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REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XX No. 103

DHAKA WEDNESDAY APRIL 28, 2010

www.thedailystar.net

BAISHAKH 15, 1417 BS

JAMADIUL AWAL 12, 1431 HURI

24 PAGES PRICE: Tk 10.00

Rise of the Channel 1 raised many eyebrows

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Channel 1 came late in a procession of private television stations that obtained licenses during the last BNP rule, but made a stir in the screen partly because of its state-of-the-art equipment and also because of its political clout.

Giasuddin Al Mamun, better known for his controversial business partnership with the then premier's son Tarique Rahman, launched the satellite channel on January 24, 2006 as its managing director with a few other known BNP leaders and adherents to its board.

TV viewers found it an interesting time for Channel 1 to hit the market when Mamun's clout in the then ruling coalition centring the so-called alternate powerhouse Hawa Bhaban had

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Channel 1 shut

Regulator seizes equipment for 'illegal' use of rented equipment; TV company insists machines owned by it

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Private television Channel 1 went off-air yesterday after regulators stopped its transmission for using rented broadcasting equipment in violation of the law.

A three-member team of Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission went to Channel 1 office on Uday Tower in Gulshan at 6:30pm and switched off its transmission. The channel was broadcasting its 6:30pm news bulletin.

The BTRC said Channel 1 had sold off its broadcasting equipment and has been using machinery owned by another company. "But as per law, the licensee must own the equipment," said Post and Telecommunications Minister Rajuddin Ahmed Raju.

The government cannot tolerate such unlawful activities, he told journalists at the secretariat.

However, Channel 1 authority told the media that the bank auctioned its equipment and a company won the bid, the auction winner has not yet made the payment. So, the



channel still owns the equipment.

Talking to The Daily Star, BTRC Chairman Zia Ahmed said the One Entertainment Ltd, owning company of Channel 1, took a loan of Tk 24 crore from Prime bank in 2005 mortgaging the broadcasting equipment. The bank put it up for auction as the channel failed to pay

back the loan.

Later, a company named Peoples Entertainment Ltd bought the equipment, but as per the Telecommunication Act 2001, radio equipment is not transferable to anyone who does not have a licence issued by the BTRC, said Zia.

The act has a provision for sentencing anyone who violates the law to 10 years in prison or imposing a fine of Tk 10 lakh or both.

The BTRC has found that the Channel 1 authority paid off its bank loans by selling the equipment to another company through an auction arranged by the bank. The channel then rented the same equipment to air its programmes.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

PM talks with Saarc leaders

Pledges for peace, stability, development of South Asia

BSS, Thimpu

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said Bangladesh attaches top importance to its friendly relations with the South Asian countries for the sake of promoting peace, stability and development in the region.

In this respect, Hasina reiterated Bangladesh's firm commitment to make the Saarc a more vibrant and meaningful organisation through concerted efforts of all in the region.

"We have to work together in making the Saarc a meaningful regional organisation to further develop the region through positive measures, concerted actions and mutually reinforcing cooperation," she said.

The Bangladesh's Premier said this when her Pakistani counterpart Yusuf Raza Gilani

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SAARC LEADERS GATHER IN THIMPU Focus on climate as summit starts today

REZAUL KARIM

The leaders of eight South Asian nations will gather today for the two-day Saarc summit in Thimphu to take united initiative to deal with climate change and boost trade for economic development of the region.

The theme of the summit is Conservation of Environment and Climate.

The stage is set for today's opening of the 16th Saarc Summit at 1:30 pm, which is expected to outline a "new vision" for addressing other challenging issues like terrorism, poverty alleviation and regional cooperation, and further strengthen the economic integration of the South Asian countries.

Leaders will figure out ways to address the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina talks to her Pakistani counterpart Yusuf Raza Gilani at Bangladesh House in Bhutan yesterday on the sideline of Saarc summit.

PHOTO: PID

VIDEO FOOTAGE More BDR mutineers spotted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After scanning the video footage of BDR mutiny at Pilkhana, Criminal Investigation Department investigators confirmed another BDR sepoy's involvement and he was brought to CID headquarters from Thakurgaon yesterday, CID sources said.

The BDR jawan, sepoy Billal Hossain, 20, had been working undisturbed at Rifles Battalion-20 headquarters in Thakurgaon since the bloody mutiny that left 74 people including 57 Army officials killed.

Additional Superintendent of Police Abdul Kahar Akand of CID, also the main investigation officer, told The Daily Star, "Billal was arrested as he was found in the thick of action with firearms in the video footage captured by media people."

"Recently we have arrested a number of BDR members from Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Sylhet and Khagrachhari and several others will be arrested soon from different districts," said Kahar Akand.

CID has arrested 2251 BDR members and 34 civilians in

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MUTINY AT PILKHANA

27 stand trial in fetter, civil dress



JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

Twenty-seven among 675 accused of the 44 Rifle Battalion were in particular focus as they were hauled before the BDR Special Court-5 yesterday in shackles and civvies.

The rest were handcuffed and in uniform in the dock at the Darbar Hall of Bangladesh Rifles headquarters in Pilkhana where the bloody mutiny broke out on February 25 last year.

This was the first incident of producing the accused in fetters before the BDR court set up to hold trial for mutiny charges. Of the 27, sepoy Salim Reza drew special attention as he played a leading role during the carnage.

Everyone's focus was trained on Salim on the first day of the trial on Monday when the complainant and prosecutor of the case narrated his leading role.

