

## Mixed reaction to move to raise retirement age

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There has been a mixed reaction among the civil servants over the government move to raise their retirement age from 57 to 60.

However, the majority of the government officials are happy with the recommendation of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Private Members Bills to put an end to contractual appointments in the administration. The committee also recommended that the retirement age be raised from 57 to 60.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, a number of officials -- currently holding joint secretary and additional secretary level posts -- supported the idea of giving no further contractual appointments.

They said contractual appointments have created a serious backlog of promotion in the administration.

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## Tk 25 lakh medicine haul at ZIA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In two separate incidents, customs officials at Zia International Airport (ZIA) seized medicines worth Tk 25 lakh from a Pakistani citizen and a Bangladeshi national yesterday.

Officials challenged Nushrat Jahan, a Pakistani national clad in 'burqa', just as she was crossing the green channel and searched her luggage.

Medicine worth about Tk 20 lakh was found in her possession.

The medicines include contraband Gynocoid tablet, Meloril tablet, Primulut-N, Kenaeort-A injection and Tienam injection.

Nushrat had arrived in Dhaka from Karachi by Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight (BG-032).

Her passport revealed that this was the third time this month she had travelled from Karachi to

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## Kerosene price likely to fall next month

UNB, Dhaka

Prices of kerosene and furnace oil are likely to be brought down sometimes next month, officials at the Energy and Mineral Resources Division said yesterday.

Both prices could be reduced by Tk 1 per litre, marking a 10 per cent reduction in furnace oil and about 6 per cent in kerosene prices.

The country annually consumes 6 lakh metric tons of kerosene and 2.71 lakh tons of furnace oil.

According to the officials, the government is planning to reduce the prices considering extensive use of kerosene by low income citizens and furnace oil in industrial units.

They hinted that the price of furnace oil might be reverted to the pre-January 5, 2003 rate of Tk 9 per litre. On that day, the price of furnace oil was fixed at Tk 10 per litre.

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# Pvt universities chase cold hard cash

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

Although private universities were established to deliver sound education as well as make money, many have become no more than mere businesses.

Only students from well-off families can afford the fees, which are mostly in the range of Tk 25,000-Tk 45,000 a semester. An honours degree in business administration costs between Tk 2.5 lakh and 6 lakh.

Students also have to pay "development fees", often for infrastructure and services that many might not use during their stay in universities. Moreover, they pay library, computer lab and sports fees.

On the whole, universities deliver poor services for the fees they charge, critics claim.

"Private universities have become a way of making quick

money rather than imparting quality education," a guardian of a private university student told The Daily Star.

He said the government had opened up the sector in order to spread the benefits of higher education but a section of businessmen had hijacked the idea to make quick money.

Private universities were "mushrooming", said State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin at a function to launch Eastern University last month.

He said it would be "suicidal" if businessmen continued to treat education as an industry.

The four-party alliance government approved the establishment of about 20 private universities last year. Nasir Uddin has suggested imposition of a five-year moratorium on approvals as most of those given the go-ahead were far from meeting the criteria set by the

University Grants Commission (UGC).

"Let's first ensure quality with the existing universities rather than allowing more," the minister said.

Private university founders blamed much of the problems on poor law and order, lack of suitable land to build up campus, delayed registration and a range of other problems.

"The deteriorating law and order and trouble from musclemen do not allow us to go for infrastructure building," one of the founders said, requesting anonymity.

Md Sabur Khan, chairman of Daffodil University, differed with the suggestion and identified lack of initiator's willingness as a barrier to fulfilment of private university requirements.

"It is not that difficult to have a

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# Gas disconnection drive begins Aug 1

## Tk 1200cr gas bills overdue

UNB, Dhaka

A countrywide drive will be launched on August 1 to disconnect gas lines of consumers who owe the country's four state-owned gas production and distribution companies a total of over Tk 1,200 crore in unpaid and overdue gas bills.

Officials said the drive is designed to recover the huge amount from both private and government consumers including those who have failed to pay for more than three months.

Private companies account for Tk 665 crore and government clients Tk 552 crore of the total amount.

