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Toxic gas runs havoc

100 fall sick as chemical factory leaks chlorine

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 100 people fell sick as toxic gas leaked out of a Keraniganj factory on the city's outskirts yesterday.

The seepage of chlorine from a pipe of Global Heavy Chemical Limited at Hasnabad was reported around 8:45am, police said.

On information, three Fire Service and Civil Defence teams from Dhaka headquarters and Postogola station ran to the factory, and after 45 minutes they managed to turn off the gas line.

While trying to stop the leak, 13 firemen started feeling unwell. Besides, at least 40 workers and engineers of the firm and many locals were among those taken ill.

Of the victims, at least 15 people, including four firefighters, were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital while 19 others, including nine from fire service, were being treated at Mitford Hospital.

Doctors told The Daily Star that the patients were under support of oxygen and saline. "Most of them are suffering from breathing problem."

The factory on around 10-acre land manufactures cleaning products and acids. Over 50 engineers and 400 other employees work there.

An engineer said he heard a bang in the morning and got a strong smell of chlorine, a poisonous gas that has a choking effect. Within a few seconds, he became unconscious.

The engineer suspects that heavy pressure might have caused the leakage while workers say the pipe was old and the metal had begun to rust.

Employee Shahidul Islam said he was still asleep. He woke up hearing noises and was about to run, but fainted.

The gas immediately rendered many other employees senseless.

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A fireman points to a Keraniganj factory pipe from which heavier-than-air chlorine gas was leaking earlier yesterday. The cracked rusty pipe that discharged the toxic gas, *bottom left*. One of the few trees, *bottom right*, in the factory compound that turned gray following the leak. The tree was lush green even the day before.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Khaleda slates govt for Padma Bridge graft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday slammed the government over the corruption allegations involving the Padma bridge project.

"This is the first time since independence that the World Bank has suspended funding for a development project for corruption allegations," Khaleda said at the inauguration of a political training programme at her Gulshan office in the

SEE PAGE 19 COL 1

DELHI BLAST India wants to have 2 Shibir men tracked

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India is understood to have sought the help of Bangladesh in tracking two members of pro-Jamaat Islamic Chhatra Shibir for their alleged involvement in the Delhi High Court blast on September 7.

Officials of National Investigation Agency (NIA) claim that at least two students from Shibir, along with India-born

SEE PAGE 19 COL 4

Food before bio-fuel

Bangladesh draws focus on hunger as world observes food day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The agriculture minister yesterday said the developed world's policy to support bio-fuel is a mockery of the hunger of the poor.

At a seminar organised to observe the World Food Day, Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury said, "... many people in Africa are starving to death. But more and more farmlands are being used for growing crops for bio-fuel for use in the cars of the rich."

Matia also blamed the surge in oil prices for high food prices and called on Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to raise its voice to bring stability in fuel prices.

"Food, hunger and politics are inter-related. Bangladesh is bearing the brunt of a spiral in oil prices today," she said at the seminar held at the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 5

Ershad sees civil war

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad yesterday said the country seems to be moving towards a 'political conflict and civil war'.

"I stepped down in 1990 for the sake of democracy but now democracy is under threat. Conflicts arise everywhere and I can see civil war ahead," he said at the central annual council of Jatiyo Olama Party at the Institute of Diploma

SEE PAGE 19 COL 1

POLLS UNDER CARETAKER PM questions BNP's demand

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday questioned the justification of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's demand for holding the next parliamentary election under a caretaker government.

"How can you be so sure that you will return to power if the next general election is held under the caretaker system?" the prime minister questioned while addressing a public rally at Maona Multipurpose High School in Sreepur of Gazipur.

Hasina also reminded the opposition leader that she had to go to jail during the last caretaker government.

The premier reiterated that those who looted public money, killed people through terrorism would not be spared. "The miscreants must be punished," she said.

Criticising the opposition's demand for restoring caretaker system, she said they want such a system in the country under which they would not have to face punishment

SEE PAGE 19 COL 2

4 Ctg cops sued for bribery

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A local trader yesterday filed a case against four people including the officer-in-charge and two sub-inspectors of Double Mooring Police Station in connection with demanding bribe and evicting him from his shop.

The accused are: Officer-in-Charge Rafiqul Islam and sub-inspectors Osman and Harun, and Nurul Amin, 55, a trader.

Haji Bazal Ahmad Sawdagor, 70, a motor-parts trader of the city's Supariwalapara, filed the case with the Court of Chittagong Metropolitan

SEE PAGE 19 COL 5

Muggers kill fish trader

3 hurt as extortionists open fire at construction site

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Muggers yesterday hacked to death a fish vendor in the capital's Jatrabari while extortionists shot injured two people at Shyampur and looted Tk 25 lakh from them.

Dead Noor Islam, 45, of Brahmanbaria, used to live in a mess at Uttar Jatrabari.

Abani Shankar Kar, inspector of Jatrabari Police Station, said unidentified criminals stabbed Noor in the throat near his mess around 5:30am when he was going to buy fish.

The criminals took his money and cell phone away, Abani said quoting Noor's roommates. The amount of the money, however, could not be known.

Those injured in the Shyampur incident are Didarul Islam and Ohidul Islam, employees of NPC Distributor Ltd, an agency of Banglalink.

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A protester runs by a car in fire during a demonstration in Rome on Saturday. Tens of thousands took to the streets of the Italian capital for a march that turned violent and equal numbers rallied in Madrid and Lisbon during protests some see as the start of a new global movement against corporate greed and budget cuts. Story on page 7.

PHOTO: AFP

Warehouse fire kills 4

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Four people were burnt alive while five others injured in a devastating fire at a warehouse near Benapole land port in Jessore yesterday.

The deceased are Musa Ahmed, 30, Mofizur Rahman, 32, and Emon Hossain, 26, labourers of the warehouse, and Badhan, 29, son of Tahajjul Islam, landlord of a building that housed the warehouse.

Tahajjul used to reside with his family members in the first floor of the building in Dighirpar area, said Hasan Hafizur Rahman, officer-in-charge of the Benapole Port Police Station.

Police and witnesses said the fire broke out in the warehouse around 5:00pm when plastic granules, imported from India, were being loaded onto three trucks from the warehouse.

On information, firefighters rushed to the spot and doused the flame with the help of locals at about 9:15pm. Police and fire brigade sources said the fire might have originated from an electric short circuit at the warehouse.

The fire gutted all the three trucks, said the OC.

Dhaka-based trading house SR Impex had rented the ground floor of Tahajjul's building to use it as their warehouse, he said.

The injured were rushed to Jessore General Hospital.

The Daily Star

Integral Energy Limited

ONLINE POLL

Do you agree with Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain that some companies, who could not pre-qualify for the Padma Bridge project, are fabricating stories to make him controversial?

Yes

No

No Comments

(8.0%)

(89.9%)

(2.1%)

TOTAL VOTES: 624

TODAY'S POLL

Do you agree with Foreign Secretary Mijarul Quayes that the execution of eight Bangladeshis in Saudi Arabia was not illogical?

PLEASE CAST YOUR VOTE AT www.thedailystar.net YOU MAY ALSO VOTE AT facebook.com/dailystarnews

PRAYER TIMING

October 17

Fajr

4:50

5:25

Zohr

12:45

1:15

Asr

4:00

4:15

Maghrib

5:38

5:41

Esha

7:15

7:45

Source: Islamic Foundation

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