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Serbian opposition parties form 'parallel parliament'

Al-Faran contacts embassies to free hostages for money Page 5

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Fall in food output prime cause of rice price-hike, speakers tell seminar Page 6

DSE MARKET

DSE price index 840.00 (+0.03%)
Market capital Tk 5384.99 cr
Transactions in volume 110554
Transactions in value Tk 2.61 cr

CSE MARKET

CSE price index 409.29
Market capital Tk 2413.09 cr
Transactions in volume 1920
Transactions in value Tk 2.38 lakh

Prospectus

Today's 16-page issue of The Daily Star contains a 5-page prospectus of AMCL: Pran Foods Ltd Pages 13-16&9

Supplement

A two-page supplement on the birthday of King Birendra of Nepal Pages 7&8

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day



NEWS BRIEFS

Madrasah teachers' training institute

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will lay the foundation stone of a madrasah teachers' training institute at Gazipur this morning, Begum Zia will also lay the foundation of a 250-bed Gazipur Adhunik Hospital there, official sources said.

Visit cancelled

British Secretary of State for the Home Department Michael Howard has cancelled his planned visit to Bangladesh scheduled on January 10-11. The visit was cancelled due to 'urgent parliamentary business', said a press release of the British High Commission in the city yesterday, reports UNB.

Flower exhibition begins today

A three-day National Flower Exhibition-'95 begins at the premises of Dhaka International Trade Fair '96 (DITF '96) at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar today. Information and Commerce Minister M Shamsul Haque will inaugurate the show, first of its kind in the country, at 10:00 am, reports UNB.

JU senate meets today

By JU Correspondent

Vice Chancellor of the Jahangirnagar University Prof Amirul Islam Chowdhury has convened a special winter session of the university senate at 3 pm today.

Only 837 issued for autorickshaw drivers in 5 yrs

Organised groups behind issuing fake licences

By Morshed Ali Khan

Some organised groups in the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) and brokers are involved in issuing fake autorickshaw drivers' licences, it was learnt here yesterday.

According to some autorickshaw drivers and owners and officials talked to, thousands of fake driving licences were issued over the last 16 years which have no record at the BRTA office.

In the last five years since 1990, the BRTA issued only 837 licences while the actual numbers of autorickshaw drivers, mostly working in shifts, may be more than one lakh. There are an estimated 20,000 autorickshaws plying on the city streets.

"In the last one month we issued only one autorickshaw driver's licence," said an official at the Licensing Department of the BRTA. "But the number of new autorickshaws those come on the city roads every month may run into five hundred," the official said.

Autorickshaw drivers and owners went on an undeclared strike and rampage in the city for three days and clashed with police after it cracked down on them to detect fake licences.

The Deputy Commissioner of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, Traffic Department, Noor Mohammad told The Daily Star yesterday that the decision to crack down came because there has been a significant rise in street crimes where the criminals used autorickshaws.

"We wanted to crack down on the criminals. But as the drivers have been aggrieved for a long time due to problems with their licences, the outburst happened," said Noor.

The persons affected in the crackdown are the desperate job-seekers who come to the capital and find an Ustad to teach him how to



Teachers and students of the Dhaka University brought out a silent procession on the campus yesterday mourning the death of Nuban Ahmed, a lecturer of Economics Department of the University. — Star photo

Superior Selection Board meets today

New move for promotion creates resentment

By Staff Correspondent

Ali, Abdul Hye, Dr A Rashid, Dr H Rashid, Nazrul Islam and Hafizuddin Khan.

The additional secretaries who are due to go on LPR are: Golam Ahmed, Dabiruddin Ahmed, Aziz Ahmed, Md Abdur Rashid, Tofael Ahmed, Akramul Islam, Mofizuddin Sikder, Md Habibullah, Shamsuddin Ahmed, Abdus Samad Bhuiyan, Giasuddin Ahmed and Nazrul Islam Siddiqui.

The resentment of the civil servants originated in 1992 when the present government soon after its assumption of power gave "mass promotions" to 654 officials on the basis of interview by a Council Committee.

Instead of the normal procedure for promotion based on the recommendation of the SSB, the Council Committee was formed to promote officials.

Many of the officials who had recommendations of the SSB for promotion based on seniority, service records and Annual Confidential Report (ACR) were not promoted as the Committee effected promotions on the basis of interviews, sources said.

Later, against a writ petition by some affected bureaucrats, the High Court gave the verdict that superseded officials should be given promotion with retrospective effect.

