

Cabinet decides to form sixth wage board

BSS, Dhaka

The Cabinet at its regular meeting yesterday decided to constitute the sixth wage board to fix the salary, wage and other benefits of newspaper and news agency journalists, press workers and general employees.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia presided over the meeting. The cabinet secretary, principal secretary to the prime minister and secretaries concerned were present.

Lists of promotees to dy secy, jt secy posts finalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Superior Selection Board (SSB), the highest body to recommend promotion of officials under the civil administration, yesterday finalised the draft of lists for promotion to a large number of posts of deputy secretary and joint secretary.

Held with Cabinet Secretary Saadat Hussain in the chair, the SSB meeting prepared the draft lists after two days of scrutiny and is likely to send it to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) today for approval.

Following approval by the PMO after further scrutiny, the promotions under the lists will be effective

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Two sisters slaughtered in Natore

BSS, Natore

Two sisters were slaughtered in Jolonda village in Boraigram upazila Sunday night allegedly by a youth as he failed to marry the elder one.

Police arrested the alleged killer Azizul Haque, a businessman, soon after the incident.

Police and locals said Azizul alias Bachchu, 26, son of Hafiz Uddin

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Prayer Timing

March 1		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5:20	5:55
Zohr	12:45	1:15
Asr	4:30	4:45
Magrib	6:03	6:07
Esha	7:30	8:00

Source: Islamic Foundation

Malaysia launches crackdown today

Illegal immigrants seek UN protection

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Hundreds of Southeast Asian migrants gathered outside the UN office in Malaysia yesterday hoping to win temporary refugee status ahead of a crackdown on illegal immigrants while thousands of others went into hiding, officials said.

Malaysia is set to launch a large-

scale operation against hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants today.

The operation to round up, whip and deport illegal immigrants, mainly Indonesians, marks the end of an amnesty which has twice been extended at Jakarta's request.

Some 300 people from Myanmar, Cambodia and

Indonesia's Aceh province lined up Monday at the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) hoping to secure UN support to remain in Malaysia.

Zaw Aung from Myanmar said he had been in Malaysia for 10 years illegally along with his wife and two children.

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Overpriced water project gets Ecneec nod

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec) has approved a controversial water management development project without approving any specific budget for it as the Ecneec found the proposed cost overestimated.

The Water Development Board (WDB) has been pushing this project since last year and on Sunday it

tabled a proposal outlining a cost of Tk 1,059 crore.

The Ecneec at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia instantly slashed about Tk 180 crore from the proposed amount. But it okayed the project asking the WDB to revise the cost and separately seek approval of Alternative

Chairman of Ecneec Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman.

After Sunday's meeting, Saifur

told journalists, "Ecneec approved the project despite some flaws, including excessive consultancy fees and vehicles needed for the project, which will be rectified later."

The project aimed at developing irrigation system in the country to raise agricultural output will continue until 2011-12.

Last year, The Daily Star carried a report that this project, outlining a

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BNP MPs critical of spiralling food prices

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The government yesterday came under severe criticism by a number of ruling BNP lawmakers for the failure to fulfil its election pledge to keep food prices low.

The lawmakers at a parliamentary body meeting pointed out the election pledge of reducing the price of rice to below Tk 12 per kilogram which now rose to Tk 18 to 20.

They also observed that the OMS (open market sale) price of rice is higher and asked the food ministry to bring down the price to keep it within the commoners' capacity.

The meeting of the parliamentary

standing committee on estimate discussed overall situation of the food prices, stock and the ongoing OMS programme.

Opposition lawmakers were absent at the meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

The BNP deputies attributed the instability in food grain prices in the market to the absence of appropriate government measures, meeting sources said.

"We have asked the food ministry to keep the food grains market stable by any means," Committee Chairman Syed Mehedi Ahmed Rumi told The Daily Star after the meeting.

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Raising privileges JS body fails to meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first meeting of a parliamentary sub-committee formed to make recommendations on how to raise lawmakers' privileges could not take place yesterday due to absence of a member.

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Fund Disbursement Huda irked at finance's delay

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda yesterday expressed discontent with the finance ministry's "delaying" the disbursement of funds under the Annual Development Programme (ADP).

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'JP to form alliance if needed'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad said his party has no plan to form electoral alliance with any major political party for the next general election.

"We don't want to be used by other political parties to serve their interest," he said while speaking at the JP council in city's Paltan Maidan yesterday.

He, however, said, "If situation demands, we will ponder forming

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2 construction workers electrocuted

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Two construction workers were electrocuted and five others seriously injured in Karwan Bazar in the city yesterday.

The dead are Obaidul, 30, son of Shamser Mondol, and Rafiqul Islam, 25, son of Bahadur Bepari, both from Dinajpur.

Witnesses said they came in touch with electric wire while working at an under-construction building at about 4:00pm.

They were rushed to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared Obaidul and Rafiqul dead.

Ripon, 22, Alam, 23, Moinal, 23, Karim, 18, and Saidur, 20, are undergoing treatment.



PHOTO: STAR

Locals crowd around the derailed coaches of Dhaka-bound Joyntika Express near Kalishima of Brahmanbaria Sadar upazila yesterday.

Donors' interference in politics unwanted

Saifur comments before flying to Paris

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday said he will raise objections to the World Bank about the recent donor meeting in Washington, which he termed an interference by the donors into the political affairs of a sovereign nation.

Before leaving for Paris to join a donors' conference, Saifur said he will try to register his protest with Praful Patel, chief of the World Bank's South Asia region, who was present at the two-day Washington meet that concluded last week without Bangladesh's participation. The meeting, organised by the World Bank (WB), the European

Union and the US government, expressed concerns about the country's deteriorating law and order situation, the rise of militants, weak governance and other non-economic issues.

The minister criticised the meeting for deliberating on issues outside its normal scope. "Donors

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JS sessions start without quorum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It has become a regular feature that the speaker starts the day's proceedings in parliament without quorum, thanks to the absence of the main opposition Awami League lawmakers and the treasury bench members' lack of interest.

Yesterday, Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar started the day's business 20 minutes behind schedule and without quorum. Only 43 lawmakers were inside the House at that time while it requires the presence of at least 60 members to make a quorum.

It needed 10 more minutes to ensure a quorum.

Yesterday's sitting could not be started on time as only five lawmakers were present in the House at 4:30pm, the scheduled time to start

business.

The House witnessed the same scenario on Sunday.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid told The Daily Star that starting session without quorum is a violation of the constitution. "During my tenure, I never began the proceedings without quorum," the former speaker said.

"Entering the House, I used to count the number of lawmakers present and wait until making of a quorum," said Hamid.

LGRD and Co-operatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Agriculture Minister MK Anwar were the only front ranking leaders present when the House started yesterday.

Leader of the House and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia entered the

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