



PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka city Awami Hawkers League holds a candlelight vigil at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday in memory of the victims of August 21 grenade attack.

Govt to enact law to check power pilferage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is going to enact a law to check power pilferage that is causing a huge loss to the power sector. The draft of the law will be tabled in parliament as early as possible, said State Minister for Power Iqbal Hasan Mahmud yesterday. "The law will be applicable to both consumers and officials as consumers cannot pilfer power without the help of dishonest officials," he said at a programme titled 'Face to Face with Women Journalists' in the city. The law will have provisions for jail term and snapping of electricity connections as punishment.

The state minister said the Power Development Board (PDB) and Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (Desa) have been facing a total loss of Tk 4000 crore due to power pilferage, unabated corruption and non-payment of bills. He also said at least \$ 2.7 billion is needed to meet the growing demand for power. "If we get the money, we will be able to provide electricity for all." To stop power pilferage, pre-paid meter would also be introduced in Sylhet, Bogra, Chittagong, Sirajganj and Banani area of Dhaka in January, he said. The new law will include three stages of punishment for power pilferage -- if caught for the first

time, the person involved will get six months' jail term and the power connection will remain cut off for six months. If the act is repeated for the second time, the consumer will be jailed for one year and the power connection will remain cut off for two years. If it is repeated for the third time, the person will get seven years' jail term and will be deprived of electricity forever. "I do not blame the consumers for pilferage; the employees are mainly responsible for it," Iqbal Hasan observed. Bangladesh Centre for Development, Journalism and Communication (BCDJC) organised the programme.

Poets call on Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of poets and distinguished personalities met Awami League President Sheikh Hasina at her Sudha Sadan residence on Wednesday evening. They condemned the grenade attack on AL rally and demanded punishment to the culprits through international probe. The poets included Belal Chowdhury, Rafiq Azad, Mahadev Saha, Habibullah Siraji, Mohon Raihan, Tariq Sujat, Nasir Ahmed, Atrika Rosy and Atahar Khan.

EVICTED OF LANDLESS PEOPLE IN NOAKHALI

Rule nisi on govt

BSS, Dhaka

The High Court on Wednesday issued a *rule nisi* on the government asking it to show cause why it would not be directed to protect the landless people living in char lands declared as shrimp mahal in Noakhali. A division bench of Justice Mohammad Abdul Wahab Mia and Justice Zinat Ara also sought to know why the government would not compensate the landless people who were harassed, intimidated and evicted by the land grabbers and so-

called shrimp cultivators. The *rule nisi* was issued on a writ petition filed by Nijera Kori along with BELA, BLAST, Ain-o-Salish Kendro, ALRD and BSEHR, said a press release. In the writ, they sought settlement of the land in favour of the landless people as per the provisions of the Land Management Manual, 1990 and also the shrimp mahal management guidelines. The court also stayed the operation of the government memo declaring 11,955.59 acres of char land as 'shrimp mahal' in Noakhali that led to severe conflicts, unrest and dispute in the locality. The court order will protect 40,000 landless people who fell victim to river erosion and started living in the khas char land, the press release added. The order has been served on the secretaries of land, environment, and home ministries, inspector general of police, divisional commissioner of Chittagong, deputy commissioner of Noakhali, assistant commissioners (land), Sadar Upazila, Noakhali, and assistant commissioner (land), Companiganj Upazila, Noakhali. Advocates Dr Mohammad Zahir, Sigma Huda and Iqbal Kabir appeared on behalf of the petitioners.

NGOs against immunity to WB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Allowing the World Bank to enjoy organisational immunity from any judicial proceedings would mean infringement of people's constitutional rights, said an NGO alliance at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity Auditorium yesterday. Representatives of the Alliance against World Bank Immunity, an affiliation of at least 25 national and local NGOs, have expressed their concern over a draft bill named The International Financial Organisation (Amendment) Bill 2004, and said the government has initiated the bill to amend The International Financial Organisation Order 1972. They called upon the government not to enact any law that may allow the WB or any of its auxiliary bodies immunity from legal proceedings as such immunity would go against the people's fundamental right to seek redress to any damage caused either to themselves or to the country. "It's unprecedented to make laws beyond the purview of the Articles of

Agreement which entitle the WB staffs to various privileges, as no member countries have so far given the bank immunity from legal proceedings," said Aurup Rahi, one of the representatives, while reading out a written statement. As the WB is a public organisation and not a private one, any aggrieved person or agency must have the right to sue it in case any of its acts inflicts damage, it added. The statement said the WB sought such immunity following a case filed by its former official Ismat Zerin Khan when she was sacked from the job. "As the bank, through its worldwide experience, has realised that its activities are harmful for the people in many cases, it now seeks immunity from legal proceedings," said Farida Akhter of Ubiniq. Alliance Coordinator Aminur Rasul and Executive Director of Voices for International Choice and Empowerment Ahmed Swapan Mahmud were present at the press conference.



