

## BB sets default loan

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the outstanding amount as per the bank's audited balance sheet. This growth will be inclusive of loan write off.

The first MoU while laying out a similar target had excluded loan write off. As a result, the banks could hand out loans more than 5 percent of their outstanding amounts by using the funds of the written off loans. So, the new agreement specifically includes the written off loans in calculating the total fund.

As the last year's target of reducing overhead cost by 10 percent failed miserably, the new MoU sets a more realistic target of cutting the cost by 5 percent.

As per the MoU, the NCBs will have to implement, in due time, the central bank's foreign exchange risk management guideline and confirm it.

The managing directors of NCBs will directly supervise the dealing room operations. All existing adjusted old entries of Nostro accounts will be adjusted by August 31. The agreement also requires them to ensure that all such entries are reconciled within a maximum period of 90 days from the date of entry.

The MD of Agrani Bank, ASM Imdadul Haq, believes the new targets are not impossible to achieve. "Between January and May, we succeeded in recovering Tk 350 crore default loans," he said. "Within the remaining time, it seems to be possible to recover the rest of the targeted default loans."

He however is not sure about how far the banks will succeed in cutting their costs, as last year the overhead cost actually had increased.

"Just consider that when employees get their annual increment in salary, the overhead cost increases by 2 percent. But we have taken steps to cut other costs," he said, adding, "For instance, to cut transportation cost,

## Non-government pry teachers' five-day strike begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Non-government primary school teachers yesterday began a five-day strike across the country demanding nationalisation of their jobs.

The Non-Government Primary School Teachers Association has also threatened to go on an indefinite strike from July 10 if its demands are not met by July 8.

The teachers association will hold a rally at the Central Shaheed Minar on July 24 to declare the next course of action.

In a press statement, Mohammed Akkas Ali Sheikh, general secretary of the association, said they will continue the strike unless the prime minister assures them of meeting their demands.

"The academic activity of 42 lakh students of non-government primary schools in the country will be hampered if the government does not meet our demand immediately," he added.

## Khulna journo end protest programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Khulna journalists yesterday concluded their seven-day programme to protest the murder of Danik Janmabhumidi editor Humayun Kabir Balu with a mourning procession.

The procession was followed by a rally at Khulna Press Club compound. Addressing the rally, Shaikh Abu Hasan, secretary of the press club and Khulna Bureau Chief of Danik Prothom Alo, strongly condemned 'police failure' in arresting the killers of Balu, also the president of Khulna Press Club.

Meanwhile, the detectives are yet to make any progress in the investigation into the murder.

Acting Police Commissioner Shaikh Sajjad Ali said three arrestees being quizzed on remand are linked with underground operatives as evidences are available.

He said the real killers of Balu are hiding in the northern region of the country. He again expressed his hope to make headway in the investigation shortly.

## BDB challenges

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High Court order of deployment army personnel at each polling centre, the election was not held in a free and fair manner and it has no validity," Mannan told reporters after filing the appeal with the EC.

"So, we demand cancellation of the polls immediately."

The acting CEC assured the BDB leader of hearing the appeal in two or three days, Mannan said.

"The Election Commission is empowered to cancel the polls, if it finds gross irregularities."

"We will also move to the High Court challenging the legality of the by-election as its order for army deployment was violated," said Mannan, who resigned from parliament and the ruling BNP on March 10 to join the BDB, founded by former president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury.

Acting CEC Safiur did not comment on the allegations.

The BDB demanded postponement of the polls raising the allegations of widespread false voting, intimidating of voters and driving,

we have taken steps to convert the fuel system of all our cars into CNG."

Another NCB high official says, "A multitude of factors make it real difficult to trim the costs. Just consider the fact of the trade unionists using cars and phones for personal purposes at the expense of the banks, and yet the government does not want to be hard on them, because they are involved in ruling party's politics."

## Bangladesh-US ties to be strengthened further: Harry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and the United States have a strong and continuing relationship which will be strengthened further in the days ahead, said US Ambassador Harry K Thomas yesterday in a message on the occasion of US Independence Day.

"Trade and commerce are the roots of our prosperous relationship, but are not the only contact we have with one another."

The US ambassador said peoples of both the countries are connected by many fundamental beliefs: a belief in the rights of the individual, a faith in the rights of free speech, freedom of religion and free press, and a dedication to the fundamental principles of democracy.

