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Tough laws on the cards for errant builders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A cabinet committee yesterday approved an amendment of the 1952 building code incorporating stringent punishment for unsafe construction and other irregularities by the constructors or the building owners.

The amendment will be approved in parliament within the next three months, sources said after a meeting of the committee chaired by Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman.

The Cabinet Committee on Public Administration Reforms and Good Governance also decided to make the National Housing Authority a

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Cloud over economy as fuel prices spiral

Austerity measures suggested as immediate step, BEF for two-day weekly holiday

INAM AHMED

As oil prices go on a bull-run, economists and the private sector urge for immediate austerity measures to backstop an adverse impact on the economy.

They feel the government needs to switch off the billboards, extend weekly holiday to two days and save daylight by changing office hours or

clock as immediate measures.

But more a tenable step would be to adjust fuel prices.

Meantime, oil prices kept within striking distance of \$67 a barrel following last week's historical surge. The situation looks bleak with Goldman Sachs, the global investment banking firm, predicting that oil price will reach \$75 a barrel on an unstable Middle East and Chinese

growth spur.

The Bangladesh Bank is also worried about the pressure building on its reserves, now \$2.83 billion as on August 13, because of its obligations to pay higher for fuel imports.

Sonali Bank and Janata Bank, which make the payments, are in a fix as they are not getting back their loans from Bangladesh Petroleum

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Jamal's family trashes Shahid's statement

Talks with Babar for justice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The family members of abducted Chittagong business magnate and district BNP leader Jamal Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday talked with State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar and sought his cooperation for justice.

They also talked with Haris Chowdhury, political advisor to the prime minister, on Sunday night and informed him about their grievances.

They dismissed the statement of Shahid Chairman, prime suspect in

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MEGHNAGHAT 2 PROJECT

Disqualified bidder gets cabinet body nod

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Cabinet's Purchase Committee yesterday approved the disqualified bid of a consortium of companies--UAE-based Belhasa, Bangladeshi Orion Power and German Steag -- for the 450 megawatt Meghnaghat 2 power project.

A Power Development Board (PDB) source said, "Although German company Steag has been shown as the lead sponsor of the bid, the company has actually withdrawn itself from the consortium."

Orion and Belhasa had originally submitted the Meghnaghat bid showing Japanese company Nissho Iwai Corporation as the lead sponsor. But upon qualifying in the bid, they change the lead sponsor.

Although this is a gross violation of rules and a strong reason to dismiss the bid right away, the PDB forwarded this faulty bid to the Purchase Committee headed by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman for its approval in March. Saifur rejected the proposal and told the press, "How can we approve a bid that was originally

won by some other party?"

Despite this, the committee meeting yesterday with Saifur in the chair approved this project because of pressure from a strong ruling alliance lobby.

The Orion-Belhasa group was previously awarded the massive Jatrabari-Gulistan fly-over project with a lot of favourable terms in June.

Earlier on June 26, the cabinet committee on economic affairs

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Nation mourns Bangabandhu

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thousands of mourners yesterday thronged the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum premises at Road No. 32 of Dhanmondi residential area in the capital to pay homage to slain Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on his 30th death anniversary.

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Peaceful hartal observed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The half-day countrywide hartal enforced by the main opposition Awami League demanding

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PHOTO: STAR

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina along with her party top brass lays flowers on the graves of her family members, who were killed on August 15, 1975, at Banani Graveyard in Dhaka yesterday.

Blast at Ahmadiyya house injures woman

Bombs were planted; two suspects arrested

SHAMIM ASHRAF and SHEIKH SHAHIDUL ISLAM from B'Baria

A powerful bomb blew off the wrist of a middle-aged Ahmadiyya woman at Brahmanbaria yesterday, 52 days into a series of bomb explosions in the same area.

Police recovered two unexploded bombs planted inside and out of the house of the injured, Hosne Ara Hosena, 55, at Bhadughar.

Top officials of local police said they are quite certain that the people behind June 24 bomb blasts at Kandipara and Bhadughar were behind the latest attack.

Leaders of Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, Bangladesh blamed law enforcement agencies for their reluctance to arrest the members of the anti-Ahmadiyya Khatme Nabuwat.

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400 hurt in attacks on AL's mourning programmes

STAR REPORT

Around four hundred leaders and activists of Awami League (AL) and its front organisations were injured as mourning day programmes marking the 30th death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman across the country yesterday came under attacks of the ruling BNP activists and cadres.

In Dohar, over 200 people, including 20-25 journalists and policemen, were injured as a band

of BNP cadres opened fire and hurled brickbats on an AL rally and police.

The AL held a rally on the Narisha Road as the police repeatedly obstructed them from holding the rally at different places.

A group of BNP cadres led by Shahin Khalashi and Bachchu attacked on the rally when AL central leader Asaduzzaman Noor was addressing.

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WOMEN'S SEAT IN JS

BNP aspirants find nomination costly

EC helplessly watches sale of tickets

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The ruling BNP aspirants to women's reserved seats are dissatisfied with the party nominations being expensive while Election Commission (EC) appears to be helpless to stop the overt sale of party tickets mainly due to legal limitations.

Many of the aspirants to the September 6 polls described the

obligation for the nomination seekers to donate Tk 3 lakh to the party funds as discriminatory. They said the party in the last parliamentary elections did not force any candidate to donate such a big amount.

Besides, the process of seeking party nominations for the women's reserved seats is costlier compared to those of all previous parliamentary polls, they added.

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Rab raids places on Shahid's info

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two courts here yesterday sanctioned 10-day remand of Shahid Chairman, the prime suspect in the sensational abduction of Chittagong business magnate Jamal Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury, in an arms case and the abduction case.

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab)-7 of Chittagong took Shahid Chairman into a 5-day remand for quizzing in the arms case filed with Patiya Police Station following recovery of two firearms from Shahid's in-laws' house at Uzirpur village of Junglekhine union under the upazila

on Sunday morning.

Shahid was also granted a 5-day remand under the custody of Criminal Investigation Department (CID), the investigating authority for the abduction case.

He was being interrogated at Rab-7 headquarters at Patenga since his appearance before the press there on Sunday afternoon when he told journalists that Jamal Uddin, also a leader of Chittagong district unit of ruling BNP, was killed one month after his abduction on July 24, 2003.

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