PHOTO: PID

US Ambassador Harry K Thomas called on Education Minister Dr M Osman Farruk at his secretariat office yesterday.

US concerned over political situation

UNB, Dhaka

US Ambassador Harry K Thomas yesterday aired American government's concern over Bangladesh's political situation stemming from the August 21 grenade attack on an opposition party rally. The envoy called on Education Minister Dr M Osman Farruk at his secretariat office. They held "wide-ranging discussion" on the country's present political situation, officials said. Harry hoped that democratic environment would be maintained in Bangladesh through the restoration of "normalcy and stability" in the country. The minister informed the envoy about the country's existing political

condition, particularly the August 21 incident, and the measures taken by the government. Thomas expressed satisfaction at the steps and conveyed to the minister his government's support to the activities of Bangladesh government. Dr Osman Farruk drew attention of the ambassador to the visa complexity facing the US-going Bangladeshi students and officials in pursuit of higher studies. Harry Thomas assured the education minister of steps to solve the problem by October.

US embassy closed on Sept 5, 6

BSS, Dhaka

All offices of the United States Embassy in Dhaka will remain closed on September 5 on the occasion of American Labour Day, a US national holiday, and on September 6 on the occasion of Janmastami, a Bangladeshi national holiday. The offices that will be closed on the two days include the Consular Section, The American Centre, Information Resource Centre (IRC) and the Students Advising Section, a US embassy press release said here yesterday.

ROK envoy condemns attack on Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

South Korean Ambassador in Dhaka Kyu-Hyung Lee yesterday called on Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina at her Dhanmondi residence and expressed sorrow for the August 21 grenade attack on her.

The envoy denounced the incident as a "sad, unfortunate and condemnable" act. "It is good for the nation and the people that you (Hasina) are alive," he said. Hasina said she always does politics for the people and wants to establish secular democratic practices in the country. Hasina's Political Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury and Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad were present. Later, family members of Mahbub Alam, the deceased personal bodyguard of the opposition leader, met with Hasina at Sudha Sadan. Mahbub was killed in the August 21 grenade attack at Bangabandhu Avenue.

The Awami League President assured the family members of helping arrange wedding of Mahbub's sister and handed over Tk 1 lakh to his mother. She also assured support for education of Mahbub's children from Bangabandhu Trust.

CPC leader Another report adds: Vice-Minister of the International Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Cai Wu condemned the assassination attempt on Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina. The Chinese leader made the statement when he called on Awami League International Affairs Secretary Syed Abul Hossain MP at Beijing Hotel in China yesterday, said a message received in Dhaka.

Birth anniversary of Shafiul Azam today



Today is the 81st birth anniversary of SM Shafiul Azam, the doyen of Civil Service of Pakistan and Bangladesh, says a press release. A former chief secretary of the then East Pakistan, he also served as cabinet secretary and minister for jute, commerce and industry, and mineral resources and energy after the independence. SM Shafiul Azam Memorial Committee has drawn up elaborate programme to mark the day. Special programmes will also be held at Dr SM Muhammadul Haque Government Primary School and Shazadi Latifa Khatun Forkania Madrasi at his village home in Chittagong.

Muggers explode bomb near Scholastica School

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Panic gripped guardians and students of Scholastica School at Dhanmondi in the city yesterday after muggers exploded a home-made bomb on the road in front of the school. The guardians and students who were returning home after the school hour at around 12:20pm ran for cover following the bomb blast, witnesses said. The two muggers who were in an auto-rickshaw tried to sped away exploding the bomb. The locals, however, caught and beat up the two who tried to snatch a purse from a woman travelling in a rickshaw in the area. Police rescued the two in an unconscious state and sent them to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. They could not be identified immediately. Police also seized the auto-rickshaw.

Obituary



Meher Afroza Karim, a former leader of Mohila Parishad and founder of Shishu Shiksha Niketan, Keraniganj, died at a city clinic on August 28 at the age of 71, says a press release. Milad mahfils will be held at her home at 18 Purana Paltan after Asr prayers and at Al-Amin Jame Mosque in New York, USA, after Maghrib prayers today.



PHOTO: STAR

Teachers, guardians and students of different educational institutions form a human chain in front of the High Court yesterday protesting bomb attacks across the country. Nari Moitree organised the programme.