Salim, a bearded young man without mustache, was wearing a round white cap usually used in prayers,

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Sepoy Salim Reza, identified as one of the 27 key leaders in last year's BDR carnage, on his way to the special court yesterday at Pilkhana Headquarters of the border security force.

BHOLA-3 BY-POLLS Khaleda asks CEC to resign

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia last night said the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners should resign as they failed to uphold the dignity of the constitutional posts by ensuring free, fair and neutral Bhola-3 by-election.

She said her party does not accept the results of by-election which was marked by massive rigging, grabbing polling centers and driving out BNP polling agents by the

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WB worried at amendment to ACC law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank has expressed its concern at the government's initiative to amend the Anti-Corruption Commission Act.

WB Managing Director Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala expressed the concern at a meeting with Finance Minister AMA Muhith in Washington on Friday.

Muhith at a press briefing at the Finance Division said, "They raised their concern

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Bachelor's level female students to get stipend

One lakh students to receive Tk 200 a month each from July

WASIM BIN HABIB

The government is going to introduce stipends for female students at bachelor's level (pass course) from July aiming to promote female education further.

Under a five-year project, around one lakh female students will get Tk 200 per month on the basis of some conditions, said sources in the education ministry and the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE).

Each student will also receive Tk 1,500 to buy books and Tk 1,000 for examination fees per year, they said.

Besides, the government will disburse Tk 60 as monthly tuition fee for each student of the institutions, they added.

This is one of the several initiatives taken by the government to promote female education so that they can play an important role in socio-economic development of the country.

"We have submitted the amended copy of the Development Project Proforma (DPP) to the education ministry to implement the project at a cost of Tk 340 crore," SM Bashir Ullah, assistant director of planning and development division of DSHE, told The Daily Star.

The ministry will soon send the proposal to the Planning Commission after necessary scrutiny. Then it will be placed in the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecne) meeting for approval.

The project will be implemented in July soon after Ecne's approval, said a ministry official preferring not to be named.

The government has been giving stipends to the female students at secondary level from 1993 with the aim of reducing the gender gap in secondary education and raising the female status in the society.

It is giving stipends to male students also from this year.

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GRUESOME MURDERS Cops dig out 3 bodies on Turag bank

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday recovered the decomposed bodies of three youths killed by unidentified assailants at Dhaka Uddyan in the capital's Mohammadpur.

They dug out the bodies from a ditch at a housing estate on the bank of the Turag.

Local people had informed police that stray dogs sniffed

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

ADB won't fund anti-Adivasi projects

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Asian Development Bank (ADB) will not provide fund for any development project that threatens lives and livelihood of Adivasi people.

International consultant and team leader of ADB Roger Plant said social assessment must be conducted in future before launching any development project involving Adivasi people.

If it is proved that any development project is likely to have adverse impact of

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

RMG workers block highway for higher pay

Vandalise vehicles; thousands of passengers suffer at Kanchpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hundreds of vehicles remained stranded for several hours on Dhaka-Chittagong Highway at Kanchpur point yesterday as about 38,000 garment workers of a factory took to the street demanding increase of their salary and other benefits.

The untold suffering of the passengers started to ease only when the agitators withdrew their blockade after an assurance of wage hike from the owner of Sinha Group around 1:00pm, sources said.

During the agitation, they also vandalised at least 10 vehicles and burnt tyres that created smoke and added to the woes of local people and the passengers.

The normal business activities were also hampered severely for the barricade, as Kanchpur is an intersection of at least 20 routes, including Dhaka-Chittagong, Dhaka-Sylhet, Dhaka-Comilla, Dhaka-Noakhali, Dhaka-Narsingdi and Dhaka-Narayanganj.

Sources said at least 38,000 workers from Sinha Group barricaded the road around 7:30 am to press home their demand for minimum wage of Tk 5,000 and increasing "attendance bonus" from Tk 300 to Tk 400 per month.

At last, around noon, police and Rab personnel rushed in and brought the situation under control.

"I had to sit in the bus for five hours to come to my office at Kanchpur from Dhaka as all vehicles got stranded for hours due to the barricade," said an official of a steel and re-rolling factory near the factories of Sinha Group.

A worker of the group said they have been demanding the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7



Thousands of workers of a garment factory in Kanchpur of Narayanganj block Dhaka-Chittagong highway yesterday, demanding pay hike and attendance bonus. The blockade went on for several hours creating long tailbacks on both sides of the highway.

PHOTO: COURTESY

Nor'wester kills four in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Four people were killed and 16 others injured in house collapses as a nor'wester swept through Sadar and Ishwardi upazilas of Pabna on Monday evening.

The deceased were identified as Afzal Hossain Tipu, 50, of Shalgaria village, Samiran Nesa, 40, of CharVarara, Ismail Hossain, 45, of Koshakhali village in Sadar upazila and Mazeda Khatun, 35, of Shahapur village in Ishwardi upazila.

Ishwardi Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md Jakir Hossain told The Daily Star that over 25 percent of litchi orchard has been damaged while seven educational institutions were destroyed in the heavy storm.

Pabna Sadar UNO Md Abdul Halim also confirmed the damage.

The worst-affected areas are Dogasi and Varara unions of Pabna Sadar upazila and Shahapur, Ruppur and Pakshey unions of Ishwardi upazila.

Md Mahatab, an official of Pabna district relief and rehabilitation department, said the relief would be distributed among the victims after assessing the damage.