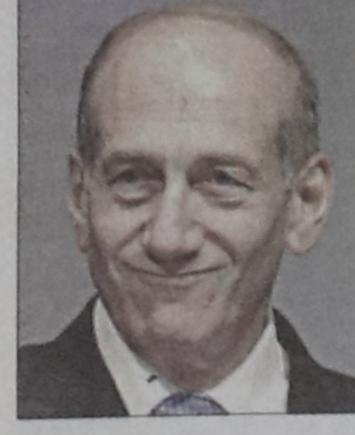
Branch: SR-130, BCS Computer City. IDB Bhaban, Dhaka. Tel: 8124941.







Olmert resigns amid lingering turmoil

AFP, Jerusalem

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert announced his resignation yesterday, but the political uncertainty gripping Israel and casting a shadow over US-backed Middle East peace talks is far from over.

"I have decided to end my functions as prime minister of the government of Israel," Olmert told a weekly cabinet meeting in Jerusalem, days after Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni was elected leader of their centrist Kadima party.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Drive against unfit buses suspended

DMP cites 'public sufferings' due to withdrawal of old buses

KAILASH SARKAR

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) halted the drive against unfit buses and minibuses on Saturday, only two days after its launching, saying that the drive has led to public suffering as the owners stopped running the buses without replacing them.

According to BRTA sources, over 5,500 buses and minibuses ply the city streets with route permits and at least 20 percent of them are older than 15 years.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Transport Committee (DMTC) on SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

All 13 acquitted in Barisal serial blasts case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A Barisal court yesterday acquitted all the 13 accused in a case filed in connection with the August 17 serial bomb blasts in Barisal city.

Golam Morshed Chowdhury Reza, Jalal Arefin, Hafez Saiful Islam, Abu Yusuf Majumdar, Abu Solaiman Sujan, Md Maruf, Jasimuddin, Abdus Sobahan, and Giasuddin are in custody while Sarwar, Abdur Rahim, Zahid Babu, and Ziaur Rahman Zia are on the run.

Barisal Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal Judge Rabiul Hassan also passed an order to release the nine arrestees if they are not accused in any other cases.

The court examined 20 out of 23 witnesses in the case

According to the prosecution, the police filed 12 cases after the SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Poverty up despite bumper Boro output

FAO-WFP report underlines impact of rising food prices

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's undernourished population has increased by 7.3 million -- from 39.6 million to 46.9 17.2 percent from the previous year million -- largely because of the impact of higher food prices and the damage of Aman rice last year, says a report of FAO and WFP.

rising food prices and general by farmers and government in inflation, more than half of the country's 145 million population is now food insecure and nearly onethird is understood as severely food

The special report prepared by FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission to Bangladesh was released on August 28.

"Of particular concern is the finding that most of this growth has occurred within the ranks of the more severely food insecure; meaning those consume below the 1805 kilo calories per day," the report

The Mission assessed the 2008 Boro and wheat production and estimated Boro rice output at 17.54 million tonnes, increased by some and 29.3 percent above the fiveyear average.

This increase of production was mainly due to favourable weather The report says that as a result of conditions and extra efforts made response to the high rice price and production loss of 1.4 million tonnes in 2007 Aman season following severe flooding and Cyclone

The total cereal output in the 2007-08 (November/October), including 2007 Aman, 2008 Boro and Aus seasons, is estimated at 28.85 million tonnes, 5.6 percent above the previous year. Total cereal import requirement in the 2007-08 is estimated at about 3.07 million tones.

The report says, "Though good production of Boro has been achieved nationally, this does not fully compensate for the heavy losses some farmers suffered in the previous Aman season in the south and east of the country."

The wholesale and retail prices of coarse rice, the nation's major food staple, have increased by 78 and 82 percent, respectively, from June 2006 to June 2008.

Rapid price rise of rice and other essential foods is putting immense pressure on the poor urban and rural households, forcing them to abandon consumption of protein foods and causing an increase in malnutrition at all levels.

According to the report, the Mission estimates that the increase in food prices has raised the number of the Absolute Poor by 9 million people, to a total of 80 million (58.3 in rural and 21.4 in urban), and raised the prevalence of undernourishment to over 55 percent.

The Mission also estimates the SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

CA in NY to attend UNGA session

UNB, New York

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed reached New York yesterday morning to lead Bangladesh delegation to the 63rd UN General Assembly at the UN Headquarters.

Bangladesh Ambassador to the United States Humayun Kabir and Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Ismat Jahan received Fakhruddin at the JFK Airport as an Emirate Flight carrying the chief adviser and his entourage landed at 8:10am (NY

The chief adviser will make country statement in the UNGA session on September 26. This will be his second participation in the UN General Assembly as the head of the caretaker government after his assumption of office on January 12,2007.

