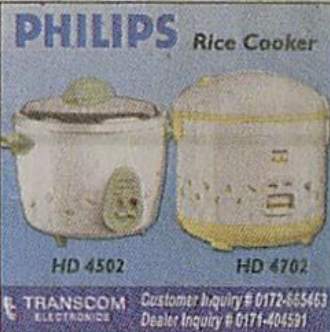




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DEADLOCK AT EC

Commissioners to act to execute HC verdict

Say they are majority; their opinion should prevail as EC decision

SHAKHAWAT LITON

For four consecutive days, the Election Commission (EC) secretariat directed by chief election commissioner (CEC) continues non-compliance with the High Court (HC) directives on electoral roll by beginning today the scrutiny of the information collected on the prospective voters.

Election commissioners M Munsef Ali and AK Mohammad Ali, who have all along been speaking

for revising the existing roll, yesterday said they will act to implement the HC directives to revise the existing roll, by stopping the ongoing work of preparing a fresh roll.

"We are in the majority at the Election Commission. So, our opinion should prevail as the commission's decision. We will take decision in light of the court's orders and give directives to the secretariat to implement the decision," Mohammad Ali told The Daily Star.

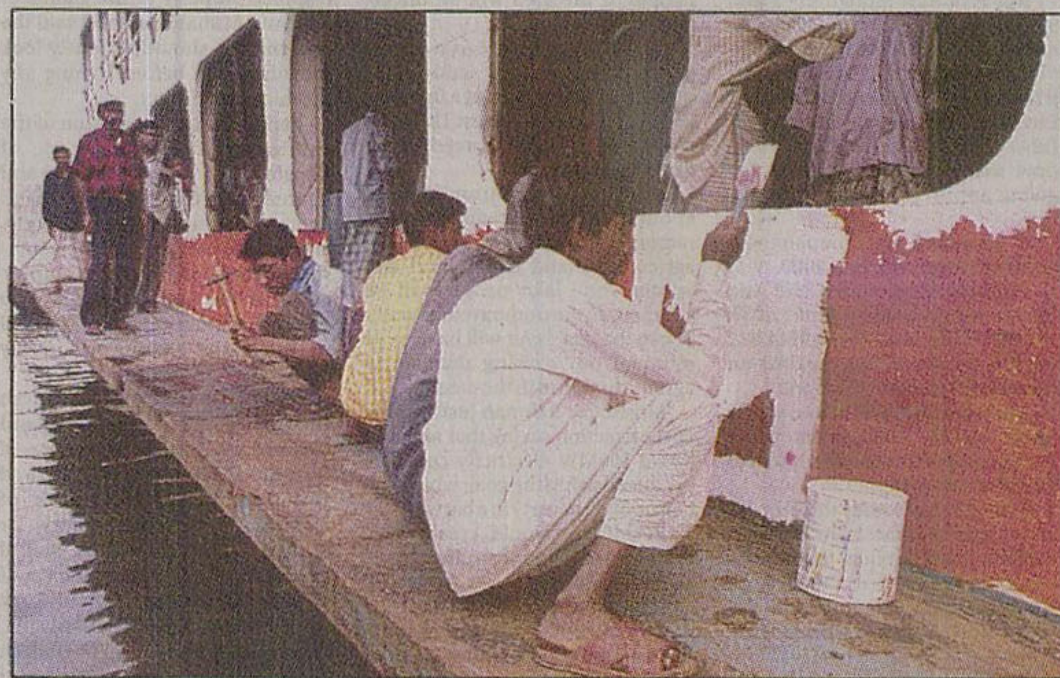
On the decision-making process of the EC, former CEC Abu Hena yesterday said, "The Election Commission should take decisions unanimously. If it fails to take an unanimous decision, the majority's opinion should prevail."

Expressing ignorance about the continuation of the enumeration task despite the HC directives, Munsef Ali said, "On receiving the certified copy of the court's orders, we will ask the chief election commissioner to convene a meeting as

we have no option but to implement the court's directives."

Ahead of the start of scrutiny, the second phase in the voter-listing process, some district election officers yesterday contacted the senior officials of the EC secretariat and sought guidelines on the HC directives. In reply, the secretariat directed them to continue the work, as it did not receive the certified copy of the court orders, said the district election officers

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



Workers paint and repair an unfit launch anchored in the Buriganga in a bid to give it a fresh look before putting it into service during the Eid rush.

60 highest taxpayers to enjoy VIP status

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has prepared a list of 60 companies and individuals to be treated as VIP taxpayers in the next fiscal year.

These individuals and companies have been selected under the VIP (Income Tax) Policy, 2005 for paying the highest amount of income tax in the last fiscal year.

The VIPs (Income Tax) include 25 individual income tax payers, 20 private limited companies, and 15 public limited companies.