But several officials alleged that owing to political considerations, some ministers are lobbying for promotion of officers junior to others by four to five years, for the purpose of making a strong base in the secretariat. "This will be useful in either case — if they win or lose in the elections," one of them said.

Talking to The Daily Star, one official alleged that "Though the erstwhile central and provincial services have now been merged, in cases of promotion, this difference was maintained before giving promotion."

"But, this has been overturned in several instances due to political reason. Even when we were promoted to

Authorickshaw workers call off strike

By Staff Correspondent

At least 12 people were injured in clashes between police and striking autorickshaw drivers and owners who also damaged about 30 vehicles while rampaging in the city yesterday.

Some 33 autorickshaw drivers were arrested for damaging vehicles and obstructing traffic.

The Autorickshaw Sramik Union, however, called off the strike as the government agreed to fulfil nine out of ten of its demands.

After a day-long meeting between the union leaders and high officials of the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) and the Police Department, the BRTA agreed to regularise the driving licences of the autorickshaw drivers — which is their main demand, according to the union leaders.

The demands also include

Police yet to trace killers of DU teacher

By Staff Correspondent

Police were yet to find out the motive behind the brutal attack on Dhaka University teacher Nuban Ahmed who succumbed Tuesday at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) after more than a week-long battle for survival.

"We are now concentrating on two aspects which might enable us to find the cause behind this murder. One of the probable reasons could be a land dispute near his residence at Mohammadpur and the other one could be his strict attitude towards students," said a senior police official yesterday.

Meanwhile, none was arrested in this connection until yesterday. Tejaan police was investigating the incident. The case may be

Hope for soccer gold dashed

From Al-Amin

MADRAS, Dec 27: The adrenalin pumping spirit of the nation for the most precious gold in the 7th SAF Games once again dried up when the lethargic booters of Bangladesh bowed out from the final conceding a crushing 0-1 defeat to hosts India at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here this afternoon.

It was crushing because the Indians, who dominated the final over an off-colour Bangladesh team, could have won by a more flattering margin.

However, the final showdown on the concluding day of the biennial regional extravaganza offered a wonderful opportunity for Bangladesh to earn the coveted gold in football in a bid to end the 11-year jinx as well as to give the million sports zealots in the country something memorable to live with for a long time.

But that was not to happen for our booters never played to translate the dream of the nation into reality in a match

Medals table

MADRAS, Dec 27: Following is the final medal tally of the 7th SAF Games which concluded today:

| Country | G | S | B | Total |
|------------|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| India | 106 | 60 | 19 | 185 |
| Sri Lanka | 16 | 25 | 53 | 94 |
| Pakistan | 10 | 33 | 36 | 79 |
| Bangladesh | 7 | 17 | 35 | 59 |
| Nepal | 4 | 8 | 16 | 28 |
| Bhutan | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Maldives | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 143 | 143 | 162 | 448 |

7th SAF Games come to colourful end

MADRAS, Dec 27: After days of glittering performances, the curtain came down on the 7th SAF Games, the biggest sports extravaganza of the seven SAARC nations, amid a colourful closing ceremony today, reports UNB.

President of Indian Olympic Association Dr B Sivanthi Adityan formally declared the 10-day sports meet closed at the 40,000-capacity Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here this afternoon.

Earlier, the closing rites began at 4.30 pm (Indian time) with the entrance of the flag-bearers following march past by the seven participating teams. First came the Bangladesh team headed by shooter Atiqur Rahman carrying the national flag while the last were hosts UNB.

See Page 12 Col 2

742 Bangladeshis held in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 27: Police said today that 3,528 suspected illegal immigrants, most of them Bangladeshis and Indonesians, were detained in three border states and one coastal state in 1995, reports AP.

The largest number of suspects were caught in Perak. Of them 742 were Bangladeshis, 679 were Indonesians, 54 Indians, 44 Pakistanis, 10 Myanmar, five Nepalese and one Cambodian.

Last year, 2,902 foreigners were caught in the same four states — Kedah, Perlis, Perak and Penang, the favourite landing points for illegal immigrants.

It wasn't clear if the new figures indicated a rise in the influx of illegal immigrants or stricter patrolling.

Also detained this year were 19 employers who harboured illegal immigrants in their work places, said Mohammad Ibrahim Rashid of a special force to catch illegal immigrants.

Malaysia's economic growth has attracted migrants from poorer Asian countries. Tens of thousands of them sneak in illegally to avoid the lengthy bureaucratic immigration process or to avoid paying commissions to agents.

