



TACKLING BNP RALLY

The ruling Awami League seems losing its way

PAGE 14

DA VINCI FRESCO

Researchers find a "possible" masterpiece

PAGE 11

2007 FRENCH POLLS

Sarkozy received £42m from Gaddafi for his campaign

PAGE 7

CARGO VESSEL HITS LAUNCH

At least 36 dead

200 missing; vessel could not be salvaged yet from 70 feet under Meghna water

PANKAJ KARMAKAR and FARHANA MIRZA
BARNNA from Munshiganj

At least 36 people died and more than 200 others went missing when a packed passenger launch capsized in the river Meghna after colliding with a cargo vessel at Gazaria in Munshiganj yesterday.

The accident happened around 2:30am when a large cargo vessel hit the Dhaka-bound launch, MV Shariatpur-1, at Char Kishori, some 30 km south of the capital.

Hitting the launch, which was carrying more than 250 passengers, the cargo ves-

sel sped away, survivors said, adding that it was a bulky tanker.

Those missing include a photojournalist and his wife and a few expatriate Bangladeshis, police and survivors said.

Rescuers recovered 31 bodies as of 8:00pm yesterday when the first phase of the rescue operation ended. The operation was scheduled to resume at 7:00am today.

Later at about 11:45pm yesterday, locals found five other bodies floating in

SEE PAGE 19 COL 2



People on the Meghna bank yesterday afternoon cry their hearts out for relatives who went missing in a ferry accident in Munshiganj. Left, Rigor mortis sets in in the bodies retrieved from the Meghna river.

PHOTO:
RASHED SHUMON

Knot finally untied for tannery relocation

Chinese joint venture company gets central ETP job

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After being stuck in a legal tangle for years, the government has finally awarded a company the job of setting up a centralised effluent treatment plant in Savar so that the tanneries now in Hazaribagh can move there.

The Chinese joint venture of JLEPCL and DCL will install the plant within the next 15 months at a cost of Tk 477.46 crore at the under-construction Savar Leather Industrial Park.

"We are hopeful the construction of the plant will be completed within the stipulated time," Industries Minister Dilip Barua said at a press conference at his ministry yesterday.

Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation signed a contract on Sunday with the Chinese company for setting up the plant, the minister said.

The deal was possible because the High Court on March 4 rejected a

petition filed by an Indian company, one of the bidders for the plant work, said Barua. "As a result, the long standing difficulty over the relocation of tanneries has come to an end," he said.

At the conference, he asked tannery owners to set up the necessary infrastructure on their allocated plots in Savar, on the outskirts of the capital, so that they could move there once the factory construction work

SEE PAGE 19 COL 5

14-PARTY RALLY TODAY Cops impose same 11 conditions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League-led 14-party alliance has been allowed to stage a rally in the capital today under the same 11 conditions that Dhaka Metropolitan Police imposed on the BNP's March 12 rally.

The rally will be held in front of the south gate of Baitul Mukarram mosque on Bangabandhu Avenue, demanding the immediate trial of war criminals.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 4

Power price to go up again

PDB proposes 11pc at bulk level

MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

The Power Development Board (PDB) yesterday sent a proposal to the energy regulator to increase electricity price by Tk 0.41 per unit or 11 percent for bulk users, officials said.

Salim Mahmud, a member of Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC), last night confirmed that the commission had received the proposal.

"The fuel cost has gone up following the rise in petroleum price in December last year. So, PDB has sent us a proposal to adjust the cost," he told The Daily Star.

"On March 19, we may hold a hearing to be participated by all stakeholders. If PDB can prove that their

SEE PAGE 19 COL 1

8 more pvt universities get govt nod

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government approved eight new private universities yesterday.

Of them, two will be set up in Dhaka and one each in Rajshahi, Sylhet, Narayanganj, Shariatpur, Chuadanga and Kishoreganj.

With these, the number of private universities in the country will rise to 62. At present, Dhaka alone has 43 private universities.

"Before giving the

SEE PAGE 19 COL 8

CLIMATE CHANGE Bangladesh termed most vulnerable

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh is the world's most vulnerable country to climate change-related risk factors, according to a new Asian Development Bank (ADB) report released yesterday.

"Asia and the Pacific have six of the world's 10 countries most vulnerable to climate change.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 2

CLIMATE RISKS Lawmakers of 30 nations meet in city today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A three-day conference of parliamentarians from 30 countries most vulnerable to climate change begins in the city today, aiming to craft a collective voice on climate change mitigation strategy and disaster risk reduction.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 6



Untreated toxic waste of a tannery in Hazaribagh in the capital streams down to the Buriganga river. Nearly 200 tanneries there dump thousands of litres of waste straight into the river every day. The photo was taken last month.

PHOTO: STAR

APU MURDER 2 to die, 4 get life term

Home minister's cousin among the convicts

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday handed down death sentences to two persons and life term imprisonment to four others, including a cousin of the home minister, for murdering a private university student in 2008.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 1

Wait and see

Shafique tells opposition on CG restoration

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The opposition parties should "wait and see" in the matter of a restoration of the caretaker government system, as the next parliament election is far away, Law Minister Shafique Ahmed said yesterday.

"The parliamentary polls are far off. So wait and see what happens," he said at a programme at Dhaka Reporters' Unity in the capital.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 7

BNP asks its MPs to stay in Dhaka

May return to JS if session extends

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

Inspired by Monday's successful grand rally, the BNP high command has asked party lawmakers to stay in the capital till Friday, prompting speculations that the major opposition party might return to parliament.

Moudud Ahmed, an influential member of the party's national standing committee, however, said the possibility of their return to the House is slim since the ongoing session is supposed to end on Thursday.

"But we will go to parliament as we will not allow the government to go unchallenged anywhere," said the former law minister when contacted yesterday.

Some other BNP leaders hinted that lawmakers from their party might join the current session of parliament if it is extended for a few days. Party Chairperson Khaleda Zia's absence from the House has already crossed 80 working days, one leader pointed out.

As per constitution, a parliamentary seat will fall vacant if a lawmaker remains absent from the House for 90 consecutive working days.

"We have got instructions to stay in the capital but we don't know the reason," said a party lawmaker requesting anonymity.

After a prolonged abstention, BNP and its allies Jamaat-e-Islami and BJP joined the 8th session of parliament on March 15 last year and walked out on March 24.

Asked if BNP plans to return to the House, Chief Whip

SEE PAGE 19 COL 4

Bhutto's new idea on power transfer

SYED BADRUL AHSAN

On this day in 1971, Pakistan People's Party chairman Zulfikar

Ali Bhutto added a new twist to the situation. Addressing a public meeting in Karachi, he demanded that power be transferred to the Awami League in East Pakistan and to the PPP in West Pakistan. It was his misplaced view that since his party held the majority in the west, it was entitled to power in the western wing. In other words, he was advocating two governments for the two regions of Pakistan. On the demand that power at the centre be handed over to the Awami League, he stated that such a move could be made only if the AL decided to shelve its Six Point plan. It was clearly a position Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was not willing to adopt.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 4

