





2 die as oxygen cylinder explodes in Ctg

CU CORRESPONDENT

Two persons were killed and four others injured yesterday in an oxygen cylinder explosion at Kadam Rasul in Chittagong.

The deceased were identified as Sumon, 30, son of Abdul Moteleb of Sitakunda upazila and Mamun, 22, of Anwara upazila.

Sources said an oxygen cylinder exploded due to excessive pressure while workers of Brothers Oxygen Ltd were refilling empty cylinders

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Indian army chief arrives today

UNB, Dhaka

Indian Army Chief General Deepak Kapoor arrives in Dhaka today on a six-day tour aimed at improving military cooperation between the two countries.

Gen Kapoor will place wreath at Shikha Anirban (eternal flame) at Dhaka Cantonment tomorrow morning. Thereafter, he will be given a guard of honour at Sena Kunja.

The Indian army chief is scheduled to meet Chief of Army Staff General Moeen U Ahmed, Chief of Naval Staff Vice-Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam and Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal SM Ziaur Rahman the same day.

SYLHET CITY POLLS 12 complaints lodged about rules violation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Candidates running for councillor posts in Sylhet City Corporation election lodged 12 complaints about violation of election rules by their rivals with the divisional election commissioner as of yesterday.

Their allegations range from use of threats to attacks on campaign workers by rival candidates. Two female candidates complained of physical attacks on them.

The Election Commission asked police to investigate the complaints.

Meantime, mayor and councillor candidates complained of violation of electoral rules by their opponents, at a meeting with officials yesterday.

They said a few mayor hopefuls are influencing voters by offering money and other means.

The officials, headed by

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

UNDISCLOSED MONEY None utilises latest scope of legalisation

UNB, Dhaka

Not a single person holding undisclosed money has come up yet to avail the opportunity of the latest amnesty given to the tax-dodgers as a last chance, prompting the authorities to think about a simultaneous drive.

This is for the second time the present nonparty government is conceding amnesty to people who did not disclose their legally earned money, and thereby evaded paying tax.

The renewed chance to show undisclosed money earned by legal means, starting from July 1 for a period of four months, came under the amnesty given by the present caretaker government while a fight is on against corruption.

Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam in his budget speech on June 9 said the taxpayers could declare their undeclared legal income accrued in any year in a prescribed format.

But the individuals have to pay a penalty at the rate of 7 percent on the tax payable in addition to the regular taxes at the rates applicable for FY 2008-09. This window of opportunity will remain open from

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Prayer Timing		
July 27		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-20	4-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-50	6-55
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Flood situation worsens as rivers swell

Low-lying areas inundated, crops damaged

STAR REPORT

The flood situation in Netrakona, Pabna, Rangpur, Faridpur and Khulna deteriorated as the rise of water level of the Padma, the Jamuna, the Teesta and the Ubdakhalh inundated more low-lying areas.

The Padma in spate flooded many low-lying areas of Faridpur affecting around 10,000 people. Two shelters have been opened for the destitute and 2,500 people have already taken shelter there. No relief drive has been launched so far, BBC Bangla service reports.

Hundreds of acres of cropland went under water and around 150 homes in Netrakona and Pabna were washed away.

The rush of floodwater also damaged three bridges and around

9km of road in Netrakona, our Netrakona correspondent reports.

More low-lying areas of Kalmakanda and Mohanganj upazilas of Netrakona went under water, Water Development Board Sources said. Barkpon, Chowhatta, Ranggun, Majhipara, Korlapara, Bariund, Gobindapur, Kashabpur, Kagajipara, Basiorpasha and Baltai of Kalmakanda upazila went under 4-5 feet of floodwater.

Road communications between Netrakona Sadar to Kalmakanda and Durgapur upazila are still disrupted. The Someshwari, Kongsra, Mogra and Dhanu are still flowing above the danger levels while the Ubdakhalh saw a rise in water level.

Floodwater breached the Mathabhangha embankment in Khulna and made 1,500 people

homeless and damaged Aman seedlings on around 1,500 acres of land and washed away 100 shrimp enclosures. Over 500 people were trying to repair the damaged embankment voluntarily, reports our Khulna correspondent.

Despite the efforts of locals, army personnel and Water Development Board (WDB), around 675 feet of an embankment and 400 metre portion of a road at Ghannarpar in Gangachara upazila in Rangpur went into the Teesta as the surging waters of the river continue to erode land, reports our Rangpur correspondent.