His wife Neena Ahmed is accompanying him on the trip.

The other members of the delegation on the chief adviser's America tour include Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury and Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim.

The chief adviser is scheduled to return home on September 30.

NO REPAIR IN 2 YEARS

DCC stops ward-based fund to curb graft

ROADS UNCARED FOR 11

HELEMUL ALAM

Most of the roads under the Dhaka City Corporation tell a sorry tale, as no repair on the roads, especially the lanes and bi-lanes, was carried out in the last two years.

The DCC authorities had earlier stopped issuing wardbased allocation in a bid to curb corruption, putting an apparent end to the repair work of differentroads, sources say.

On the other hand, the roads, which went through repair about three years ago, are also in a miserable state as the work was not up to the mark, they add.

Commissioners of different wards pin the blame on DCC for not providing any funds in the Tk2 crore," he added

last fiscal year. Lack of fund is the main reason behind the poor state of the roads, they argue.

As many wards commissioners are on the run or behind bars, there was virtually no-one to raise the issues of the roads before DCC authorities, locals

of Ward-14 and acting commissioner of Ward-13 (areas including Kazipara, Shewrapara, Mirpur Rokeya Sarani, Paribagh, Barobagh and Monipur) said although there was an allocation of Tk 50 lakh for each of his wards, he did not get a single penny in the last fiscal year.

He said 25 percent of the roads under his wards are badly damaged and 25 percent more are partially damaged.

"To repair all the severely damaged roads, we need at least

As the contractors of DCC do the construction, monitoring of their work is also done by officials, who are mainly responsible to ensure quality, he said.

Anowaruzzaman, commissioner of Ward-40, said a huge number of roads of east and west Razabazar are in a bad condition Abdul Kader, commissioner as they are not getting budget from DCC for the last three

Commissioner of Ward-65 Md Shahidul Islam echoed the same, saying he is facing huge public criticism for not doing the repair. He said he has made all kinds of steps to do the work from his side in vain.

Commissioner of Ward-45 Atikul Islam Matin said all the roads of Block-A, almost all the roads of Block-B, and a large number of roads in Block-C and Dare in wretched condition.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

US hopes for full lifting of emergency

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The United States (US) yesterday said it hopes that the conditions in Bangladesh will allow total withdrawal of the state of emergency at some point prior to the elections.

The US welcomed the chief adviser's statement that the state of emergency and Emergency Power Rules will be relaxed or repealed to SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

4yr old boy dies while mom's suicide attempt fails in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A four-year-old boy died while his mother was in critical condition yesterday evening, as the mother had tried to commit suicide by taking sedatives after allegedly killing her child in the posh Gulshan area of the capital. The body of the little boy Alif

was sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue while his mother Saila Sharmin alias Shashi, 25, was undergoing treatment in United Hospital.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Saudi envoy meets Khaleda UNB, Dhaka

Saudi Ambassador to Dhaka Dr Abdullah NA Al Bussairy yesterday met BNP Chairperson and former premier Khaleda Zia at her cantonment residence.

BNP sources said the ambassador went to Khaleda's residence at 4:00pm and discussed with her many issues related to Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia. They also discussed the coun-

try's latest situation.

Democracy weakens as local govt ignored Policy dialogue told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Democracy could not be strengthened in the country because of successive governments' negligence towards strengthening the local government system, especially the union parishads (UP), local government experts said vesterday.

The standard of education, local development and public services could not be improved to expected levels because of shortage of funds in the UPs and inactivity of UP standing committees, they said.

The remarks came at a policy dialogue titled "Standing Committees' effectiveness: Critical issues and ways forward" organised by Democracywatch in association with Danida's Human Rights and Good Governance Programme at the Cirdap auditorium in the city.

"The UP standing committees meant to monitor UP activities and make recommendations for implementation are often not active," Dr Badiul Alam Majumder, secretary of Shushashoner Janney Nagorik (Shujan), said at the event.

The main task of the standing committees -- formed to work on 13 different issues at each UP -- is

engaging people in the process of development and providing services. In reality there is no such effort, Majumder claimed. Dr Majumder, who is also a

member of the Local Government Reform Committee formed under the present caretaker government, said, "We talk of democracy, but we take neither ownership nor responsibility for it." According to

Democracywatch survey, 77.1 percent of the local people do not know about UP standing committees while its members are not clear about their roles in it. Democracywatch Programme

Manager Mostafa Sohel said in his keynote presentation that there is no budget allocated for these com-Governance Coalition

Coordinator Mohsin Ali said the Local Government Reform Committee has specified the tasks of the standing committees, but has not specified ways for their funding or terms of reference. Ali said that there should be a

strong mechanism so that the

recommendations made by the committees are implemented.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Hasina files bail petition in extortion case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A bail petition for Awami League President Sheikh Hasina in an extortion case was filed with the High Court (HC) yesterday.

