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TRANSCOM ELECTRONICS

Rajuk evicts Amtoli slum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rajdhani Unnayan Katrapakkha (Rajuk) yesterday evicted Amtoli slum in Banani turning a few thousands of people homeless.

The Rajuk started bulldozing the shanties of the slum in presence of Gulshan police and a magistrate at around 11.00 am.

Witnesses said the Rajuk knocked down a few hundreds of shanties and damaged household belongings of the poor slum dwellers without any prior information. Most of the residents could not remove their stuff, they added.

M Emdadul Islam, superintendent engineer of the Rajuk, said the slum dwellers had been living there for years and polluting the lake water. "They built many unhealthy open latrines by the Gulshan-Baridhara lake and were polluting it by directly disposing excreta into it. That's why we evicted them as a part of our environment drive," he said.

The slum had also become a centre for criminals and police were also seeking an eviction, he added.

Raj Punnah festival starts today in Bandarban

MANIRUL ISLAM MANU, Bandarban

Raj Punnah, a traditional festival of the Bomang tribe, begins today in Bandarban amid much fanfare and jubilation.

Fiftieth Bomang King Aung Shai Pru Chowdhury, 91, will inaugurate the three-day festival at the King's Temporary Darbar Hall at 9:00am, coupled with a folk fair at Rajbari field.

Hundreds of people-- both Bangalees and indigenous ones -- from remote areas of the three districts of Chittagong Hill Tracts, SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

22 BDR men hurt in road crash

BSS, Rangpur

At least 22 members of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) were injured in a road accident on the Panchagarh-Dhaka highway near Birganj of Dinajpur district yesterday morning.

Police and hospital sources said the accident occurred when a bus carrying the BDR personnel of Panchagarh Battalion skidded off the road and fell into a ditch after its driver lost control over the steering. The BDR men were going to SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Prayer Timing
January 13

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-36	5-40
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

4 more Rab battalions soon

SHARIFUL ISLAM

The government is planning expansion of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) by forming four more battalions in a short time.

Each new battalion will have 688 manpower drawn from the armed forces, police, Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), Ansar and Coast Guard, adding to seven existing Rab battalions with 5,500 manpower who are conducting anti-crime operations across the country, Rab sources said. "The government is planning to

form the four more battalions to ensure deployment of necessary Rab members in all parts of the country," the sources said, adding that two of the new battalions will be placed in Sylhet and Barisal divisions.

Of the existing seven battalions, four are based in Dhaka while one each in Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi divisions.

"We are working to prepare a proposal on manpower, equipment and management of the new SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Two criminals killed in 'crossfire'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two criminals were killed in 'crossfire' between their accomplices and separate teams of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and police in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar in the last two days.

Plainclothes Rab men arrested listed top criminal Babar Ali alias Petkata Babar from near Chittagong Jail gate Tuesday.

Babar, who was just released on bail, was taken to the Rab-7 headquarters at Patenga for interrogation, sources said.

The Rab, however, in a press release said he was arrested from Laldighi Par area when he was preparing for a criminal act.

Following his statement, a Rab team took Babar to a hill in Chowdhury Nagar Bonobillah Residential Project area under Bayezid Bostami Police Station SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Take urgent steps to cut charge, time

MCCI asks Ctg port authorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

When one cent counts in global trade now with the phaseout of the multi-fibre agreement, the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) yesterday asked the Chittagong Port Authority to take urgent short-term measures to lower charges and cut time.

As the port Chairman AMM Shakhawat Hossain detailed a number of steps including the under-construction New Mooring Container Terminal and a planned deep sea port, a high-powered MCCI team felt that since these would take years and even decades to complete,

urgent measures are now needed. The leading chamber said immediate start of customs clearance through Green Channel is one task that needs to be done. Reducing check and approval points of customs and port from 42 to seven is another step. Other steps needed are allowing private inland container depots with permission to handle import containers, computerisation of port and customs operations and allowing door to door delivery of containers.

MCCI President Kutubuddin Ahmed said goods need to be cleared within 24 hours at any cost. He suggested formation of a regulatory body for the port in the fashion

of the Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission.

He said illegal 'fees' make port use costlier in Bangladesh. The average cost of handling a 20 feet container at the Chittagong port is around \$600 while in other regional hub port like Singapore, Colombo, Mumbai and Bangkok, the cost is around \$216, \$220, \$450 and \$360.

Port Chairman Shakhawat said private participation in port operations is needed to streamline functions. He mentioned that the New Mooring terminal will be completed by 2006 to ease congestion.

The chairman said the port is poorly equipped and lacks gantry SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

10 hurt in bomb blast at drama festival

UNB, Sherpur

At least 10 people were injured, two of them critically, in bomb explosions at a drama festival at Chakpara village in Sadar upazila in the early hours yesterday.

