at their grief and shared with them their sense of loss.

The aggrieved family members of the victims demanded proper trial of the killers so that no such killing recur in future. They also urged the prime minister to punish the masterminds of the killings.

The families of the victims included Sarika Sarkar, wife of Binoy Sarkar Bina, Ferdousi Ahmed Misti, wife of Saidur Rahman Newton, their fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters and children.

They told Khaleda Zia that the two ward commissioners were involved in political, social and development activities in their respective areas, and had taken up a range of development programmes for welfare of the residents of their localities.

The prime minister inquired about the well-being of the family members of the victims, including their present financial condition, saying that her government would stand by them.

Khaleda Zia said she would try to arrange for a suitable job for the wife of Binoy Sarkar befitting her qualifications so that she could become an earning member of the family.

She said her government would also take steps so that the family members of Misti is not left alone and suffer hardship.

DCC Mayor and Minister for Fisheries and Livestock Sadek Hossain Khoka and Political Secretaries to the Prime Minister Haris Chowdhury and Mosaddek Ali were present.

Potato chips

FROM PAGE 12

After the Swedish study was released, the World Health Organisation announced plans for a meeting of experts on the relationship between high carbohydrate foods and cancer, saying more study was required.

At the time, WHO said that while much is known about the effects of acrylamide on animals, there is far less information about its effect on humans. It said the Swedish findings did not change basic dietary advice to eat less fat and more fruit and vegetables.

The Norwegian agency used the types of foods identified by the Swedes as high in acrylamide as a basis for picking products from grocery stores in Oslo to be analyzed.

They study found that potato chips had the highest acrylamide level, 90 times higher than bread, which had the lowest level.

The authority noted great variation between brands, indicating that production techniques can reduce the levels in a product.

"We are in a close dialogue with food producers and have been informed that they are working actively to reduce the acrylamide levels in Norwegian food," agency director Gunnar Jorfald said.

The scientists also estimated that acrylamide in fried foods causes about 1 per cent of diet-related cancer cases or about 30 Norwegians a year in the nation of 4.5 million people.



Wife of slain DCC commissioner Sayedur Rahman Newton meets Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday.

Turks in tatters

FROM PAGE 1

It was all too familiar for the Turks, who gave away a penalty three minutes from time in their first game to hand Brazil a 2-1 victory.

It could have been even worse had Parks not missed a golden chance to get his second in injury time, a goal that would have put the Turks out of the tournament.

"It's always the last five minutes," lamented midfielder Umit Davala.

"Perhaps we were over-confident but it was exactly the same as Brazil. We had chances to score the second goal but didn't and it cost us."

"We've now lost three points in two games. We are new to the World Cup and it shows we still have a lot to learn."

Turkey are appearing in their first finals since 1954 and coach Senol Gunes agreed that the long absence was a contributory factor in their late lapses.

"It's a bitter disappointment but I think maybe we have suffered

because we are not so experienced," he said.

Midfielder Yildiray Basturk was also frustrated as he watched the points slip away after being substituted 10 minutes from time.

"We lost concentration and we defended too deep," he said. "It would be fine if games lasted 87 minutes but I'm sorry to say that they last 90."

Turkey must now beat China in their final game and hope Costa Rica lose to Brazil, who are already guaranteed a second round berth after winning their first two games.

But even if both results go the right way for Turkey, qualification will depend on them overhauling Costa Rica's current goal difference advantage of three, possibly scraping through on goals scored.

"We cannot worry about the Brazil game but only our own match," said Gunes.

"It could have been easier if we had won today but we still have a chance of qualification and we

intend to take it.

"We know we need to create more chances and score goals but I am confident we will get the result we need to qualify."

Gunes will have Alpay Ozalan and Hakan Unsal available again following their one-match suspensions for being sent off against Brazil, but is lucky not to have been deprived of Emre Belozoglu, who was fortunate to escape with a booking in a volatile finale.

The goalscorer pushed a Costa Rican official who was about to roll the ball back on to the pitch for a throw-in a minute from time, sparking an unsavoury shoving match involving a dozen players and officials from both sides.

But Gunes played down the incident. It was merely "the heat of the moment in an important match," he said.

JAGPA, PNP, JP merge

FROM PAGE 12

"Time is running out. But still there is time to curb these menaces by restoring good administration," he said.

He urged Khaleda Zia to fulfill her election pledges. "Otherwise," he said, "people will force you to step down from power through a massive movement."

The JP chairman, however, criticised Awami League's demand for a mid-term election, saying that it is not the time to judge a government, which has been in power only for eight months. "More time should be given to this government," he added.

The former president, who was forced to quit power following a mass upsurge in 1990, said both BNP and Awami League had tortured and thrown him into jail. He blamed AL for breaking up his Jatiya Party into three factions after coming to power in 1996.