The former premier is now abroad on parole for treatment.

Hasina's counsel Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh submitted the petition to a vacation bench of the HC comprised of Justice Sheikh-Rezowan Ali and Justice Md Rais Uddin.

The HC bench will hear the petition today, the counsel told newsmen later.

The extortion case was filed by businessman Noor Ali.

The AL chief's counsel also said they will file two more petitions with the HC today for her bail in Niko and barge-mounted power plant corruption cases filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission

Noor Ali, managing director of Unique Group of Companies, filed the case with Tejgaon Police Station on June 13, 2007 accusing Hasina and her two relatives of extorting Tk 5 crore for mediating between Power Development Board (PDB) and his firm for a power plant deal back in 1997.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5



COURTESY: SALMAN SAEED

People watch from a distance as a CNG-run bus is in flames near Mohakhali flyover in the capital yesterday. The fire originated from the vehicle's battery and caused traffic jams in adjoining areas.

PHOTO: STAR

Consumers Association of Bangladesh and National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme of FAO give food carts to 11 street vendors in Dhaka yesterday. Story on page 2.

Sehri, Iftar timings Ramadan Sep Sehri Iftar 22 5-58 23 | 4-28 | 5-57 24 4-28 5-57 23 **Prayer Timing** September 22 Jamaat Azan

Zohr

Asr

Esha

Maghrib

4-28

12-45

4-45

5-58

7-45

Celebrating 22 years of Achievements 4-34 EASTLAND INSURANCE CO. LTD. 1-15 5-00 The name you have learnt to Trust 6-08 PABX: 9564600 Email: eastland@bdcom.com 8-15 Source: Islamic Foundation

Stampede kills 43 in Week that changed Fireworks blamed

works. He was aiming at the ceiling

but a piece of cloth caught fire,

witness Liu Caihong, 31, told AFP

"Everybody started running

Liu, who had numerous cuts on

her body, said she still had no news

friends who attended the perfor-

mance with her on the third floor of

detained over the fire, Xinhua news

province, went to the club with his

wife. They became separated and

agency said, but it gave no informa-

tion on possible charges.

she died in the blaze.

Twelve people have been

Fu Maoxia, 56, from Sichuan

"We were lucky enough to have

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

outside the club.

the club.

AFP, Shenzhen

A fire and subsequent stampede at a club in southern China killed 43 people and left 88 injured, state media said yesterday, in the latest out." incident highlighting China's

abysmal fire safety record. Witnesses and state media of her younger brother and 18 reports said the blaze late Saturday at the Dance King nightclub in the city of Shenzhen, near the border with Hong Kong, was caused by a

fireworks stunt that went wrong. Hundreds of people crammed into the club, then were apparently forced to try to escape the venue through its insufficient exits, triggering a stampede, state media said.

"The performer was shooting a gun, trying to shoot off some fire-

China nightclub fire Wall Street forever Republican administration of Secretary Henry Paulson

AFP, Washington

Wall Street will never be the same after a week that saw the White House, abandoning its laissez-faire attitude toward markets, organize an unprecedented bailout of private companies.

government has announced to restore stability to the US banking system could cost up to one trillion dollars, including the 700 billion dollars for the rescue of financial firms confirmed on Saturday.

To put that staggering price tag in perspective, the cost would amount to six months of economic output in a country like France. But confronted with the worst

President George W. Bush have any In the middle of the week, the huge US banking system was tee-

tering on collapse: its lifeblood --

cash -- no longer circulated; its pulse, measured by short-term The massive measures the interestrates, was spiking. The morphine injected in massive doses -- liquidity infusions by central banks -- no longer had an

> An emergency operation was needed to remove the cancer at the heart of the global financial crisis. The United States "may be days away from a complete meltdown of American International Group

our financial system," said the influential Democratic senator, Chris Dodd, who chairs the Senate holder does not exist. Banking Committee.

announced the broad outlines of a landmark plan proposed to Congress in which the government would buy toxic assets from financial institutions accumulated during the US real-estate boom and which since soured in the worst housing crisis in decades. In other words, the federal

government would become the biggest hedge fund on the planet. That would follow the government's seizure of the ailing mortgağe-finance titans Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and the nationalization of the largest US insurer, (AIG), two extraordinary actions in a country where the state share-

"Welcome to the USSRA -- the SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

financial crisis since the 1929 market crash that ushered in the Late Thursday, Treasury Great Depression, did the

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