



PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia inaugurates an armament exhibition organised by the armed forces at the National Parade Square in Tejgaon yesterday.

187 bank branches to accept utility bills

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The residents of Dhaka will be able to pay all utility bills to 187 select branches of private or public sector banks.

They will also be able to pay the bills online -- through ATM and credit cards and other electronic systems accepted to the banks.

The finance ministry yesterday approved the proposal for the payment of telephone, electricity, gas, water and other bills at the select branches in Dhaka and Tongi considering people's in-

venience in clearing the bills.

The finance ministry and different bank management will meet soon to select the branches zone-wise where the service will be launched.

Directives to the banks will be sent soon.

The ministry also decided that the system would be replicated in other metropolitan cities in near future.

Under the arrangement, banks will not be given any service charge, but be allowed to keep the deposits for a certain period.

Presently some bank branches accept telephone bills, some electricity or water, requiring an individual to go to four separate branches a month and wait in long queues for hours.

The cabinet in September decided to introduce a One Stop Utility Bill Payment System.

It then decided to introduce the system in nationalised commercial banks only, but Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman met different bank management to spread the service to private banks also.

8-year-old maid tortured brutally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg



The story of an eight-year-old girl sent a cold shiver of fear after police rescued her covered in hallmarks of brutal torture from a railway official's house in Chittagong city Sunday night.

Boiling oil was poured on her, sending her writhing in pain for days. Much of her body was scraped with a sharp knife or burnt with red-hot spoons. The employer and his wife chained her to their house for months to camouflage the torture.

years ago.

The harrowing ordeal came to light when another domestic help, Rashida Begum from the neighbourhood, went to work for Baker and his wife Shilpi Khanom, a s s h e w a s

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Nepalese PM arrives tomorrow

UNB, Dhaka

Nepalese Prime Minister and Chairperson of South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (Saarc) Surya Bahadur Thapa arrives in Dhaka tomorrow on a three-day visit.

He will be accompanied by a 12-member delegation, an official

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Step down for midterm polls

Hasina asks govt

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina has asked the government to step down, paving the

way for midterm election to end 'misrule, terrorism and corruption.'

"In view of present suffocating situation, I don't think there is any option other than the government

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Badruddoza opens office today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, former president and founding secretary general of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), today opens an office at Baridhara in a bid to gear up his recent political initiatives.

The office is located on the fourth

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Saifur for allotment of JS seats on pro rata basis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

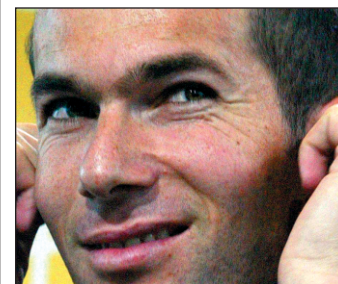
Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday said electoral system should be amended to strengthen democracy by paving the way for honest and credible persons to be elected as lawmakers.

When asked to elaborate, Saifur proposed allotment of parliamentary seats to the political parties proportionate to the percentage of vote they secure in general elections.

Echoing his comment, Shah AMS Kibria, former finance minister, advocated for amendment to electoral system. He also said proportionate distribution of seats might be considered.

Saifur and his predecessor finance minister agreed that the existing electoral system does not fully reflect people's opinion, as it upholds contestants securing the highest votes, even if less than half

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Zidane FIFA Player of the Year

AFP, Basel

Real Madrid's French midfielder Zinedine Zidane was named FIFA Player of the Year for the third time on Monday, ahead of Arsenal's Thierry Henry and Brazilian teammate Ronaldo.

The 31-year-old Zidane is the midfield hub of both Real and France, combining a prodigious work-rate with an enormous talent for providing goals for his teammates.

He won the World Player of the Year award in 1998 and 2000.

Based on a worldwide vote by 142

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| Prayer Timings | | |
|----------------|-------|--------|
| December 16 | | |
| | Azan | Jamaat |
| Fair | 5-30 | 5-50 |
| Zohr | 12-45 | 1-15 |
| Asr | 3-45 | 4-00 |
| Maghrib | 5-22 | 5-27 |
| Esha | 7-00 | 7-30 |

Source: Islamic Foundation