

Did you know?

The Empire State Building was the first building to have more than 100 floors (it has 102). The tower takes its name from the nickname of New York State, where it is situated in Manhattan. Upon its completion in 1931 at 381 meters, it took the top spot as tallest building, and towered above all other buildings until 1972.



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Recipe for disaster

Run-down rail tracks, outdated signalling system, engines, unguarded level crossings offer only danger to travellers

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

Run-down railway tracks, outdated signalling system, unguarded level crossings, frequent mechanical and human failures contributed to about 997 train accidents last year calling into question the safety measures of Bangladesh Railway. Information from railway reveals that derailments have been overwhelmingly high over the last few years for poor condition of tracks but majority of deaths were caused by collision with road traffic at unguarded level crossings across the country. According to the record of Bangladesh Railway, a total of 55 people died in 2009 in train accidents. Of them 51 died in collisions with road traffic at the level crossings. The death toll was 53 in 2008 in 893 train accidents. In 2009 there were about 868 derailments while the collisions with road traffic at level crossings were 62. The condition of West zone is more vulnerable with about 634 accidents taking place last year. The railway lacks approach warning signals and road signals at numerous level crossings across the country. At present, the country's 2855 km rail network has about 1,403 level crossings,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7



This recent photo shows a level crossing in the port city's Sitakunda Echo Park area where there is no gateman or barrier. The authorities have only put a cautionary signboard on the tree.

PHOTO: ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

3 crushed under train wheels in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Three day-labourers were crushed by a train at Sitalpur under Sitakunda upazila of the district yesterday morning. The deceased were identified as Khwaja Mainuddin, 35, Anisur Rahman, 30, and Saidul Islam, 30, all from Naogaon district, said sources in GRP. The accident occurred around 7:30am when they were walking along the railway lines near Chowdhuryghata Rail Gate without noticing Dhaka-bound Subarna Express and Dhaka Mail en route to the port city from the capital--on the tracks. The victims met the tragic death when Subarna Express ran over them on the track between Bhatary and Kumira railway stations--some 12km off Chittagong Railway Station, GRP sources said. The bodies were sent to morgue for autopsy, sources added.

Nat'l strategy be drawn up for oil, gas exploration

HC told
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An appropriate national strategy should be devised for exploration of the country's mineral resources including oil and gas, barrister Abdur Razzaq told the High Court yesterday. He was placing arguments before the HC during the second day's hearing on the writ petition challenging the government move to sign production-sharing contracts (PSC) with foreign companies for gas and oil exploration in

SEE PAGEN 15 COL 8

Performance to decide MPO

Non-govt schools' listing for govt payroll to depend on number of students, pass rate in public exams

WASIM BIN HABIB

The high-powered committee on monthly pay order (MPO) listing has suggested inclusion of non-government educational institutions on the government's payroll based on their student number and pass rate in public examinations. The committee also spelled out two other criteria--date of academic approval of the institutions and number of examinees taking the public examinations--for MPO entitlement. The committee submitted its report to the prime minister and the education minister on Sunday. "We will finalise the policy after reviewing it," said Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid upon holding first meeting on the policy on Tuesday. He said they would start the MPO listing soon after finalising

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Extortionist hurt in Rab shooting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gunfight between the members of Rapid Action Battalion and a gang of criminals in the city's Naya Paltan area early yesterday left an extortionist wounded. Alamgir Hossain, 23, of Hizla upazila under Barisal district, was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital with bullet wounds in his leg. He was later shifted to Pongu Hospital. Rab 3 officials said acting on a tip-off, they went to Culvert Road at Naya Paltan around 12:30 am to nab the criminals. Sensing the presence of the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

BB plans countrywide road show in March

Aims to promote soft loans for farmers, SME financing, campaign against money laundering

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh Bank is launching a road show from Teknaf to Tentulia at the end of March to promote financing of small and medium enterprises, soft loans for farmers, use of banking channels for remittance and raise awareness about money laundering. The bank has already prepared a concept paper for this innovative eight-day road show. The concept paper said that in developing countries like Bangladesh, financing of SMEs is a recipe for development while money laundering is a threat. In most cases money launderers use a front company to siphon off money. As profit is not the

main aim of these organisations, they in most cases sell commodities or services at lower than the market prices. As a result, genuine entrepreneurs are thrown off competition and the foundation of the economy becomes weak. Citing a World Bank report, Bangladesh Bank said about half the incoming remittance use illegal money transfer methods. Awareness has to be raised about sending money through banking channels and the banks would have to improve their quality of service. Bangladesh Bank said as a result of different initiatives, remittances have increased and foreign currency reserve has crossed the \$10 billion mark.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Tigers take on India today

SPORT REPORTER

With both teams having lost their first matches against Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and India will look to register their first win when they meet for the first time in the Idea Cup at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today. Bangladesh lost the opening match against Sri Lanka by seven wickets, while India were beaten by five wickets. So, it becomes a very important match for both teams to stay alive in the competition. Bangladesh are expected to make one change to the side, with left-arm pacer Syed Rasel

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Jyoti Basu's condition deteriorates

ANI, Kolkata

CPM leader and former West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu's health condition deteriorated yesterday morning following which he has been put on a ventilator. Basu is being treated for pneumonia at the AMRI hospital in Salt Lake here. The 95-year-old former West Bengal Chief Minister was kept under observation for the last two days in the ICU. The veteran leader was admitted here on Friday following a severe chest infection. The doctors after conducting a proper check-up had earlier detected that he was suffering from slight pneumonia. Earlier in July 2009, Basu was admitted to the hospital complaining of discomfort in the abdomen and a disturbed sleep.

