



Serena sinks Venus' hope of a treble

AFP, London

Not content with deposing older sister Venus as world number one, Serena Williams spoil the top seed's dreams of a Wimbledon hat-trick at the All England Club yesterday.

The 20-year-old Serena, the second seed, claimed her third Grand Slam title with a 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 win in 78 minutes over 22-year-old Venus, who had been bidding to

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7



The Daily Star UPL launch Dr Mahmud's book today

STAR REPORT

The Daily Star and the University Press Ltd will jointly launch a book written by economist and former advisor to the caretaker government Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud.

The publication ceremony of the book titled 'Popular Economics: Unpopular Essays' will be held at the CIRDAP auditorium, Chameli

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

AJM to pay arrears of workers today

STAR REPORT

The management of the recently closed Adamjee Jute Mills (AJM) Limited will pay the outstanding wages and salaries of workers and staff today and start paying the golden handshake from July 15, Jute Ministry and AJM sources said.

Workers will get arrears of one week's salary and house rent for one month. Besides, about 1400 officials will also receive their salary today, said the sources.

There are around 24,000 workers still in the AJM complex waiting for their dues. Workers and employees have already submitted the forms and photographs for the golden handshake.

The AJM management has formed an emergency cell comprising over 500 employees to continue the emergency services of the closed industry. The cell is responsible for finalising the dues of workers, employees and officials, said a top official of AJM.

"Although the mill was shut down on June 30, many of the workers, employees and officials are still in their houses inside the AJM complex as their wages and salaries are yet to be cleared. So the utility services have to be continued," he said.

An emergency meeting of the Jute Ministry and Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation held recently has approved a policy to pay the entire amount of golden handshake to the workers, employees and officials of the closed mills.

"As per the policy, we will clear the payment. We have requested the Finance Ministry to pay Tk 420 crore to clear all dues. So far, we have received Tk 290 crore and the rest will be available immediately after golden handshake payments starts on July 15," Jute Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmad told The Daily Star yesterday.

Our Narayanganj correspondent adds: Following the comment of opposition leader Sheikh Hasina about the mill's closure, the security of the mill area was tightened from Friday apprehending trouble, with BDR and armed police raiding different areas of Adamjee Nagar.

Although the family members of workers already left the mill area last week, police are on high alert and are not allowing anyone to assemble in meetings or other gatherings. Sources said no outsiders would be allowed to enter the mill area from today. AJM authorities have already sealed the main factory area and are not allowing anyone entry without a pass.

Titas transfers tampered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A powerful corrupt and influential clique has been instrumental in transfers and postings at the Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd.

This lobby has already intimidated the Titas authorities into transferring officials of its choice last month. This group enjoys the blessings of a Petrobangla high-up who previously held a top position in Titas.

Petrobangla, the holding company of Titas, transferred 15 officials of the transmission company last month, while Titas authorities also did the same to eight others.

Sources said this group also enjoys the support of the ruling BNP-backed trade unions. State Minister for Energy Mosharrif Hossain also sides with this clique, Titas insiders said.

Sources said a number of honest officials have recently been transferred from Titas to make room for dishonest officials in some vital posts.

In a very recent case, an official with corrupt reputation has been posted to Narayanganj for the fourth time. There are several departmental corruption charges against this official. Narayanganj is a lucrative zone for corrupt officials as a large number of industrial units there tamper with meters in connivance with some Titas men.

Another official with questionable reputation has been re-posted to the planning department of Titas.

A 'corrupt' official is not handing over his responsibilities to his replacement and is resisting the latter from joining the post.

On the other hand, an official posted to Titas at Petrobangla's recommendation is facing strong

resistance from this corrupt circle. Sources said trade union leaders are being used to harass this man.

Meanwhile, discontent is running high at the Petrobangla and Titas as the energy ministry has assigned the director of planning of Petrobangla to oversee the Titas affairs contrary to the organisation's tradition. Previously, the director of administration of Petrobangla used to carry out this responsibility.

The planning director has also been given the responsibility to look after two other Petrobangla companies -- Gas Transmission Companies Ltd (GTCL) and Rupantarita Prakritik Gas Company Ltd (RPGCL).

This has created resentment among Petrobangla employees and officials as the planning director is also junior to most of the other directors.

75 held while being trafficked to India

UNB, Benapole

At least 75 people including women and children were rescued from the truck terminal area of Benapole check post while being trafficked to India yesterday.

Of them, 21 were women, 22 children and 32 men.

BDR sources said these people were brought from Narail and Abhoynagar of Jessore district by a bus in the morning.

The traffickers, however, fled the scene. A case was filed.

Magurchhara blowout Petrobangla seeks govt guidelines for compensation claim

UNB, Dhaka

Petrobangla now seeks further policy decision and guideline from the government regarding realisation of compensation from Unocal for Magurchhara blowout.

"We have decided to seek opinion from the government on the matter and a request letter addressed to Energy and Mineral Resources Division has been drafted," a senior official at Petrobangla yesterday told UNB.

Dr Mohammad Ismail, director (operation) of Bangladesh Oil, Gas and Mineral Corporation, or more popularly known as Petrobangla, said the letter would be sent to the ministry by today.