According to Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC), flooding of low-lying areas in Munshiganj, Manikganj, Faridpur, Madaripur, Shariatpur, Dohar and

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



Two two-month-old capped langurs feasting on the lush green vegetation at Satchhari National Park in Sylhet. The park has 56 such primates that usually breed during the rainy season.

TALKS WITH BUSH Gilani to defend anti-militant strategy

AP, Islamabad

Pakistani Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani left yesterday on a three-day visit to Washington to defend his government's reluctance to use force against Islamic militants blamed by US officials for soaring violence in neighbouring Afghanistan.

The trip comes amid intensifying US pressure for Pakistan, a vital ally in its war on terrorism, to move against strongholds that Taliban and al-Qaeda militants have established in its border regions.

It will be the first visit by Gilani since he came to power following Feb. 18 elections.

Before his departure, Gilani told reporters that Pakistan was fighting the war on terror in its own interests. This is our own fight. This is our

own cause," he said, noting that his ruling party's leader, Benazir Bhutto, had died in a terrorist attack on Dec. 27.

Gilani's three-month-old government is persevering with efforts to negotiate peace deals along the wild frontier and stabilize a country roiled by Islamist suicide attacks. Force will be used only as a last resort, he reiterated this past week.

"Pakistan's national security and internal stability is paramount," Information Minister Sherry Rehman said. "Pakistan is making its own policy for its own problems." Gilani's first plunge into the centre of American power begins with separate meetings Monday with President Bush, Vice President Cheney and Secretary of State Rice.

His hectic, three-day schedule also includes appointments with

lawmakers, academics and journalists. Officials say he may meet with the contenders in November's presidential election, Barack Obama and John McCain.

Gilani, whose government is wrestling with daunting economic problems exacerbated by skyrocketing oil prices, also is to meet with members of Bush's economic team and address business leaders.

But the sharpest questions are likely to address the growing disagreement between Islamabad and Washington over how to counter violent Islamic extremists. al-Qaeda leaders are believed to find sanctuary in Pakistan, while American troops in eastern Afghanistan are facing a spike in cross-border attacks by Taliban insurgents.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Bank accounts of 22 businesses, families frozen

A CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) Thursday froze bank accounts of 22 people including a number of businessmen and their family members in connection with suspicious transactions.

NBR in a letter directed all banks and financial institutions to freeze their accounts and submit statement of transactions from July, 2003 onwards.

The letter was signed by deputy director of central intelligence of NBR. The NBR asked the banks and financial institutions to provide it with all transaction records of the accounts, the account holders' FDR accounts, credit card records, information on security lockers within seven days.

All the businessmen who had their accounts frozen are related to clearance and forwarding agencies and import and export of goods.



Drivers of CNG-run autorickshaws form a human chain on the Buriganga Bridge at Postagola yesterday protesting against illegally collecting tolls from them for crossing the bridge.

DMCH doctors refer most patients to pvt diagnostic centres

SHAMIM ASHRAF and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Elderly Mofizul Islam, a patient at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), was worried how he would bear the expenses of four pathological tests at a private diagnostic centre as advised by the doctor at the medicine ward of DMCH.

The doctor came up with a solution, saying, "No problem, I am introducing you to a representative of Diagnostic Centre. You will get a 40 percent discount from there."

Referring patients to private diagnostic services by in-house physicians in exchange for "commission" or "gift" from the private services are rampant at public hospitals including DMCH, the country's largest public hospital, and the adjacent Dhaka Medical

College (DMC), said sources.

Although both the DMCH and DMC have laboratory facilities where 90 percent of the pathological tests and other investigations can be conducted round the clock, the physicians send about half of their patients to private diagnostic centres for the tests, the sources added.

This sort of unethical practice at seven medicine wards of DMCH alone causes a loss of nearly Tk 1 lakh each day to the hospital, according to them.

Mofiz, the 75-year-old muajjin at Masjidul Aksa in Ohab Colony area of Bashabo, was admitted to the DMCH on July 11 with complaints of pain in the abdomen.

After the DMCH doctor told him to get the tests done from a private diagnostic centre, the confused patient asked the doctor, "Can't

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

BURIGANGA BRIDGE Toll collected illegally from CNG drivers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The leaseholder of the Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge-1 (Buriganga bridge) has allegedly been collecting over Tk 1 lakh in tolls illegally a day from CNG-run auto-rickshaws although the lease agreement does not give it that right.

