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Bangabandhu's homecoming day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The nation celebrates the historic Homecoming Day of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today.

On this day in 1972, Bangabandhu, the Founding Father of Bangladesh, returned to an independent country after being released from a Pakistani jail earlier. Pakistan army arrested him on

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REDRAWING CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARY EC plan to upset poll roadmap

Say AL, BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the Awami League (AL) and BNP yesterday said the implementation of electoral roadmap might be hindered if the Election Commission (EC) redraws the boundaries of parliamentary constituencies.

"The whole electoral process will be affected badly and the

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Decomposed bodies of 6 Sidr victims recovered

UNB, Bagerhat

Decomposed bodies of six more Sidr victims were recovered from the Sundarbans and Sharankhola upazila yesterday, nearly two months after the disaster.

Local people found the bodies of five fishermen at Chhaprakhal in the Sundarbans and another body of a woman in a paddy field at Tafalbari village in Sharankhola.

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Ashura on Jan 20

UNB, Dhaka

The holy Ashura will be observed in the country on January 20 as the moon of Muharram, the first month of Hijri year 1429, was not sighted yesterday.

The decision was taken in a meeting of the National Moon Sighting Committee at Islamic Foundation conference room yesterday with committee's Vice-President and Religious Affairs Secretary Muhammad Ataur Rahman in the chair.

The meeting said the Hijri year 1429 will start on Friday (Jan 11) while Ashura will be observed on January 20, said an Islamic Foundation press release.

Move on to abandon damaged Titas well

SHEIKH MD SHAHIDUL ISLAM, B'baria

Bangladesh Gas Field Company Ltd (BGFL) is going to permanently abandon its Brahmanbaria Titas Gas Field's faulty well no. 3 and has already started the procedure.

The experts concerned are trying to kill the well permanently. The entire process would cost at least \$7.87 million and Tk 70.56 lakh in two phases, sources said.

The BGFL authorities yesterday hoisted a red flag and announced special notice asking everyone around not to be frightened as the process may create at least 20-to-25-foot high flames with roaring and deafening sounds.

Sources in the BGFL said the well was adding 30 million cubic feet gas to the national grid regularly. But the authorities started the

termination process due to its faulty and abnormal functioning. At least 20-25 days is required to complete the work, they added.

M/s Boots & Coots International, a US-based gas control company, has been tasked with the killing and abandonment work. Despite their efforts, the well remained unchanged until yesterday.

They shut down the well for 12 hours on Sunday on an experimental basis, but had to restart it urgently after one and a half hours. They claimed the experiment was done the next day.

A BGFL officer said the experiment was done as a diagnostic step to work out what process should be adopted. He said the well is under their full control and all the primary tasks have been completed.

Natural gas was emitting through countless big and small holes in Shampur, Anandapur and

Loiska Beel near the well for the last three years. Informed by villagers, BGFL authorities launched an investigation and found that gas was emitting due to lack of proper cementation in the well.

All tube-wells of Shampur and Anandapur villages are out of order since the emitting started.

Speaking anonymously, a BGFL high official said the faulty well was very harmful for Titas Gas Field. That is why they started the killing process.

Contacted, Md Abdul Hye, deputy commissioner (DC) of Brahmanbaria, said he has visited the spot and has reports from the BGFL that gas emitting will stop when the ongoing work is done.

The DC has ordered the upazila nirbahi officer (Sadar) to make a survey on the villagers of nearby villages as a precautionary measure in case of emergency.



PHOTO: STAR

Open Market Sale (OMS) of rice began across the country yesterday as part of the government effort to rein in the soaring prices. The photo of an OMS outlet was taken at Motijheel in the capital.

Ex-director of NBR sued for ill-gotten wealth

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former National Board of Revenue (NBR) director Jahurul Haque and his wife were sued yesterday for amassing wealth beyond their known sources of income and concealing information in the wealth statement submitted to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

ACC Deputy Director Moniruzzaman Khan filed the case with Ramna Police Station against Jahurul and his wife Afia Haque for amassing Tk 1.53 crore beyond known sources of income and concealing information about wealth worth Tk 1.25 crore in the statement.

Afia submitted the wealth statement on March 3 on behalf of her absconding husband after the High Court ordered the ACC to accept it.

Earlier, the ACC had asked Jahurul to submit the wealth statement in person. But he sent his nephew Tawhidul Islam to submit it

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DU VIOLENCE Students' judicial statements were not influenced

Ex-magistrate tells court

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A former magistrate in his statement to a Dhaka court yesterday said the two Dhaka University (DU) students who had given judicial statements to him were not influenced by anyone.