ORPHANAGE CASE CJ to decide on Khaleda's stay plea

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday sent to the chief justice two separate petitions filed by BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and her son Tarique Rahman seeking stay of the proceedings against them in Zia Orphanage Trust embezzlement case. The HC bench of Justice Syed Muhammad Dastagir Husain and Justice Md Rais

SEE PAGE 7 COL 3



These two-stroke three wheelers were banned in the capital during the last BNP-led government's ruling, as the vehicles pollute the environment. They are now running on the city's outskirts after being converted to run on CNG. The photo was taken at Keraniganj yesterday.

PHOTO: SHAWKAT JAMIL

Gas rationing plan okayed

BSS, Dhaka

The energy ministry yesterday approved a proposal of Petrobangla for starting a gas rationing plan to ease the ongoing gas supply crisis across the country, especially in the capital soon. "We have decided to start the gas rationing soon. We will send the minutes of the today's meeting to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) for final approval. "As per the directive of the PMO, we will implement it," M Mohsin, secretary of the energy ministry told BSS. According to the Petrobangla, the Titas Gas System is now getting 1,425 million cubic feet (mmcf) of gas against its demand for 1,675 mmcf per day. Due to this huge shortfall, residential consumers and CNG stations are facing gas crisis during the last few weeks. The power sector and the fertiliser factories are also facing troubles due to the gas shortage. The present crisis, a common scenario in winter, is taking place as the amount of condensate (a petroleum product) has increased in gas, which finally creates problems in the distribution system. "We don't have any system to stop gas supply in any particular areas or zones as we supply all gas from a common grid. "The business community has come forward to help ease the problem and we both agree to start the gas rationing," the energy

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

ARMS HAUL CASE Next hearing on Jan 21

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Chittagong court yesterday fixed January 21 for the next hearing of sensational 10-truck arms haul case. The court of Metropolitan Magistrate Md Fazul Bari fixed the date after the nine accused of the case were produced before it. They are two former director generals of National Security Intelligence Maj Gen (ret'd) Rezaqul Haider Chowdhury and Brig Gen

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Ulfa threatens to attack Indian forces

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Guwahati/ Mumbai

The outlawed United Liberation Front of Assam (Ulfa) yesterday threatened to attack security forces and vital installations in Assam ahead of India's Republic Day. Meanwhile, security has been tightened at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST) railway station and other sensitive locations in Mumbai Wednesday following a threat to carry out explosions this afternoon, officials said. An anonymous threat call to carry out blasts in at least half a dozen locations was received by the Mumbai police control around 7.30 am Wednesday.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Gang guns down guard

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A teenage gang gunned down an elderly security guard at a building construction site in Mirpur at around 6.45am yesterday. Kubbat Ali Sultan, 65, was shot in the chest while standing by an outdoor fire in front of the partially constructed building owned by Hazi Abdur Rob in Mirpur's Section 11 of Block D in Pallabi. According to a security guard from another building who spoke on condition of

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Extended primary level exams in Nov

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The education ministry has proposed to introduce terminal examinations of extended primary level, which is class VIII, in November as per a draft education policy. The proposed exams, which will be the second largest public test, will be held in place of existing junior scholarship exams, said ministry sources. The education sector went through first major reform of such kind with the government holding last year primary terminal examina-

tions for the students of class V, the biggest public test ever. Once the draft policy is approved, education up to class VIII will be considered as primary level. The draft National Education Policy also reads: scholarships will be awarded to the class VIII examinees till class X on basis of their results. The proposal came at an inter-ministerial meeting yesterday with Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid in the chair.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

OnlinePoll

Do you think the conditions that BNP placed for its return to the Parliament like withdrawing 'politically motivated' cases against Khaleda Zia, Tarique Rahman are justified?

Yes (13.0%)
No (85.9%)
No Comments (1.1%)

Total votes: 1209

TODAY'S POLL

Do you think gas rationing by keeping industries in seven zones shut once a week in turn will be effective in resolving gas crisis?

Please cast your vote at www.thedailystar.net

Prayer Timing

| January 7 | | |
|-----------|-------|--------|
| | Azan | Jamaat |
| Fajr | 5-30 | 6-05 |
| Zohr | 12-45 | 1-15 |
| Asr | 4-00 | 4-15 |
| Maghrib | 5-30 | 5-35 |
| Esha | 7-00 | 7-30 |

Source: Islamic Foundation