The officials said the Energy and Mineral Resources Division at a high-level meeting yesterday gave the four companies of Petrobangla the go-ahead for disconnecting gas lines without any prior notices as the defaulters had already been given enough time to pay.

State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources AKM Mosharrif Hossain, who presided over the meeting, ordered the "highest

punishment" to any official found to be reluctant in realising the bills through disconnection.

The four gas companies asked to enforce the disconnection drive are Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd., Jalalabad Gas Systems Ltd., Bakhrabad Gas Systems Ltd., and Paschimanchal Gas Company Ltd.

The public sector clients, however, will have until August 15 to pay their outstanding bills.

The Tk 552 crore dues from the

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PHOTO: STAR

Activists of the Awami Shechhyasebak League attend their first council in processions yesterday, clogging the city roads with traffic during rush hours. The council was held at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh.



PHOTO: AFP

Bangladesh opener Hannan Sarkar executes a copybook straight drive off Australian paceman Brett Lee on the third day of the second Test at Cairns yesterday.

## Hasina blames govt for 'ruining' economy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday blamed the four-party alliance government for "ruining" the country during its 22-month rule.

"The present government marred the previous Awami League (AL) regime's stable economy with wrong policies," the AL chief said.

Addressing the inaugural session of Awami Shechhyasebak League's council in the city, Hasina said the government failed to secure people's life and curb price hike of essentials. So it has no right to remain in power.

Alleging that the coalition government has made the country a 'prison', she said people are passing their days in panic due to the government's 'vindictive politics'.

She said the country has become a safe haven for thieves, dacoits and criminals.

She urged all to unite to free the country from tyranny of the present government.

Hasina once again urged the prime minister (Khaleda Zia) to

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# Tigers take Test into Day 4

## Waugh has 150s against all nations

AFP, Cairns

Australia's evergreen captain Steve Waugh broke more records Sunday as his world champion side moved in for the kill on the third day of the second cricket Test against Bangladesh here.

Waugh, 38, followed up his 100 not out in the opening Test in Darwin a week earlier with an unconquered 156 as Australia waltzed to 556 for four wickets, the highest innings total against Bangladesh in their brief time in Testcrans.

Battling facing a huge 261-run deficit, Bangladesh showed commendable spirit until late in the day when they lost three quick wickets.

They reached stumps with a rocky 106 for four wickets, still needing another 155 runs to make the home country return to the batting crease.

Together are Sanwar Hossain (six not out) and Alok Kapali (10 not out) as Bangladesh face the prospect of another big drubbing a week after being thrashed by an innings and 132 runs in Darwin.

Bangladesh began their second

knock solidly, reaching a promising 87 for one wicket before the dismissal of opener Hannan Sarkar (55) triggered a collapse in which three wickets toppled for as many runs.

Leg-spinner Stuart MacGill, who tormented the visitors with a first innings 5-77, was again the bogeyman, snapping up 2-27 from 11 pin-point overs.

Australia declared their run-fest just before tea.

Waugh closed the innings immediately after his fifth-wicket partner, Martin Love, had completed his maiden Test century.

Love, desperately needing a good performance after his first-ball duck in Darwin, scored his century, his first in Tests, off 154 balls, hitting seven fours.

But it was Waugh's day and when he brought up his 150 in the second session off the bowling of Mohammad Ashraf, he became the first player to score 150 against all other Test nations.

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## Cab knocks woman to death at Mirpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A taxicab knocked a woman to death and injured a man at Mirpur while a passenger bus ran over a man at the Zia International Airport (ZIA) roundabout yesterday.

Halima Begum, 50, wife of Abdur Rashid of Block-B, Mirpur-12, was waiting to cross the lane at around 1:00pm when the yellow taxi cab (Dhaka Metro Pa-14-2588) hit an unidentified man standing nearby.

The cab then swerved and hit Halima, crushing her to a wall.

The victim's daughter, Nazma, rushed her to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the doctors declared her dead. The injured man was admitted to the DMCH.

Meanwhile, locals caught driver Abdul Motaleb and turned him over to Pallabi police. Police took the cab to their custody.

A murder case was filed in this connection.

