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AL calls 12-hr hartal today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country reels under a 12-hour shutdown today as the main opposition Awami League (AL) is set to enforce a hartal to protest fresh taxes in the proposed budget for 2002-03 fiscal, 'political persecution' by the government and rising crime rates.

The dawn-to-dusk general strike was earlier scheduled for Saturday but was deferred by a day as the strike coincided with the ongoing higher secondary examinations.

The AL President and the Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad, Sheikh Hasina has warned that more such agitation programmes loom should the government "continue persecuting the opposition activists".

The warning came on Friday when the police obstructed an opposition procession in the capital from campaigning for today's general strike.

The AL activists also took out processions in Dhaka and other parts of the country yesterday to

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Bail forgery SC lawyer, 3 others held

BSS, Dhaka

A Supreme Court lawyer and three others were arrested yesterday after a High Court bench discovered that they got three accused of a smuggling case released on a counterfeit bail order.

A High Court Division bench comprising Justice M A Aziz and Justice Mohammad Muntazuddin Ahmed ordered their arrest after they incidentally found that they managed to procure a forged order of bail.

Lawyer Mohammad Nurul Islam Chowdhury, Executive Editor of the fortnightly "Ainer Darpan" Abul Khair, High Court staff Nurul Islam and one Abu Sayeed were taken to police custody.

The bench also ordered the arrest of another High Court staff Jalal, now under suspension, on the basis of an earlier allegation.

The Supreme Court yesterday also unveiled two other incidents of forgery in two other High Court benches in which three lawyers were initially found involved.

51 AL, Juba League & BCL men sued at Laxmipur

UNB, Laxmipur

Fifty-one leaders and workers of local Awami League and its front organisations, Chhatra League and Juba League, were sued on Thursday for torching a madrassah and Chhatra Kalyan Sangha office.

The leaders sued in the case include district AL general secretary and pourasava chairman M A Taher and his three sons.

Police arrested Taher's younger son Shibli and Chhatra League leader Zaved from the town on the day.

Mizanur Rahman, president of district Islami Chhatra Shibir and Chhatra Kalyan Sangha, filed the case against the AL leaders and workers.

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Role of big powers in current Indo-Pak tension

Column: Currents and Crosscurrents MM Rezaul Karim

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The proposed National Human Rights Commission -- abandoned again?; and Suicide bombing: Is another form of struggle possible?

Supplement 10

One page supplement on 'Black Day for newspapers'

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
June 16		6-47 pm
June 17	5-11 am	

Prayer Timings

June 16

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-51	6-55
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Gains go down the drain

Losses of 14 SOEs to negate profits of 24

RAZIUR RAHMAN and SHARIEF KHAN

Financial mismanagement, lack of good governance or vision and heavy tax burden will continue to mar performance of state owned enterprises, 14 of which are projected to incur a total loss of Tk 2284 crore this fiscal.

These losses would overshadow a profit of Tk 484.62 to be made by 24 other SOEs, according to the Bangladesh Economic Review 2002.

In the last fiscal (2000-01), 16 SOEs incurred a loss of Tk 2659.4 crore while 22 others made a profit of Tk 551.58 crore.

Despite such loss projections, the government, like in previous years, did not give any guideline or statement in the latest budget to improve performance of SOEs and

overcome or reduce their losses.

These SOE losses are equal to one tenth of the Annual Development Programme (ADP).

Financial mismanagement and heavy tax burden become apparent

from the fact that two SOEs -- Petrobangla and BPC-- contribute over Tk 4500 crore a year as tax.

BPC has been marked as the biggest loss maker this fiscal-- projected at Tk 562 crore. BPC was

also the biggest loss maker in the last fiscal when it incurred a loss of Tk 1544 crore. But the same organisation, which used to make over Tk 900 crore profit each fiscal in early nineties, is clearly a victim of heavy tax burden.

"Last year, BPC contributed more than Tk 3000 crore as import tax. This fiscal, it would give a similar amount to the national exchequer," said a BPC source. "As long as there is this tax structure for BPC and as long as BPC can not control the price, losses will continue," he said.

In case of Petrobangla, the government takes away over Tk 1500 crore a year as tax and another Tk 100 crore from its profit.