Police and witnesses said two bombs exploded at the festival at about 12:30am when a drama was being staged.

Two of the injured, Majibur, 25, and Masud Miah, 22, were admitted to the Sadar Hospital in a critical condition. SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Manmohan thanks Khaleda

UNB, Dhaka

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has thanked Prime Minister Khaleda Zia for her message of condolence on the devastation wrought by the tsunami in India's southern coast and island territories.

"Your solidarity at a time such as this is deeply appreciated," Singh said in a letter to Khaleda.

The Indian premier said he had recently visited some of the affected areas, and obtained a firsthand impression of the extent of the calamity that has befallen several thousand Indian people.

"While the government and the people of India must now focus attention on the difficult task of rehabilitation and reconstruction, we will remain mindful of your goodwill and support," Singh said. Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Veena Sikri handed over the letter to Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday.

English schools' registration time extended up to end-January

STAR REPORT

The Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board, Dhaka has extended the time for the private English medium schools to register with it up to the end of this month.

The education ministry last year asked all private English medium schools to register with the board by the year-end. But, finding a low rate of response, it has extended the SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



A female student walks past locked doors at the Dhaka University Arts Building yesterday during a student strike enforced by a combine of six opposition-backed student organisations to protest the recent killing of Prof Muhammad Yunus of Rajshahi University.

Govt action against Khatme Nabuwat demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political leaders yesterday asked the government to take punitive action against the religious zealots who declared eminent lawyer Dr Kamal Hossain as murtad (deviated from Islam) at a public rally last Friday.

At a discussion entitled, 'Resisting the anti-constitutional activities of fundamentalists,' organised by the Gono Forum in the city, they also demanded that the government ban the activities of fundamentalist organisation Khatme Nabuwat as they are working against the spirit of the constitution and the law.

Holding the government responsible for the situation, AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said declaring Dr Kamal murtad proves that fundamentalists in the country are getting stronger by the day.

He said if the government does not take action against the fundamentalists, it will bring disaster for the country.

Workers Party of Bangladesh President Rashed Khan Menon said the government should take legal action against Khatme Nabuwat for

declaring Dr Kamal murtad.

"Islamist fundamentalists, who are doing politics in the name of Islam, have kept mum on the issue of US genocide in Iraq," he said, adding that performing religious activities is a constitutionally guaranteed right of every citizen and community.

He also demanded punishment of the zealots who declared Dr Kamal murtad and said the activities of Khatme Nabuwat should be banned.

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim said different militant organisations in the country are active with the support of Jammate-Islami.

President of Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud said the growing strength of anti-liberation forces is the result of progressive political parties' failure to maintain their unity.

AL Presidium Member Amir Hossain Amu, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Inu) leader Mainuddin Khan Badal, Gono Forum leader advocate SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Stocks bounce back after slide

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Stocks rallied spectacularly yesterday, a day after a huge slide, as the market regulators assured the investors of reverting to the margin facilities if share prices continue to fall.

The investors showed renewed interest and were in a buying spree yesterday after Tuesday's nosedive when the prices went down by more than five percent on average.

The Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) General Index on Tuesday shed 133.13 points, the largest-ever

single-day fall after the 1996 stock market crash.

But the market bounced back as the DSE General Index gained 86.28 points to close at 1829.62 points yesterday from the previous day's 1743.3 points.

The DSE-20 Index comprising blue-chip stocks also increased 78.90 points to close at 1998.50 points from Tuesday's 1919.60 points.

The Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) All Share Price Index gained 128.01 points to stand at 3355.25

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Gas field fire dying down

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The fire at Tengratila gas field is slowly dying down with the flames leaping less than five feet at three points yesterday, compared to around 10 feet on the previous day.

Gas continued to leak, however, at 30 points in and around the gas field yesterday. Bubbles of gas were still seen in the local water bodies, and gas was also spewing out in the last three days at various points in the sand covered marshy lands.

Kerry Putnam, a drilling expert

from the Canadian company Niko, visited the gas field yesterday afternoon and looked for probable points for drilling relief well.

Meanwhile, the authorities today started shifting 54,000 litres of diesel stored in five oil tankers in the area as a safety measure.

A preliminary list of 446 families of two nearby villages affected by Saturday's gas field fire will be submitted to the district authorities today.

The deputy commissioner (DC) SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

বিজিএমইএ নির্বাচন ২০০৫-২০০৬

বিজ্ঞপ্তি

এতদ্বারা বিজিএমইএ'র সম্মানিত সদস্যদের জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, নির্বাচন তফসিল অনুযায়ী বিজিএমইএ'র নির্বাচন নির্ধারিত সময়ে অনুষ্ঠিত হবে। সে মোতাবেক সব নির্বাচন প্রক্রিয়া অব্যাহত আছে।

সংশ্লিষ্ট সবার সহযোগিতা কাম্য।

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