Mohammad said that most of those caught had improper identification papers.

"Others were detained for carrying false travel documents or expired work permits," he said.

Perak, Kedah and Perlis border Thailand, Penang is

WB denies report on stopping foreign aid

Star Report

The World Bank (WB) has categorically denied that the Aid Consortium members have submitted any memorandum or letter to its headquarters that "foreign assistance to Bangladesh may be stopped if democracy is endangered" as reported in a vernacular daily on December 13.

Following the publication of a lead news item in a vernacular daily The Daily Star on the same day faxed a query to the Alternative Executive Director of the Bank, Mushfiqur Rahman, and Director, South Asia Country Department, Mieko Nishimizu, in Washington to verify the information.

In reply, Nishimizu wrote "I have no knowledge of the source of such reports and

Kohl named European of the Year

PARIS, Dec 27: German Chancellor Helmut Kohl was named European of the Year for his work in the European Union, the French Roman catholic weekly la Vie which created the award announced today, reports AFP.

Jacques Delors, the former president of the European Commission who headed the international jury awarding the prize, prized Kohl for his "exceptional personality."

He also stressed Kohl's commitment "to all the major strategic choices that allowed the European Union to move forward."

The choice was a "symbolic gesture so mutual understanding succeeds over the mistrust which is always liable to rise between our peoples," and a "gesture of thanks toward a man who forged his European faith in his youth and has nurtured it ever since."

Previous award winners include Norwegian Foreign Minister Joergen Hoist and his wife for their role in easing the tension between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in 1993.

Opposition considering poll readiness

By Masud Hasan Khan

With behind-the-scene dialogue underway, many opposition leaders and activists are now seriously thinking of their readiness for the elections, if a consensus is reached with the government and they (opposition parties) agree to join the polls.

The opposition parties' public stand is to force Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to step down and to take part in elections only under a caretaker government.

But privately, many of the opposition leaders are concentrating on three things — the time they would have if the caretaker issue was resolved and polls were held with the opposition participating in it, the fund they would need for the polls and chances of getting party nomination, according to opposition sources.

These who are confident of getting party seal are less worried but most worried are those who are planning to be new entrants in their respective parties' election race, the sources indicated.

The new aspirants are also calculating their chances against the ruling BNP's possible nominees.

As for the Awami League

BNP may consider 'shared advisory council'

By Nazmul Ashraf

The ruling BNP would not give 'further concessions' other than considering a 'shared advisory council' under the President for holding the parliamentary elections, a top party source said yesterday.

In case the on-going negotiations with the Opposition fail, the ruling party would go only by the Constitution as regards the present schedule for general elections, the source added.

Asked about the latest position of the BNP, Information and Commerce Minister Shamsul Islam, who is playing a key role in the current negotiations, said "Advisory council was originally their demand (AL chief Sheikh Hasina and Left Democratic Front raised it early this year)... We'll consider the idea if they stick to their original proposal for an advisory body."

Hasina had demanded on January 10 last that an advisory council be formed with equal number of members from the ruling party and the Opposition. Besides, the eight-party LDF also made a similar demand.

India reviewing air security

NEW DELHI, Dec 27. A team of senior Indian government-officials began a major review of air security today as the federal police agency took over an inquiry into a mystery weapons drop.

The committee will look into general policy and make general recommendations on security aspects to the prime minister in the next three to four days, a spokesman for the Home (Interior) Ministry told Reuters.

Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao ordered the review, headed by a top civil servant responsible for internal security, following the discovery of a large quantity of weapons in eastern India.

