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Asia Energy staff houses in Phulbari torched

Coalmine protesters demonstrate throughout the day, snap rail links, demand ouster of the company

STAR REPORT

Thousands of demonstrators took control of Phulbari on the second day of an indefinite strike yesterday, and set fire to houses of some Asian Energy employees, clamouring for ouster of the London-based company.

The agitators also vandalised the Asian Energy office and cut off road and rail links between Dinajpur and the other districts in protest at Saturday's police actions that left at least five people dead

and over 300 injured.

According to unconfirmed reports, seven people died that day when police and Bangladesh Rifles men fired on the locals demonstrating against open-pit coalmine project at Phulbari.

Meanwhile, leaders of the National Committee for Protection of Oil-Gas-Port district unit yesterday held a daylong meeting with the deputy commissioner (DC) of Dinajpur. They placed a five-point demand at the meeting that ended with no results.

The district administration asked the agitators to withdraw the ongoing strike and sought from them three days' time to meet their demands. But the protesters did

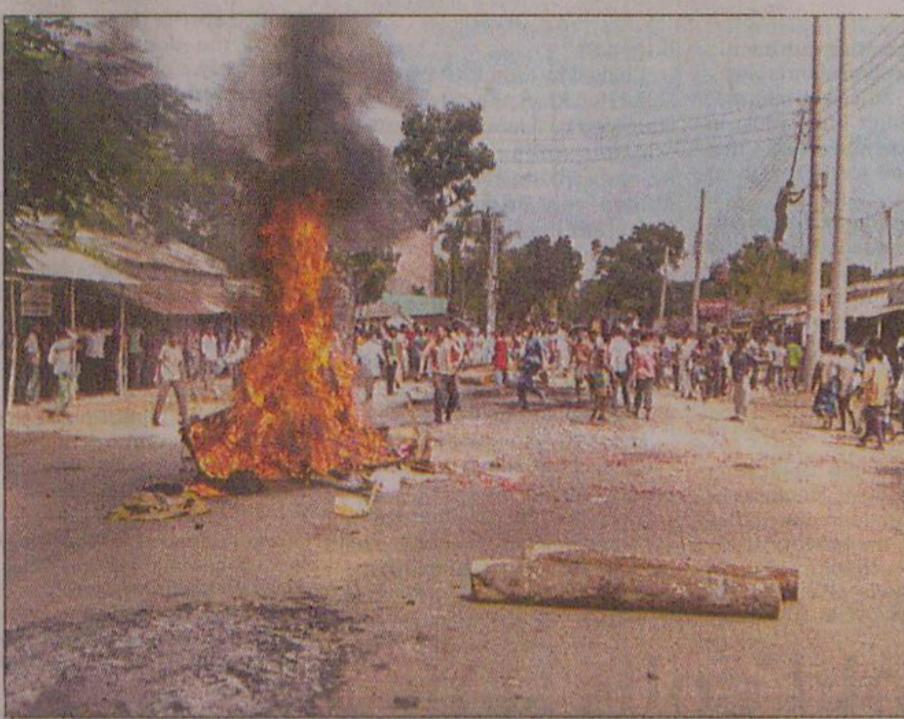
not agree, Dinajpur DC Tahsinur Rahman told The Daily Star last night.

Throughout the day yesterday demonstrators kept control over different strategic points across Phulbari. They took to the roads since early in the morning but no clash was reported. Hundreds of paramilitary, police and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) men were deployed in the town.

Locals dumped logs in every several yards along a 10-km stretch

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Demonstrators barricade a road at Phulbari burning tyres, left, during angry protest against Saturday's killings; the ransacked workshop of Asia Energy at Phulbari.

Islamic parties boom after 1976 ban lifting

Record shows about 100 organisations exist

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Islamic political parties and organisations have mushroomed in the country since the constitutional ban on them was repealed in 1976, allowing formation and functioning of organisations based on religion.

No one knows the number of such parties and other organisations floated since withdrawal of the ban as neither the government nor the Election Commission (EC) has any accurate figures on them.

Government intelligence agencies' records however showed

existence and activities of about 100 Islamic political parties and organisations since repeal of the ban while around 11 were active in between 1964 and 1971, sources said.

Thirty Islamic political parties and their different factions have contested parliamentary elections since 1979 with manifestos for establishing Islamic rule, EC statistics show.

In the 1979 parliamentary polls, the first one after withdrawal of the ban, two Islamic parties -- Muslim O Democratic League that also included Jamaat-e-Islami and Bangladesh Nezame Islam -- were among the contestants. The number of such parties remained the same in the 1986 election with

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SC Bar body worried over judiciary

UNB, Dhaka

The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) yesterday said the nation has plunged into a "grave crisis" with the judiciary put at stake and the constitution trampled.

"We, the members of the Bar, today have no alternative but to leave it to the court of the people to judge and resist the evil designs for the interest of free judiciary, constitution and democracy," SCBA President Barrister Amir-Ul Islam told a press conference in the association's hallroom.

Former SCBA president Dr Kamal Hossain, Vice-Chairman of the Bar Council Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud and senior lawyer Humayun Hossain Khan also expressed their concern over confirmation of 17 High Court

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OIL, GAS EXPLORATION Bad timing for third round bidding

SHARIER KHAN

The government's attempt to float the third round bid for oil and gas exploration in the Bay of Bengal in October is likely to fall flat due to 'bad timing', sources said.

After remaining inactive for five years in the field of major exploration, the government recently made a lot of exercises concerning the third round bid.

The energy ministry is hoping that the cabinet will soon approve its proposal to float the third round bid in 26 blocks in the bay. The ministry started the process for the bid late last year.

But sources said this attempt is 'impractical' as the follow-up lengthy process of selection and negotiation for the bidding will not

end even during the tenure of the next caretaker government, and continue when a new government takes over after the coming general elections.

