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Nasheed makes brief stopover in Dhaka

PM returns home from Bhutan

UNB, Dhaka

Maldive President Mohammed Nasheed termed Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina as a "maternal figure" for them.

Nasheed made the remark when he had short talks with Hasina at the VIP lounge of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday afternoon, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni told UNB after the meeting.

He stayed nearly one hour at the airport on his way to Shanghai, China.

Earlier, Bangladesh premier and Nasheed arrived at the airport on board the same flight of Bhutanese Druk Airlines.

The aircraft carrying the two leaders flew from Bhutan's Paro International



The trees in the photo in Kurmitola of the capital will soon vanish if the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh has its way. CAAB is planning to build its new 10-storey headquarters on the plot. Inset, a signboard reads that the plot has been reserved for the construction.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Plundering of greenery

Over a hundred trees to be felled to build CAAB HQ; controversy over design

TAWFIQUE ALI

The Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) is all set to begin construction of its new headquarters, felling over a hundred trees near Shahjalal International Airport in Kurmitola of the capital, amid a crying need for increased greenery in the city.

Moreover, the building's architectural design selection process is marred by controversy.

The prime minister is scheduled to lay the foundation stone of the Tk 58 crore ten-storey complex on May 20, said CAAB officials.

The headquarters will be built on four acres of land. It is half the size of the present location.

CAAB has not obtained any approval from the authorities concerned for the construction to be completed in two phases.

CAAB member (operations and planning) and head of the project's Tender Evaluation Committee, Group Captain M Saiful

Dhaka eyes Teesta water deal soon

Water resources minister says

BSS, Dhaka

Water Resources Minister Ramesh Chandra Sen said that Bangladesh is hopeful of signing the Teesta water sharing treaty with India soon.

Preparations in this regard are on to hold a secretary level meeting in Dhaka soon, he said while talking to BSS here yesterday.

Ramesh said the meeting would discuss in detail the draft proposals placed by India and Bangladesh in the last Joint River Commission (JRC) meeting held in New Delhi to prepare specific proposals for the water sharing treaty.

10 more RMG factories face labour unrest

20 hurt as workers clash with cops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 20 people were injured yesterday in clashes between law enforcers and workers of 10 garment factories in the capital's Mirpur with the labour unrest continuing for the fourth day over pay hike.

Several hundred workers put barricades on the road at Mirpur Section-13 and 14 at around 10:00am bringing vehicular movement to a halt there for about two hours.

Police charged baton to disperse the agitating workers, who retaliated by pelting them with brickbats, said witnesses.

The angry workers got involved in chase and counter-chase with law enforcers for nearly two hours turning the entire area into a battleground.

STRANDED IN BENIN

Shipping agent agrees to pay for repatriation of 3 seamen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is trying to realise airfare for repatriation of the stranded Bangladeshi seamen offshore Benin from their shipping agents in Bangladesh, Bazlur Rahman, director general of the Department of Shipping, said yesterday.

Chittagong-based agent KSF has already agreed to pay airfare for repatriation of the seamen it sent to Benin, he said.

Of the stranded crewmen, only three were sent by KSF. Bazlur said another shipping agent SIS was also involved in sending seamen to Benin.

New policy on cards to define child

Anyone below 18 to be considered a child

FARHANA URMEE

Adopting United Nations standards, the government is set to re-define the age of a child by raising it from 14 to 18 -- a move that would eventually outlaw employing an additional 1.3 million kids involved in labour.

The anticipated change to the national children policy would follow the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and attempts to bring an end to the confusion over what constitutes a minor.

According to 2003 study of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), 3.2 million children aged between 5-17 years are involved with child labour for wage. Of them, 1.29 million children are involved in hazardous work, and the new policy would have direct impact upon them.

The policy would prohibit any physical punishment in educational institutions. It also aims at providing rights for ethnic, refugee, and disabled children.

In addition, the draft policy would require that every child born in Bangladesh be registered and given a right to claim the national identity.

"A human being below 18 will be given all the services that are meant for children," said advocate Salma Ali, executive director of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association, which offers legal advice to women and children.

She added the policy change would be "a step towards human development".

The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA), which has prepared the draft policy,

12 Tahrir men held

Leaflets seized

STAR REPORT

Police in separate drives yesterday arrested 12 operatives of banned Hizb-ut Tahrir from the city's Dhanmondi, Mohammadpur, Tejgaon, Paltan and Sutrapur areas and seized around 600 leaflets from their possession.

The arrestees were distributing leaflets containing provocative statement against the government and the prime

SUNAMGANJ HAOR AREAS Engr suspended for failure to check flooding

STAR REPORT

Executive engineer Abdul Hakim of Sunamganj Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) was suspended yesterday for his failure in taking measures to check flooding in haor areas, which damaged Boro crops on over two lakh hectares of land.

"The action has been taken under section 141(1) of the BWDB Service Rules. The executive engineer failed to take effective actions in time to check floods," said a press release of the Ministry of Water Resources.

The Sunamganj BWDB was entrusted with building flood protection embankments for 37 risky haors of a total of over 100. The WDB could not complete the embankments in time, reports a Sunamganj correspondent.