In their statements, the two students accused several teachers and students of DU for violating the Emergency Power Rules (EPR) on the DU campus and their statements are not his personal statement, said Shahed Kabir, a former magistrate of Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, while giving his statement to the court.

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Raise use of coal to cut gas consumption

Draft Coal Policy review body suggests

BSS, Dhaka

The draft coal policy review committee in its final report has recommended that use of natural gas in different sectors, including power, should be gradually lessened side by side with increasing the use of coal and other substitute fuel sources to ensure energy security in the country.

The report was yesterday handed over to secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources Mohammad Mohsin with a provision for forming a public sector organisation named "Coal Bangla" to develop the coal sector, an official handout said.

The secretary received the report from committee chairman Prof Abdul Matin Patwary. The 10-member review committee formed on June 21 last finalised the report

after reviewing the overall draft coal policy in as many as 19 sittings, it said.

The committee felt that ensuring energy security through the speedy development of the coal policy is its main objective, the handout said.

Prof Nazrul Islam, Maj Gen Mohammad Ismail Faruq Chowdhury, Professor Nurul Islam, Journalist Ataus Samad, Prof Mostafizur Rahman, Nazrul Islam, Mohammad Maqbul-e-Elahi and Mohammad Ehsanullah were present during the handing over of the report. Officials of the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources were also present.

It was mentioned in the coal policy that the total explored coal reserve in the country is 3,300 million tonnes including 1.53 million tonnes

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BRAC Bank Heist Locker renters claim Tk 2.2cr valuables lost

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BRAC Bank yesterday received claims from 22 of the 60 affected locker renters that they had kept gold ornaments and other valuables worth about Tk 2.20 crore in the lockers, according to officials of the private bank.

A number of affected locker renters rejected the bank officials' estimated value of the stolen valuables claiming that the real value of their stolen jewellery and other valuables would be much higher.

An affected renter wishing anonymity said she had submitted papers to the bank authorities claiming gold ornaments and other valuables worth about Tk 84 lakh.

Meanwhile, the investigators remain tight-lipped about the progress of the investigation into the heist at the Dhanmondi branch of BRAC Bank Ltd in the capital.

"We are certain that an organised gang was involved in the

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Malaysia to ban foreign workers at its airports

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia will ban foreign workers from serving customers at all its airports in a bid to reduce migrant labour in the country, according to a report yesterday.

The move comes after calls by unions to halt the hiring of foreign

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Tapan leaves for London

UNB, Dhaka

Former energy and power adviser Tapan Chowdhury left for London last night.

Sources said Tapan, a director of Square Group, took an available flight at 9:00pm for Singapore en route to London to meet his wife and daughter.

His return schedule could not be known.

Tapan resigned from his post on Tuesday.

Hillary wins New Hampshire race

AFP, Manchester, New Hampshire

Hillary Clinton yesterday basked in the glow of her primary win in New Hampshire, where she defied polls and narrowly beat rival Barack Obama in the state's key Democratic presidential nominating contest.

Senator John McCain meanwhile staged his own comeback on the Republican side, triumphing in the crucial early vote despite having been widely written off months ago as his campaign flagged.

"I campaigned really, really hard across New Hampshire," said Hillary, who grew tearful in a rare show of emotion on the eve of the



primary, leading to ample political opinion that the display either helped or hurt her.

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"I don't pay a lot of attention when people say I'm up or when people say I'm down," Hillary told CNN. "I really believed that I had a good chance to win. Nobody else believed it, but all day, I did."

Hillary triumphantly told cheering supporters: "Over the last week, I listened to you, and in the process, I found my own voice."

Despite public opinion polls that anointed Obama a double-digit favorite and suffering a stinging third-place defeat in the Iowa caucus last week, Hillary won the state primary that saved her husband's own presidential campaign in 1992.

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Bush starts ME tour, sees new chance for peace

Holds talks with Peres

AFP, Ben Gurion Airport, Tel Aviv

US President George W Bush said he saw a new chance for Middle East peace as he arrived in Israel yesterday at the start of a landmark regional tour marked by escalating tensions with Iran.

Amid tight security, Bush flew in for his first presidential visit to Israel, seeking a foreign policy triumph in his last year in office by forging a Middle East peace deal.

Israel rolled out a full red carpet ceremony, with dozens of dignitar-

ies welcoming the leader of its closest ally on the tarmac at Ben Gurion airport near Tel Aviv when Air Force One touched down.

"We see a new opportunity for peace here in the Holy Land and for freedom across the region," declared Bush, who has pledged to advance peace talks with a view to creating a Palestinian state before his term ends in January 2009.

Negotiations were relaunched amid great fanfare at a US conference six weeks ago but have since

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