The individuals accorded VIP status are Asit Kumar Saha, Aditya Majumdar Dai, Ashok Kumar Saha, Samson H Chowdhury, Haji Md Kaus Mian, Alhaj Rahim Uddin

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Dip in aid, high bank borrowing worrying points, says CPD

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A decline in foreign financing that forced the government into increased borrowing from banks has become its Achilles' heel, observed the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

Without augmentation of foreign aid flow, high export growth and sustained remittance flow the

external balance may experience severe pressure in immediate future, says a CPD report titled "State of the Bangladesh Economy in FY06: Early Signals and Immediate Outlook."

The report released yesterday suggests that the government will need a sizeable package of foreign financing to implement its ADP (annual development programme)

and sustain the normal activities of the economy.

Referring to the large imbalance in deficit financing of the budget and balance of payment, the CPD observed that the government should not take any steps, which may jeopardise economic stability putting the next caretaker government in trouble.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Debapriya hits back at Saifur's criticism

Rejects his claim of GDP growth

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In response to the finance minister's claim that the current fiscal year's GDP would exceed 7 percent mark, economist Debapriya Bhattacharya yesterday said the GDP growth should not be projected through casual empiricism.

"One should talk about the GDP growth on the basis of hard information and refrain from giving any casual empiricism. It is not right to estimate the GDP looking through the windows of a car," Debapriya,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Unfit launches put into Eid service

SURANJITH DEABNATH

About two hundred unfit launches have been put back on the water at Sadarghat Launch Terminal to ferry Eid passengers under the very noses of law enforcers despite strong warnings from the government against overloading and operating of unfit water transport.

A large number of unfit launches, trawlers and sea boats with fresh coats of paint on them are gathering at the terminal and plying different routes taking advantage of unusual rush of home-bound passengers ahead of the Eid-ul-Azha on January 11, the second largest religious festival of the Muslims.

Many unfit launches are still being painted at the dockyards on the shore across the terminal to be operated as part of the 'special Eid service' while the law enforcers are not taking any step to stop such activities.

Thousands of middle class, lower middle class and low income group people are being forced to travel on these accident prone vessels risking their lives as tickets for fit launches are not available at the counters which are being sold by the scalpers instead at prices three to four times higher than normal fares.

According to a survey conducted by officials of the Shipping

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

MAKKAH BUILDING COLLAPSE 7 more Bangladeshis found dead

AGENCIES, Makkah, Dhaka

At least nine Bangladeshis including eight pilgrims have died in Thursday's hotel collapse in Makkah, with the death toll rising to 76 yesterday, a Bangladesh government official confirmed as information trickled out late from the cordoned-off site.

The dead are Golam Mohiuddin and Jahanara Begum of Gulshan, Begum Dilruba Islam of Mirpur, ANM Abdul Muquit, Habiba Khanom and Nahida Hossain Muquit of Uttara, and Mohammad

Muntazul Haq and Abdur Razzak of Rajshahi, reports UNB.

Zafrullah Khan, Bangladesh consul in Makkah, told the news agency most of the victims were staying at Hotel Lulu'at Al-Kheir. "Abdur Razzak and Mohammad Muntazul Haq of Rajshahi perhaps went to meet them at the hotel before the collapse," he said.

According to the rules of Saudi Arabia, if any pilgrim dies during the Hajj, they will be buried at Makkah, he added.

The Bangladeshi pilgrims who

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

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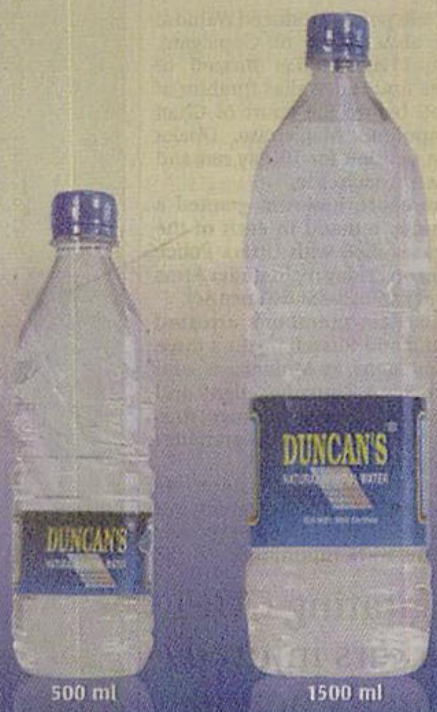
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Biting cold kills 6 in Thakurgaon

STAR REPORT

A cold wave sweeping eight northern districts for the last two days has paralysed life and claimed six lives in Thakurgaon with hundreds attacked by cold related diseases.

Dense fog blanketed the region disrupting communications and the sun was not sighted all day long.

The capital also experienced chilly weather yesterday as the met office recorded temperature at 14 degrees Celsius, the lowest this season.

The six people who died were aged 50 to 75, a UNB report said.

