

# Govt firm to build non-communal, democratic country

## PM tells Catholic delegates

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the present government is strongly committed to building up a non-communal, democratic Bangladesh where people of all faiths will live in peace and plenty.

She made the remark when a delegation of Catholic Bishop Conference of Bangladesh, led by Arch Bishop Paulinus Costa, met the prime minister at her official residence Jamuna.

She told the delegation that her government and she personally believe in the spirit of non-communalism.

During the meeting, the

bishops highly praised the leadership of Sheikh Hasina and hoped that the people of Bangladesh would be able to attain their cherished development and prosperity during the tenure of the present government.

Prime Minister Hasina recalled that like the people of other religions, the Christian people had also made their supreme sacrifice to attain the sovereignty and independence of Bangladesh during the Liberation War.

She deplored that after the election in 2001, anti-liberation forces had launched repression on the minority people, including the Christians.

The delegation hailed government's move to fully implement the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord 1997.

In reply, the prime minister said, "People of every religion and ethnic group would live in this land with their respective dignity and rights."

She said her government would maintain religious harmony prevailing in society.

Vatican Ambassador in Dhaka Joseph Marino, Prime Minister's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad, PMO Secretary Mollah Waheduzzaman and principal secretary to the prime minister MA Karim were present.



Left Democratic Alliance forms a human chain in front of the Bahadur Shah Park in the city yesterday demanding arrest of those who tried to grab a house at Rishikesh Des Road.

## UNDERGROUND RAIL LINE

# JS body asks ministry to conduct feasibility study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications Ministry yesterday asked the ministry officials to conduct a feasibility study on Joydevpur-Kamlapur underground rail line as part of efforts to ease city's traffic congestion.

## UK signs int'l fingerprint checking agreement

BSS, Dhaka

The UK Home Office has announced a new international agreement last Friday to exchange migrants' fingerprints, a move which will further strengthen the international fight against illegal immigration.

Under the new agreement, the UK, Canada and Australia will be able to check fingerprint information on migrants, including foreign criminals and asylum applicants, against relevant databases in the other participating countries, a British High Commission press release said here yesterday.

This will make easier to identify migrants who try to hide their identities and their past. It will reveal their real identities where these were not previously known, making it easier to obtain travel documentation and speed up their removal.

Fingerprint exchanges will also help genuine applicants by confirming their accounts. At the same time, personal information continues to be properly protected.

The new data-exchange agreement will support the checks that the UK already undertakes with its European partners, the press release added.

The standing committee also asked the authority concerned to built flyovers or underpasses at different rail crossing in the city to reduce traffic jam.

"Playing trains in the city is one of the major reasons of city's traffic congestion. We have asked the communication ministry officials to conduct a feasibility study on underground rail line from Joydevpur to Kamlapur through open digging," Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, chairman of the committee, told reporters after the meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

Mujibur Rahman said, "Traffic situation in the city is

worsening day by day. The committee is working to develop city's traffic system."

About construction of flyovers, Mujibur said, "Rail crossing in the city is also another major reason for traffic congestion. Therefore, the committee today asked the ministry to take steps to construct flyovers considering importance of locations."

The standing committee also asked the ministry to take all-out measures, including developing public transport system, arranging large public buses, in the city to reduce traffic jam which eats up valuable time and money of the city dwellers.



## Moderate rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely to occur at most places over all the six divisions in next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Heavy to very heavy falls are also likely at places over Dhaka, Chittagong, Barisal and Khulna divisions while moderately heavy to heavy falls at places over the country, Met Office said.

It said day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 7:21pm today and rises at 6:39am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 30.5 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rangpur and Dinajpur and lowest 24.0 degrees Celsius at Feni and Cox's Bazar.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	28.5	25.2	87	83
Chittagong	28.4	24.5	87	85
Rajshahi	28.0	24.3	99	88
Khulna	28.0	25.5	97	90
Barisal	27.5	24.8	97	92
Sylhet	30.1	25.2	80	70
Cox's Bazar	29.5	24.0	96	87

## ABDUCTION IN BANDARBAN

# Prime suspect, 7 others held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

The prime suspect of PHP Rubber garden supervisor Hefajetur Rahman abduction case along with seven of his accomplices was arrested during BDR drives in dense forests of Bandarban early yesterday.

