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3,510 RAIL CLIPS GRP, railway investigators differ over theft timing

Government Railway Police (GRP) and Bangladesh Railway investigators made contradictory claims about the 3,510 sleeper clips stolen from train lines in the capital. The GRP investigators claimed that thieves took at least two to three days to steal the clips while Bangladesh Railway investigators claim the theft was committed overnight.

A three-member committee of Bangladesh Railway headed by its engineering chief was formed Friday to investigate the theft of the clips from rail lines between Banani and Cantonment stations. The GRP is also investigating the incident.

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EARTHQUAKE  
**Bangladesh at high risk, but lacks preparedness**

Bangladesh due to its geographic location has a high risk of experiencing earthquakes but the country does not have the capacity to combat such natural calamity, experts said at a roundtable yesterday.

They pointed out that unplanned urbanisation, over population, poorly constructed structures, lack of coordination between institutions concerned, inadequacy of recovery tools and lack of awareness are putting the nation at high risk.

The experts suggested launching massive earthquake-related awareness campaigns, retrofitting existing buildings, strengthening

building inspection system, proper implementation of building code and training for masons, architects and engineers.

Network for Information Response and Preparedness Activities on Disaster (Nirapad) in association with USAID and Care organised the roundtable titled "Earthquake risk in Bangladesh: Preparedness and limitations" at Cirdap auditorium in the city to mark the National Disaster Preparedness Day 2008 today.

ASM Maksud Kamal, an expert on earthquake and tsunami preparedness of Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP), in his keynote paper said during the last 150 years seven major earthquakes took place in

the country and two of them had their epicentres in Bangladesh.

He said there are four tectonic source zones that can lead to major earthquakes in future and the faults are the Meghalaya fault zone to the north, the Tripura fault zone to the east, the Sub-Dauki fault zone to the north east and the Bogra fault zone to the west.

If an earthquake occurs outside the country then three cities-- Dhaka, Sylhet and Chittagong-- might be badly affected, he said adding that rapid urbanisation has accentuated the problem of vulnerability.

He said the loss of lives and properties caused by earthquakes can be reduced significantly if the

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Home ministry gets the job of nat'l ID cards  
 Council of advisers okays ordinance

The council of advisers yesterday approved the National Identity Registration Authority Ordinance 2008 and tasked the home ministry with providing the national identity cards.

According to the ordinance, the voter identity cards being prepared by the Election Commission would be considered as national ID cards.

The weekly meeting of the advisory council with Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed in the chair also gave their approval to the draft Bangladesh Labour Ordinance (Amendment) 2008.

According to the amended law, Chittagong and Mongla dock workers' management boards stand abolished. The amendments

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A delegation of liberation war veterans from the Indian armed forces led by Lt Gen (ret'd) JFR Jacobs calls on Chief of Army Staff Gen Moeen U Ahmed at the Army Headquarters in Dhaka yesterday.



Water being sold on a rickshaw van as the city dwellers suffer from water scarcity due to frequent power cuts. The photo was taken from Kamalapur yesterday.

ACC allowed to interrogate Sheikh Selim

A Dhaka court yesterday allowed the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to interrogate detained former health minister and Awami League (AL) leader Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim at the jail gate in connection with his corruption and ill-gotten wealth.

Another Dhaka court issued arrest warrants against detained former premier Khaleda Zia's assignment officer Dr Firoz Mahmud Iqbal and his wife in connection with graft cases.

Meanwhile judgement in the arms case filed against Khondaker Akhter Hamid Paban, son of Khaleda-appointed BNP Secretary General Khondaker Delwar Hossain, and four others, will be delivered today.

SELIM TO BE INTERROGATED  
 Additional Chief Metropolitan Golam Rabbani passed the order allowing Sheikh Selim's interrogation after ACC Deputy Director Abdul Karim, who is also the investigation officer (IO), submitted a petition before the court for interrogating the arrestee.

In his petition, Karim said that

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Reminiscing '71  
 Indian army veterans join sector commanders at reception

"We were comrades in arms, we fought together shoulder to shoulder," said Lt Gen (ret'd) JFR Jacob, former chief of general staff of eastern command of India.

The then Indian Army commander of the eastern front said this yesterday as he was reminiscing Bangladesh's Liberation War of 1971 at a reception in the capital's Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre.

Sector Commanders Forum (SCF) organised the reception in honour of visiting Liberation War '71 veterans of the Indian Army.

