

Shoddy SoEs up for sale

Over 60 mills, factories earmarked for privatisation

RAFIQ HASAN

Dozens of state-owned mills and factories are being shut down, mainly with the objective of privatisation. After the closure, all the workers and employees would be given a golden handshake and the factories would be sold out to private enterprises, according to the government plan. There are more than 60 state-owned mills and factories earmarked for privatisation by the immediate past and the present governments. The government has already served closure notices to a number of factories, and more factories will get such

notices very soon, according to sources. Now the Privatisation Commission is handling mills and factories in various stages of the privatisation process. The commission is assessing the assets and values of those earmarked factories and tender notices against some factories have been floated, inviting bids from local and foreign nationals for buying those factories. The commission has recently invited tenders against a total of 17 enterprises. Of these, 10 factories are already closed and closure notices have been served

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Hasina, Vajpayee talk outstanding issues

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday had extensive talks with Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee at his official residence in New Delhi. The talks began at 12:30 PM and lasted 40 minutes. The two leaders discussed outstanding issues between the two neighbouring countries. Sheikh Hasina thanked Vajpayee for his valuable contribution to the liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971. Her press officials told UNB in the evening that the talks at the PM's official residence at 7 Race Course Road were held in a cordial atmosphere. The talks were "construc-

tive, the officials said. Principal secretary to the Indian PM and National Security Advisor Brajesh Misra aided Vajpayee during the talks while Kazi Zafarullah MP assisted Sheikh Hasina. Earlier, former Indian PM IK Gujral and Mrs. Gujral met Sheikh Hasina at her Imperial Hotel suite at 11 am. They exchanged views on different matters for an hour. Hasina will call on Indian President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam at Rastrapati Bhaban today (Wednesday) at 1 PM. Hasina, who arrived in the Indian capital on Monday night from Bangkok, also had a meeting with Indian External Affairs Minister

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Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina listens to Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee during a meeting at the latter's official residence in New Delhi yesterday.

4 laws amended Govt given unlimited time to return vested properties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday amended three laws, making them compatible to the just-enacted Speedy Trial Tribunal Act. The House also amended the Vested Property Return Act, allowing the government unlimited time to return vested properties to their owners. The main opposition Awami League, meanwhile, kept off the parliament after staging a stormy walkout on Monday over a bill that seeks to rename the Bangabandhu Agriculture Award as the National Agriculture Award. A small faction of the opposition bench, however, participated in the legislative business. Law Minister Moudud Ahmed piloted the three bills seeking changes to the Arms Act, 1878, the Explosive Substances Act, 1908 and the Narcotics Control Act, 1990, while Land Minister M Shamsul Islam steered the Vested

Property Return (Amendment) Act, 2002. Amendments to the arms, explosive and narcotics laws aim at speeding up investigations into charges in related criminal cases. According to the new provisions, investigation into a charge must be completed within 15 working days if the offender is caught red-handed. The investigation officer (IO) will be given 60 days from the date of receiving complaints about an offence or from the date of receipt of a court order for investigation.

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The bumpy reality

Less than 5pc city roads vehicle worthy

JULHAS RIPON

True, Dhaka city has a 3,200-kilometre road network. True, it is one of the most crowded metropolises in the world. However, the bumpy reality is only 150 kilometres or less than five per cent of the roads are vehicle worthy right now. The rest are simply potholed, worthy of a war-torn country. Strewn with potholes and carpets worn out, the roads cause public nuisance and accidents at regular intervals. Long and tedious traffic congestion slows down the city life, resulting in huge loss of work hours every day. The main thoroughfares, VIP and VVIP roads, as well as thousands of alleys, lanes and by-lanes across the city need urgent repairs and re-carpeting. From east to west and north to south, small or large, the roads bear the testimony of neglect, mismanagement and plunder by the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

According to officials of the DCC and the Roads and Highways Department (RHD), this year the city roads are in their worst condition in recent memory. Official sources said of the total road network, only 150 kilometres are vehicle worthy. Sources in the RHD said the condition of most of the city's 200km main thoroughfares and nearly 110km connecting roads is very poor. The rest 2,540km of road composed mostly of unplanned narrow lanes and by-lanes are totally unfit for vehicles. One hundred and fifty-two kilometres of feeder roads also are damaged largely. Experts in road construction think that now is the high time to conduct bitumen carpeting of the city's main roads as the rainy season is gone and winter has set in. They said if the authorities fail to start repairs and development works immediately, it would worsen the

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PHOTO: STAR

West Indian cricketers pose for a group photograph upon their arrival at Zia International Airport yesterday. The Caribbeans will play two Tests and three one-day internationals during their tour of Bangladesh.

Alleged physical abuse of student by teacher JCD men go on rampage at DU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least three students were injured as activists of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) went on the rampage at the history department of Dhaka University (DU) yesterday. Three female students and two teachers of the department were also assaulted. The incident took place following press reports yesterday that a female student of the university was physically harassed by a teacher of history department. The injured are Abdul Wahab, Shohag and Kamal -- all third year students of history department. Wahab was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with head injury. A section of newspapers reported that a female student of Sociology department was physically harassed by Mesbah Kamal, an associate professor in history department, on Monday in his office room. During the rampage from 11 am to 1:30 pm, Mesbah Kamal along with the female student took shelter in a departmental office and later quit the campus with the help of police. The students of history department came under attack when they tried to

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Shaheed Milon Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shaheed Dr Milon Day will be observed today to commemorate his supreme sacrifice to bring an end to autocratic rule in the country. Dr Shamsul Alam Khan Milon, the then joint secretary of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA), embraced martyrdom during the 1990 mass upsurge against the autocratic regime of H M Ershad. Milon was killed in police firing near the Teachers-Students Centre (TSC) of Dhaka University on November 27 in 1990. His death intensified the mass upsurge that toppled Ershad regime. Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Sheikh Hasina, in a message yesterday, paid rich tributes to Milon and said the supreme

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