



Vessels are being built at a makeshift dockyard.

PHOTO: STAR

# Shady shipbuilding

## Draftsmen offer everything, from design to registration, in one package

MORSHED ALI KHAN

Virtually four draftsmen control the private shipbuilding sector at the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), sources said. These draftsmen – whose sole responsibility is to sketch the design drawn by a qualified naval architect – offer prospective vessel owners a complete shipbuilding package starting from design approvals to the registration for a fee. Prospective owners of vessels are happy to buy such compact packages which save a lot of administrative hassle and guarantee registration for their vessel no matter how feebly it is built. For years, the clique at the BIWTA has monopolised private shipbuilding; flooding the sector with sub-standard vessels including those that ferry thousands of people around the country.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

## Expunge JS proceedings on Hasina

### Hamid asks Speaker

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Abdul Hamid yesterday asked the Speaker to delete Tuesday's proceedings on a resolution against opposition leader Sheikh Hasina. "The House adopted the resolution and held the discussion on it in violation of the Constitution and the parliament's Rules of Procedure," he said at a press briefing at his parliament chamber in the evening. Hamid also described the deliberations against the opposition leader "filthy, vulgar, derogatory and beyond any parliamentary norms". "I've never heard such language being used in the House by the lawmakers in my 32 years as a member of parliament."

"The comments by the ministers and other treasury bench members

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

## Two DCC ward commissioners held after oath-taking

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two DCC ward commissioners were arrested yesterday soon after they were sworn in at Nagar Bhaban in the city. Abul Hashem Hashu of ward 43 of Awami League and AKM Ahmed Raju of ward 44 of the four-party alliance were elected commissioners in the April 25 elections. But due to the advance detention orders pending against them, they went into hiding ever since without taking the oath to office. But they had to finally come out to meet the deadline for oath. Yesterday, following the mayor's departure from Nagar Bhaban after the swearing-in, the two commissioners came out of the building and were arrested right away. They were sent to the Dhaka Central Jail. The government action was prompted by press reports regarding their involvement in criminal activities.

## Temporary ban on manpower export to Brunei

RAFIQ HASAN

The government has imposed a temporary and partial restriction on manpower export to Brunei. "None would be allowed to send workers to that country without clearance from the Bangladesh embassy there," said Mohammad Quamrul Islam, State minister for Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment. He said the restriction would continue until improvement of the existing situation of Bangladeshi workers there. The Bangladesh embassy in Brunei was asked to take up the matter of employment irregularities with authorities concerned, he told The Daily Star. He said that around 1,000 Bangladeshi workers have been victims of strike and agitation in three garment factories there following the death of a worker. About two hundred have already returned and many others are likely to come back. There are around 10,000 Bangladeshi workers in Brunei, sources said. The minister said Bangladesh embassy in Brunei is looking into the matter. The embassy is also in touch with the Brunei government about keeping some of the workers who do not want to go back, he added. On the other hand, the government has formed a five-member inquiry committee headed by Director General of Bureau of Manpower Export and Training (BMET) Shahidul Haque to investigate the incident of returning workers from Brunei. The committee has started inquiry and first session of the hearing already took place yesterday. "Drastic action would be taken against any recruiting agent found guilty by the inquiry committee," Quamrul said, adding that the committee would submit its report within a week. The returnees have named seven recruiting agents who charged more than Tk 2.50 lakh from each workers in stead of the government-fixed rate of Tk 50,000.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

## Gulshan-Baridhara-Banani lake

# Remove illegal structures, PM asks ministries

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday directed the Housing and Public Works Ministry and other ministries concerned to immediately remove all illegal structures from in and around the Gulshan, Baridhara and Banani lakes. Her directive came following a briefing by consultants of Gulshan-Baridhara-Banani Lake Development Project of the Public Works Ministry on the situation of the lakes in various phases. The consultants, Vitti-Sthapatibrida, gave a visual presentation of the lakes at different periods including 1979, 1990, 2000 as well as the present situation of illegal occupation and filling threatening the sheer existence of the Gulshan-Baridhara-Banani lakes

and causing environmental problems.

Lakes in the RAJUK's Master Plan of the capital and their present situation were highlighted during the presentation at the Prime Minister's Office seeking her intervention in the matter. Khaleda Zia, who inquired about the illegal constructions and fillings, also instructed the Ministry of Public Works and others concerned to take effective measures under the Natural Reservoir Conservation Act 2000 to save the lakes. She asked the Public Works Ministry to construct walkways all around the lakes for demarcation and clearly identify the areas of the water bodies. The prime minister ordered construction of bridges instead of culverts and pipe drainage to ensure natural flow of the lakes.

