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TRANSCOM ELECTRONICS

Mirza Abbas to face trial in cop murder case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas and five others are going to face trial in the murder case of constable Abu Naser at Razarbagh Police Lines in Malibagh in February 2001.

Judge Mohammad Momin Ullah of the Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court on January 26 directed Mirza Abbas, his brother Mirza Khokon and four others to appear before it on February 20.

Four other accused are Shahab Uddin Laltu, former president of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, student wing of ruling BNP Yusuf Bin Jalil, Abu Iqbal and Sumon. Of them, Abbas, Khokon, Yusuf and Laltu obtained bail from the High Court (HC) while Abu Iqbal got bail from the sessions judge's court. Sumon is still at large.

Following a court rule, the case SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Black market in diesel on the rise

Acute crisis of petrol, octane continues

STAR REPORT

Amid a persisting fuel crisis, particularly in the northern districts, some dishonest dealers are cashing in on people's miseries by selling their quotas of diesel at high prices on the black market.

On an allegation of such black marketing, the deputy commissioner of Kurigram yesterday slapped a show-cause notice on the owner of a local filling station.

Sources said the owner of Shaikat Filling Station sold 9,000 litres of diesel from his allotment to Abdul Gafur, a businessman of the district's border area, on January 28.

Officials of the Bangladesh

Petroleum Corporation (BPC) acknowledged receiving allegations of the black marketing, but said nobody had come up with specific evidence so far.

However, the northern farmers have started to get diesel and kerosene, though at limited quantities. But an acute crisis of petrol and octane is still haunting both transport owners and commuters.

BPC officials said yesterday the diesel supply was 900 metric ton against a demand for 2,200 metric ton. The total reserve of diesel in the northern region yesterday stood at 14,000 litre.

Our Rajshahi correspondent Anwar Ali reports: People did not get petrol at most of the filling

stations in the city yesterday, while supply of diesel started to rise, bringing some relief for the farmers who require a huge quantity of diesel to run irrigation pumps during the current peak Boro season.

Reports from Dinajpur, Rangpur and other northern districts also indicate an acute shortage of petrol and octane, with diesel supply picking up after the opening of the alternate fuel depot at Kazirhat, 25km downstream of Baghabari. The depot at Baghabari went out of operation as a shrinking river channel started to keep fuel vessels stranded.

Now only 50 lorries of diesel are SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

UNUSUAL PRICE HIKE Govt may import sugar through BSFIC, TCB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a bid to contain the unusual price hike of sugar, the government is considering import of sugar through Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation (BSFIC) and the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB).

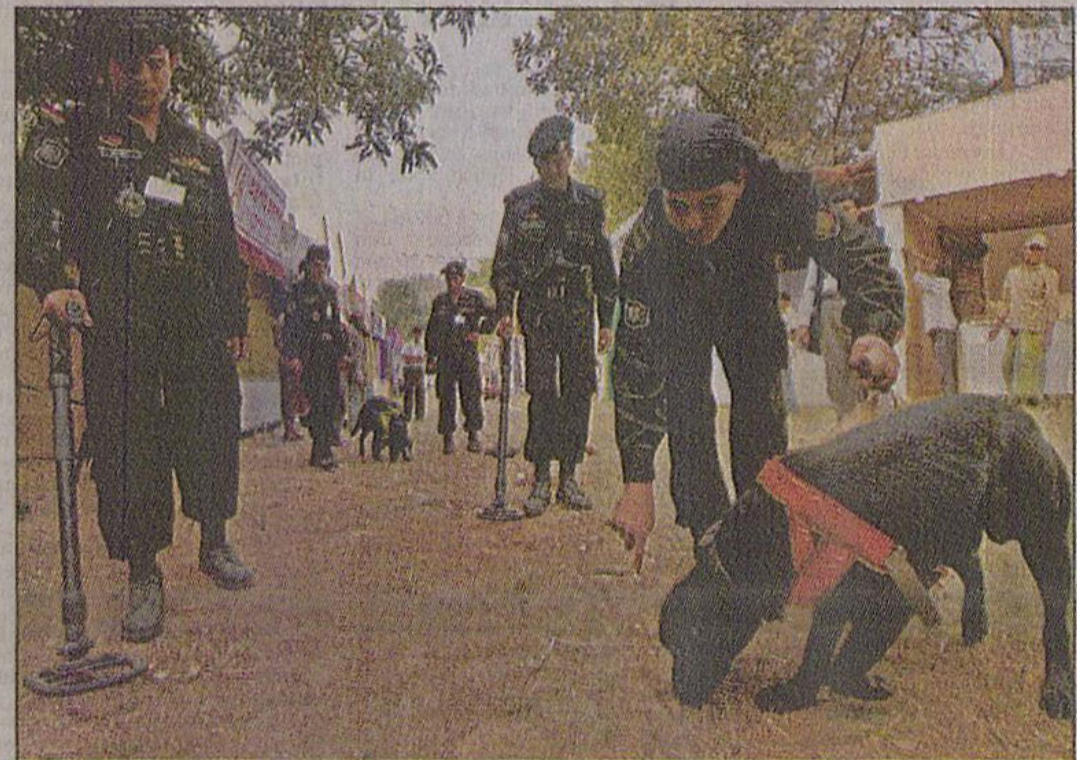
"BSFIC has already started marketing locally-produced sugar. We are now considering allowing the corporation to import sugar and sell it through its dealers or TCB," Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury told a press briefing in Dhaka yesterday.