While BPC and Petrobangla are affected mainly by heavy tax structures, other SOEs are simply vic

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Profit Making SOEs (minus tax contribution) in cr taka

BSEC -- 4.96, BFDC -- 3.79, Petrobangla -- 179.33, Dhaka WASA -- 14.24, BSC -- 5.08, BIWTC -- 11.05, CPA -- 41.59, CDWMB -- 3.15, MPA -- 3.7, BJC -- 0.03, TCB -- 19.73, BFDC -- 1.43, RAJUK -- 13.11, CDA -- 4.94, KDA -- 1.67,

BFFWT -- 4.94, BFDC -- 0.23, BPRC -- 10.69, CAA -- 74.29, BSCIC -- 0.38, BEPZA -- 19.78, BWDB -- 2.18, REB -- 64.16 and BTB -- 0.17

Loss Making SOEs (minus tax contribution)

BPC -- 561.88, BPDB -- 455.85, BJMC -- 405.77, DESA -- 336.11, BCIC -- 267.01, Biman -- 103.74, BTMC -- 44.52, BADC -- 33.34, BIWTA -- 27.16,



English forward Michael Owen (R) shoots the ball to score his team's second goal as Danish goalkeeper Thomas Sorensen (L) makes a futile attempt to stop the ball at Niigata Big Swan Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



PHOTO: STAR

Haphazardly stopped buses often create traffic backlog on the city roads. The snap shows the Paltan Crossing yesterday.

MV Subha capsized was an 'act of God'

RAFIQ HASAN

The capsizing of MV Subha in Baleswar river in Mathbaria in Pirojpur district on May 23 was an 'act of God', according to a report prepared by an official inquiry committee.

It said 'there was hardly any evidence because the vessel could not be salvaged'.

Talking to the Daily Star one of the five members of the inquiry committee said they found that the fitness certificate of the launch was valid and it was not overloaded. The member said the committee did not find any major flaws in the structure of the launch.

The report is likely to be submitted to the authorities concerned

today.

The committee, formed two days after the disaster, is headed by Mamtaz Ahmed, deputy secretary at the shipping ministry.

The Khulna-bound vessel coming

from Chardoani in Patuakhali with about 120 passengers was caught in a storm and capsized.

Thirty-one bodies were recovered and 24 people swam ashore.

It suggested that steps should be taken to improve the existing system of approving plans and building passenger vessels.

The existing system can not ensure safe journey through waterways, and a massive drive is needed to improve it, the report said.

The committee in its report also said that mechanised country boats plying on rivers should also be brought under a legal framework.

The MV Subha could not be salvaged. After three days' efforts, BIWTA abandoned its operation as it did not have appropriate equipment to pull ashore the vessel from under 120 water.

In another incident last month, about 400 people were killed when MV Salahuddin-2 sank in the Meghna after being caught in a storm.

Officials here hope the issue of Bangladesh's supply of gas should not remain bogged down in the whirlpool of domestic politics in that country and be viewed from economic considerations spin-off to Bangladesh in

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No stopping bus drivers?

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The traffic department of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) has failed to make bus drivers to stop their vehicles haphazardly.

Top officials of the traffic department said it is difficult to hold bus drivers liable for any offence, as 90 per cent of driving licenses are counterfeit and contain misinformation about the bearer.

This prevents the police from tracking down the culprit. Also confiscated licenses are never collected from police stations, as any driver would simply buy another one.

They said the police usually book owners of vehicle as per documents and the owners always end up paying the penalty. The drivers enjoy complete 'immunity' from law unless they are involved in accidents leading to death on the road.

Although the department had long pledged that they were deploying more men to clip the wings of the

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Germany crawl to quarters

AFP, Seogwipo

A goal two minutes from time from Oliver Neuville thrust Germany into the World Cup quarter-finals here yesterday as they ground out a hard fought 1-0 win over minnows Paraguay.

Neuville's right-footed strike from close-in sealed victory in an uninspiring game played before a swathe of empty seats.

The victory hands Germany a last eight tussle with Mexico or the United States who play tomorrow.

While Paraguay exhibited more flair it was Germany's hard-nosed determination and physical superiority that secured a 13th quarter-final appearance in 15 World Cups.

After a sluggish first half they emerged from the break in a more attacking frame of mind and began turning the screws.

Germany have a trait of pulling goals out of the hat just when they are needed and the pressure paid

off in the 88th minute when Bernd Schneider's low cross from the right was slammed in by Bayer Leverkusen's Neuville.

Coach Rudi Voller, a player in Germany's victorious 1990 World Cup winning side, said it was a deserved victory.

"It was not really a football game in the first half," he admitted.

"Everyone was kind of shooting the

ball all over. "But we started to play in the second half. We were able to move out on the wings more and we deserved our victory."

Neuville said he was just happy to be in the starting lineup after losing his place before the World Cup.

"We played very well in the

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Political, economic issues to dominate FM's talks in Delhi

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Political and economic relations between New Delhi and Dhaka will be high on the agenda when Bangladesh Foreign Minister M Moshed Khan holds talks with Indian leaders here tomorrow.

Khan, who arrives here Monday night, will have talks with Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh and is expected to be conveyed that the two countries would be able to move forward for more intense cooperation in the economic sphere overcoming some "recent irritants" in bilateral ties.

A feeling that has run through the Indian establishment ever since the BNP-led government came to power in October last year is that Indo-Bangla relations should continue unaffected by the change of guard.