Hundreds of people in the eight districts, mostly children and elderly ones, have been attacked by cold related diseases and diarrhoea. Many of them have been

admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital (RMCH).

RMCH sources said some of those hospitalised are in a critical condition with breathing problems, our Rangpur correspondent reports.

Civil Surgeon of Rangpur Dr. MA Momin said during the winter, 'Rota virus disease' generally affect people, mainly children. On an average, 50 children infected with Rota virus are being hospitalised everyday.

Due to dense fog, plying of motorised vehicles was too difficult till 12:30 pm yesterday. Many vehicles plied were seen plying with their headlights on.

Met office sources attributed the cold spell to lower humidity in the atmosphere. The temperature

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Bangladesh Shines in Colors 398 Thanas of 61 Districts

NEW THANAS

Biswambharpur, Sunamganj
Tahirpur, Sunamganj
Saturia, Manikganj
Nagarpur, Tangail
Shoronkhola, Bagerhat
Chougacha, Jessore



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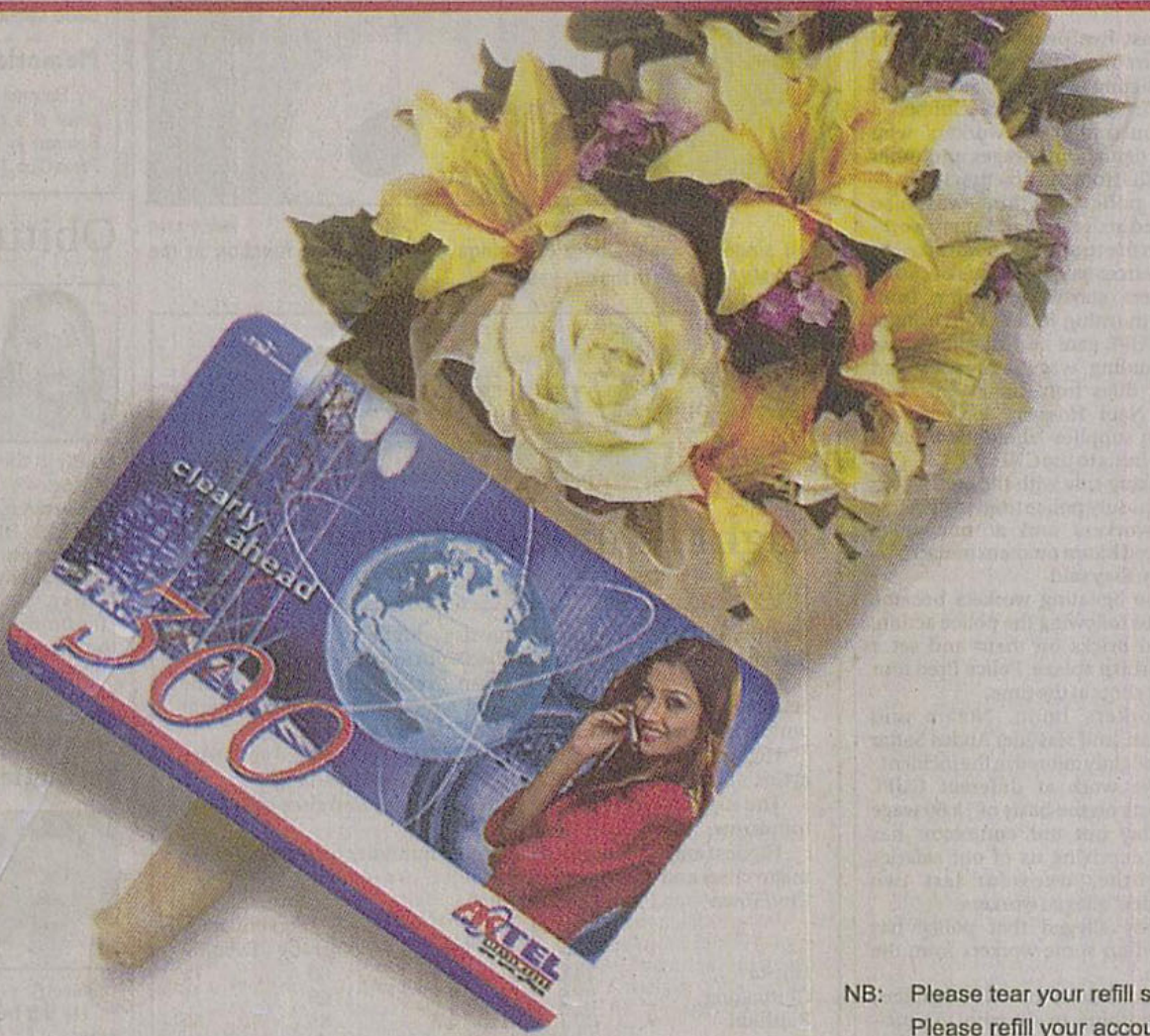
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