"Today is a day for celebration and pride in the United States as well as in Bangladesh. We hope Bangladeshis will join Americans around the world in celebrating our friendship and achievements on July 4."

America proudly stands with Bangladesh in a mutual dedication to the ideals of freedom and liberty, he said.

## Probe report

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service, prompting the authorities to send food samples to two testing laboratories, including the ICDDR,B. The authorities have decided to make public the findings today, said a top BCS official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The Biman flight, BG-036, took off from Jeddah in the morning with 264 passengers on board, but about 35 fell sick two hours after having boiled rice, mutton and pulses soup. Many started throwing up, prompting the flight crew to alert the ground and provide first aid, said the official.

Armed with ambulances, wheelchairs and doctors, the ground staff at Zia International Airport (ZIA) treated the sick passengers of the aircraft that touched down at 11:45am on Friday.

"If it were food poisoning then 80 percent of the passengers would have fallen sick," the official added.

"Our own hygiene report found nothing wrong in the food sent from the catering centre. The same food did not affect others in the flight and the same food was sent to other flights including Riyadh-Dhaka and Hong Kong-Dhaka."

"There was no report of any untoward incident. This makes us believe that something went wrong with the food in the flight," he said.

The BSC's reputation is all the more at stake as it supplies food to a dozen international airlines. "We have immediately informed them of the incident because we don't want to leave them with any doubt about whether we are doing something about it or not," said the official.

"We will make sure that we get to the root of the problem so that this does not happen again," he said.

## Saber

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'added a black chapter to Bangladesh's democratic history'.

He asked Harris to take legal steps against the newspapers if he was sincere to his comments. "If he fails to do so, people in future will believe the pictures published by the government on the prime minister's activities are tempered with."

Saber, also organising secretary of the main opposition Awami League, said leading newspapers in their reports and pictures exposed the real atmosphere of Dhaka-10 by-polls, 'characterised by widespread fake votes and capture of polling booths by the ruling alliance activists'.

away of the opposition candidate's polling agent from booths on Thursday.

The acting CEC at a press briefing on the day rejected the demand, saying his office did not get any evidence of such allegations that called for cancellation of the polls.

He, however, admitted that the High Court order for army deployment at each centre was violated.

The BDB also questioned hurried gazette notification and swearing in the ruling alliance leader.

"The government has completed it in a hurry fearing legality of the by-election," Mahi told reporters.

EC Secretary SM Zakaria declined to comment on the fast steps to swear in Falu.

"Don't ask me such an irritating question," he reacted angrily to reporters and advised them to contact the acting CEC.

The Central Working Committee of the Awami League at a meeting with Acting President Abdus Samad Azad in the chair said the hurried oath-taking by Falu proved that the government rigged the by-polls.

## Cops release another Bangla Bhai man

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police yesterday freed another alleged cadre of Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) whom villagers of Shikdari-Sakua in Bagmara upazila handed over to them on Friday.

Sources said villagers caught Omar Faruk from Sakua mosque after Friday prayers after recovering leaflets, booklets and pictures of Osama Bin Laden and monogram of Al Qaeda from his possession. He was involved in the killing of Awami League (AL) leader Yasin, the villagers alleged.

Earlier on Thursday, police released three other alleged cadres of militant Islamic outfit the JMJB, including the prime suspect in Yasin murder case, reportedly under instructions of a deputy minister.

Bagmara police also recorded a case against villagers and local AL leaders for beating Faruk, a teacher at Sakua Hafezia Madrasa, over 'false accusation' of his involvement in the murder of Yasin.

"Police rescued Faruk while a mob was beating him hanging him with a tree, and villagers did not hand him over to police," investigation officer of Yasin murder case Abu Siddik said trying to justify his release.

"The question of arresting him (Faruk) does not arise as he did not commit any crime...He is imam of a mosque and a hafez (one who memorises the Quran)," Siddik said replying to a query.

But villagers claimed that in presence of police, Faruk admitted his close links to JMJB operations commander Bangla Bhai and also with the accused in Yasin murder case.

Bagmara AL General Secretary Zakirul Islam said leaders and workers of the party and its student front Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and youth wing Awami Jubo League were implicated in the case for beating Faruk. Saiful Islam, Bagmara BCL president, Kajol, organising secretary and AL and Jubo League workers Abu Bakkar, Shamim and Ashraf were named as accused in the case, he mentioned.

