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CA to join D-8 summit in KL on July 8

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed will lead Bangladesh delegation to the 6th summit of Developing-8 grouping, popularly known as D-8, scheduled for July 8 in Kuala Lumpur.

"This would be a significant gathering of government leaders of some of the largest Islamic countries -- Bangladesh, Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia, Turkey, Nigeria and Egypt," said Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday.

The D-8 bloc was formed with the objective of promoting economic and trade cooperation among the eight largest Muslim economies.

It seeks to create new trade opportunities, promote linkages and enhance standards of living

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5 rookie rental plants fail to add power

SHARIER KHAN

Five rental power contracts awarded to inexperienced power companies by the Power Cell of the power ministry in January fail to add power to the national grid 46 days behind schedule.

Of these five, four went to Energy Prima, a shell company of Hosaf Group. Energy Prima is now struggling to successfully complete a 100-hour test run of a 50-megawatt rental power plant in Kumargaon for the last few days.

The Kumargaon plant's latest test run started on Monday. Since yesterday evening it was able to generate 50MW. "This should be carried out 100 hours before it can go for commercial operation," said

asource.

The power ministry pushed these expensive rental power deals for three years on the argument that these can be installed within 120 days. The Power Development Board (PDB) will incur a loss of Tk 40 crore a month if all of these eight rental power schemes come into operation. But the ministry believes that the cost of not having power was much higher a loss for the nation.

Now it is clear that the three other rental power plants of Energy Prima are still far away from launching commercial operation. The three plants are Shahjibazar 50MW plant, Bogra 20MW and Fenchuganj 50MW.

Earlier in May, Energy Prima

chief Moazzem Hossain informed the energy ministry that the Kumargaon plant would come into operation from mid-June, Shahjibazar plant from June 25, Bogra mid-July and Fenchuganj from August. This schedule now falls flat.

Another rental power plant in Bhola to be installed by local GBB with Indonesian Kaltimax is also uncertain. GBB was previously awarded with a 15-year rental power project in Bogra but failed to launch it.

But the Power Cell awarded it with a 33MW power project in Bhola. GBB has only recently taken move to open the letter of credit to import power plant machinery.

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DIALOGUE TOMORROW AL to demand withdrawal of all charges against Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) at its dialogue tomorrow will formally place the demand for the withdrawal of all "false" charges brought against party chief Sheikh Hasina and her unconditional and permanent release.

It would also place its six-point demand announced earlier, including complete lifting of the state of emergency, holding of parliamentary polls before upazila elections, trial of war criminals, controlling price hike of essentials and officially ensuring the honour of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman deserves.

"We want Sheikh Hasina's

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Khoka charged with Tk 10cr illegal wealth

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday pressed charges against Dhaka City Corporation

(DCC) Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka in a case filed for amassing wealth worth Tk 9.76 crore illegally and giving false information to the commission.

The ACC could not submit any probe report in another case as the High Court (HC) earlier stayed the proceedings of the case against Khoka's wife Ishmat Ara.

The Investigation Officer (IO) will take necessary steps against Ishmat Ara following an HC order.

ACC Assistant Director Shamsul Alam, also the IO of the case, sub-

mitted the charge sheet against Khoka to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court showing 45 people as prosecution witnesses.

The IO prayed for issuance of arrest warrants against Khoka and an order to attach his properties. Khoka remains the only mayor out of the six mayors of six city corporations in the country, who has not been detained.

Meanwhile, the detained mayors cannot contest the upcoming August 4 city corporation polls due to their conviction and detention on corruption charges, except for the Chittagong city corporation mayor whose tenure is yet to expire.

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42pc raise in power tariff proposed

BERC to take decision after public hearing

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser's Special Assistant for Power and Energy Dr M Tamim yesterday said there is a proposal pending with Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) on a 42 percent raise in electricity tariffs.

After a public hearing, BERC will take the decision about increasing the electricity tariffs, Tamim told reporters at the energy ministry.

He said the power ministry has no authority to take a decision on electricity tariff rise. "It's the BERC who is the appropriate authority to make the decision as to how much it would allow raising the tariffs," said Dr Tamim.

He justified the government decision raising petroleum prices,

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Heated debate over Hasina's 2 petitions to quash cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Attorney General barrister Fida M Kamal and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's counsel barrister Shafique Ahmed yesterday locked in a heated argument before a High Court (HC) bench over the jurisdiction of the bench for hearing two petitions filed by Hasina to quash the barge-mounted power plant case and the Niko corruption case against her.

Barrister Shafique Ahmed accused the Attorney General of professional misconduct during the row. The HC bench of Justice Khademul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Mashuk Hossain Ahmed fixed Wednesday (today) for hearing the matters.