The government may also allow TCB to import sugar for open market sale. These measures will help bring down the prices, the minister hoped, saying decisions will be finalised after discussing the issue with other ministries concerned.

The government is going to take SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



Freedom fighters and family members of Liberation War martyrs bring out a rally in the city in observance of Mirpur Liberation Day yesterday demanding removal of war criminals from the cabinet and their trial.



Rapid Action Battalion members use sniffer dogs to make a sweep of the Bangla Academy premises on the eve of the Ekushey Book Fair that begins today.

Hearing of Beximco case against SQ Chy's brothers refixed on Feb 2

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Hearing of the case filed by Beximco Holdings against three brothers of Salauddin Qader Chowdhury, parliamentary affairs adviser to the prime minister, on charges of misappropriating Tk 95 crore of QC Container Lines Limited, will be held in the High Court tomorrow.

The hearing of the case was due yesterday, but the High Court bench of Justice Shamim Hasnain refixed February 2 for the hearing.

On December 15, 2005, Chairman of Beximco Holdings Sohel F Rahman and Deputy Chairman Salman F Rahman, also shareholders of QC Container Lines Limited, filed the case with the High Court, accusing three brothers of Salauddin Qader Chowdhury, Saifuddin Qader Chowdhury, and Jamaluddin Qader Chowdhury.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Graft check for M'singh Bypass project

Ecneec increases health sector funds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Economic Council yesterday reiterated its instruction to the communications ministry to refer the Mymensingh Bypass project to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to investigate some reported irregularities.

A meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec) also decided to double the government support to private socio-economic development projects and to increase the funding for the Health, Nutrition and Population Sector Programme (HNPP) by more than Tk 22,000 crore.

The meeting chaired by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman reissued an Ecneec order dated October 12, 2005 asking the communications

ministry to refer the Mymensingh Bypass project to the ACC following reports of suspected corruption. The meeting turned down a proposal of the ministry to go for only departmental actions against the project staffs involved in the anomalies.

"We found a lot of irregularities in this project. The ministry concerned has been asked to refer the project to the ACC so that appropriate action can be taken," Saifur told the press after the meeting.

The bypass project was approved in March 1998 with an estimated cost of Tk 19 crore. After a revision of the project to accommodate an additional Tk 10 crore spent without permission, the Ecneec formed a committee in December 2003 to probe into the matter.

The probe committee found a number of irregularities in implementation of various project components including survey, land acquisition and earth filling as well as carrying out extra work without the Ecneec's permission.

SUPPORT TO PVT DEV PROJECTS DOUBLED
The Ecneec meeting yesterday revised the regulations to increase the government funding for private socio-economic development projects outside the capital from the present 10 percent of the project costs to 20 percent.

The government support for projects in Dhaka City was increased from 25 percent of their costs to 40 percent.

Planning ministry sources say the Ecneec decision was aimed at SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

EC secretary Khan relieved of his post

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Secretary of the Election Commission (EC) Moniruzzaman Khan was relieved of his post yesterday due to his close familiar relations to the previous secretary and the present Election Commissioner SM Zakaria.

Consequently, the post becomes vacant again. Khan was appointed as the secretary on January 25, as Zakaria's extended tenure as the secretary was cancelled on January 15.

Establishment ministry sources said Khan was unable to even join his post officially as controversy rose about his appointment since it was found that he is a close relation of Zakaria.

Zakaria found out about Khan's appointment and immediately informed the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) that they are relatives, the sources added.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Shyamoli traders fear reprisals for Pintu's arrest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Local businessmen of Shyamoli area in the capital are fearing reprisals from members of a local gang which has long been extorting illegal tolls from them, following the arrest of their alleged gang leader, Motiur Rahman Pintu, also younger brother of a BNP leader Barkatullah Bulu.