## DCC to award development contributors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) is going to award individuals, journalists and organisations for their contributions towards the development of the capital city.

The DCC has made the decision at a recent board meeting. The meeting has decided to award every year one individual and an organisation for their voluntary contributions and one journalist for his or her contributions through authentic reporting conveying social appeal for city development.

The award will be titled as Dhaka Nagar Padak (Dhaka city award) and introduced from December 16, the Victory Day, this year, officials said.

Each of the three awardees will receive Tk 50,000, a gold medal weighing two tolas and a citation.

Besides, the DCC will provide a good number of meritorious students with stipends.

Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, MP is expected to announce the awards and stipends next week when he will announce the DCC budget for the 2004-05 fiscal year.

There will be a special budgetary allocation of Tk 50 lakh for the award and stipend programmes, the officials said.

## Sharapova

FROM PAGE 1  
Jana Novotna in 1997.

Playing in her first grand slam final yesterday, Sharapova showed no early nerves and drew first blood by breaking the defending champion's serve to lead 3-1 after Serena ballooned a backhand long.

Serena, 22, was seeking her third successive Wimbledon singles crown but was unable to cope with the brute force of the 17-year-old's groundstrokes.

Sharapova broke again for 5-1 with a searing backhand winner and kept her composure to take the first set on her fourth set point when Serena netted a forehand service return.

The 13th seed maintained her momentum at the start of the second set and a shell-shocked Serena was struck on the nose by the ball after one particularly venomous groundstroke from the Siberian.

With both players troubled by the gusty wind, Serena thought she had wrested away the initiative when she broke for 4-2 but Sharapova defiantly broke straight back.

In an epic ninth game, Serena grittily saved three set points but Sharapova secured the decisive break when the American slipped and hooked a forehand out.

The fearless Russian then completed an astonishing victory on her second match point when Serena netted a forehand and she greeted her triumph by collapsing to her knees in tears in disbelief.

Sharapova's victory is the first for a non-American in the women's final since Czech Novotna in 1998, which is also the last year neither Venus or Serena held one of the four grand slam titles between them.

## Hartal passes

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it succeeded to put brakes on public life and economic activities. Shops remained closed, as well as most of the educational institutions, business houses and other establishments. All modes of vehicles, excepting rickshaws and a few motorised three-wheelers and buses, kept off the road.

Awami League (AL) called the 6:00am to 6:00pm general shutdown protesting what it said was unprecedented rigging in Thursday's by-polls in Dhaka-10 and the June 21 bomb blast at a meeting of senior AL lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta in Sumanganj that killed one person and injured 70 others. It was also to protest killing of two policemen by the cadres of ruling BNP's student wing during a robbery in Motijheel and killing of editor Humayun Kabir Balu in Khulna.

The party however kept Gazipur Sadar and Tongi from the hartal's purview to facilitate submission of nomination papers by intending candidates to Gazipur-2 parliamentary by-election slated for August 1, DHAKA.

In the capital, some 6,000 police and paramilitary troops were deployed at the vulnerable points to fend off troubles. A large consignment of police in riot gear cordoned off the AL central office in Bangabandhu Avenue since early morning and barred the party activists from gathering there. Police also made the area off-limits to pedestrians.

Mostly the women activists of the opposition staged demonstrations in different city areas during the hartal hours. Police batoncharged them in Bijoynagar and Paltan areas leaving over a dozen injured.

Police barricaded a procession of Awami Mahila League at Paltan intersection after it reached there from Bijoynagar at around 9:30am led by frontline AL leader Motia Chowdhury.

Being intercepted, Mahila League leaders and activists staged a sit in there. To disperse the demonstrators, police swooped on them wielding clubs and dragged a woman on to a police van, prompting Motia Chowdhury to board the vehicle by her own will. Some 15 other demonstrators followed Motia to the van.

The police vehicle took all of them to the gate of Motijheel Police Station and released them there.

Police batoncharged a procession of Jubo Mahila League, the young women wing of the party on Bijoynagar Road at around 11:20am, leaving several leaders and activists injured. Women police pounced on the procession from different directions and clubbed the processionists at will. They also dragged seven demonstrators and pushed them on to a police van parked nearby.

During the police action, some supporters of ruling BNP were seen hurling abusive words to the women

and urging police to beat and arrest them.

The AL women front leaders and activists who were presented before a court soon after the arrest are: Nazma Akhtar, Sanjida Akhter Bappi, Biplobi Al Majhi, Mahfuza Rina, Keshoara Sultana Salma, Asma Akhtar and Lipi Akhtar.

A group of AL lawmakers took out a procession from the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban at around 11:30am, which was joined in by other senior leaders when it reached Russell Square in Dhanmondi after parading along Mirpur Road. The processionists staged a sit in and held a rally at the square for over an hour.

Police also chased and dispersed processions of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Mahila League at Kalabagan bus stand when they were marching towards the rally of AL leaders and lawmakers at Russell Square in the noon.

During the chase, some opposition activists jumped into a nearby lake to avert arrest. Police nabbed two AL women activists at the spot.

In another incident, police dispersed a procession of Jubo Mahila League near Farmgate at about 11:30am.

RAJSHAHI

Our Rajshahi correspondent reports: Ruling BNP activists raided, looted, bombed and vandalised the house of a pro-AL ward commissioner of Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) in a startling show of arms right in front of police during yesterday's hartal hours.

At 11:30am, a band of BNP cadres sallied forth from Rajshahi City Bhaban and attacked a pro-hartal procession led by Al Mamoon, RCC commissioner of Ward No 15. They chased away the processionists, who later re-gathered and started hurling bricks at the BNP activists.

After a series of chase and counter chase between the two sides, an angry mob of BNP activists, along with some RCC employees, rushed to Ambagan at around 12:30pm, openly brandishing their firearms. In presence of police, they raided the house of Al Mamoon, ransacked it, vandalised the building and fired many times in the air to scare off people. None however was injured in the incident.

Except these incidents, the city was otherwise peaceful during the hartal.

NARAYANGANJ

UNB adds: Reports from Narayanganj said police charged baton on a pro-hartal procession in the industrial port town leaving 10 AL leaders and workers injured. Police also picked up six AL activists from the procession.

## Hasina for D8

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signatories to the D8 began in the Turkish city on Friday under the auspices of ESSAM (Economic and Social Research Center). ESSAM Chairman Recai Kutan chaired the meeting, also scheduled to be addressed by former Turkish prime minister and founder of the D8 Prof. Necmettin Erbakan, Malaysian former prime minister Mahathir Mohammad and former Indonesian president BJ Habibie.

She also suggested sending similar D8 delegations to important developed countries with a request to use their influence in ending the massacre of innocent Palestinians and help establish the Palestine state.

Hasina noted the rise of extremism and religious bigotry in some of our Muslim countries is a consequence of the problems in the Middle East as well as unwise and short-sighted domestic policies.

The former prime minister said the anti-Islamic feeling increased alarmingly as a result of what seems to be a 'systematic malicious anti-Islamic campaign perpetrated by certain vested quarter'.

She said the misconceptions about Islam and Islamic way of life are adversely affecting the relations of the countries belonging to Islamic ummah and the rest of the world. In fact, negative impact of this situation is having its toll on the development efforts of the developing world at large and the Islamic world in particular.

Hasina said the D8 countries should take the lead within the OIC to reaffirm commitment for strengthening the fraternal relations based on Islamic values.

She viewed recent developments in Iraq and Afghanistan as optimistic, but worried over the plight of the Palestinians with the calculated killings and destruction under what she said was cold and ruthless policies of the Israeli government.

On the objective and progress made by the D8 countries since the adoption of Istanbul Declaration on June 15, 1997, Hasina said there are progresses in many areas of cooperation, but the intensity of cooperation is slow.

The Istanbul Declaration envisaged improving developing countries' position in the world economy, diversifying and creating new opportunities in trade relations, enhancing participation in decision-making at the international level and providing better standards of living to the masses of the member countries.

The second summit of the organisation was held in Dhaka in March 1999. It adopted Dhaka Declaration

calling for increased interaction between the member states to achieve the goals set out at the time of inception of the D8.

The former prime minister also mentioned her government's efforts for women empowerment through various micro credit projects and protection of children's rights.

Stressing a speedy economic and sociopolitical collaboration among the D8 members to face the challenges of globalisation, she said a strong position of the group is needed to obtain a fair deal on trade and tariffs, on consumer-market access and access to financial market for funds.

In the globalisation process, she said, the growing 'digital divide' is threatening to marginalise developing countries like Bangladesh. She called for concerted efforts to liberalise economic structures, deregulate markets, encourage joint ventures and persuade private sectors to invest in other countries of the D8 based on comparative advantages.

