

US wants fast enactment of law against terror finance

US asst secretary also offers technical help

A visiting US high official yesterday urged the government to frame and enact an effective anti-money laundering law and take steps to curb financial crimes as part of the Bush administration's global drive against militancy.

Patrick M O'Brien, assistant secretary for terrorist financing at the US Treasury Department, recommended the actions at a number of meetings with the central bank governor and high officials of home and foreign ministries during his two-day official visit here from Wednesday.

In the meetings, sources said, O'Brien expressed his government's concern at the delay in drawing up an amended and

Why tele-tapping not illegal

HC asks govt to explain

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court in a rule yesterday ordered the government to explain within three weeks why Bangladesh Telecommunication (Amendment) Act 2006 empowering the law enforcement and intelligence agencies to tap telephones should not be declared illegal and unconstitutional.

A division bench comprising Justice M Awlad Ali and Justice Zinat Ara passed the rule in response to a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by Odhikar, a human rights watchdog, and Nurul Kabir, editor of the New Age.

Jatiya Sangsad on February 12 passed the act amid protest by the

opposition. Earlier on December 11, President Iajuddin Ahmed promulgated an ordinance with immediate effect allowing the authorities concerned to tap telephones. The ordinance led to an outcry among the rights groups and political parties.

The secretaries of post and telecommunication, law, and home ministries and Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) have been made respondents in the case.

Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed yesterday told reporters that a reply to the rule will be placed within three weeks, outlining the rationale behind making the law.

The petitioners submitted that privacy is a fundamental right as per article 43 of the constitution. Tele-tapping and collecting information from the conversation of two individuals constitute a gross invasion of privacy and thus violates the constitution.

The petition said the telecom act will be a new weapon for the government to harass its political opponents as well as infringe on the privacy of general people.

It said the government has taken all measures to invade people's privacy by tapping their telephones and thereby transgressing the bounds of decency and affronting human dignity.



People in hundreds with light bulbs in their hands demand smooth supply of power, water and gas during a 14-party demonstration at Pallabi in the capital yesterday.

Budget session from June 7

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad goes into its budget session on June 7.

President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday summoned the 22nd session of the eighth parliament.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman is going to place the national budget for 2006-07 in the House on June 8 for the 12th time as the finance minister.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 5

'ILLEGAL' EXPLORATION India, Myanmar envoys summoned

BSS, Dhaka

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday said the allocation of undemarcated areas in the Bay of Bengal by India and Myanmar cannot be acceptable to Bangladesh.

This was conveyed to Indian High

SEE PAGE 19 COL 7



A flatbed trailer loaded with iron rods makes its way through the busy streets at Jatrabari yesterday despite a ban on playing of trucks at daytime in the capital.

Massive outage grips country as national grid trips

UNB, Dhaka

Almost half the country plunged into darkness as the national electricity grid tripped at nightfall yesterday, shutting down most of the power-generation units.

Four units at Ashuganj power station, two at Baghabari and one each at Barapukuria and Sylhet stations went off following the failure of the national power grid at 6:19pm, officials said.

The shutdown sent many districts into blackout. In some of those, power supply could be restored shortly after the mechanical breakdown, sources said.

The six districts of greater Mymensingh were worst affected as power supply remained cut-off for about two hours there following

the collapse of Ashuganj station, UNB Mymensingh correspondent reported.

Sources said electricity supply snapped at about 6:25pm in Mymensingh, Tangail, Kishoreganj, Sherpur, Neerakonia and Jamalpur districts and was restored at about 8:30pm.

When contacted, local power office said, "Different units at Ashuganj stopped working for a sudden halt in supply from the national grid."

The massive outages affected life in the capital as well. Especially the HSC examinees suffered badly due to the power failure.

As of late last night, some of the power units were still shut down as PDB men were working hard to resume their normal operations.

DEFAMATION CASE Arrest warrants issued against Prothom Alo editor, publisher

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued warrants of arrest against the editor and publisher of daily Prothom Alo in a defamation case filed by Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas.

Defence lawyers for Prothom Alo Editor Matjur Rahman earlier submitted a medical certificate regarding his admission to a clinic and sought extension of time.

Rejecting the petition, Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Shamsul Alam framed charges and issued the arrest warrants against Matjur Rahman and the daily's Publisher, Mahtuz Anam.

The court passed the order as the two did not appear before the court on three consecutive dates.