"We are now passing time with a sense of insecurity as the gangsters SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Kansat arrestees freed on bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

All the nine arrested leaders of Kansat rural power subscribers were released from jail on bail last night at the intervention of the local Jamaat leaders following the prime minister's directive to end the deadlock at Sonamasjid land port.

Several thousand local people kept Rajshahi City Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu MP, who is in charge of Chapainawabganj district, confined at Kansat until the released leaders reached the scene at about 8:00pm.

Minu told The Daily Star last night that he had rushed to Kansat at the directive of the prime minister and convinced the agitating people to withdraw the barricade put on Chapainawabganj-Sonamasjid road on January 23.

Earlier in the day, local Jamaat leaders including former MP Latifur Rahman, district Ameer Prof Rafiqul Islam, Obaidur Rahman and Saidur Rahman held a meeting with Ariful Haque Titu, a leader of Kansat power subscribers

association and arrested leader Golam Rabbani's mother Mansura Begum and wife Shamima Akhtar Parul.

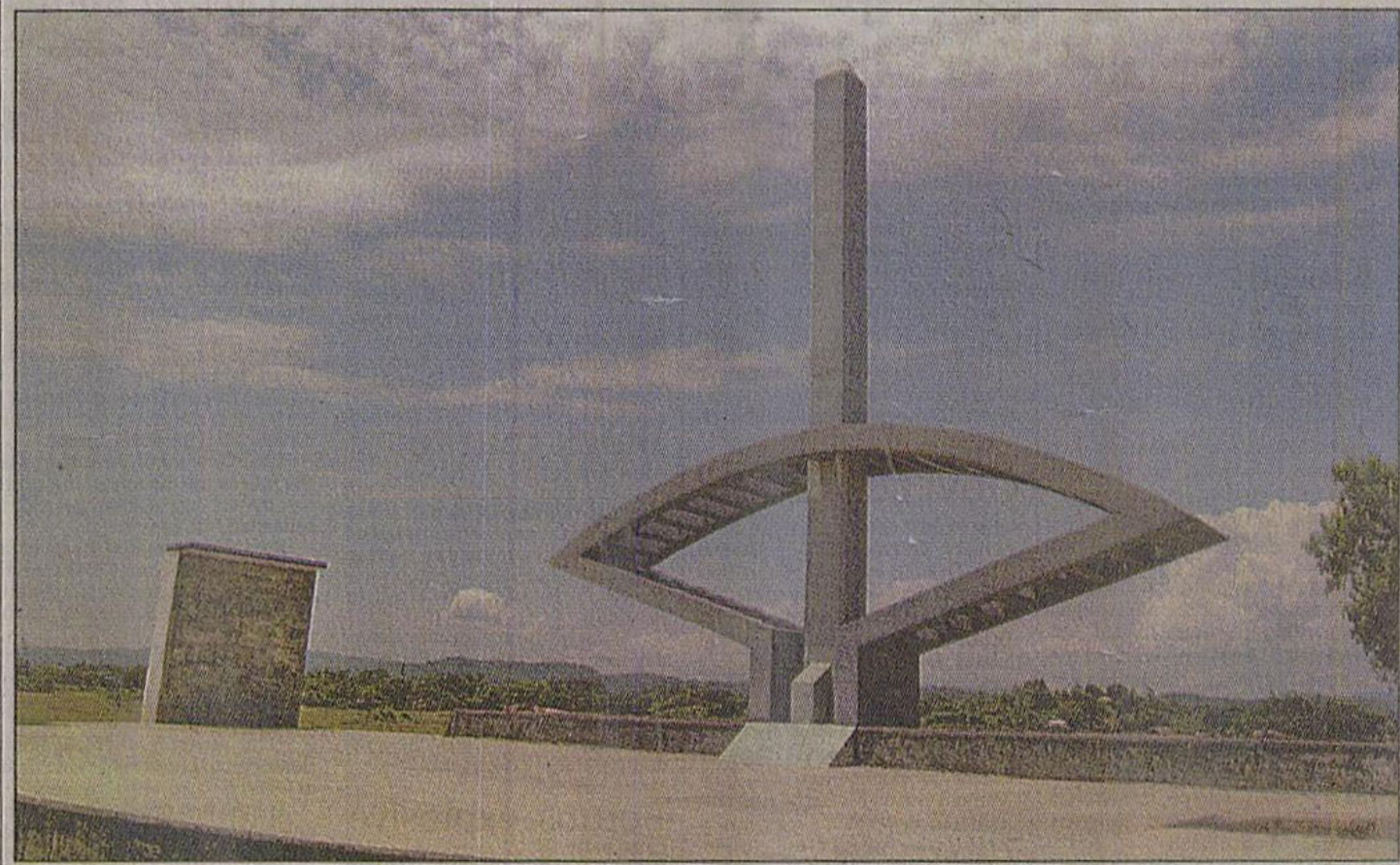
They also met the city mayor at the local circuit house in the afternoon to settle the issue.