As the only LDC in the D8 domain, she said Bangladesh needs duty-free and quota-free access to foreign markets to make a success its 'fragile export-oriented initiatives'. The country also requires foreign capital through both official and private channels to implement its development projects.

6-storey house

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Afsar told The Daily Star yesterday it was their private matters and journalists have nothing to do with it.

Afsar and Jamal also claimed they have proper permission from the Rajdhani Unnayan Katnipakkha (Rajuk).

"I have all sorts of permissions. I am not doing anything illegal," said Afsar Ali.

"There is no chance for it to tilt further as they have put sand to the bottom of the building," said Abdul Aziz, an engineer, whom the owners hired yesterday.

## President, PM

FROM PAGE 12

"Bangladesh greatly values its relationship with the USA."

She reiterated the commitment to work with the US president to enhance "all-round cooperation" to mutual benefit.

The prime minister believes that the ties of friendship with the USA will grow in strength in future.

Khaleda also wished him good health, happiness and long life and continued peace and prosperity of the friendly people of the United States.

## Rickshawpuller killed in city road accident

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A rickshawpuller was killed while another sustained serious injuries in a road accident in the city yesterday.

The accident occurred when a bus rammed two rickshaws in front of Asad Gate at around 3:30pm.

Abdul Barez, 25, died on the spot while the other was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in unconscious state.

The bus driver managed to flee the scene.

Tejgaon police could not give details about the accident.

## Grabbers swoop

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was sold out to individuals privately under a law. It allowed the original owners to claim their stakes in the lake's land if no development work was done on the acquired land within a specific period.

Emdadul Islam told The Daily Star that filling lake is totally illegal under the Wetland Protection Act, the Town Improvement Act 1953 and also under the Building Construction Rules. "Earlier, some of these plot owners somehow managed to have clearance certificates from Rajuk, but those are not valid any more under these protection acts," he said adding, "Soon we will go for eviction to make sure the lake is free from all sorts of encroachments," said Islam.

Owner of the so-called plot No.5, MA Malik said the 'land' belongs to him and threatened this reporter with dire consequences for publishing any report in this regard. His legal adviser, who identified himself as ATM Rafique told The Daily Star that they had all the documents, including Rajuk's clearance, to substantiate their claims to the plot. "This is not the lake but our very own land," Rafiq added.

Residents in the neighbourhood cited the name of Akhtaruzzaman Babu to have encroached most on the lake with several acres demarcated by pillars under his name.

## AL hartal

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President Abdul Ali Mridah. Bhuiyan said hartal has now no appeal and such shutdowns also do not reflect people's opinion.

Besides, he said, instead of party workers, hired men are engaged in picketing in favour of hartal.

The BNP secretary general said: "We can build a happy and prosperous country if we reach a consensus to stop hartal in the country."

## College student

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connections with the outlaws, also threatened Shilpi's family with dire consequence as his overtures were turned down.

On Thursday, Mukul and his accomplices picked up Shilpi into a microbus when she was returning home from her college at about 2:00pm and drove off to an unknown place, sources said.

Police arrested Mukul's father but could not rescue the girl until yesterday.

## Rab nabs close

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him with death and disrupting his construction work if he did not get the money.

Yunus consulted the Rab Battalion Headquarters in Uttara and agreed to pay Azgar Tk 50,000 in Joarsahara area in Badda at around 8:00pm Friday.

Rab men ambushed Azgar and his associate Sabbir Ahmad when they went there to receive the money.

A team of the elite anticrime force, meanwhile, arrested Monir Hossain, another top criminal of Cantonment Police Station, from Kakoli in Gulshan at 5:30pm yesterday.

Officer-in-Charge of Cantonment Police Station Abdul Malek said Azgar and Monir are close associates of 'Kala' Jahangir and control crime syndicates in the area.

## More workers

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he pointed out.

According to an estimate of Bangladesh Bureau of Manpower Export and Training (BMET) around 350 Bangladesh workers die in Saudi Arabia a year. A total of 528 expatriate Bangladeshis around the world died last year. Bodies of most of them were brought back home, BMET officials said.

Sometimes relatives of the dead bring the bodies back without informing the government.

In case of Saudi Arabia, relatives of many of the dead give consent to bury them in the holy cities of Makkah and Medina, one official said.