BDR officials said the main suspect U Kew Ching Chak alias Jibon Chak, 22, and his accomplices Kebol Chakma and Prakash Chakma were arrested at Badur Jhiri forest while Buddha Moni Chakma, Mai Sa Mroo, Mona Kumar Chakma, Mangal Chakma and U Ba Ching Marma were caught at Alekhong Jhiri in Baishari union of Naikhangchhari upazila around 9:00 am.

Sources from BDR said U Ba Ching Marma, a permanent resident of Bandarban town, was arrested with firearms by intelligence unit last year. Jibon Chak and Mai Sa Mroo are also from Bandarban while Kebol Chakma, Prakash Chakma, Buddha Moni Chakma, Mona Kumar Chakma and Mongol Chakma from Rangamati.

Locals suspect that Jibon was trying to build a crime network with local youths and outsiders from Rangamati.

Hefajetur Rahman and garden worker Najir Miah were abducted at gunpoint from Baishari Rubber Garden at the dead of night on August 16.

According to Naikhangchhari police the abductors demanded a ransom of Tk 50 lakh. Following the incident, a joint combing operation by the BDR, Rab and police compelled the miscreants to give up and set the hostages free at Alikadam area on August 24.

Based on Hefajetur's description of the places he had been kept, BDR jawans recovered a huge quantity of firearms and military equipment from Allang Mroo para under Alikadam upazila on Wednesday.

## Lead scares highlight China's environmental dilemma

AFP, Beijing

A pair of lead poisoning scandals affecting at least 2,000 children in China are just the latest in a seemingly endless string of pollution scares exposing the dark side of the nation's economic boom.

China's growth rates have long been envied around the globe, but its three-decade industrial expansion also has turned it into one of the world's most toxic countries.

Countless cities are smothered in smog while hundreds of millions of citizens lack access to unpolluted drinking water.

Acid rain affects huge swathes of the country and there are regular revelations of public health scares due to factories spewing cancer-causing toxins and other pollutants into the air, water and the food chain.

Despite a growing environmental consciousness here, such scares remain rife due to lax enforcement and an overriding focus on industrial growth, activists said.

"The main issue is that local law enforcement remains very weak. They have limited resources to monitor industries, so (polluting) companies can just get away with punishment," said Ma Tianjie, a campaigner with Greenpeace China.

In the recent cases, at least 2,150 children living near two smelting plants in Hunan and Shaanxi provinces are suffering from suspected lead poisoning, according to official figures. The plants have been closed.

## Chehlum

METRO DESK

Chehlum of ATM Riazul Islam, a freedom fighter and veterinary doctor, will be held today, says a press release.

On the occasion, Quarkhwan and milad mahfil will be held at his village home in Dinajpur.

Relatives and admirers are requested to attend the programme and pray for peace of the departed soul.



Food Minister Dr Abdur Razzaque distributes subsidised rice among the workers of Samahar Sweater Limited in Tejgaon industrial area in the city yesterday.

## PROF YUNUS SIGNS MOU WITH CURE2CHILDREN

# Bone Marrow Transplantation Centre to be set up

METRO DESK

Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus, chairman of Grameen Health Care Trust, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Cure2Children Foundation of Italy recently to establish a Bone Marrow Transplantation Centre for patients with thalassemia in Bangladesh, says a press release.

Cure2Children Foundation was represented by Lawrence Faulkner, founder and scientific coordinator, Pietro Sodani, consultant hematologist and BMT expert, and Eugenio La Mesa, chief executive officer.

The MoU is aimed at setting up a social business in Bangladesh to start bone marrow transplantation - the only way to cure thalassemia. A committee of Grameen Health Care Trust, Cure2Children, Thalassemia Associations and local professionals have prepared an action plan to evaluate different options to start the

first transplant within the first half of 2010.

"Bangladesh needs improvement in all aspects of healthcare. Through Grameen we are trying to address some health issues, which need immediate action," said Prof Yunus.

"We can protect children from thalassemia by making people aware of how to avoid it. Bangladesh is a country with high density of thalassemia carriers," he said.