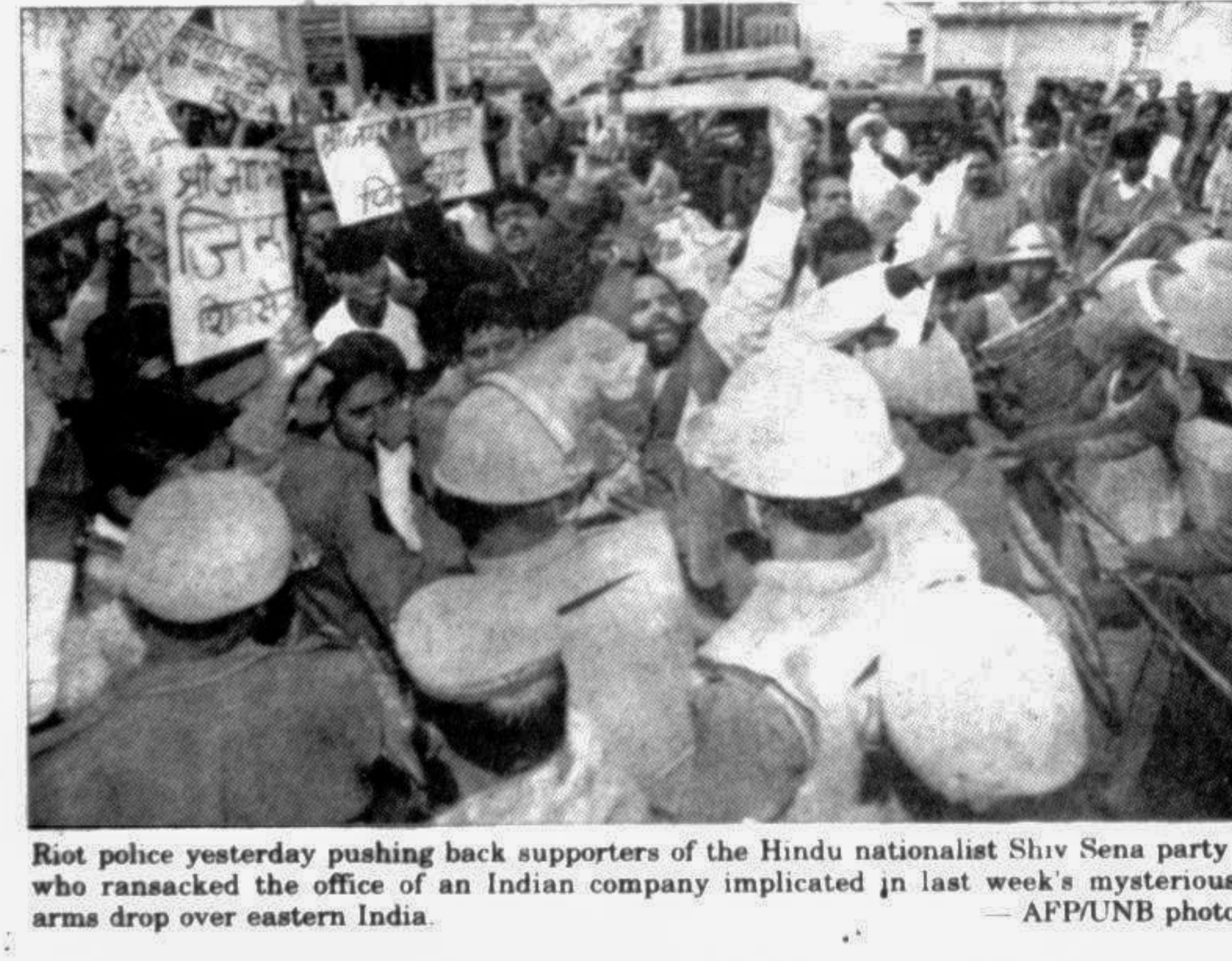
The arms were apparently dropped by parachute from an Antonov AN-26, a Russian-made twin turboprop short-haul transport aircraft, on December 17.

The arms drop has embarrassed Rao's government and threatens to become an issue in general elections due by June. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the main opposition party, has demanded firm action.

AFP from Moscow adds, the Russian Foreign Ministry yesterday described an incident in which a Russian cargo plane was forced to land in India as a simple misunderstanding, Interfax news agency reported.

AFP adds from New Delhi: Hundreds of supporters of a Hindu nationalist party ransacked the office here today of an Indian company implicated in last week's mystery air-drop of arms over eastern India, witnesses said.

About 300 members of the Shiv Sena (army) of Shivaji knocked down the door of the downtown New Delhi office of the Air Charter Company of India, broke windows and furniture and scattered files, they said.



Riot police yesterday pushing back supporters of the Hindu nationalist Shiv Sena party who ransacked the office of an Indian company implicated in last week's mysterious arms drop over eastern India. — AFP/UNB photo

Times-Bangla Trust yet to repay overdue loans

Star Report

The two state-owned newspapers — Dainik Bangla and The Bangladesh Times — have failed to repay their outstanding dues of Taka 7.48 crore, despite repeated requests from different financial institutions, according to a working paper prepared by the Information Ministry.

However, the Times-Bangla Trust, which publishes both the newspapers, has now shown interest to repay their principal amount provided the interests accrued on its loans are waived.

The Trust has requested the commercial banks and a development financial institution to write-off its interests of about Taka 2.90 crore.

This interest amount includes Taka 2.08 crore on account of Dainik Bangla till