She asked the authorities concerned to take effective measures to ensure that residential character of the area is retained as per the original plan.

Khaleda Zia also directed the Ministry of Housing and Public Works to co-ordinate with others concerned and to take pragmatic steps for finalising the survey of the lake areas. Minister for Housing and Public Works Mirza Abbas, Information Minister Tariquul Islam, State Minister for Housing and Public Works Alamgir Kabir, Prime Minister's Political Adviser Haris Chowdhury, Principal Secretary Dr Kamal Siddiqui, Works Secretary Syed Tanveer Hossain and RAJUK Chairman Iqbal Hossain Chowdhury were present during the presentation.

## Private terminals in country

# Akbar for ceiling on container handling

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain has opposed allowing any private container terminal in the country unless there is a long-time ceiling on the number of containers it would handle. He also said it has to be ascertained first if the main channel of the Karnaphuli river would be affected or not if a private container terminal is set up there. "My personal opinion is that setting up of any private container terminal should not be allowed

without ensuring these," Akbar said. He was speaking as chief guest at a seminar on "Problems of ports and shipping in matters relating to export" in the city yesterday, organised by the Standing Committee on Export of the Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI). The government signed an MOU with the Stevedoring Services of America (SSA) in 1998 for building two private container terminals at Chittagong and Pangaon in Dhaka. The minister said, "They (SSA) wants to have a ceiling on container

handling for the first three years only. If it is accepted, there will be no container at Chittagong Port after 20 years. And then they might even ask for handing over the port to them," he said. In this connection, he referred some ports in neighbouring countries, including one in Thailand, which lost business to others. He pointed out that the national investment for Chittagong Port so far is more than US\$ 1.5 billion, whereas the foreign company would have to spend even less than US\$

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

## Graft case against Hasina, 2 others sent to Sessions Judge's Court for trial

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The graft case against former prime minister and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina and two others was sent to the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka, yesterday for trial.

Mohammad Ayub, Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, ordered transfer of the case to the Sessions Judge's Court after the case file was placed before him.

The two others are Abul Hasan Chowdhury, former state minister for foreign affairs and Dr SA Samad, former principal secretary to Sheikh Hasina.

Abdullah-Al-Zahid, officer of the Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAC) submitted the charge sheet to the CMM's Court, Dhaka, on Tuesday.

In the case filed with Tejgaon police station, it has been alleged that Sheikh Hasina in connivance with former state minister for foreign affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, former principal secretary Dr S A Samad and BEPZA Executive Chairman Brigadier General M A B Siddiq Talukder unnecessarily employed a lobbyist in the United States for garment industries that caused financial loss to the country to the tune of Tk 2.1 crore.

Siddiq Talukder's name was dropped from the charge sheet as the allegation against him was not proved.

In the charge sheet 15 people were shown as prosecution witnesses.

The case was filed with Tejgaon thana on December 11 last year. Abdullah-Al-Zahid, also investigation officer (IO) of the case, got approval from the Prime Minister's office on June 6 for submission of the charge sheet.

Three accused except Hasina were earlier granted ad-interim bail by the High Court. The court granted bail till submission of the police report.

## No link with Taleban activity: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said the government was on the alert for any evil design against the state or activities aimed to tarnish the image of the country.

"Legal action will certainly be taken against anyone found involved in anti-state activities," she asserted while replying to a question from M Rashiduzzaman Millat in parliament.

She informed the House that section cases had already been filed against three persons on specific charges of their involvement in anti-state activities. She also said investigation was on against another person for his alleged involvement in treason.

Khaleda Zia categorically denied Bangladesh's link with any Taleban activity. "Bangladesh is now known in the world as a modern moderate democratic Muslim country. This image will continue to prevail in the future."

She accused "a certain quarter" that suffered election debacle last October of trying to create anarchy in the country in a planned manner and to establish Bangladesh as a Taleban state in the eyes of the world.

## LP Gas Company to be privatised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The energy ministry yesterday decided to privatise the LP Gas Company Limited and float shares of three affiliates of the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) through stock exchanges in phases.

The bodies are the Padma Oil, the Eastern Lubricant and the Standard Lubricant.

At present, the private sector owns 50 per cent shares of the three BPC-affiliated bodies, and the Padma Oil and the Eastern Lubricant are already listed companies of the stock exchange.

Yesterday's decision taken at a meeting presided over by State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharaf Hossain means that the three companies will be privatised.