He said he handed over power to Justice Shahabuddin for the sake of democracy and good governance, but democracy could not take institutional shape yet and parliament could not be made effective due to boycott by the opposition.

Mentioning a rumour that some evil forces might capture power, Ershad said: "It is not a good sign for democracy... Jatiya Party will not support any such move."

Turning to the proposed budget for fiscal 2002-2003, the former President called it "highly ambitious and fanciful."

The government will not be able to implement this budget, he said. "Where would the money come from when export and industrial production have gone down, and donors are unwilling to give aid?"

DPHE

FROM PAGE 12

three and from Rajshahi City Corporation.

The samples were tested at the laboratory of Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR).

But the DPHE has neither taken any measures to remove the poison from pipeline water nor shut down the deep tube wells in the four towns, sources in the DPHE said.

When contacted, a high official at DPHE said a plan for removing arsenic from supply water in the four towns was submitted to the planning cell of the LGRD ministry on March 3 this year. But it has not yet been approved, he said.

In the tests, it was found that pipeline water in seven of the 99 municipalities and in Rajshahi was also contaminated with arsenic.

The seven municipalities are Manikganj, Noakhali, Bhairab, Gopalganj, Faridpur, Sathkira and Rajbari.

Among the seven municipalities, the highest level of arsenic was found in Gopalganj, which was 0.38 mg/L, followed by 0.21 mg/L in Faridpur, which are dangerously high.

In all the seven municipalities and in Rajshahi, DPHE has taken measures to remove arsenic. It has installed arsenic removal plants, shut down contaminated deep tube wells and sank new wells at deeper aquifers for supply of safe water.

But in Faridpur and Bhairab the pipeline water is not yet free from arsenic. DPHE engineers are working there to supply safe water, the sources said.

Experts say long time use of arsenic contaminated water damage the lungs, liver, kidneys, bladder and skin in humans.

War cloud

FROM PAGE 1

Pakistani authorities on Saturday summoned an Indian diplomat for a sharp dressing-down over the incident and Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar also urged restraint.

Washington, meanwhile, late Saturday welcomed the announcement by Armitage that India was ready to respond to Musharraf's commitment to rein in Islamic militants operating from Pakistani soil.

"Coming after the visit of ... Armitage to the region, we are pleased that the government of India has noted the progress being made. We look forward to the steps that the government of India has said it will take shortly," State Department spokeswoman Mary Thomas told the news agency.

Meanwhile, Pakistan yesterday welcomed India's reported decision to take steps within the next few days to defuse a tense military stand-off over the disputed state of Kashmir.

"Pakistan welcomes reports that India is experiencing military and diplomatic gestures to de-escalate tension between the two countries over the Kashmir issue," Information Minister Nisar Memon said.

"It seems the situation is heading towards improvement," state television quoted him as saying.

Memon also expressed hopes that the two countries would be able to begin a dialogue on "all important issues including Kashmir".

Indian and Pakistani newspapers yesterday interpreted the latest

statements as a sign that war clouds were receding.

"Finally, peace gets a chance," read a headline in the Indian business newspaper The Economic Times.

Pakistan's respected Dawn newspaper said tempers were cooling on both sides. "Both Islamabad and New Delhi should be thankful to world capitals for making concerted efforts to defuse the tension in the subcontinent," the newspaper said.

Akbar: Hasina

FROM PAGE 12

Akbar pointed out that the police recently arrested an aide of the opposition leader on charge of conspiring against the BNP-led coalition government. "The Awami League had conspired against the (previous) BNP government in 1996 and it is again doing the same thing," the minister said.

He warned that the AL would be held responsible if democracy or the parliament ceases to function because of its conspiracy.

Accusing the main opposition party of being involved in the politics of killing and terrorism, he claimed none of the BNP ministers was found involved in such crimes.

"I have heard that in her bedroom there are 16 portraits of her family members who had died in an unnatural death. If that's true she must not be in her senses... I wish she continued as the chief of Awami League and went on speaking the way she does, because it would guarantee the BNP stint in power," said the shipping minister.

The shipping minister also castigated the AL and its frontline leaders whom he accused of being involved in various criminal activities.

The minister also informed that the government was also trying to replace the old steamers plying between Dhaka and the southern districts including Barisal and Khulna with new and modern ones.

The ministry's decisions came following the two tragic ferry accidents last month that claimed at least 600 lives.

"Once the decisions are implemented, no accident caused due to man-made errors should take place," the minister said.

He said a high-powered committee comprising naval architects from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) would survey all the 2000 water vessels to find out whether their structural designs are right.

Quoting the ministry's decisions, the minister said the vessels in operation have to introduce radar and wireless communications system within next six months so that operators can communicate with the authorities concerned when needed.

He said special training would be provided to the staff on board so that they can tackle any odd situation especially at the time of northwester or inclement weather.