Diplomatic sources here say Bangladesh's recent offers to mediate between Indo-Pakistan military tensions have not gone down well in New Delhi which views this as a purely bilateral issue to be sorted out between India and its western neighbour.

The trade relations between the two countries also

struck a rough patch recently with Bangladesh making clear its unhappiness about the types of goods on which India granted duty-free access at the Commerce Secretary-level talks held in Dhaka in April this year.

Khan, according to the sources, is expected to urge India during talks here to allow duty-free entry to 25 categories of Bangladeshi goods while India had agreed to grant such facility to only 16 categories of goods from Bangladesh at the Commerce Secretary-level meeting in April.

The draft amendments to the Indo-Bangladesh trade treaty, which has already expired and is now on short-term extension, is also likely to come up during Khan's discussions in Delhi.

Demarcation of a very small portion of the boundary and India's bid to buy natural gas from Bangladesh are also likely to come for Khan's talks.

Officials here hope the issue of Bangladesh's supply of gas should not remain bogged down in the whirlpool of domestic politics in that country and be viewed from economic considerations spin-off to Bangladesh in

Egg seller shot by extortionists at Karwan Bazar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An egg seller was shot by extortionists in the city's Karwan Bazar area yesterday.

The victim was identified as Nazrul Islam of shop number 572 at Karwan Bazar Chicken Market.

Sources said the extortionists called Nazrul out of his shop, took him to a restaurant in the bazar area and demanded toll from him.

As Nazrul refused to oblige, the extortionists shot him in the thighs.

He was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and later shifted to the Orthopaedic Hospital as his condition deteriorated.

When contacted, the duty officer of Tejgaon police station said they were aware of the incident.

No case was filed in this connection till 9:00 pm yesterday.

BTTB loses Tk 60 crore

BCS telecom journal reveals Alcatel project design flaw

ABU SAEED KHAN

Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) has lost over Tk 60 crore due to the "substandard works and wrong equipment" supplied by Alcatel, according to a journal of the BCS Telecom Cadre.

The amount may be much higher if the case is properly investigated, says the 2001 issue of Teletech. Alcatel installed digital microwave links in Dhaka-Sylhet, Dhaka-Mymensingh and Dhaka-Bogra routes of BTTB's transmission network in 1994. But these links had been down for an average 50 hours per year since their installation, the journal claimed.

It alleged that the French vendor did not conduct necessary survey prior to installing these microwave links and fixed the antennas at lower heights. This caused obstruction to the radio path of the brand new microwave backbone and ended up with emitting poor transmission signals.

Such critical technical flaws frequently disrupted BTTB's NWD service and caused huge financial loss to the national exchequer. Bangladesh Television also uses BTTB's transmission backbone, and Alcatel's

"faulty" transmission network equally disrupted its nationwide broadcasting services.

According to sources, BTTB repeatedly urged Alcatel to fulfil its contractual obligation by repairing the faults during the warranty period. But the vendor ignored BTTB's distress signal.

Rather, the idea of hiring a foreign consultant at an estimated cost of Tk 40 lakh to solve Alcatel's problems was mooted at one stage. However, BTTB formed a Technical Committee in 1998 to address the grueling problems in Alcatel network. SATM Badrul Haque, the then Secretary of BTTB board, was the convener of the five-member committee.

The committee found that Alcatel had supplied under-sized antenna and installed those at lower height. The committee also observed the Alcatel links "miserably failed" to perform due to the "poor design" of radio path.

The committee recommended that Alcatel should replace its under-sized antennas with appropriate ones, adjust the antenna heights accordingly and replace other ancillary things as required.

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Grameen Match Report

AFP, Niigata

England's young lions made donkeys out of Denmark here yesterday to power into the last eight of the World Cup.

A header from Rio Ferdinand, Michael Owen's first goal of the tournament and Emile Heskey's strike a minute before half-time ruthlessly exposed the deficiencies of a Danish side that had dumped reigning world and European champions France out of the tournament.

The first-half goals allowed Sven-Goran Eriksson's side to switch to cruise control and preserve their energy for a possible quarter-final showdown against Brazil, who meet Belgium in their second round match tomorrow.

Jubilant England captain David Beckham, who had a hand in all three goals and produced easily his best performance yet in Japan, said England had no reason to fear any of the teams left in a tournament already deprived of Argentina, France and Portugal.

"I'm not bothered who we play. If you are in the World Cup you want to play against the best," Beckham said.

"We are a young team but we are not scared to play football. Brazil are one of the best teams in the world and Belgium are very good too. But we are not bothered now."

"We are two games from the final and we will see how it goes."

Ferdinand, who was again

magnificent at the heart of an English defence which has conceded only one goal in four games, said the team would relish the prospect of taking on Brazil.

"I grew up watching Brazil. I love Brazil. They are my second favourite team but there will be no favours handed out if we play them."

A beaming Eriksson said England

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DHL Spec Report