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Govt okays new realty law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday approved in principle a new ordinance to regulate the booming real estate sector.

Titled 'The Real Estate Management Ordinance 2008', the draft law carries a provision for jail sentences or fines for the property developers violating agreements with buyers.

The cabinet at a meeting presided over by Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed in his office approved the draft to put an end to harassment of clients by a section of crooked realtors.

Currently, there exist no laws to shield consumers from developers breaching contracts or allow them to seek redress.

Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha (Rajuk), the government body entrusted with

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Best Air's first return flight from Colombo 16hrs late

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Passengers of the first return flight of private airlines Best Air faced untold sufferings as the plane was stuck at Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) in Colombo for 16 hours due to technical glitches and problems in embarking passengers.

The Male-Dhaka flight via Colombo was scheduled to fly for Dhaka at 5:00pm (Sri Lankan Standard Time) Monday. The Boeing 737, however, reached Dhaka yesterday around 2:00pm, 16 hours behind schedule.

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Arrest warrant issued against Sohel Rahman
Case against Orion bigwigs taken up by ACC

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued arrest warrants against Beximco Holdings Ltd Chairman Sohel F Rahman, its two directors and two former high-ups of IFIC Bank in a Tk 158.67 crore embezzlement case.

Meantime, a case relating to Tk 488.50 crore embezzlement by Orion Group chief Obaidul Karim, former managing director

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2 ex-lawmakers among 6 granted HC bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday granted interim bail to six people, including two former lawmakers.

They are former Jamaat MP Abdullah M Taher, former BNP lawmaker MA Hashem of Partex Group, Sayeed Hossain Chowdhury, chairman of HRC Group, Giridhari Lal Modi, of Uttara Group, and Gato directors Syed Galib Ahmed and Syed Tanveer Ahmed.

Of them, Sayeed Hossain was arrested on charge of violating the

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Prayer Timing		
July 30		
	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

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CONSENSUS AT PRE-SUMMIT MEETING
Saarc Food Bank starts functioning soon

UNB, Colombo

Foreign secretaries of South Asian countries yesterday focused on the question of food security and reached a consensus on making Saarc Food Bank operational immediately to help any member state in case of exigencies.

Briefing reporters after the first day of the 35th session of the Saarc Standing Committee, Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Touhid Hossain said they also agreed on transfer of technology and extending institutional support for increasing production in agriculture sector.

He said the Saarc Council of Ministers comprising the foreign ministers, who will meet here July 31-August 1, will finalise the

Standing Committee's recommendations on these matters.

Touhid said at least two agreements concerning Saarc Development Fund (SDF) and Saarc Regional Standardisation Organisation (SARSO) will be signed at the summit on August 2-3. The headquarters of SARSO will be set up in Dhaka.

On trade, he said the meeting agreed that the next meeting of Safta Ministerial Council, comprising commerce ministers, at Male will try to reduce the negative lists of the member-states to boost the intra-Saarc trade.

Touhid said the foreign secretaries also stressed the need for activating and strengthening the Saarc Secretariat located in

Kathmandu. Bangladesh circulated a concept paper on that at the meeting.

Besides, the meeting also discussed issues of energy and climate change.

AFP adds: Officials of an eight-nation South Asian grouping began talks here yesterday to prepare the groundwork for a summit later this week that will focus on trade and terrorism.

Delegates from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, The Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka began discussing arrangements for the summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, or Saarc, starting Saturday.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

CA for quick steps to ease city traffic jam

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday directed the authorities concerned to take immediate measures to reduce the nagging traffic congestion in the capital.

The head of the caretaker government made the directive at a high-level meeting on the latest situation of tackling traffic jam in the city and advised the ministries and departments concerned to sort out problems and take quick actions to reduce sufferings of the city-dwellers and commuters.

He asked for coming up with set of recommendations and solutions in the next meeting by mid-August.

The CA under his personal initiative called the meeting at his office where the DMP commissioner presented a power-point presentation, which showed about

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Children taking water to Motijheel Colony on a rickshaw van from Fakirerpul water pump of Dhaka Wasa as residents of the colony are facing water crisis. The photo was taken at DIT Road in Fakirerpul yesterday.