The ministry also decided to take action against the officials responsible for such negligence after an investigation into why measures were not taken in advance to protect the crops in the area, said the press release.

Farmers of the haor area are facing a serious blow due to the loss of the only crop in that area as the haors with ripening paddy in two lakh hectares of land went under water.

The Department of Agriculture Extension expected 6.5 lakh metric tons of rice from Sunamganj.

A correspondent from Kishoreganj reports: in the last 15 days, around 50 embankments in Itna and Mithamain upazilas

May Day today

STAR REPORT

The historic May Day will be observed today in the country as elsewhere in the world with a renewed pledge to protect the rights of workers and create a labour-friendly working atmosphere.

The day is observed across the world every year since 1886 commemorating the supreme sacrifices of workers at the Hay Market in the United States to establish the rights of eight-hour working day and with a renewed pledge to uphold the rights of working class.

Many working people sacrificed their lives on May 1, 1886 and the following days during series of movements, bomb attacks, riots and police actions on agitating workers while they were on a three-day strike at Hay Market in Chicago.



Rehana Begum, day labourer at a brickfield in Amin Bazar near the capital, has come under the spotlight as May Day is upon us. Hardworking people like her go almost unnoticed round the year, living lives of deprivation. They need the government's urgent attention for decent wages.

PHOTO SHAWKAT JAMIL

Criminals gun down AL man

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminals gunned down a jhut (garment wastage) trader who was also a local Awami League leader in the capital's Kathalbagan area yesterday afternoon.

The deceased was identified as Rokon Uddin Babu, 46, an executive member of Dhaka City Corporation ward 60 unit of Awami League.

Witnesses said two unknown youths fired five bullets at Babu when he was having tea with his associate at a stall around 1:45pm after the Juma prayers. The criminals fled the scene right away, they added.

Doctors declared Babu dead when he was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Deceased's son Fakrul Alam Shajib said besides a jhut businessman in Panthapath area, his father was a contractor and he had no enemy that

SI GOUTAM Last murder suspect held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detective branch of police last night arrested another suspected killer of Gautam Roy, sub-inspector and second officer of Bangshal Police Station, from the city's Khilgaon area.

Assistant Commissioner of DB Sanwar Hossain told The Daily Star that they arrested Zaman Mallik, the last murder suspect in the Gautam killing case, from a house in Meradia around 8:00pm.

With this arrest, all three accused are now in police custody, he added.

Earlier DB arrested two other suspects: Kaila Zakir alias

SECONDARY SCHOOLS Over 400 teachers to get promotion

WASIM BIN HABIB

Six years after the postponement of promotion the government is going to elevate assistant teachers of secondary schools to the posts of assistant headmaster and assistant district education officer.

A proposal for promotion of 408 teachers across the country has been sent to the education ministry on Wednesday, a top official of Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) told The Daily Star.

Of them, 357 assistant teachers will get promotion as assistant headmaster and 51 as assistant district education officers, he said.

Since the post of assistant district education officer is a cadre post, the ministry will send the proposal to Public Service Commission (PSC) for approval, said the official.

After PSC's approval the ministry will start awarding the promotion, he said.

"We have sent the proposal to the education ministry. It will be sent to the PSC soon," said Prof Mohammad Jakir Hossain, director (secondary) of DSHE.

The total number of government secondary schools in the country is 317 including 144 double-shift schools, according to the DSHE data.

There are 461 posts of assistant headmaster for the schools as every double-shift school has

WAR CRIMES TRIAL Chief investigator was Chhatra Sangha member

Says PM's adviser

STAR REPORT

The chief investigator for war crimes trial, Abdul Matin was nominated for the presidency of a college unit of Islami Chhatra Sangha, student organisation of Jamaat-e-Islami in 1971, prime minister's adviser on education Dr Alauddin Ahmed told a roundtable yesterday.

Alauddin questioned how a person nominated for the post of president of a college unit of Islami Chhatra Sangha could be made the chief investigator, reports private TV channel

Sunken launch under water for 5 months

Govt, owners fail to settle dispute over salvage operation

M ABUL KALAM AZAD, back from Bhola

Passenger launch MV Coco-4, which sank in the River Tentulia five months ago, still could not be salvaged as the government and owners of the ship are yet to reach a settlement on the next move.

The vessel is under water since government's two salvage ships Hamza and Rustom abandoned the rescue mission in first week of December last year.

The capacity of Hamza and Rustom together is 120 tonne while the weight of Coco-4 is about 400 tonne.

The government charged M/s Rahman Brothers Shippers Limited, the parent com-

pany of the sunken ship, Tk 10 lakh for the failed rescue operation when the company sought permission to salvage the launch on their own two months ago.

Tarique Rahman, elder son of former premier Khaleda Zia, is the managing director of the shipper company while Arafat Rahman, another son of Khaleda, and Giasuddin Al Mamun are the directors.

"The company was denied permission [to lift up the ship] as it paid only Tk 2 lakh," a senior official of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), told The Daily Star yesterday.

Yesterday the company proposed to pay the