During a visit to the bridge by The Daily Star correspondent it was learnt that employees of the leaseholder, Alim Miah and Sons owned by Abdus Salam Bepari, collect Tk 10 per auto-rickshaw.

The contractor got the lease for one year in April for Tk 4.92 crore.

Section-7 of the leasing agreement clearly mentions that the lessee must collect tolls against money receipts. "It is forbidden to collect tolls without providing money receipts," the agreement reads.

But when asked why they are collecting tolls without money

receipts, the toll collectors on duty told The Daily Star correspondent, "It is none of your business."

Deputy Assistant Engineer of the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) Firoz Alam said he was aware that tolls are being collected without money receipts and that in May they had asked the lessee verbally to stop collecting tolls from CNG-run auto-rickshaws. He said he has already informed the department high officials about the matter.

Auto-rickshaw drivers alleged that they informed the Shyampur Police Station and the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) of the matter in writing but the law enforcers have not taken any step and rather favour the lessee.

However, Officer-in-Charge of Shyampur Police Station Alamgir Hossain said no one informed him that the lessee is collecting tolls without money receipts.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Power outage worsens

UNB, Dhaka

Country's power generation came down to 3,324 MW yesterday, resulting in nagging outage even on the weekend.

This generation figure was recorded at 7:00 pm, the time treated as the highest peak hour of the day.

In July last year, the average daily generation was about 3,500 MW.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Drunk women force plane to emergency landing

AFP, Berlin

A plane made an emergency landing in Frankfurt after two drunk British passengers tried to open a door to get fresh air, German police said yesterday.

The aircraft, which had taken off from the Greek island of Kos, was heading to Manchester on Thursday when it was forced to land, police said in a statement.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Cargo vessel sinks in Chandpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

A cargo vessel yesterday sank at the confluence of the Meghna and Dakatia rivers in Chandpur.

Md Kamal Hossain, 30, a crew of the ship, went missing while his two colleagues were rescued near Alur Bazar about five kilometres off Chandpur town in the afternoon.

Police and witnesses said the vegetable-laden vessel, which was coming to Pura Bazar from Bikalpa Launch Ghat, sank due to strong current at the confluence of two rivers in the morning.

Saarc preparatory meet opens today in Colombo

74 killed in heavy Lankan fighting

AFP, Colombo

An eight-member South Asian meeting opening in Sri Lanka today will focus on boosting regional trade and stepping up moves to combat terrorism, Colombo's foreign minister said yesterday.

Officials of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) will start meetings Sunday in the run-up to a main two-day summit starting August 2, Rohitha Bogollegama told reporters.

Bogollegama said Colombo was fully prepared for the main summit, the biggest Sri Lanka has hosted since a 1976 meet when over 75 heads of state visited.

"All arrangements are in place to host the summit, which is the biggest heads of state gathering in Colombo since the 1976 Non-Aligned summit," Bogollegama said.

Sunday's preparatory meeting and the full summit will involve Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

"The European Union took over 50 years... we are only 23 years old," the minister said of the regional grouping, often dismissed as little more than a talking shop.

The summit is being hosted by Colombo at a cost of nearly three billion rupees (28 million dollars).

The 15th summit of Saarc should have been hosted by the Maldives, but the atoll nation agreed to allow Colombo to stage the event to coincide with the island's 60th anniversary of independence from Britain.

Meanwhile, at least 66 Tamil Tiger rebels and eight government soldiers have died in the latest fighting in northern Sri Lanka, the island's defence ministry said yesterday.

The fighting on Friday was centred around Jaffna, Mannar, Vavuniya and the Welio Oya regions, the ministry said. There was no immediate comment on the claims from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

The toll brings to 5,301 the

number of rebels the military says it has killed since the start of the year when the government pulled out of a Norwegian-brokered ceasefire.

Just 464 soldiers government soldiers have died in the same period, according to ministry figures. Casualty claims cannot be verified independently because the ministry blocks journalists from visiting frontlines.

Colombo appears to be pressing ahead with its military offensive in the north despite the guerrillas' offer of a 10-day unilateral ceasefire ahead of a summit of heads of eight South Asian leaders that starts here on Sunday.

Colombo has brushed off the truce offer despite rebel threats to take "defensive action."

Sri Lanka is hosting a South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) meeting, which brings over 1,000 delegates from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, as well as Sri Lanka.

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