

AL enforces hartal till noon in capital today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka city unit of the Awami League will enforce a half-day hartal in the capital today. The hartal would start at 6:00am and continue till 12 noon, said a party press release. The AL called the hartal to protest the arrest of Sayeed Khokon, a party candidate in the last parliamentary polls, without warrant from his city residence. Khokon was later shown arrest in a regular case. On June 30, police also foiled a scheduled procession by the central and city units of the AL. Over the last few days police raided the residences of AL presidium member Tofail Ahmed, AL central committee member and former chief whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah and former state minister

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Remitters' welfare fund used for 'political gains'

RAFIQ HASAN

Around Tk 50 crore from the Wage Earners Welfare Fund has been drained out for purposes other than what it is primarily meant for, sources said. The labour ministry allocated the money for construction of schools and madrassahs for 'political gains' in the last few years. The fund which comprised more than Tk 105 crore a few years back was not utilised for 'legal and logistic support' to Bangladeshi workers abroad subjected to torture and cheating by their employers or languishing in foreign jails. Over 1500 of the workers are now in foreign jails. Although the fund was created through mandatory donation from the workers going abroad, it hardly benefited them. During the previous Awami League rule, 1393 schools and madrassahs in different areas were given Tk four lakh each on the recommendations of party lawmakers concerned. The fund was given for 'political gains' and not for spread of education, said State Minister for Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Mohammad Quamrul Islam. He however said there is a provision for providing financial assistance to educational institutions from the wage earners fund, but those should be in the areas where large number of children of expatriates live. Only Tk 2.8 crore was distributed for education purposes during the

previous BNP rule (before AL rule), Quamrul Islam said. But during the AL rule, money was disbursed from the fund in the name of development of schools and madrassahs in various areas where hardly any family of expatriate lives, he alleged. As many as 34 schools and madrassahs in Chatkhil Upazila under Noakhali district got allocation from the fund. Besides, 19 educational institutions in Tungipara and Kotalipara, the constituency of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, got the fund money, sources said. When contacted, the then minister for labour and employment Abdul Mannan categorically denied the allegation of misuse of the fund during the AL rule. He however admitted that some amount from the fund was used for 'infrastructure development' but that was allocated through the wage earner board headed by the labour secretary. The money was disbursed through deputy commissioners and thana nirbahi officers and not through any member of parliament. The initiative was taken for the welfare of the wage earners' children living in the country, he claimed. "It was nothing new because such initiative was also taken during the previous BNP rule (before AL rule) when Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan (now LGRD minister) was labour minister," Mannan said.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

5-member public expenditure review body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A five-member public expenditure review commission has been formed to make the financial management of the government more disciplined, efficient and dynamic. M Hafizuddin Khan, former advisor to the last caretaker government, has been appointed chairman of the commission, a government handout said yesterday. The other members of the commission are former secretary Md Habibur Rahman, Director General

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

Rejoinder and our reply

Chief Conservator of Forest (CCF) Anwar Faruq has contradicted the report headlined "Justice goes wild on forester" published in The Daily Star on July 1. Faruq admitted that the land under Shafipur mouza (CS No. 628 and current RS 784) in Kaliakoir Upazila in Gazipur is a government forestland under official gazette, although the Jamuna Group

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

INSIDE TODAY
Special Supplement 17-20
A special 4-page supplement on the 226th Independence Day of the United States of America

Announcement
Due to technical difficulties, this week's Rising Stars has not come out today. Look out for it on Saturday. Therefore, the price of today's issue will be Tk 7.00 only.



PHOTO: STAR

Children of SP Khairul Bashar, who allegedly killed himself with his service revolver, look at their father's picture at their Boro Maghbazar residence in the city yesterday.