This road leading to Shikder Medical College in Rayerbazar in Dhaka has been in this state for months. Dhaka Wasa claims the road to be a part of a canal. Conflict between Dhaka City Corporation and Wasa over the issue has left locals in distress.

City hospitals struggle with rise in viral fever patients

SHAMIM ASHRAF and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Sitting on a bench at the outpatient department of Dhaka Shishu Hospital, two-year-old Shourav wailed in pain and discomfort as his mother tried to calm him down.

The situation was repetitive in the department where everyone seemed to be waiting in queue for a doctor to see them.

Shourav and his mother had been waiting since morning for admission at a general ward but there was no bed left at the hospital that has seen a surge in number of patients suffering from viral fever and colds.

The picture is the same in all public hospitals in the city as the number of patients has almost doubled due to spread of seasonal viral diseases.

Doctors at Shaheed Suhrawardy Hospital and Shishu Hospital are struggling to manage the large number of patients thronging the hospitals every day.

Dr Monir Hossain, a physician

at the DMCH outpatient department, told The Daily Star that the viral complaints start with the monsoons and last through to September.

Viral infection spreads mostly in crowded places like offices and classrooms, and patients will recover within a week, though fatigue might persist for a few weeks more.

The high humidity during monsoons creates a sustainable environment for the spread of viruses causing diseases as fever, colds, skin rashes, diarrhoea, etc. Most of these diseases are accompanied by nausea, vomiting and severe aches in the body, coughs, etc.

While most of these symptoms do not necessarily mean infection, doctors are asking city dwellers to be cautious as these symptoms match those of dengue fever, also spreading in Dhaka.

If the temperature does not fall within two to three days, patients should be taken to a doctor, physicians advise.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Police rescue 16-year-old forced into sex trade for 2yrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A letter from an unknown man to BNWLA yesterday led to the rescue of a 16-year old girl who was being held in an apartment in city's Segunbagicha area for the past two years and forced into a life of sex trade.

Shahbagh police along with BNWLA officials raided a flat on the 12th floor of Segunbagicha apartment 'Rupayan Lotus' in the afternoon yesterday rescuing Parul (not her real name), who was abducted four years ago from her home in Khalishpur, Khulna, and another girl.

Police told reporters that Bangladesh Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) received a letter from an anonymous man who said the girl was being held against her will in the house and forced into sex trade.

Shahbagh police raided the apartment along with BNWLA officials on the basis of this letter.

"They made me do horrid, horrid things every day," Parul wailed as she broke down in tears in front of reporters at the Shahbag police station.

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Thrice mugged in 40 minutes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A rickshaw ride from Gabtali to Shahbagh gave a private-university teacher the taste of life in Dhaka out at night. He ran into three marauding gangs of muggers in all of 40 minutes from 4:00am Monday.

In every case, he said youths in white cars seemingly from well-off families waylaid him on his way back home.

"The first gang stopped my rickshaw at Kalyanpur, snatched my two cellphones and the wallet containing several hundred taka," he said preferring anonymity.

He managed to escape the second gang as he asked the rickshaw-puller to turn back quickly after being intercepted in front of Bashundhara City shopping mall at Panthapath.

The escape was, however, shot-lived. A few hundred yards away, a third gang stopped him at gunpoint, making off with the wristwatch that the first youths did not notice to snatch.

He said he saw patrol teams of law enforcement agencies not far from every place of incident, but nobody seemed to notice it.

The story speaks volume of how rampant muggings have become in the city, making going out at night a risky business.

A Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) statistics say 513 mugging cases were filed across the city in the six months from January this year. Ninety-five cases were filed in June, 60 in May, 100 in April, 89 in March, 83 in February and 86 cases in January.

Five hundred and forty-eight people were arrested during the same period in this connection. Mugging incidents, in reality,

are way higher than the DMP statistics say as most of the victims do not report it to the police while many others just register general diaries only stating that they lost their valuables in order to ward off legal hassles.