Saifur: Bankers

FROM PAGE 1

However, bankers say, the problem occurs due to agents' discount, short shipment of exports, EPZ exports and non-repatriation of export-proceeds.

"We are trying to build the capacity of Bangladesh Bank. We want to make it an independent central bank," the finance minister told newsmen, emerging from the meeting.

He said the central bank has the huge task of monetary management, foreign exchange management and oversight function to deal with.

So, the organisation should be strengthened with empowerment of officers and furnishing it with modern equipment to bring dynamism in its activities. "We are examining how we can improve efficiency of the bank effectively," he said.

Saifur said he would again sit with the central bank executives next week to review the problems in

detail. About autonomy of the Bangladesh Bank, he said it had already been enjoying autonomous status. "We don't want to interfere in its activities."

Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Fakhruddin said autonomy of the bank would be reinforced with implementation of the new budgetary proposals.

The budget for 2002-2003 proposed strengthening the supervisory authority of the central bank over NCBs by making necessary amendments to the Bangladesh Bank Order, the Banking Company Act and the Bangladesh Bank's (Nationalisation) Order.

Referring to errors and omissions in the balance of payments, he said they were working on the problem to find out how the problem can be managed and hoped for a solution shortly.

Finance secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan was present in the meeting.

Housing sector

FROM PAGE 1

Finance Minister Saifur Rahman in the proposed budget for fiscal 2002-03 said, "The tariff value on brick-field sector was fixed in 1991, and taking the price increase of goods into consideration, I propose to increase the present tariff value on bricks by 50 per cent. At the same time, I propose a tariff value on a similar product --'ready-mix'-- on a proportionate basis."

On the other hand, real estate and housing companies said the proposed fiscal measures will have a positive impact on this sector.

"Due to these measures, a person intending to buy an apartment in Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara areas will require to pay around Tk 3 lakh less than the earlier rate," Toufiq M Seraj, president of Real Estate & Housing Association of Bangladesh (REHAB), told The Daily Star yesterday.

A buyer had to pay around Tk 8 lakh for transferring an apartment valued at Tk 40 lakh. Now he will require to pay a little over Tk 5 lakh. This will help create a healthy environment in this sector, he said.

Withdrawal of VAT on sale and purchase of land and apartment will remove the bottlenecks in getting connections of utility services. A buyer had to pay around 30 per cent

of the value of an apartment as registration and transfer fees and VAT.

Due to high charges, hundreds of apartments have not been registered. At least 1500 apartments have remained unregistered only in Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara areas, he said.

Tax officials raided offices of some leading real estate companies recently and seized documents for alleged non-payment of VAT and other fees. They demanded the payments immediately after booking of an apartment by a buyer.

They also issued notices to WASA, Titas Gas and DESA not to provide connections to the project sites before the payments.

People buy apartments only after completion of the projects and gas, water and electricity connections in apartments, other REHAB officials said.

The new measures will also help develop a secondary market in the housing sector. A sector does not grow without a secondary market, they said.

Now, there is no resale value of apartment because of high transfer charges. If a person buys an apartment today and wants to sell it after a year, he will definitely incur several lakh taka loss, they mentioned.

PDB, DESA, BPC

FROM PAGE 1 tions, the chief guest at the seminar. State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharraf Hossain, said government is not giving any subsidy to gas or petroleum sectors. Rather, there has been 'price distortion' in the sectors.

Regarding subsidy in the gas sector, the state minister said, "We have imposed 55 per cent tax on gas. Then how can one think about subsidies in the sector? Rather, we are giving subsidy to IOCs (international oil companies)." The government is purchasing power from IOCs at a higher price and selling it at a lower price, he added.

Mosharraf also said the independent power plants (IPPs) are given subsidies, which is a problem in the country's power sector. "This has to be rationalised," he said.

Mosharraf blamed the WB for changing its stand on the subsidy issue.

"From the very beginning, the World Bank was dead against subsidy. And now they are saying to give direct subsidy in a transparent way," he said.

Temple suggested withdrawal of subsidy in power supplied to the agriculture sector to strengthen the

power sector's finances and allow its faster expansion to reach more farmers sooner.

Prof Moinul Islam, president of Bangladesh Economic Association and also a designated discussant at the seminar, opposed Temple's views saying, "I would not mind if the subsidy goes to our farmers who have given us food autarky, but I would definitely mind if it goes to a company like KAFCO."

He also observed that the key-note paper has overestimated the subsidy in the power sector while the amount of subsidy in the gas sector is more than that mentioned in the paper.

Essentials

FROM PAGE 1

spite of enough stocks. If there was any change in import duties, they should increase the prices only after getting new supplies, he said.

Some companies informed the traders about the hiked prices of some commodities like powder milk, sugar and soybean oil. They did not increase the previous prices, though, Mujibur said.