"It is very important that we let people know how the disease spreads and how it can be reduced and stopped completely. In the mean time, we want to create facilities for bone marrow transplantation in an affordable way for children who are already suffering from thalassemia," he added.

Eugenio La Mesa said, "Our main goal is to create with Grameen Health Care Trust a financially self-sustainable social business for Bone

Marrow Transplantation with the potential to be easily scaled, both in Bangladesh and in other countries."

Since the only way to defeat thalassemia is through prevention, the parties plan to raise public awareness about the disease, and to evaluate the possibility of establishing screening facilities throughout the country with the support of Grameen.

"Combining the know-how of Grameen Health Care, Cure2Children and Bangladeshi professionals in thalassemia, we envisage that ten years from now there will be no more thalassemia in Bangladesh; that is thalassemia will join the list of extinct diseases along with polio and small pox," said Eugenio La Mesa.

Cure2Children will provide the medical knowledge, know-how transfer and training while Grameen Health Care Trust will provide local knowledge and networks in rural Bangladesh.

## Food ration for RMG workers

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the garment industry had been hurt by the global recession.

The minister was speaking as chief guest at the inaugural ceremony of rice-rationing programme for the garment workers on Shomahar Sweater Factory premises in the city's Tejgaon Industrial area yesterday.

He said wages of the workers did not increase in proportion with the price hike of basic commodities. For this reason, the government is trying to keep prices of those commodities at tolerable level by continuing rice-rationing programme for the workers, he said.

He asked the garment owners to strictly follow the rules of payment stated in the sixth wage board in 2006. "Please do not unnecessarily sack the workers," Hossain suggested the owners.

Speaking on the occasion as special guest, Food and Disaster Management Minister Abdur Razzaque said the government has subsidised foodstuff and fertiliser to save both farmers and consumers.

"The government is giving subsidy of Tk 7.50 per kg rice to sell to the garment workers," the food minister said.

Mukhlisur Rahman, secretary to the food and disaster management ministry, said the government has enough stock to continue such rationing programme all the year round at the subsidised rate.

Abdus Salam Mursheedy, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), urged the government to give at least Tk 2,000 crore to the garment sector from the government's stimulus package fund of Tk 5,000

crore for the welfare of workers.

Meanwhile, both the BGMEA and BKMEA started their rice-rationing programme for the workers from yesterday.

Each worker will get five kgs of rice in a week at a rate Tk 16 per kg. Each worker will be able to buy no more than 20 kgs in a month.

According to a food ministry press release, around 1.09 lakh workers of 140 factories under BKMEA and around 5.41 lakh workers of 618 factories under BGMEA will initially get the rationed rice. The number of workers will increase gradually.

Initially the government has allocated 2,100 metric tons of rice for the factories listed under BKMEA and 10,800 metric tons for the factories under BGMEA, officials at the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management said.

## Most private hospitals not equipped

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patients coming with swine flu symptoms is very insignificant. The Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) authorities said anyone having severe acute respiratory illness (SARI) needs to be admitted in any hospital, otherwise, they must be treated in home confinement.

The government has formed Pandemic Influenza Management Committee in every public medical college hospitals and providing them training to manage the swine flu patients. It is supplying anti-viral drugs to treat the patients.

Besides, the government has started to train up the health professionals of the city's eight private and autonomous hospitals and the training sessions will end by Sunday.

The hospitals include Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, BIRDEM, Bangladesh Medical College and Hospital, Uttara Adhunik Medical College and Hospital, Dhaka Shishu Hospital, Holy Family Red Crescent Hospital, National Medical College and Hospital and Shahabuddin Medical College and Hospital.

"After completion of the training programme, we will supply anti-viral drug 'Oseltamivir' to the hospitals and then they will be able to treat swine flu patients," said Prof Mahmudur Rahman, director of IEDCR.

If one suffers from flu-like illness he or she should maintain personal hygiene properly, including wearing mask, covering nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing and maintain safe distance from others, experts say.

## BDR offences should be classified

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own offences as per the rules of the constitution and the law, he told the Supreme Court.

He also said laws of one service cannot be applied to others.