On Sunday police officials discussed the rise in muggings in a four-hour meeting, chaired by DMP Commissioner Naim Ahmed. He entrusted experienced officers with pinpointing the most vulnerable spots and working out a plan for a massive drive to curb the crimes.

The police have already identified around 200 mugger-friendly spots, with Ramna and Jatrabari areas being most susceptible to the crime.

Sources said more than 1,500 uniformed and plainclothes police, drawn from city police stations, Detective Branch (DB), Rajarbagh-based Public Order Management and Special Armed Force, would take part in the operation.

The law enforcers also classified muggers into two groups: professionals and drug addicts. Professional snatchers fall into yet two categories, one using firearms and the other using sedatives to make their victims unconscious or ointment to render them temporarily blind.

The DMP commissioner yesterday acknowledged that muggings have become a major problem. He told reporters that around 100 muggers belonging to more than 20 gangs are stalking the city streets, adding that police have already arrested all members of about 20 such gangs.

He said muggers are most active from 4:00am to 6:00am, 9:00am to 1:00pm and after

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SABBIR MURDER
Hearing on charge framing on August 6

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday fixed August 6 for hearing on charge framing against five people, including Shafat Sobhan Sanvir, son of Basundhara Group Chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan Shah Alam, and four others in Humayun Kabir Sabbir murder case.

Sabbir, a director of Basundhara Telecommunications Network Ltd, was killed on July 5, 2006 and his body was found near a building in Basundhara residential area in the city.

Judge Mohammad Shawkat Ali Chowdhury of the Third Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court set the date and asked the jail

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

August 21 blasts failure of four-party govt

Says SQ Chy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained BNP leader Salauddin Quader Chowdhury yesterday said the August 21 grenade attack on an Awami League (AL) rally was a failure of the BNP-led four-party alliance government.

"It was certainly a failure of the alliance government. The then state minister concerned should have resigned his position after that," he said, talking to reporters after trial proceedings in a graft case at a special court.

He went on to say that some "immature boys" sporting short beards and round caps had been

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MILITANTS
Pakistan warns US against 'unilateral' action

AFP, Washington

Pakistani Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani held talks with US President George W. Bush here Monday and called on the United States not to act "unilaterally" against Islamic militants in Pakistan.

Gilani, whose new government has been facing intense US pressure to crack down on Pakistan-based militants, told reporters after his meeting with Bush at the White House that Pakistan was committed to fighting extremists.

"We are committed to fight against those extremists and terrorists who are destroying and

making the world not safe," he said. "This is a war which is against Pakistan, and we'll fight for our own cause."

Speaking to CNN television just hours after seeing Bush, Gilani said the United States needs to be more patient and should not take unilateral actions against militants in Pakistan.

Asked by CNN about a suspected US missile strike on an al-Qaeda leader in Pakistan on Monday, Gilani said he had told Bush that "unilaterally it should not be done."

"We must have more cooperation with each other and it's our job because we are fighting the war for

ourselves," he said.

Gilani declined to directly accuse the United States of being behind the missile attack, which security officials in Pakistan said had targeted Egyptian militant Midhat Mursi al-Sayid Umar, al-Qaeda's top expert on chemical and biological weapons.

But he said if it was proven to have been a US operation, it would be a violation of Pakistani sovereignty.

"Basically Americans are a little impatient. Therefore in the future I think we'll have more cooperation on the intelligence side and we'll do the job ourselves," he said.

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Bangladesh Chhatra League Chittagong University unit's indefinite strike causes delay in shuttle train operations leaving many university students waiting at the Sholashahar Station in Chittagong yesterday.

Businessman arrested for torturing maid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A businessman was arrested yesterday on charge of brutally torturing a female domestic help at his house in the city's Kalabagan area.

The victim, Rezia Akhtar, 13, was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with injuries to her head and other parts of her body.

The arrestee, Sanjay Bhuiyan, was taken to Dhanmondi Police Station. His wife, who also tortured the girl, went into hiding.

Daughter of Abdur Razzaq of Bati Chandrapara in Gafargaon upazila of Mymensingh, Rezia was working at the house for about four months.

Rezia filed a case with

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