Prior to implementation of the decisions, the BPC will reassess the assets of the bodies according to the present market price, the meeting said.

## Appointment of House deputy leader Conflict, contenders grow as BNP delays decision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling BNP has not yet taken any decision on the appointment of a deputy leader of the House in place of AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, who was elected president over seven months ago. The indecision has, on the one hand, frustrated some frontline party leaders and increased the number of claimants to the position, on the other, said sources. They said the number of claimants has now risen to four, triggering a conflict among the groups in the ruling party. BNP sources said that Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at one stage almost finalised her decision on appointing BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan the deputy

leader of the House, considering his political background and contribution to the party. But later, Khaleda shelved her decision as soon as Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman became a claimant to the position. The prime minister thought of accommodating both Bhuiyan and Rahman by introducing a new post of deputy prime minister, the sources added. But another section of BNP leaders who are against Bhuiyan and Rahman hindered the move and suggested that others from outside the cabinet be appointed to the two vital positions. The group put up KM Obaidur Rahman as a candidate for the position of deputy leader and suggested that the post of deputy prime minister should not be introduced.

They argued that both Bhuiyan and Rahman hold important positions in the party as well as in the cabinet.

Meantime, BNP standing committee member Col. (Retd) Oil Ahmed MP, who was not inducted into the cabinet, also expressed his desire to be the deputy leader of the House.

According to BNP insiders, the group opposed to Saifur Rahman and Mannan Bhuiyan has been pursuing the prime minister to appoint KM Obaidur Rahman the deputy leader, arguing that such a post should be occupied by someone from outside the cabinet.

On the other hand, the sources

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

## Contingency plan suggested to face fallout of war

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday suggested that Bangladesh formulate a contingency plan to face the consequences of any possible outbreak of war between India and Pakistan in future. Bangladesh should not be pushed to the position of a "mere spectator and hostage" to the 55-year rivalry between the two major neighbours who have their own objectives and "understand each other better" and do not care for concerns and opinions of other smaller neighbours, they said. The speakers expressed the views at the daylong seminar titled "India-Pakistan Conflict: Consequences for Bangladesh" organised by the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) at its auditorium. The seminar was inaugurated by State Minister for Foreign Affairs Reaz Rahman and addressed by BISS Chairperson Mufleh R Osmany. Prof. Abdul Quaiyum, former chairman of the Atomic Energy

Commission, and Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury, journalist and columnist, presented keynote papers on two sessions of the seminar. Prof. Nooruddin Ahmed presided over the first session and Prof. Moniruzzaman Miah, former vice-chancellor of Dhaka University, the second session. Zaglul Ahmed in his keynote paper said, "A conventional war between India and Pakistan is unlikely to be a 'limited one', as many believe, since both nations are major military powers despite India being stronger in terms of area and population. A conflict can be fearsome. In the case of war, any neighbours cannot be safe. Just in case, atomic weapons are used in the war between the two nuclear rivals, the neighbours will be far more dangerously exposed."

Bangladesh, Zaglul Ahmed said, must make all-out efforts to prevent the war. He suggested that a taskforce be set up to deal with any such eventuality in the region.

Prof. Quaiyum in his paper explained the devastating effects of modern atomic weapons. He also spoke about the recent development of delivery capacity of the two nuclear rivals and cautioned that if nuclear devices are dropped, radiation fallout will be devastating. The consequences of nuclear war will lead to an effect of radiation flowing into rivers and contamination of foodstuffs, among other adverse effects.

Prof. Moniruzzaman rounded off the discussion by saying Bangladesh

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

## For your information, Mr. Mayor



PHOTO: STAR

Every morning, hundreds of fish-traders flock to the Panthapath area, near the FDC rail gate, where an illegal fish market has thrived in the very presence of police, the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and the Bangladesh Railway, the owner of the land. The market encroaches upon one of the busiest thoroughfares of the city. Worse, with its huge remains scattered all over and unbearable stench, the market poses hazards to the public health. Some of the most prestigious establishments, including the Sonargaon Hotel, are situated in the area. About two years ago, the DCC bulldozed the market after the local business executives lodged several complaints. But the market bounced back by 24 hours thanks to a ruling party minister and his son. Traders in the market said the only official wholesale fish market is located at Swarighat in Old Dhaka. But congestion left Swarighat virtually inaccessible to the traders. They do not have any option other than sit on the road. The traders claim that they pay a huge sum of money every day to police and the DCC men for space. They hope the DCC provides them with a space for a wholesale fish market.