Defence lawyers Syed Ahmed

INSTRUCTION TO ENROL 'FAKE' VOTERS Poll official quizzed, threatened for making allegation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) Secretariat yesterday summoned the Assistant Registration Officer (ARO) of DCC ward no 41 Aminul Huq Bhuiyan who earlier told the press that he had been instructed by the election officials to include fake names in the voter list.

The EC Secretariat officials asked Aminul to return the 899 voters' registration forms given to him by the enumerators. Some 10 Secretariat officials interrogated him at the chamber of Joint Secretary (Law) AKM Salimullah for about one and a half hours.

Aminul, also a teacher of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Government High

School, however said he was right in his decision not to include the 899 "fake" names in the voter list.

He later told reporters that several EC officials threatened him on phone and when he went to the EC Secretariat they exerted pressure on him to return the registration forms by 9:00pm. They also enquired about his home address, family and other relatives.

Aminul earlier told the press that he had taken the decision after investigating the names in voters' registration forms submitted to the district election officer by one Atiqul Islam who worked as

SEE PAGE 19 COL 5

2 accused firm owners confess to smuggling another 64kg heroin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Apart from smuggling 54kg heroin to the UK, detained proprietor of Rainbow Enterprise Kazi Zafar Reza and Green Haven Enterprise owner Abul Bashar smuggled another 64kg heroin to the same country on different occasions, said an investigator.

Zafar and Bashar have confessed to their role in smuggling the drug in the name of a fake company, a member of the team probing the heroin smuggling told The Daily Star.

Police have already arrested BD Foods Limited Chairman Badruddoza Chowdhury Momen

after two accused confessed to a magistrate on May 14 that Badruddoza was the mastermind behind the trafficking of 22.5kg heroin to the UK.

"We are now trying to detect all others involved in the smuggling," the member said wishing not to be named. Asked about the name of the fake company, he said he would not disclose the name of the company for the sake of investigation.

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) recently filed a case with Sutrapur Police Station against Zafar and Bashar in connection with the smuggling of 54kg heroin to the UK. Later, Bashar's

SEE PAGE 19 COL 1

WB pins fuel, power price hike to loan

Procurement law, solving power crisis also among conditions for \$150m DSC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank (WB) has attached a string of conditions including adjusting the prices of oil, power and gas to the \$150 million fourth tranche of its Development Support Credit (DSC).

The Bank for the first time yesterday made the conditions public before disbursing the budgetary support. In an information note to media, the WB specified six of the recommended actions, with tabling the Procurement Law in the next session of parliament at the top.

The second action on the list is raising the prices of petroleum products and natural gas to "close the gap between local prices and import costs and to reduce the losses of the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation".

The third action is adjusting household and reducing industrial power tariffs and improving the Power Development Board's billing and collection systems. Then comes addressing the power crisis by bringing in private power producers through a "transparent and competitive bidding process laid out in the government's own regulations and guidelines".

The next action mentioned is selecting a strategic buyer for Rupali Bank through a "transparent and competitive process that meets Bangladesh Bank's 'fit-and-proper' criteria". The last one is approving the organogram for the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission "without which it cannot function".

So far the Bank has given \$700

SEE PAGE 19 COL 5

Graft, factional feud challenges to polls

US Assistant Secretary of State Boucher says

UNB, Dhaka

Corruption and bitter intra-party rivalries are challenges to Bangladesh's general elections in 2007, US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Richard Boucher has said.

Giving a statement before the House Committee on International Relations in Washington on Wednesday, Boucher said corruption and poor governance are the main obstacles, which are a drag on Bangladesh's economy.

Boucher said in recent years the country's GDP has grown at over 5 percent a year, which he said is respectable, adding that a higher

growth rate would have a more dramatic impact on the standard of living in Bangladesh.

"The main obstacles are corruption and poor governance, which are a drag on the country's economy. This is keeping the Bangladesh people from realising their potential and preventing the levels of growth that will make significant progress in reducing poverty," he said.

Boucher said Bangladesh is a traditionally moderate and tolerant country that has made impressive progress in establishing democracy since gaining independence in 1971.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 4

NOTICE

Channel i will telecast a special programme today at 5:30pm on the "Regional Dialogue on National Election 2007: Civil Society Initiative for Accountable Development" organised by Centre for Policy Dialogue, The Daily Star, Prothom Alo and Channel i in Jessore on May 13.

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