In the other incident, an unidentified man, aged about 25 years, was hit by a passenger minibus at the ZIA circle at around 1:45pm.

A team of airport police rescued the critically injured youth and took him to the DMCH where the doctors declared him dead.

Witnesses caught the minibus (DM Ja-14-1517) but its driver managed to flee. Airport police seized the minibus.

## 2 al Jazeera staff held by US troops

REUTERS, Doha

The Arabic television network al Jazeera says US forces have arrested their correspondent and driver in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul while they were filming an attack on American troops.

"They were filming a civilian Iraqi car shooting at American forces in Mosul. So the Americans arrested the driver and the correspondent," an al Jazeera official told Reuters, but said he had no further information.

Earlier this month, Iraqi police arrested and later released four of the Arab station's employees in Iraq, suspecting one of them of inciting violence.

Al Jazeera had said the earlier arrests were sparked by tension with US forces in Iraq over its coverage of attacks on American troops.

The network has been widely criticised by Washington for its reporting of the U.S.-led war on Iraq and for broadcasting footage of Iraqi casualties as well as airing video and audio tapes of Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda network.

## 116 fishermen still missing in Bay

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

As the inclement weather in the Bay continued, at least 17 trawlers and 116 fishermen and crew are missing at the Patharghata coast of the sea, sources said.

Golam Mustafa Chowdhury, president of the Patharghata Fishing Trawlers Association said two fishermen of the five sunken trawlers managed to swim ashore while the rest 116 of the 12 trawlers are still missing.

Another source of the Fishermen Association confirmed that eight trawlers sank in the deep sea.

Reports from Charfession coast of Bhola revealed that seven fishermen of a deep sea-going trawler has been missing since July 25 after sinking of a trawler with 16 passengers on board. The missing are Abul Kalam 30, Hossain Miji 50, Abdul Khalek 29, Abdul Mannan 25, Joydul Abedin 35, Motahar 20 and Motasin 45.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
July 28		6-44 pm
July 29	5-26 am	

Prayer Timings		
July 28		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-30	5-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-50	6-55
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

## Mob lynches 3 'robbers' in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Three alleged robbers died in mob lynching at Ranipur village of Barguna district yesterday.

The victims, identified as Pintu, 24, Ashraf, 26, and Haider Ali, 44, were listed criminals of the area, police said.

According to sources, the locals of Ranipur arranged a meeting to find out the culprits of a burglary that had occurred at a grocery shop on Saturday.

People alleged that a notorious group was behind the theft.

When the group denied the allegations and threatened the villagers, the mob became furious and attacked them.

Pintu and Ashraf died on the spot and Haider Ali later died at the

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# AES plant sell-off string-struck

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An inter-ministerial meeting yesterday resolved that the Power Development Board (PDB) may conditionally allow US company AES to sell its two large power plants to British company CDC Globelac.

Organised by the Power Division of the Ministry of Energy, Power and Mineral Resources, the meeting emphasised realisation of a number of benefits in return for the unprecedented changeover in the ownership of the 450 MW Meghnaghat Power Plant and 360 MW Haripur Power Plant.

The energy ministry has now sought the prime minister's approval for allowing the sell-off.

As per contract, the AES cannot

sell more than 49 per cent of its shares in the first eight years of commercial operation. But the cash-strapped US company has been lobbying for relaxing this no-sell clause after it reached an understanding with Globelec last year.

On the basis of a set of recommendations put forward by a committee, the meeting said that the PDB should negotiate with the AES on the demised corridor for discharge channel, taking into account the future expansion of the power plants.

It also agreed that the priority agreement with the AES, which makes power purchase from the projects mandatory and ensures top priority right for the AES ahead of current and future independent

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## Govt to take up special plans to check river erosion: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said the government will take up a special programme in the coming dry season for effective management of river erosion in parts of the country.

"River management in Bangladesh is a tough job," she told a delegation of members of parliament from Chandpur district who called on her at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday.

The delegation included BNP MPs ANM Ehsanul Huq Milon, M Nurul Huda, GM Fazlul Huq, SA Sultan Titu, MA Matin and Alamgir Haider Khan.

During the meeting, the delegation pleaded for more funds to

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