First Class Magistrate Sayeed Kutub granted the bail prayers of the arrestees after more than 10 lawyers led by local BNP lawmaker Shahjahan Mia's brother-in-law advocate Abu Hasib submitted a special bail petition for them.

One of the lawyers, advocate Saiful Islam Reza, said, "We moved the bail petition following directives of the mayor and deputy commissioner after a negotiation."

The detained leaders -- Golam Rabbani, Zahir Chowdhury, Monirul Islam Manna, Moslem Uddin, Shyamol Singh, Md Badsha, Md Belal, Abul Kalam Azad and Sanwar Hossain -- were released soon after the court granted them bail.

The mayor told The Daily Star that the families of all the nine dead in January 4 and 23 police firing SEE PAGE 15 COL 2



Yesterday was the 59th anniversary of the killing of Rashmoni, a Hajong woman, by the police during the 'Tonko Andolon', a movement of the indigenous people demanding waiver of land taxes, in Susong Durgapur of Netrakona in 1947. This memorial commemorates the martyr.

Hearing on Galib cases March 14

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A Bogra court yesterday fixed March 14 as the next date for hearing on two cases against Asadullah Al Galib and four others.

Galib and four other accused were produced before the Bogra Special Tribunal-2 amid tight security.

Hearings on the two cases -- one for a bomb blast and the other for explosives recovery -- were not held while the court conducted hearing on the petition for discharging Galib from the cases and fixed February 7 for deciding on it.

One of the cases is for a bomb attack at a cultural function on SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

69 families fatwa victims last year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad yesterday said that at least 69 families were the victims of fatwa (religious decree) during the previous year.

The organisation in a report based on newspaper analysis said a total of nine families fell victim to fatwas in January this year alone.

Leaders of the organisation at a press conference at the National Press Club expressed their concern over the rise of such practices. The number of such incidents may be more than what the statistics show

as many families hush up the incident fearing more disgrace, they said.

The speakers at the press conference pointed out that there are no specific laws against fatwa or fatwabaj (people who deliver the decree). As a result the fatwabaj take the advantage and continue to oppress people, especially women.

General Secretary of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad Ayesha Khanom said, "Often political leaders seem to be unwilling in taking initiatives against these SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Musharraf to keep uniform even after 2007 polls

PTI, Islamabad

Pervez Musharraf will continue to be Pakistan's President and retain his post as the army chief even after the next general elections due in 2007.

Despite opposition from mainstream political parties and reservations expressed by Commonwealth, Musharraf will continue to hold the two posts.

This was announced by pro-Musharraf Chief Minister of the SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

NUCLEAR SITES

Iran threatens to halt spot checks by UN

REUTERS, Tehran

Iran threatened yesterday to halt snap UN inspections of its nuclear sites and resume uranium enrichment if it was reported to the UN Security Council as agreed by the council's five permanent members.

The big powers said a crisis meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) board on Thursday should "report

to the Security Council on the steps required from Iran."

But they said the council should then wait until IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei reports on Iran's nuclear program at a regular IAEA meeting on March 6 before deciding on any action.

That gives Tehran a few more weeks to try to negotiate its way out of the crisis, but its immediate response was defiant.

"In case of any referral or report

to the council, we are obliged to lift all the suspensions and stop implementation of the Additional Protocol," chief nuclear negotiator Ali Larjani was quoted as saying by the semi-official Mehr news agency.

The nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty's Additional Protocol, signed but not ratified by Iran, gives UN inspectors greater powers of access to suspected sites, includ

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Israeli army kills militants in clash

REUTERS, Jenin, West Bank

Israeli troops killed two Islamic Jihad militants yesterday in the first deadly clash since a shock victory by Hamas in a Palestinian election that has thrown Middle East peace-making into turmoil.

Islamic Jihad said its West Bank military commander Nidal Abu Sadi was one of those killed.

The fighting near the city of Jenin in the occupied West Bank raised tensions just a week after the parliamentary vote, in which Hamas trounced Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's long-dominant Fatah movement.

Islamic Jihad, a group that like SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Prayer Timing		
February 1		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-52	5-56
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation