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Inside Today

Article

 Today, July 10, Aung San Suu Kyi, Burma's leading politician and dissident, is awarded the Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought by the European Parliament. For the last two years she has been under house arrest in Rangoon. We publish her own exclusive writing Freedom from Fear Page 4

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Opposition stages walk out in protest Revised VAT bill passed

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) on Tuesday passed the Value Added Tax (VAT) Bill, 1991 with exemptions allowed for certain goods and services. The Opposition staged a walk out alleging it was not given adequate time to examine the exemptions.

The government had deferred consideration of the bill Monday saying it had some fresh thoughts on it.

On Tuesday the Finance Minister gave a statement on the aims and objectives of VAT and announced the exemptions before moving the bill.

Small and cottage industries with less than Taka three lakh as capital investment in equipment and machinery, those goods and services having an annual turnover of below Taka five lakh, small hotels and restaurants, printing presses producing books, magazines and education materials, and small sweetmeat shops are among the goods and services in the exemption list.

Saifur Rahman said that VAT system was being introduced to increase internal resources mobilization by reforming the taxation system with a view to achieving self-reliance. This was necessary to strengthen democracy, he said.

He said that the Opposition should refrain from making contradictory statements. On the one hand it called for reducing dependence on foreign help, but opposed VAT on the other. It called for self-reliance but refused to pay tax.

The Finance Minister said a progressive and elastic tax, VAT was unavoidable. This was needed to achieve economic sovereignty. There was no alternative to economic reforms, he said adding that Bangladesh See Page 8 Col 1



Class Four government employees demonstrating for implementation of Pay Commission report in the city Tuesday. —Star

All amendment bills sent to Select Committee

By Staff Correspondent

All the seven Constitution amendment bills introduced in the Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) by the government and the opposition were unanimously referred to a 15-member Select Committee on Tuesday for scrutiny. The committee is to submit its report by July 14.

Speaker Abdur Rahman Biswas allowed moving of proposals for referring two government bills and five private members' bills on the same day (government day) by using his residuary power.

Earlier on Monday Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad and some other MPs had a meeting with the Speaker till late at night to reach a consensus on the question.

Mirza Golam Hafiz, who proposed the constitution of the 15-member Select Committee, told the House the decision to move the government bills and the private members' bills on the same day was taken in the greater interest of the people.

He said the Treasury Bench and the Opposition had agreed to iron out their differences on the proposed Constitution amendment for a switch over to a parliamentary form of government, at the Select Committee. He said through exchange of ideas it had already been possible to overcome many misunderstandings.

The Law Minister then proposed the Select Committee headed by himself and proposed that the Constitution (Eleventh Amendment) Bill, and Constitution (Twelfth Amendment) Bill be referred to it.

Abdus Samad Azad who proposed that the Constitution Amendment Bill 1991 introduced by him be referred to the same Select Committee thanked the Speaker for ensuring that the government bills as well as the private members' bills could be moved on the same day, and referred to the same committee.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition said it was a historic occasion. By referring all Constitution amendment bills to the same Select Committee an opportunity was created for the whole House to sit together and discuss those.

Referring to a demand put forward by Ganatantri Party MP Suranjit Sengupta that a 34-member Constitution drafting committee be formed instead of constituting a Select Committee, he said the Law Minister had given assurance that MPs not included in the Select Committee will get opportunity to attend its meetings. Abdus Samad Azad then proposed to refer his bill to the committee.

Rashed Khan Menon also proposed to refer all his four bills to the Select Committee. The House adopted the proposals unanimously.

Mirza Golam Hafiz, Minister for Law and Justice is the chairman of the Select Committee. Other members of the committee are: Dr Badruddoza Chowdhury, Abdus Samad Azad, Maj Gen (Retd) Majidul Haq, Barrister Abdus Salam Talukdar, Sheikh Razzak Ali, Khandakar Delwar Hossain, Barrister Nazmul Huda, Barrister Rafiqul Islam, Mesbahuddin Khan, Sudhangsu Sekhar Haldar, Col (Retd) Shaikat Ali, Rashed Khan See Page 8 Col 8

BCCI crisis Bangladesh Bank works on various options

By Shahiduzzaman Khan

Bangladesh Bank is working on various options to overcome the crisis arising out of the suspension of the Bank of Credit and Commerce (Overseas) International (BCCI) operations in Bangladesh four days ago, banking sources said.

The central bank is considering resuming operations of the Bank on a limited scale as soon as possible to allay fears of the depositors and stem panic withdrawals from some of the foreign banks operating in Bangladesh. It is reliably learnt.

There were heavy withdrawals from some of the for- See Page 8 Col 3

Sudhangsu Halder does not hate proponents of 'Bismillah'

By Staff Correspondent

AL MP Sudhangsu Sekhar Halder told parliament on Tuesday that he was misquoted by a section of the press creating an impression that he hated those supporting 'Bismillah' in the Constitution.

He apologised for the fact that the said newspaper report might have hurt the sentiments of the people. He informed the House that the newspaper in question did not publish his rejoinder. A rejoinder was sent for the second time. I may seek protection of the court if the second rejoinder is not published, he said.

He alleged that autocratic forces which had tried to instigate communal violence in See Page 8 Col 2

JP women demonstrate outside Court trying Ershad CMM details subject matters

By Staff Correspondent

The second case against deposed president Ershad for amassing wealth and property beyond his known sources of income resumed yesterday with the deposition of prosecution witness Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) Azizul Haque Bhuiyan, chairman of the eight-member Inventory Committee.

The CMM gave a detailed description of the cash and other subject matters in the case recovered from the Sena Bhaban and the Bangabhaban.

The case was adjourned yesterday at around 1 pm to resume today at 10 am.

Much before the hearing resumed 16 members of the Jatiya Mahila Party waited in front of the Court and raised slogans near the jail gate at Nazimuddin road.

The authorities deputed a contingent of women police to keep the situation under control. When the women police arrived the JP women left the place.

Before the Court started hearing the case Ershad peeped from the windows of the first floor of the Court to see the women, who came in his support and raised slogans in his favour.

Earlier, Ershad entered the Courtroom hand in hand with the Attorney General, both smiling.

In the Court, the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate said that the cash recovered included 379 bundles of 500-Taka notes, 117 500-Taka notes, seven bundles of 100-Taka notes, 30 100-Taka notes, one 20-Taka note, three 10-Taka notes, two five-Taka notes, one two-Taka note, three one-Taka notes — total 1,90,81,565 Taka.

The money was found in 21 steel trunks under sarees and other clothes, the witness earlier told the Court.

As Special Judge Mohammad Ali Khan was recording the deposition of the witness, Ershad, sitting with his legs crossed in the dock looked unusually depressed. At interval he was See Page 8 Col 7



JP women demonstrating outside the court trying Ershad Tuesday. —Star photo

Pay Commission report under consideration, says PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said Tuesday the government would consider government officers and employees' demands, which include wage hike, reports UNB.

The assurance was given when leaders of the Bangladesh Government Employees Sanghati Parishad and the Government Employees Coordination Council met separately with the Prime Minister.

Begum Zia said the government See Page 8 Col 6

Govt employees want implementation of Pay Commission report

By Staff Correspondent

The class four government employees Tuesday demanded immediate implementation of the Pay Commission report.

The Pay Commission and Office Time Implementation See Page 8 Col 7

DUCSU poll date fixation today

The Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University Prof Moniruzzaman Miah will meet the leaders of different student organisations and members of the University Education Atmosphere Council (UEAC) today at 4-30 pm, reports BSS.

The meeting will review the law and order on the university campus.

It is expected to fix up a date for holding the next DUCSU and hall union elections.

CU inquiry report released Neutral person as VC suggested

By Staff Correspondent

The Judicial Inquiry Commission on the December 22 incident in Chittagong University (CU) has recommended appointment of a "neutral person" as Vice-Chancellor and "review and amendment" of CU Act, 1973.

The one-man commission headed by Justice Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury submitted a 304-page report to the government recently. Copy of the report was released to the press Tuesday.

The commission said that provisions of the Act does not allow the Vice-Chancellor to remain neutral and he has to seek support of some student and teachers' groups before appointment which ultimately create problems for his administration.

The report said, "the present Vice-Chancellor, Prof Alamgir Mohammad Serajuddin, has become a controversial figure in the university" and agreed with the opinion expressed by the local administration.

The report, however, expressed concern that "if the VC is removed or voluntarily resigns from the post of VC, the teachers and the students who wanted his removal will get an upperhand in the university which is not desirable."

The report urged the See Page 8 Col 7

Assam militants kill Soviet hostage

SRINAGAR, July 9: Separatist rebels in the north-eastern state of Assam said they killed a Soviet hostage when he tried to escape, a news agency reported Tuesday, reports agencies.

Press Trust of India quoted a United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) statement as saying that Sergei Gritchenko, a mining consultant, was "killed in an encounter after he tried to escape from custody" of the militants. The front statement was dated Sunday and reached the state capital of Guwahati on Tuesday.

