

North Korea softens on US security offer

REUTERS, Seoul
North Korea, in a significant shift in a year-old nuclear crisis, says it is prepared to consider a US offer of security guarantees in return for dropping its atomic weapons programme.

talks would be held until Pyongyang had checked Washington's intentions through diplomatic channels. US President George W Bush proposed the unspecified written undertakings this week during the 21-member Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting in Bangkok.

on the intention to co-exist with the DPRK and aimed to play a positive role in realising the proposal for a package solution on the principle of simultaneous actions," the spokesman said. DPRK are the initials of the North's formal name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The North's official KCNA news agency published the spokesman's comments in English.

"It is premature to talk about the six-way talks under the present situation unless the will to accept the principle of simultaneous actions is confirmed," he said. China hosted an inconclusive first round of talks in Beijing in August with Japan, Russia, the two Koreans and the United States also at the table. Ban Ki-moon, South Korean
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More names of 'godfathers' to be revealed

Hasina says before flying off to Germany

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition Leader and Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her party is preparing to publish more names of godfathers who patronise criminals with the direct support of the government. "Apart from the names of the godfathers already published, we have substantial proof of criminal activities and misdeeds of more ruling party men and those will be made public," she told reporters at
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Legalised VoIP far away

Telecoms ministry fails to come up with proposal

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

Legalisation of Internet telephony hangs in the balance as the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MoPT) failed to send a proposal to the cabinet division even three months after a decision. "The issue of legalising Internet telephony will be sent to the cabinet for approval," Telecommunication

Minister M Aminul Haque told The Daily Star earlier. When contacted, MoPT Secretary Faruk Ahmed Siddique admitted the failure. "We hope to send it to the cabinet soon," he said without specifying any date. Internet telephony or Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) is the most cost-effective overseas telecommu-

nications system. The system may enable 'mobile to mobile' phone users to receive international calls. Currently, about 10 lakh people use 'mobile to mobile' phones because of lack of landline interconnectivity. A vested quarter, close to the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party,
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Thais to clone Marbled Cats

ANN/ THE NATION
A Thai research team will begin trying to clone endangered Marbled Cats next month and hopes to see the first cloned kittens born in February. The team will use sample tissue from a Marbled Cat (Pardofelis marmorata) from Nakhon Ratchasima Zoo, said its leader, Dr Rangsan Phanphai, a lecturer in the Biotechnology Department at Suranaree University of Technology. The tissue for the cloning process would be taken from the ear of one of the cats and then grown in a lab to increase the number of cells, Rangsan said. The team would inject DNA extracted from the cultured cells into eggs from 25 domestic cats, he said. First, however, the original DNA of the eggs would be removed. The eggs would then be implanted in surrogate moth
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Habiganj-Rashidpur pipeline Petrobangla opts for local bidders

STAR REPORT

Petrobangla gave in to the pressure of a lobby with a vested interest and limited a pipeline project to local bidders, ignoring the possibility of a cost-effective solution, sources said. The Tk 27 crore Habiganj-Rashidpur pipeline construction project was supposed to maintain standard open bidding from foreign and local pipeline builders to ensure low cost and timely implementation with quality. Petrobangla originally thought of going with an open tender for the project a year ago. But for some mysterious reasons, whenever the project was placed before the Petrobangla board for clearance, the tender proposal was sent back for further modification. Having rejected four proposals, the board finally gave the nod to float the tender with a restriction to local bidders, said a source. This pipeline is to help increase

gas transmission from the Sylhet region to other parts of the country. The pipeline system is saturated with gas supplies right now. Though different gas fields can increase gas production, Petrobangla cannot increase the supply for technical reason. Gas demand rose to a record 1,295 million cubic feet per day (mmcf), putting huge pressure on the existing pipeline system that is equipped to supply a maximum of 1,250mmcf to 1,270mmcf. To meet the soaring demand, Petrobangla has made a move to increase gas production from different gas fields in the Sylhet region. Petrobangla plans to receive an additional 30mmcf from Unocal's Jalalabad field from December, 40mmcf more from its Fenchuganj field next year, and an extra 70mmcf from Moulavibazar in January 2005. This extra 140mmcf gas cannot be supplied to other regions unless
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AWWWW THAT'S NOT GENTLE ONE.... England opener Marcus Trescothick ducks for cover from a snooter off Bangladesh fast bowler Mashrafe-bin Mortuza during the fifth day's play of the first Test at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

CU student abducted serving jail sentence for misdemeanour

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg
A Chittagong University (CU) student earlier feared kidnapped was found in Comilla jail yesterday. Mohammad Iftekharul Islam, a first-year student of English Department, was sent to jail for 15 days by a railway mobile court at Laksham junction last Wednesday for travelling without ticket from Chittagong the day before, police said. Iftekhar was initially fined Tk 100, but the magistrate later decided to send the repeat offender to jail for his arrogance, said a railway official requesting anonymity. "Had he not misbehaved with the magistrate, Iftekhar would have been released considering his young age and student status," he added. The matter came to light after Iftekhar contacted his family over phone immediately after the sentence. Earlier, Iftekhar's father filed a general diary (GD) with Chandgaon Police fearing his son's abduction.