Attorney General Fida M Kamal told the HC bench that the bench did not have the jurisdiction over hearing the petitions to quash the cases since the bench was assigned to hear other matters including writs.

Objecting to the submission made by the Attorney General,

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PHOTO: STAR

Torrential rain left many streets in Dhaka inundated yesterday. The photo taken at Nazimuddin Road shows rickshaws making their way through knee-deep water.

Dhaka rain-hit Wet weather to continue till July 5

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Heavy downpour for most of the day yesterday sent many areas in the city under ankle-to-knee-deep water, meaning immense sufferings to the residents, particularly the office-goers and students.

According to the Met office, moderate to heavy rain across the country has been brought on by monsoons, and it is likely to continue till July 5.

Dhaka received 67mm of rainfall between 6:00am and noon yesterday while the highest rainfall during the same period was recorded 73mm in Kutubdia.

The ceaseless deluge that began the previous night turned much of the capital into a swamp, disrupting life and trade. Commuters were the worst sufferers as traffic remained stuck for hours in long tailbacks.

Public utilities digging up roads added to their plight. CNG-run three-wheelers breaking down for water getting in exhaust pipes compounded traffic jams on the arterial roads and crossings including Mouchak, Kakrail, Karwan Bazar, Bijay Sarani, Fakirapool, Paltan, Dainik Bangla, Rampura and Rokeya Sarani.

Office-goers and students

struggled to find vehicles in the rain beating down for most of the rush hours. Many had to wade knee-deep through water and muck leaked out of sewers to reach destinations.

Rickshaws were in great demand in places where motorised vehicles were few in number.

Taking advantage of the rain-lashed conditions, many rickshaw pullers and CNG drivers charged the passengers more than twice the usual fare.

Raihan of Kazipara said, "I had to pay Tk 15 for a rickshaw ride that usually takes not more than Tk 5."

Nurjahan, a garment worker in Pallabi, said, "I had to walk through waist-deep water to be at work this morning."

Anwar, a private firm employee, said he failed to show up at his workplace in Karwan Bazar by 12:30pm and missed an emergency appointment as his motorcycle had stopped moving in water at Gulistan.

Badda, Demra, Madartek, Basabo, Manda, Trimohoni, Gulistan, Shantinagar, Monipuripara, Shewrapara, Kazipara, Mirpur-10, Pallabi, Mohammadpur, Manik Mia Avenue, roads near Azimpur

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Confusion over Saudi king's 'planned visit'

STAR REPORT

Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud's 'planned visit' to Bangladesh seems to have aroused confusion with no official confirmation available yet.

A section of the media yesterday reported that the foreign ministry had already started making preparations for the king's visit.

Quoting Foreign Adviser Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, news agency UNB reported that King Abdullah would visit the country and the date would be fixed "on mutually convenient time".

The Daily Star, however, could not confirm the information.

Contacted yesterday evening, Foreign Secretary Tuhid Hossain dismissed the reports on Saudi King's visit as speculations.

A source in the Chief Adviser's Office too said no concrete information on the matter is available at this moment.

The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Dhaka meanwhile said it was unaware of any such programme.

However, a foreign ministry official said the Saudi king might indeed embark on a tour to three Muslim nations in Asia-Bangladesh, Indonesia and Pakistan.

Govt hikes bus fares

Fuel price spiral causes commotion all around

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government last night increased bus fares amid a chaos in the capital and across the country as transport operators had been increasing fares feverishly earlier in the day, a day after the former had hiked prices of fuel oil by a huge margin.

The new rate of bus fare is Tk 1.05 a kilometre while the rate is Tk 1.08 for minibuses, according to a government handout distributed last night.

On Mawa and Paturia ferry terminal routes, bus fare was increased to Tk 1.08 a kilometre while for minibuses the fare was increased to Tk 1.11 per kilometre, said the handout adding, the new fare goes into effect immediately.

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PHOTO: STAR

Petrol being pumped into a car at a filling station in Paribagh in the city as motorists try to cope with the fuel price hike made effective yesterday.

Horror in Barisal Mother, 4 daughters slaughtered

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Unknown assailants killed a mother and her four daughters by slitting their throats in Khalisha village under Bhashanchar union of Mehendiganj upazila in Barisal on Monday night.

The deceased were identified as Tanjira Begum, 40, wife of Jahangir Hawlader, and her four daughters Anjuman Ara, 16, Shathi, 11, Jannatul, 9, and Ferdousi, 6.

Tanjira's one and a half year old daughter Sagarika however was luckily unharmed.

