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CTG PORT

Strike continues despite talks with CPA

UNB, Ctg

The owners and workers of lighter vessels continued their strike after signing an 11-point memorandum of understanding with the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) yesterday.

As stalemate at the seaport continued, the port users and the authorities concerned sat for another round of talks at 8:00pm to resolve the remaining issues like compensation for the ship owners and workers' salaries for last eight months.

Three associations--Coastal Ship Owners' Association of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Cargo Vessel Owners' Association, and Inland Vessel Owners' Association of Chittagong--enforced the strike to press home their demands, including immediate release of 24 wheat-laden lighter vessels detained since February 27.

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BNP MEET WITH GRASSROOTS

Leaders decry price hike, power crisis

Warn party to face hurdles in next polls if govt fails to improve situation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The grassroots level leaders of the ruling BNP yesterday blasted the government for the skyrocketing prices of essentials and the unbearable electricity crisis.

"They warned that the party will have to face hurdles in the next parliamentary election if the government fails to improve the situation immediately.

The district, upazila and municipality level leaders attending a pre-election meeting and Ifar party in the capital demanded adequate measures

to control the commodity prices, including more subsidies on essential items.

"The price hike of essentials and shortage of power have badly affected people's lives in these last days of the government," Taiyebur Rahman, president of Thakurgaon upazila unit BNP, said.

"We will have to face a tough time in the next election if the situation is not improved," he said amid clapping from the leaders of 36 districts of Rajshahi, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions.

As many as 1,400 leaders of these districts attended the first day's programme of the two-day meeting organised by BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman.

BNP lawmakers of the three divisions and leaders of the party's front organisations also attended the programme held at the Prodhamontri Bhaban.

Top leaders of the ruling party who were present at the meeting,

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2 killed in Tongi roof collapse

UNB, Gazipur

The roof of an under-construction annex building of a textile mill at Tongi collapsed yesterday, killing two people and injuring 25 others.

Police said two construction workers--Alamgir, 15, son of Saiful Islam and Mamun, 20, son of Gulam Mistri--of Dhunat upazila under Bogra district died instantly.

Six of the injured--Saiful, Badsha, Alam, Lal Miah, Emdadul and Razzak--were admitted to Tongi Sadar Hospital, while the remaining 19 released after first aid.

Factory sources said the incident occurred at about 1:00pm when more than 200 workers were engaged in casting the 4000 square-foot roof over the ground floor of the factory building.

On information, firefighters and Rab members rushed to the spot, rescued the injured and sent them to the hospital.



PHOTO: STAR

Collapsed roof of an under-construction textile mill building in Tongi on the outskirts of the city. Two people were killed and 25 injured as the roof caved in yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Eleven children rescued from traffickers pose for photographs at Keraniganj Police Station yesterday. Two alleged traffickers are also seen behind the kids.

Cops rescue 11 children from traffickers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police rescued 11 children, brought from Bhola allegedly for trafficking, at the Sadarghat launch terminal yesterday.

The children, seven girls and four boys all aged under 14, were herded from different villages of Charfassion upazila in Bhola for Talim (education) at a madrasa in Dhaka.

Police sources said they were brought to Dhaka for trafficking outside Bangladesh.

The racketeers, Hasina Begum, 35, Sabera Begum, 45, and Kulsum Begum, 45, boarded a launch from Charfassion on Friday morning and arrived at the Sadarghat launch terminal at 8:30am yesterday.

"Ansar men stationed there informed us about them after seeing the three women suspiciously taking the children inside

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18 killed as bus plunges into river

STAR REPORT

At least 18 passengers including a mother and her four children were killed as a bus veered off a bridge and fell into the Gangnaei river in Kichak in Shibganj upazila yesterday.

As many as 18 bodies were recovered as of 8:30pm yesterday, reports our Bogra correspondent.

Police said the bus of Sunmoon Travels plunged into the river with about 50 passengers, the driver and his assistant on board.

Witnesses said the driver lost control while crossing the Kichak Bhangra Bridge, which is under repair, around 2:15pm. The bus left Bogra bus terminal for Joypurhat around 1:00pm.