In the last phase of the Liberation War for Bangladesh in 1971, liberation forces of Bangladesh and the Indian army joined forces to annihilate the occupying Pakistan forces in battlefields. After long 37 years of their victory, the wartime friends of the Liberation War gathered under the same roof yesterday in the capital of Bangladesh.

The visiting Indian ex-army veterans and their Bangladeshi comrades turned nostalgic in

remembrance of their heroic victory over the Pakistan occupation army in 1971. The thrilled and excited war heroes embraced each other while recollecting their days of war together.

The gallant warriors were joined by a large number of politicians, lawyers, cultural activists, businessmen, retired armed forces officials and human rights activists -- who also took part in the War of Independence directly or indirectly.

An 11-member delegation of Indian war veterans led by Lt Gen (ret'd) Jacob is on a visit to Bangladesh at the invitation of Bangladesh Chief of Army Staff Gen Moeen U Ahmed.

Soon after entering at the reception hall, JFR Jacob embraced deputy chief of the Liberation Forces Air Vice Marshal (ret'd) AK Khandker amid cheering and applauding from an ecstatic crowd.

As all members of the Indian delegation entered the full house packed with freedom fighters of Bangladesh, the crowd grew even more euphoric.

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Indian army veterans meet Gen Moeen

The visiting Indian war veterans, who fought alongside the freedom fighters during the country's independence war, paid a courtesy call on Chief of Army Staff General Moeen U Ahmed at Army Headquarters in Dhaka yesterday.

During the meeting, delegation chief Lt Gen (ret'd) JFR Jacob said, "We feel proud of taking part in the liberation war of Bangladesh with the freedom fighters."

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6 Dalit freedom fighters get recognition

Research and Development Collective, a non-government organisation, gave honorary awards and mementos to six freedom fighters of the Dalit community for their contribution in the Liberation War.

They awardees are Shambhupada Biswas, Kalipada Mondol, Dulal Chandra Das, Monimohan Biswas, Mahabir

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ARSENIC CONTAMINATION  
**Number of patients soars for want of safe water**

The number of severe arsenic contaminated patients is three times higher than the previous estimation done around two years ago, says a joint study of the government and JICA.

The study shows the number of arsenicosis patients are increasing alarmingly due to want of safe water sources in affected areas.

The study conducted under the project titled "Sustainable Arsenic Mitigation under Integrated Local Government System (SAM-ILGS)" also finds many identified patients died in last five years without proper treatment.

"The actual number of patients

in the country could be even more than triple than that was identified previously if the contaminated areas are surveyed again," Kazuyuki Kawahara, project manager, said.

The first government arsenic project titled Bangladesh Arsenic Mitigation and Water Supply Project (BAMWSP) started in January 1998 and continued until June 2006.

Kawahara said they found 799 patients in Chowgachha upazila in Jessore while the previous BAMWSP found only 275 patients there.

"The main reason of increasing number of patients is that previously the patients were identified

by the field workers under BAMWSP whereas the patients have been identified under the new (SAM-ILGS) project by health assistants and confirmed by doctors," Kawahara added.

He said BAMWSP identified around 38,000 arsenicosis patients in 268 upazilas across the country. But if the areas are surveyed again and doctors confirm the patients, the number would cross even 1 lakh.

He emphasised initiating a fresh survey on the most vulnerable areas in Comilla, Chandpur, Chapainawabganj and Faridpur.

According to the previous project, 4,036 patients were identified

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Opposition claims victory in Zimbabwe election

Zimbabwe's opposition claimed victory yesterday in a general election even before the first results were announced, saying it will not accept any attempt by President Robert Mugabe to "steal" the outcome.

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Arab summit wraps up without Lebanon breakthrough

An Arab summit failed on Sunday to clinch a breakthrough on Lebanon, spotlighting the rift between host Syria and stay-away US allies, which blame Beirut's political crisis on Damascus.

A Damascus Declaration -- which Arab League chief Amr Mussa read out at the end of the two-day summit -- called on Lebanon to elect a consensus president and re-endorsed an Arab initiative for peace with Israel.

They also urged Iraq "to disband all militias without exception... and speed up the building and training of the Iraqi armed and security

forces... in preparation for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Iraq."

The leaders called on Arab states to bolster their diplomatic representation in Iraq by opening up embassies in the war-torn country.

On Lebanon, "Arab leaders stress their commitment to the Arab initiative to solve the Lebanese crisis, and call on Lebanese leaders to elect consensus candidate General Michel Sleiman at the time agreed," in the final resolutions.

They also called in their resolutions, a copy of which was obtained

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Prayer Timing

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-45	5-20
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-20	6-25
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

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