There was no independent confirmation of the report, which did not say when Gritchenko was killed or where.

The Soviet man was kidnapped July 1 by the ULFA, an armed militia fighting for independence for the remote hilly state from India.

Earlier on Tuesday, the Assam government released six militants of the ULFA from jail as part of a general amnesty for the jailed members of the group.

The move was largely seen as an effort to secure the freedom of Gritchenko, the Soviet, and 13 Indian officials, who also were kidnapped July 1 by the front.

The front complains native See Page 8 Col 6

Taka not devalued

Finance Minister Mohammad Saifur Rahman told the Jatiya Sangsad on Tuesday that the last time Bangladesh currency was devalued was on July 2, reports BSS.

He was replying to a question from Prof Rafiqul Islam (AL-Jessore).

Raising a supplementary Prof Islam wanted to know from the Finance Minister as to why the present government devalued the currency within so short a time of its coming to power and when the Jatiya Sangsad was in session. He also wanted to know from the minister whether this devaluation was the outcome of any extraneous pressure.

Saifur Rahman told the House that BNP government was a nationalist government and it never submitted to any pressure. He said Bangladesh currency was adjusted with dollar but not devalued.

See Page 8 Col 1

Mostafiz in Moscow

MOSCOW, July 9: Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman arrived here today on a four-day official visit to the Soviet Union, first by a Bangladesh Foreign Minister in more than 16 years, reports BSS.

He is paying the visit at the invitation of Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh.

The Foreign Minister, who is leading a five-member delegation was warmly received at the Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport by Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister I A Rogachev in the small hours of today. Bangladesh Ambassador in the Soviet Union Mostafizur Rahman was also present.

Indian parliament goes into session amid tight security

NEW DELHI, July 9: India's 10th parliament went into session today under unprecedented security, with the crisis-hit economy set to dominate the inaugural agenda laid down by a second successive minority government, reports AFP.

Proceedings on the first day were limited to the swearing-in of newly-elected MPs in the lower house — the product of a violent election capped by the assassination of former Premier Rajiv Gandhi.

The new parliament convened for the two-month budget session in the midst of a severe financial crunch, which has forced New Delhi to negotiate a bailout loan of up to seven billion dollars with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

But serious issues took the back-seat today as Speaker Indrajit Gupta administered the mandatory oath to members in a ceremony that was largely uneventful after starting on the dot of 11 am (0630 GMT).

Opposition MPs from the southern state of Andhra Pradesh, home state of Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, however, introduced an element of drama by abstaining from the oath-taking.

They said they were protesting the "large-scale violence and destruction" in their state following Gandhi's assassination on May 21, which they have blamed on activists of his Congress (I) party.

Property worth about 35 million dollars was damaged in the southern coastal state following the former Prime Minister's murder by a bomb. Gandhi's assassination came in the midst of India's most violent general elections, which left more than 250 people dead during the polls and the heated campaign that preceded them.

The murder of the Congress (I) President sparked new fears for important personalities, prompting the government to bring the state's British-built parliament house under an unprecedented security umbrella.

Sharpshooters took up positions on surrounding rooftops, 10 of the dozen gates leading into the circular building were locked and road barricades set up in the vicinity to prevent possible suicide squads from storming the legislature, police and witnesses said.

Bags, briefcases, files and floral bouquets were put through X-ray scanners, and hospitals put on emergency alert.

Bomb disposal squads with sniffer dogs were in attendance, as 350 mobile patrols prowled the city of eight million people.

Inside parliament, Gupta launched proceedings by asking members to observe a brief spell of silence to dedicate themselves to fulfilling the "heavy responsibility" the nation had placed in the legislature.

The veteran Communist urged MPs to maintain high parliamentary standards in a speech following prolonged applause which greeted his entry into the house after his appointment as pro-team Speaker.

Boisterous members of the Hindu-revivalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the single largest opposition party, See Page 8 Col 8

Foreign debt Tk 27.695 cr

The total foreign debt of Bangladesh till April this year was 11,400,000 million US dollars, equivalent to Taka 27,695.09 crore, reports BSS.

This was stated by Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman in reply to a question in the Jatiya Sangsad.

The Minister told Hafiza Asma Khatoon (Jamaat) that this loan was to be repaid in different periods from four to 40 years.

Answering another question the Finance Minister said the country received 274.63 million US dollars from the World Bank and 253.80 million US dollars from ADB for development activities in 1990-91.

Notice

Due to unavoidable circumstances, today's issue of The Daily Star contains eight pages instead of regular 10 pages. The National and the Feature pages are dropped. We regret the inconveniences caused to the readers and patrons.
 — Managing Editor