SP commits 'suicide'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A superintendent of police (SP) allegedly committed suicide at his Boro Maghbazar residence in the city's Ramna area in the early hours of yesterday. Khairul Bashar, 45, SP of Faridpur, shot himself dead with his service revolver at his flat of Ramna Tower at 1:35am. He was on a three-day leave for the treatment of his son, police said. "I heard a gunshot and found a revolver on the floor," his eldest daughter Tanni alias Tony said. Bashar was rushed to the Monowara Hospital and later shifted to the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University. Finally, he

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Japanese FM tells Dhaka plays the role of stabiliser in South Asia

STAR REPORT

Japan feels that Bangladesh is playing an important role as a stabiliser in the South Asian region. "Japan views Bangladesh as a moderate and democratic Islamic country. It attaches great importance to the role Bangladesh plays as a stabiliser in South Asia." This was stated by Yoriko Kawaguchi, foreign minister of Japan, in an exclusive Internet interview with The Daily Star recently. The Japanese foreign minister also spoke about Japan's changed role in the international community and its desire to pursue a proactive and positive foreign policy. "Japan says what must be said and does what must be done in the international community to ensure and enhance the security and prosperity of it," she said. On Bangladesh, Kawaguchi said, Tokyo-Dhaka ties are based



Yoriko Kawaguchi

on 'positive economic cooperation'. "Japan", she said, till now "is the largest provider of development assistance to Bangladesh. In future we intend to strive for further development of Japan-Bangladesh relations."

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

SSC exams pass rate improves this year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Results of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations under the seven education boards of the country held in March this year were announced yesterday with the average percentage of pass being 39.88. The percentage was 35.22 last year. The results were given in letter grading system for the second year. Of the 10,25,457 examinees enrolled under Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Comilla, Jessore, Barisal and Sylhet boards, 10,05,937 appeared at the examinations and 4,08,979 passed. The average percentage of pass of male students is 42.33 and that of female students is 37.06 under the seven boards. The percentage of pass is 43.80 under Dhaka board, 37.80 under Chittagong board, 39.94 under Rajshahi board, 29.24 under Comilla board, 50.72 under Jessore board, 36.39 under Barisal board and 41.97 under Sylhet board. The highest percentage of pass -- 50.72 -- is under Jessore board while the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Plan to raise banks' capital requirement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is planning to increase the capital requirement for banks to cope with their capital inadequacy. "We are giving it a serious thought. We may raise the capital requirement to Tk 100 crore for private banks so that they do not suffer from chronic capital inadequacy," Finance and Planning Minister Saifur Rahman said yesterday. The minister was talking to newsmen at the finance ministry after a meeting with the members of the newly formed Bank Reform Committee to devise ways for salvaging the banks from huge defaulted loans. However, the minister said the banks which would not be able to

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Ashuliya, other areas Decision to stop illegal landfills

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Following a series of articles by The Daily Star, the government decided to stop all illegal landfills of low-lying areas around the city including Ashuliya, the main flood flow zone and vital retention point of flood water. The authorities also directed law enforcers of the relevant area to take action if anybody tries to fill up the low-land around the city. The decision was taken at a high level inter-ministerial committee meeting held at the public works ministry yesterday. All developers engaged in the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3



PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Rajuk filled up part of the Uttara Lake at sector No. 13 in the Uttara Model Town in the city in flagrant defiance of the environmental laws.

Undercover, Rajuk fills Uttara Lake

JULHAS RIPON

Rajuk has filled up a portion of the Uttara Lake at sector No. 13 in Uttara Model Town in the city to allot plots undercover. Some Rajuk officials started filling up the site in 2000 in an underhand dealing with some influential people, sources in Rajuk said. Later, Rajuk has changed its mind and is now looking for an alternative, the sources added. Defying the wetland protection act as well as the appeals of Uttara residents, Rajuk filled up at about 33,000 square feet of the lake along the Road No. 2 to allot plots to some influential people, the residents allege. Despite repeated appeals to Rajuk, the dumped soil is yet to be removed from the area -- surrounded by sector Nos. 3, 7, 5 and 13, they complained. Earlier, a large area on the eastern side of the lake at sector No. 7 was filled up and allotted to people. The plot owners already raised constructions on the land, the residents said.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Auditors to check past loan rescheduling, interest waiver

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It is the managerial weakness of the banks and not so much political pressure responsible for huge defaulted loans. This was the observation of the members of the newly formed Bank Reform Committee to suggest solution to the default loan problem. As it has become a common practice for banks to reschedule loans and even offer interest waiver to defaulters, the committee will also check if any irregularities were

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1