

Ctg port returns to normal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The activities at the country's premier seaport Chittagong have started getting back normal following the sudden political change in the country, especially a new chief adviser's taking oath last night.

Handling of cargo at the port has started in full swing, said a high official of Chittagong Port Authority.

The clearing and forwarding agents are busy releasing consignment on behalf of exporters and importers and the customs offices and banks were kept open on the weekly holiday yesterday for facilitating port operation.

The port yard was bustling with release and arrival of new containers while the cargoes were handled at all the nine jetties.

The business community is now

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FBCCI hails emergency

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) and Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) yesterday welcomed President Iajuddin Ahmed's proclamation of state of emergency on Thursday night.

The FBCCI board members in a hurriedly called meeting at the FBCCI conference room decided to welcome the state of emergency. FBCCI Acting President Mohammad Ali chaired the meeting, a press release said.

The FBCCI hoped that the business activities of the country will function smoothly and the law and order situation will improve

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Prayer Timing		
January 13		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-36	5-40
Esha	7-00	7-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

LOW GAS PRESSURE

7 small gas-fired power projects uncertain again

SHARIER KHAN

Finalisation of the seven gas-fired small power projects has once again become uncertain due to low pressure of gas supplied to the project sites as well as other issues.

The government had earlier aimed at completing all the relevant agreements by mid-January to add 260 megawatt power by June-July. But now it seems that commissioning of these plants may be delayed till early next year due to low gas pressure.

Sources said Petrobangla may not be able to increase gas pressure to suit the power plants within one year. And this has become a major problem for six out of the

seven sites.

These matters came up at a meeting between the power ministry and the power project contractors on Sunday with the power secretary in the chair.

The meeting was informed that all the projects except the one in Bogra have one or more issues that need to be resolved first.

The Bogra 20 MW rental power plant to be set up by GBB Ltd has been given one acre of land and a land lease agreement (LLA) has been signed. The GBB is now awaiting signing of a Gas Sales Agreement (GSA). The GBB claims that it would be able to go for partial generation of power in April.

Ornate Services Ltd, which is

setting up the Fenchuganj 50 MW plant, has switched over to a land-based power plant, instead of a barge-mount one. It is now negotiating an LLA with the PDB but Ornate representative at the Sunday meeting said signing of the GSA would not be possible till the gas problem is resolved. Otherwise, Ornate said, it can set up the plant by September.

Dealing with the 80 MW Shahjibazar plant, the United Group has initialised a power rental contract with the PDB. But it has several unresolved issues that need to be addressed before finalising this contract. The group wants to incorporate two additional clauses

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BSF guns down one, tortures two to death

STAR REPORT

Indian Border Security force (BSF) shot dead a Bangladeshi national and injured at least seven others at Mazipara border under Tentulia upazila of Panchagarh yesterday morning while Debhata police yesterday recovered bodies of two Bangladeshis who the BSF tortured to death on Thursday.

Our Dinajpur correspondent reports: Mobarak Ali, 24, of Mazipara under Tentulia upazila of the district was killed and seven farmers were bullet-hit as BSF men of Nalabari outpost fired several shots toward the Bangladesh territory yesterday morning, BDR officials quoted the villagers as saying.

The injured -- Md Gaffar, 30, Shaidur, 18, Md Shah Alam, 20, and Iftekhar, 20, all from Bebiganj village under the same upazila and three unidentified ones -- are undergoing treatment at Rangpur

Medical College Hospital.

The BSF took away Mobarak Ali's body that they did not return as of filing the report.

Admitting the incident, Lt Col Sheikh Farid of 25 BDR Battalion of Panchagarh said a letter has been sent to their counterpart protesting the gruesome killing and urging return of the body.

A tense situation is prevailing on the border.

BSF tortured to death Bangladeshi cattle traders Ratan Das, 32, and Nityananda Das, 30, both from village Basantapur in Kaliganj upazila of Satkhira district, opposite to BSF's Rameswar camp on Thursday, reports our Satkhira correspondent.

Informed by locals who found the two bodies floating on the river yesterday, a police team rushed there, rescued the bodies from Shibnagar char in the Ichhamati River under Debhata upazila and

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EMERGENCY

Nizami believes diplomatic missions made it happen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Matiur Rahman Nizami considers activities of different diplomatic missions in the last one week as the main reason for declaring the state of emergency.

"Activities of different diplomatic missions round the week and the statement of United Nations secretary general have played major role in declaring the state of emergency," he told the BBC Bangla Service yesterday.

He also said "the role of some diplomats indicates that they still think Bangladesh as their colony."

"It seems to us that it is not in the consideration of the diplomats that Bangladesh is an independent and sovereign country and has a constitution," Nizami said.

Replying to a question, he said violence of some quarters has increased following the activities of the diplomats.

M a n y d i p l o m a t s
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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

A woman braves the blaze in a last moment attempt to save her belongings as the devastating fire spreads in a slum near the FDC gate in the capital yesterday.

Bush's Iraq troops plan comes under fire in US

AFP, Washington

President George W Bush faces political warfare with the US Congress over his plan to send more troops to Iraq, with even legislators from his Republican Party resisting the strategy.

Bush and top aides came under withering criticism Thursday as they launched a hard sell to convince a

nation weary of the war -- which has claimed more than 3,000 US lives -- that this final bid to send 21,500 more soldiers to Iraq can work.

The president appeared with US troops in Fort Benning, Georgia, to argue that the revised plan was "our best chance for success," while several of his top aides testified in Congress, now controlled by the opposition Democrats.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who heads to the Middle East Friday to sell the new US plan, endured a fearsome grilling before leaving at Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Defence Secretary Robert Gates and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Peter Pace also f a c e d

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One burned alive, 350 shanties gutted in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two fires at slums in Shyampur and FDC level crossing in the capital yesterday left one person dead and at least 350 shanties gutted.

Mohammad Hanif Miah, 55, was killed and 150 dwellings were reduced to ashes at Dhaka Match New Colony slum in Shyampur when a devastating fire broke out around 4:45am.

Police said Hanif was trapped and burnt alive inside a shanty. He had come to visit his brothers-in-law from Begumganj, Noakhali.

Locals claimed the fire started due to an electric short-circuit in a shanty and quickly spread to other dwellings in the slum.

Five fire engines from fire service headquarters, Postagola and Sadarghat stations rushed to the spot and doused the flame around 5:45am.

In the other fire incident at FDC level crossing slum in Ramna, around 200 shanties were gutted.

The fire broke out around 4:00pm and snapped rail communication with the capital for about half-an-hour as fire engines were parked on the railway tracks.

Police and members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) rushed to the spot after the fire broke out and halted intercity train Ekota Express, heading for Dinajpur, at Moghbazar level crossing for several minutes causing traffic to come to a standstill on both sides of

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2 outlaws killed in 'shootouts'

STAR REPORT

Two underground operatives were killed in encounters with Rapid Action Battalion in Kushtia and Jhenidah early yesterday.

They are Santu, 32, a cadre of Gono Mukti Fouj (GMF) in Kushtia, and Mohiuddin alias Mohi, a member of Sramajibi Mukti Andolan (SMA).

Our Kushtia correspondent reported that a team of Rab-12 arrested Santu at Patildangi village

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