"Investors would not be interested to spend money to participate in a bid that will see rapid changes of government," said a top official.

"Besides, the third round bid will exclusively focus on exploration in the Bay of Bengal. But we do not have any clear marking of deep sea borders with India and Myanmar. This creates another serious uncertainty for potential bidders."

He went on, "In addition, we know very little about the bay. When oil companies will seek

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Saudi prince's bid to buy Rupali Bank gets a nod

Deal awaits PM's final approval

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Why case against CPD trustees not be quashed

HC asks govt, Mahmudur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a rule ordering the government and Energy Adviser Mahmudur Rahman to show cause within four weeks why the case pending before the CMM's Court, Dhaka, against five eminent citizens should not be quashed.

An HC division bench also stayed all proceedings of the case filed by Mahmudur Rahman until disposal of the rule.

The rule came in response to a petition filed by the five citizens, who are also members of the board of trustees of independent think-tank Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

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JANATA TOWER FINE Certificate case against Ershad dismissed

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday dismissed the certificate case filed against former president HM Ershad for realisation of the fine imposed on him in the Janata Tower case.

First Class Magistrate Delwara Begum, also the General Certificate Officer (GCO), passed the order.

In her order, the GCO mentioned that Ershad had earlier served three months and eight days and paid Tk 2,74,35,400. So, the case filed for realisation of the fine from him was dismissed, she added.

On November 23 in 2000, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court (SC) in a verdict fined Ershad Tk 5,48,70,800, in default he would have to suffer six months in jail.

On September 4, 2001, Judge

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ADP IMPLEMENTATION Saifur's ministries among lowest performing ones

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday found himself in an embarrassing position when a meeting to review Annual Development Programme (ADP) disclosed that the performance of the two ministries under him was among the lowest in expending allocations.

Four departments under the ministries of finance and planning were listed among the 10 low performing ministries and departments in implementing the ADP in last fiscal year, a Planning Commission report revealed at the meeting chaired by Saifur Rahman.

As the disappointed minister asked the officials concerned to explain the reasons, they said the delay in releasing funds against the projects was due to 'strict condition' and most of the projects were for technical assistance, sources said.

Ministries of law, post and telecommunications, information, and land, Election Commission Secretariat and Cabinet Division were other low performing ministries and departments.

The report showed that the overall implementation of the revised ADP in the last fiscal year was 91 per cent despite a huge cut of the original budget and the

implementation of foreign aid was 88 per cent.

The Planning Division spent only 28 per cent of its allocation. The situation is worst in spending project aid and the figure is only two percent.

The report revealed that Internal Resource Division has failed to spend a single penny against the allocation of Tk 4.30 crore.

Finance Division spent 57 per cent of its overall allocation and 46 per cent of the project aid, the report added. It also showed the Economic Relations Department spent 52 per cent of the overall

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JMB militant Jewel jailed for 64 years

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Adhaka court yesterday sentenced Enayetullah Jewel, Gazipur regional commander of banned Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), to 64 years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) in two cases filed with Joydevpur Police Station in January this year.

Jewel is accused in 33 other cases now pending and under investigation with different police stations in five districts.

Judge Shahed Noor Uddin of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 gave the verdict in presence of the lone accused for possessing illegal firearms, explosives and ammunition.

In its order, the judge said the accused was given 44 years' RI for

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Over 100 hurt as cops clash with workers

50 buses vandalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Over 100 people including 17 policemen and four journalists were injured in a series of clashes between transport workers and police in Rajshahi Bus Terminal area yesterday.

The policemen fired 100 shots and lobbed 71 teargas shells to disperse the transport workers after they torched a police motorcycle and damaged three other vehicles.

The angry cops also damaged some 50 buses and 25 shops and

beat up the transport workers, pedestrians and journalists during the three-hour rampage, witnesses said.

Rajshahi Motor Sramik Union and Rajshahi Bus-Minibus Owners' Association called an indefinite transport strike in Rajshahi from today protesting the police atrocities.

The clashes erupted after a bus driver assaulted a policeman while checking a bus at Kasiadanga on the outskirts of the city.

According to sources, activists of Awami League and BCL were returning home by bus after

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BCL man killed in clash with BNP activists

CU CORRESPONDENT

An activist of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) was killed and 25 people were injured in a clash with the BNP activists in front of Shah Waliullah Filling Station at Sitakunda yesterday.

The dead was identified as Mohammad Elias, 22, son of one Bachchumian.

Three of the injured -- Nur Nabi, Rubel and Belal -- were admitted to a local hospital in a critical condition.

According to sources, activists of Awami League and BCL were returning home by bus after

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CNG SCAM CHARGE Huda now says reply will come within 10 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After about two and a half years of formation of the probe committee on the CNG scam, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda yesterday said that he would reply in writing within 10 days on the allegations raised against him.

"I will reply to the allegations in writing within the next 10 days and then you could decide whether to discharge me from these allegations or not," Nazmul Huda said in the meeting of parliamentary standing committee on communications

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Cabinet okays upgrading Fazil, Kamil degrees

UNB, Dhaka

The cabinet yesterday approved a proposal for making Fazil and Kamil degrees of madrasa education equivalent to graduate and postgraduate degrees.

Chaired by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, the cabinet in its weekly meeting held at the Prime

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'See you in Dhaka,' say SA Games

AL MUSABIR SADI from Colombo

Sri Lanka bade goodbye to the 10th South Asian Games with splendour of colour and music here yesterday, bringing the athletes who fought for glory over the past 11 days together in a friendly atmosphere at the Sugathadasa Stadium.

What began amid terror following

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

A fire gutted valuable goods and machinery at a chemical products factory at Ashulia on the outskirts of the capital yesterday.