Liaquat Hossain, officer-in-charge (OC) of Mehendiganj police station, said the assailants entered the victims' house by boring a hole into a wall around 3:00am when Tanjira and her daughters were sleeping.

The assailants first hacked them with sharp weapons and then slit

their throats, he added.

Police recovered the bodies yesterday morning and sent them to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Police picked up Tanjira's brothers Shahjahan Bairagi and Shahid Bairagi on suspicion of being involved in the murder. Police also detained the victims' neighbours Tania Begum, Joynob Bibi, and Parvin in the police station for interrogation.

Shahjahan, who is a retired police officer, said he heard voices of some people coming from his sister's house and as he came out of his own house to check what was going on, he saw 12 to 15 armed individuals leaving the house.

He also said, "The neighbours rushed to the house as I yelled, robbers." Later, he informed the police.

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Regional fund sought to tackle climate change

Two-day Saarc experts group meet begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Experts from the Saarc countries yesterday emphasised the need for creating a regional climate change fund to establish adaptation research and training centres and share information and experiences to face the common menace of climate change.

At a two-day meeting of the Saarc Experts Group on Climate Change starting yesterday, they presented country situation reports on climate change and their progress in battling it and sought regional cooperation.

Ministers from the Saarc member states will sit tomorrow to plan a course of actions on the issue. Environment experts from eight Saarc countries-India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, the Maldives, Bhutan and Bangladesh-joined yesterday's meeting.

Special Assistant to the Chief Adviser for Environment and Forest Raja Debashish Roy opened the session. Leader of the 15-member Bangladesh team, Environment and Forest Secretary Dr Rezaul Kabir moderated the sessions.

In his address, Debashish said the Saarc member states need to jointly raise voices against the climate change to intensify the ongoing negotiations for getting global climate change fund planned after the Bali conference.

"Our focus is on getting grants rather than loans from the developed countries since they are the most responsible for creating the adverse impact on climate change by releasing huge quantity of carbon dioxide," he said.

The experts suggested developing region-wide community-based measures in diverse ecological conditions by exchanging information. They also called for cooperation in capacity building to take more "clean development mechanism" (CDM) projects and promoting cooperation in renewable energy technology.

Former UNESCAP director Dr Rezaul Karim in his keynote paper

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Khaleda's release process not being delayed

Says Hossain Zillur

UNB, Dhaka

The government is not deliberately delaying the process of releasing detained former prime minister Khaleda Zia, Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman said yesterday.

"We're not buying time... There is no matter of slowing down the process on our part. We're proceeding ahead following a particular policy," he said after an informal meeting of four advisers at the communications ministry.

The group of four -- Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman, Communications Adviser Golam Quader, LGRD Adviser Anwarul Iqbal and Law Adviser AF Hassan

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JUVENILE CRIME 2

Crime world beckons 7 lakh slum kids

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Around seven lakh children living in slums of the six metropolitan cities of the country are susceptible to a life of crime because of lack of any proper mechanisms to protect them.

In the absence of any social safety nets to guard their well-being, juveniles raised in slums and streets without proper care or guidance from parents are easily lured into committing criminal offences.

According to government estimates, seven lakh children are among the 50 lakh people -- a

number estimated by a Centre for Urban Studies survey in 2005 -- residing in slums in six metropolitan cities, and their numbers are ever increasing.

In exchange for very small amounts of money, youngsters are being hired by gangsters to carry or use firearms or peddle drugs. These children don't know any better than falling into such traps, and where they understand the gravity of the jobs they are hired for an empty stomach often overrides considerations.

Eleven-year-old Shawon, not his real name, is a glaring example of how a juvenile growing up in a

slum can slip into a life of crime. Only three months ago Shawon used to scavenge papers in Karwan Bazar area, but now he sells cannabis on the railway track in the same area under cover of the night.

"A woman I called aunt brought me into this business three months ago," Shawon told The Daily Star.

He makes about Tk 150 a day selling drugs to support his crippled mother and younger sister. When asked about his father, Shawon's eyes sparkled in anger. First he said his father was dead.

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PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka Electric Supply Authority digs a hole at Moghbazar level crossing in the capital for repair work ignoring the workers' safety as there are chances of the trench walls collapsing by the vibration of passing trains.

POWER PLANT CASE Hasina's trial adjourned again until July 10

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special court yesterday adjourned again the trial proceedings of the barge-mounted power plant case filed against former premier and Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina and six others till July 10.

Judge Firoz Alam of Special Court-1, set up on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises, passed the order following a defence appeal.

On June 18, the court postponed recording of witnesses' depositions to July 1.

As the court went into session around 10:30am, Hasina's counsels told the court that they would not be able to take part in the

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