He was delivering his submission as an amicus curiae (friend of court) before the 11-member full bench of the Appellate Division on the third day of hearing on the president's reference on whether the offences committed during the BDR mutiny can be tried under the military law.

The Appellate Division bench headed by Chief Justice MM Ruhul Amin yesterday adjourned the hearing until September 1. Barrister Amir is expected to continue his submission on that day.

During yesterday's hearing, Amir said if the offences of the accused BDR personnel are classified and proper punishment is ensured for their respective offences, their family members could be satisfied in a sense that the trial was fair.

He said the facts and the responsible persons behind the BDR mutiny, and the identity of the BDR members who were on leave during the mutiny would have to be determined for ensuring fair trial and punishment.

Every service of the state has its own law and range, and the rules governing a service cannot be applied to another service, Amir said, adding that the BDR members and even the paramilitary force's officials, who are appointed from the armed forces, are guided

and controlled by the BDR Order 1972.

He said as per section 96 of the Army Act 1952, a mutiny can be tried under the army act, but not other offences like killing. The trial of the mutiny at the time of the killing of Ziaur Rahman was held under the army act, but not the offence of his killing, Amir added.

He also said trial notifications for incidents of the past cannot be given retrospective effect as per section 5(1) of the army act.

Three of the 10 amici curiae-advocate TH Khan, barrister Rafique-Ul Huq and advocate Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed-had placed their submissions before the court during the first two days' hearing on the reference.

## ARMS CASE

# Joynal Hazari acquitted of charges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday in a verdict acquitted former Awami League lawmaker Joynal Abedin Hazari alias Joynal Hazari of the charges of an arms case, in which he was earlier convicted and sentenced to life-term imprisonment.

The court delivered the verdict declaring illegal Hazari's conviction and sentence handed down by a court in Feni.

The HC bench of Justice AFM Abdur Rahman and Justice SM Emdadul Hoque came up with the judgement upon a petition filed by Hazari for quashing the proceedings of the case and scrapping the lower court verdict.

His Counsel Advocate Shahjahan Shaju yesterday told The Daily Star that the HC delivered the verdict acquitting his client and scrapping his conviction on the grounds that the allegations brought against him in this case were not proved.

He said there is no bar on his way of getting released from the jail, following yesterday's HC verdict.

Hazari, general secretary of Feni district Awami League, was accused in total 23 cases, but, earlier, he got bail in 11 cases and was acquitted of the charges of another 12 cases with yesterday's one among the total cases against him, he said.

On August 17, 2001, the joint forces raided the 'Shaila Kutir' of Hazari at Masterpara in Feni in his absence and recovered huge arms and ammunition including a rifle, two loaded revolvers, sub-machine gun magazine, 431 bullets, lethal weapons and contraband items including Viagra. Hazari was said to have fled the country the same day.

Feni police filed a case against Hazari and his private secretary Farooq Hossain Mridha in this connection.

The district and sessions judge in Feni on August 10, 2003, convicted and sentenced Hazari and Farooq to life imprisonment (3½ years and six months) in the case.

Farooq was acquitted of the charges in this case in 2003 following an HC order.

Advocate Abdul Baset Majumder argued for Hazari.

## 37,000 pirated CDs seized

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized over 37,000 pirated CDs, including 1,000 porn CDs, 92 CD drives, 1,800 memory cards and a huge quantity of other equipment from Shaheedbagh in Motijheel area in the city yesterday.

They also arrested Mohammad Sharif, 32, and Mohammad Limon, 19, on charge of carrying out the illicit business.

Rab officials said one of their anti-piracy action team conducted a drive early in the morning at a building at Shaheedbagh and seize the goods and arrested them.

## Obituary

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Md Mohsin Ali, editor of the local daily Protova and former chairman of Dinajpur Municipality, passed away due to old-age complications at Zia Heart Foundation in Dinajpur on Monday at the age of 76.

He left behind wife, five sons, six daughters and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

He was buried at his family graveyard yesterday.

## Habibur Rahman

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Habibur Rahman, a freedom fighter, passed away due to prolonged illness at his village home under Kalara upazila in Satkhira yesterday at the age of 56.

He left behind wife, five daughters, son and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

He will be buried with state honours at his family graveyard today.