Only one survivor was pulled out and sent to Shibganj Upazila Health

Complex in an unconscious state.

Police and firefighters rushed to the scene and immediately started rescue operations, which continued as of 8:30 last night.

UNB adds: As the rescue operation continued, local sources apprehend the death toll may rise further.

A macabre tragedy came down upon a family, as a mother and all four of her children perished in the accident. They hailed from Kalai village in Shibganj, the sources said.

A few passengers, however, managed to swim to safety after the accident. Police and divers aided by locals continued hectic efforts to salvage the bus.

"The death toll may go up as we fear a few more people are trapped inside the sunken bus," a rescuer said.

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25 arrested Rohingyas linked with JMB

Rajshahi BNP man held on serial blast charge

STAR REPORT

Investigators have found that the 25 suspected Rohingya militants rounded up in Chittagong on Friday have close links to some local militant groups, including Jama'at ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Ahle Hadith.

Meanwhile, police in Rajshahi yesterday arrested a ruling BNP activist in the town's Hatim Khan area in connection with the August 17 serial blasts.

Our staff correspondent from Chittagong reports: Detective Branch (DB) of police in its forwarding report for the remand of the 25 mentioned that the detainees have long been involved in subversive activities in collusion with their Bangladeshi allies

like JMB and others.

The report placed before a Chittagong court also said the 25 had supplied bombs and explosives to the outfits held responsible for bomb attacks in different parts of the country including the August 17 blasts.

Metropolitan Magistrate Moqsedur Rahman yesterday placed each of the arrestees on a two-day remand. DB Police produced them before the court with a petition for a five-day remand.

The DB police placed charges against them of staying illegally in Bangladesh, plotting against the interest of the country and maintaining links to the banned JMB

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TRADE NEGOTIATION

Bimstec to keep brief negative list of goods

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

The eighth meeting of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (Bimstec) Trade Negotiation Committee ended yesterday with great advancements to the draft agreement of trade, which aims at making the economic forum operative from July next year.

During the six-day long negotiations in Dhaka, representatives of

Bimstec countries -- Bangladesh, Myanmar, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal and Bhutan -- agreed on an institutional arrangement to monitor the trade agreement of the regional cooperation, meeting sources said.

They also agreed to keep the member countries' negative lists of commodities as brief as possible in order to help regional trade acceleration.

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EARTHQUAKE

Islamabad postpones Saarc commerce ministers' meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pakistan has postponed the upcoming Saarc Commerce Ministers' Meeting in the wake of the recent earthquake but said it was looking forward to attend the November 12-13 summit of the seven-nation grouping in Dhaka.

The 5th Saarc Commerce Ministers' Meeting was scheduled for October 21-22 in Islamabad and the implementation of the South Asian Free Trade Area (Safta) was on top of

the agenda.

The meeting of the 11th Committee of Experts (CoE) on Safta scheduled in Islamabad on October 18-19 has also been put off. Foreign ministry officials in Dhaka yesterday said the CoE Meeting will take place in Kathmandu at the same time.

"The government of Pakistan was constrained to announce the postponement due to the severe earthquake and destruction

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Saifur, Bhuiyan blast media over country's image

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday blasted the media for what they termed "misreport" on the price hike of essentials and "undermining" the government's success in different sectors.

"Don't feel sad by reading newspaper headings. They [media] report these intentionally for tarnishing the country's image. No patriotic people can do so. It seems objective journalism is being exiled from the country," Saifur Rahman told the grassroots level leaders of

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REPORT CARD ON MINISTERS

4 years in office

Moudud's pledges remain elusive

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed has dwarfed all his predecessors in spawning the bitterest-ever hostilities between the judicial and the executive wings by a series of controversial moves and acts in the last four years.

Of these numerous questionable deeds, the 14th constitutional amendment, his ministry's role in arranging a presidential clemency for a BNP man



sentenced to death in a double murder case and the allegedly anomalous appointment of 19 High Court judges sparked the spikiest controversies and the most riotous agitation.

Tumults raised by the outraged lawyers, on several occasions, debased the Supreme Court into a hotspot. They boycotted Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassir Husain's court, protesting his apathy and inaction against what they said

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