State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharrif Hossain speaking to UNB over phone from his hometown Mymensingh said the government would make some suggestions after consultation with experts and at the top level of the government.

"I heard Unocal responded negatively to Petrobangla's claim of compensation for the Magurchhara incident. Let's see what can be our next course of action," he said.

Petrobangla chairman Syed Sajedul Karim would not talk to the press on the sensitive issue and had his personal staff tell the press to talk to the director (operation).

Dr Ismail said Petrobangla had sent the letter to Unocal claiming US\$ 685 million for burning 245 BCF (billion cubic feet) of gas following a report of the inquiry committee that probed the blowout.

In response, the US giant Unocal said the issue of compensation was already resolved through signing of supplementary agreement for blocks 13 and 14, awarding Bangladesh extra five per cent additional shares.

Unocal said there is no scope for discussion on the compensation issue, while Petrobangla says it will take steps for dialogue on the basis of government's guideline.

"We can sit across the table and discuss the issue. We claimed the com

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

FOR YOUR INFORMATION, MR. MAYOR



PHOTO: STAR

Truckers have taken over the entire road on the Dholai Khal to park and repair their vehicles. Many in the area believe the former mayor handed over the road to the truckers in secret. The truckers say they do not have any alternative site in Old Dhaka where hundreds of trucks are needed every day to carry merchandise. The truckers, however, are 'kind enough' to leave a narrow lane for rickshaws! There has hardly been any initiative to regulate the parking facilities in the city. To enormous sufferings of the commuters year after year, these heavy vehicles have taken over this important road, which could have otherwise reduced traffic congestion on many streets in the old part of the city.

Marketing of Mercedes-Benz launched in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

If you are willing to dig deep into your fat purse and have an eye for world-class vehicle -- Mercedes-Benz, all you have to do now is go to the showroom of Rancon Motors Ltd., make a pick and place an order. The company will do the rest.

Rancon, a sister concern of the Rangs Group, has been awarded the sole distributorship of Daimler-Chrysler AG, Germany, the maker of Mercedes-Benz, since January 1, 2002 for both passenger cars and commercial vehicles.

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury formally launched the marketing of Mercedes-Benz in the country by unveiling covers of M-class SLK-2

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SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

DCC proposes Tk 677.34cr budget for fiscal 2002-03

BSS, Dhaka

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has proposed Taka 677.34 crore budget for the fiscal 2002-2003.

The DCC also proposed Taka 401.34 crore revised budget for the fiscal 2001-2002.

Sources at the DCC Revenue Department yesterday said that the proposals would be placed before the corporation's council meeting to be held on July 9. After approval by the council, the new budget would be formally announced by Mayor Sadek Hossain Khoka, MP on July 11.

In the proposed budget, Taka 487.8 crore has been earmarked for various development works including development of the DCC and various infrastructures of the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

AL-BNP gunfight leaves one dead, 15 hurt in Munshiganj

UNB, Munshiganj

A gunfight between Awami League and BNP activists at Dighirpar Bazaar in Tongibari upazila left one person dead and 15 others injured on Friday night.

The dead was identified as Suruj Mia, son of Jalal Bepari of Beshanal village.

Police and witnesses said the clash between the supporters of Waliullah, a former UP chairman, and Sohrab of Awami League took place over establishing supremacy

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

500 more villages flooded in Assam overnight

Seven lakh marooned: Brahmaputra rising fast, breaching embankments, snapping road links

AFP, Guwahati

Flooding in India's northeastern state of Assam worsened yesterday as overnight rains submerged scores more villages, leaving up to 700,000 people cut off, officials said.

"The river Brahmaputra and its tributaries are rising menacingly, breaching embankments and snapping road links across the state," Assam Flood Control Minister Nurzamal Sarkar told the wire service.

"Apart from the worst-hit eastern Assam district of Dhemaji, several villages in the districts of Morigaon and Sonitpur have also been submerged in overnight flooding," he said.

Road communication between Dhemaji and rest of Assam has been snapped for the past five days with floodwaters overtopping the

national highway in at least three places.

"At least 150 villages in Morigaon district have come under floodwaters overnight following a breach in an embankment," the minister added.

Unrelenting rain over the past week has inundated up to 17,500 villages in the state and Sarkar said the danger was far from over.

"We are extremely worried with most of the tributaries of the Brahmaputra showing a rising trend and flowing much above the danger level at various places," he said.

Rescuers yesterday and the day before battled to move hundreds of thousands of people trapped by floodwaters to safety.

At least eight districts in the state have been hit by the floods.

The government yesterday opened relief camps in the worst-hit

districts of Dhemaji and Morigaon to shelter homeless villagers.

"We have asked the district administrations to open relief camps and provide food and medicines to the inmates," Sarkar said. "The army has been alerted and asked to assist the civil authorities in relief and rescue operations."

The state meteorological observatory in Guahati forecast more heavy rains over the weekend in Assam.

"Heavy rains accompanied by thunder squall are likely to hit Assam during the next 48-hours," a weather office official said.

Flash floods triggered by monsoon rains in India have already killed hundreds of people. As well as Assam, the worst-affected states have been West Bengal, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2