Moghul-era relics sliding into ruin

PINAKI ROY
Two Mughal-era monuments are gradually being run down and destroyed as a result of the negligence of the authorities who are supposed to be looking after them. Although the Bara Katra and Chhota Katra in Dhaka's Chawk Bazar are protected under Antiquities Act -- it is illegal even to make a scratch on them -- people have invaded the area and turned the land and buildings into shops and homes. A madrassah has grabbed parts of the Bara Katra courtyard for years and its students are living in the south plaza, the only visible remnant of the building. Corrugated iron shops make it impossible for visitors to walk around the site and a plethora of signboards for phone-fax establishments, groceries, schools and other businesses mar the view. The clutter prevented this correspondent from finding the grave of Bibichampa, daughter of Shaista Khan, the subedar of Bangla. Some historians say Bibichampa was a concubine of Shaista Khan. Yet the Bara Katra, erected in 1644, is one of the country's oldest monuments. Its architectural importance is highly rated:
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PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN
The Mughal relic of Bara Katra stands hidden behind a cluster of shops and signboards despite the law to protect historical sites.

Businessman rescued 3 days after abduction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Police yesterday rescued the businessman abducted from Ramna area on October 22 from Beraid village under Badda Police Station. A gang of five abducted Mahmuduzzaman alias Suja, 38, when he was returning home by rickshaw after dropping his daughter at Vigarunnisa Noon School and College at about 7:10am that day. The gang led by Abul Hossain waylaid Suja's rickshaw and forced him at gunpoint to get into a microbus. Suja was kept hostage inside Abul's house at Beraid. The kidnappers demanded a ransom of Tk 2 lakh to Suja's wife Nilufar Mahmood over telephone. Nilufar filed a case with Ramna Police Station after receiving the phone call. On receiving information, Ramna police raided the house and rescued Suja at about 2:30pm. Police arrested Sayeed, owner of a phone-fax shop at Beraid. The abductors used Sayeed's phone to demand the ransom, police said.

Two bodies to help contain power sector corruption

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The parliamentary standing committee on public undertakings has decided to form two committees to contain the corruption and irregularities that plague the power sector. The standing committee will submit its report to the prime minister next month with its recommendations for improving the situation in the power sector. The committee yesterday observed that the power sector is
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8,000 get plots in Purbachal project

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The government has selected 8,000 applicants for plots under the first phase of allotments for the Purbachal New Town Project (PNT) at Rugganj of Narayanganj and Kaliganj of Gazipur. "Of the 31,426 applicants, we have chosen 8,000 including government and non government service holders, businessmen, freedom-fighters, journalists, lawyers and others professional groups," Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas told newsmen at his secretariat office yesterday. Applications for the PNT plots were submitted almost 29 months ago. "In the first phase, 15,000 plots will be given out of the total 34,000, and 3341 have already been allocated under the wage earners' quota," the minister said. "Applications rejected so far will be reconsidered during the next phase of allotments," he added. Sources said at least 23 of 25 lawmakers and ministers given allocations are ruling party men. But Mirza Abbas dismissed
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2 killed, body of housewife recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Unidentified gunmen shot dead a trader in front of his house at South Paikpara in Mirpur yesterday and another man in Badda Friday night. The body of a young housewife was recovered by police from a shanty at Monsurabad in Mohammadpur yesterday. Sources said an armed gang of about five shot 25-year-old Monir, a potato chips dealer, in front of his rented house at around 3:00pm. The gang shot him in the head and fled the spot killing him on the scene. Police sent the body to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for autopsy. The victim's relatives said Monir had no enmity with any one and that he might have been killed accidentally. But police linked the killing to feuds between the owner of Monir's rented house and a real estate developer. A police official said the developer damaged a wall of the house recently, sparking a dispute that was still unresolved. No case was filed till 8:00 last night and none was arrested. In another incident, a gang shot Manik Mia, 28, at Quratuli Notunbazar in Badda. His wife said he went out of house at Kalyanpur Friday evening on receipt of a call. Before leaving, he told her he would meet some friends and have dinner with them at a Chinese restaurant. At about 9:30pm, locals found Manik lying on a road at Notunbazar with bullet wounds in his chest, head, back, throat and waist. Police took him to the DMCH where he died at about midnight.
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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Oct 26		5-25 pm
Oct 27	6-01 am	

Prayer Timings		
October 26		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-00	5-30
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-30	5-35
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation