



US President Bill Clinton motions for quiet to the combined bodies of the US Congress before he begins his state of the Union address, Tuesday. Vice President Al Gore (L) and Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich are behind him. Story on page 8 — AFP/UNB photo

Anti-Sikh riots in '84

Ex-Indian minister Bhagat arrested

NEW DELHI, Jan 24: A former Indian cabinet minister was arrested and brought to court today in connection with the anti-Sikh riots which swept through the capital following the 1984 assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, reports AFP.

H K L Bhagat, 74, who held various cabinet posts in the governments of Indira Gandhi and her son, Rajiv Gandhi, arrived in court amid tight security to answer charges of murder, rioting and looting.

However, while the court was hearing the charges, Bhagat complained of breathlessness and was taken to hospital.

Sikh groups have campaigned for a decade to bring him to justice in connection with the deaths of nearly 3,000 Sikhs in New Delhi following the assassination of Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984.

She was gunned down by two of her Sikh bodyguards to avenge the Indian army's storming of the Golden Temple, the holiest shrine in Sikhdom, to flush out armed Sikhs separatists.

A new case was recently filed against Bhagat by a judge who heard testimony from a 35-year-old Sikh woman who

said the politician was at the head of a mob of Hindus who murdered her husband on November 1, 1984.

Bhagat and several other members of the ruling Congress(I) party alleged to have been involved in the anti-Sikh riots are believed to figure high on a hit list drawn up by Sikh militant groups to avenge the 1984 riots.

Bhagat served as Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Information and Broadcasting under Indira and Rajiv.

Star staffer mugged

By Staff Correspondent

A staff of The Daily Star was mugged on Sat Masjid Road near the Zigmatola crossing when she was returning to her residence at Dhamondi yesterday evening.

A gang of muggers in an auto-rickshaw snatched her handbag while she was travelling in a rickshaw at around 6:30 pm.

She had valuable documents and cash in her bag. An auto-rickshaw came near her rickshaw and drove off after snatching the handbag.

Review of JSAP

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Khorshed Alam, Privatisation Board Chairman, Matir Rahman and ERD Additional Secretary Mahbub Kabir, sources said.

As a result of the Privatisation Board's failure to divest the HTM, the World Bank is holding back the release of the 40 million SDR floating tranche.

According to a WB estimate, the delay in implementing the JSAP will increase budgetary costs by 30 million dollars in the current financial year, which is equivalent to the salaries of 130,000 school teachers.

The credit was made effective in April, 1994 and the first tranche of 50 million dollars was disbursed at that time.

"We are trying to negotiate the extension of the expiry date," said a highly placed source in the Jute Ministry.

When asked about the status of the privatisation process, the Chairman of the Privatisation Board, Matir Rahman, refused to make any comments.

According to officials sources, the high level meet may decide to revise the JSAP relating to the closure and downsizing of the public sector mills.

"It appeared to us that if the production capacity of the (public sector) mills was further squeezed, the export demand could not be met," argued a Jute Ministry official. "The vacuum created by the closure of the state-owned mills would not be filled up by increased production of the private sector mills, as thought earlier," he added.

Meanwhile, the Bank has dubbed the status of the pro-

ject as "highly unsatisfactory" identifying five major problems.

These are: lack of serious effort to privatise Hafiz Textile Mills, non-liquidation of Bangladesh Jute Corporation's assets, delay in disposing off assets of the closed mills, delay in inviting bids for BJMC mills which did not receive response earlier, and delay in reviewing tender conditions for mills which have failed to obtain successful bids.

Lack of proper initiative and leadership by the Privatisation Board as well as feeble political commitment of the government have led the delayed implementation of project, sources concerned said.

"The Board needs to be headed by a person with a Cabinet member status like in Pakistan instead of a bureaucrat, for smooth functioning since privatisation involves political will," said an official concerned.

Earlier, a mission led by the chief of private sector development division of the World Bank's South Asia region visited during November. And in a letter addressed to the Jute Secretary, he said, "given the scarcity of IDA resources and many competing claims of these limited funds, we need to be in a position to assure our Board that the government intends to revamp the JSAP with a view to seeking continuing IDA support."

According to WB estimate, total losses of the jute manufacturing sector currently amount to about Tk 1200 crore, of which about 80 per cent comes from the state-owned jute mills. The annual financial losses of the public sector mills is about Tk 35,000 per worker.

Boon retires

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named in the squad for the upcoming World Cup, but he scored a century in the second Test against the Sri Lankans in Melbourne in December.

He scored 21 centuries in amassing 7,344 runs in 106 Test appearances for Australia after making his debut against West Indies in 1984-85.

His Test average stands at 43.71, and he has averaged a century every 8.95 innings.

The chunky Boon played 181 limited-overs internationals, scoring five centuries and 57 half-centuries among his 5,964 one-day runs — a total that places him sixth on the all-time list.

Details on page 10

Money for 28 F-16 fighters

Pakistan warns of legal action against US

ISLAMABAD, Jan 24: Pakistan said today it would consider legal action if the United States failed to refund 658 million dollars paid for 28 F-16 fighter planes with held since 1990 due to US suspicion of Islamabad's nuclear plans, reports Reuter.

Defence Minister Aftab Shaaban Meerani told parliament the two sides would discuss the issue again in a Pakistan-US consultative group expected to meet in March.

"If the 658-million dollar is not refunded, we will look into all the options, including going to courts," he said in reply to a question from an opposition deputy in the National Assembly (lower house).

The United States stopped all military and new economic aid to Pakistan in October 1990 over the nuclear issue. The US Congress agreed last year to a one-time waiver of the ban on military sales to Pakistan to allow delivery of millions of dollars

worth of US equipment, but not the F-16s.

The plan authorised the US administration to sell the planes elsewhere and reimburse Pakistan, but no third-country buyer has yet come forward.

Meerani insisted that Washington must return all the money, paid to US aircraft-maker Lockheed, which it fulfilled its contract by manufacturing the F-16s.

"Our consistent and principled stand has been that since the US government has failed to deliver the aircraft, it is bound to reimburse in full the amount paid with interest," he said.

The 28 planes were part of a total of 71 Pakistan ordered in the late 1980s at a cost of 1.4 billion dollar. None was delivered because of the ban on military sales that took effect when then-president George Bush failed to certify that Pakistan was not trying to make nuclear weapons.

Islamabad denies possessing nuclear bombs though it

says it had developed the capacity to make them. Meerani said Pakistan bought 11 planes on a credit of 205 million dollar while a cash payment was made for 17.

Asked if Washington had found new buyers for the F-16s, Meerani said the Pakistan-US consultative group had agreed in May to resolve all foreign military sales issues, including the disposal of F-16s, in a separate programme management review.

This meeting is now tentatively scheduled to be held in March this year, he said.

The 1985 Pressler amendment bans military aid to Pakistan unless the US president can certify to Congress that Islamabad has no nuclear weapons and is not trying to develop them.

Pakistan says its nuclear work is peaceful but it will not sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty until its arch-foe India, which exploded a nuclear device in 1974, does the same.

Gold, medicine seized at ZIA

By Staff Correspondent

Customs officials at the Zia International Airport (ZIA) seized gold and banned medicine items worth Tk 12.91 lakh from an Emirates flight yesterday morning.

The customs surveillance team found banned medicines worth around Tk 6.73 lakh in three unclaimed bags inside the Lost & Found Sec-

500 lawyers demand PM's resignation

By Staff Correspondent

Five hundred lawyers of the Dhaka Aijibhi Samiti in a joint statement yesterday demanded immediate resignation of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and holding next general election under a neutral caretaker government to save the nation from a serious confrontation.

They suspected that some passengers of the Dubai-Karachi-Dhaka flight (EK-610) which arrived at ZIA at around 9:30 am left the baggage in order to arrange the collection later. They also found garments worth about Tk 18 thousand.

Besides, the customs team recovered banned medicines including injections and tablets worth Tk 3.56 lakh from a passenger, Nurul Amin, of the same flight. He came from Karachi, airport sources said.

Meanwhile, the surveillance team seized 54 tolas of gold worth Tk 2.62 lakh from another passenger of the flight. The passenger SM Shahabuddin came from Dubai, customs sources said.

Among the prominent lawyers who signed the statement are: Faizur Rahman Khan, Altaf Hossein, Sharer Mohamad Shuruzzaman, Rahmat Ali, Abdus Sabur, Kamrul Islam, Khandaker Mehboob Alam, Farid Uddin Ahmed and Sharer Zahid Hossain.



Fourth Class employees of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital brought out a procession in the compound yesterday protesting the indefinite strike by doctors of the hospital.

— Star photo

Hartal in Sylhet

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wards the route of the Prime Minister.

The protesters blasted a number of firecrackers during the clashes. One policeman, Hafizur Shahjahan, was also injured with splinters during the day-long clashes.

Police allowed none to approach the route the PM took and arrested four Awami League leaders — Dulal, Kabir, Noman and Dewan Gaus Sultan — during the protests.

Tension mounted in the city since morning as huge police patrolled the city streets, all vehicles remained off the streets, and shops and business establishments were closed responding to the hartal call that paralysed normal life.

The Prime Minister reached the city at about 12:15 pm and left it at 3:30 pm after offering *fateha* at the *mazar* of Hazrat Shah Jalal and Hazrat Shah Parwan and a brief stay at the local circuit house.

At the local circuit house, the BNP chairperson exchanged views with the party leaders on different issues including the party's election campaign for the February 15 Jatiya Sangsad polls.

Begum Zia is scheduled to make night halt in Khulna city and the following day (Sunday) address some other public meetings in the district.

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named in the squad for the upcoming World Cup, but he scored a century in the second Test against the Sri Lankans in Melbourne in December.

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JP office case Hearing adjourned till Feb 11

Deposed President Ershad was yesterday produced before the Special Judge's Court in connection with his trial in the Jatiya Party Office Case but the hearing could not be held because of objections raised by defence lawyers, reports BSS.

First Additional Sessions Judge and Special Judge Akhlaqur Rahman, responding to the defence prayer, adjourned the hearing till February 11.

Ershad last appeared in the Special Judge's Court on November 4. He had been affected with viral hepatitis.

After recovering from the disease, the former president on the advice of the physicians had to take long rest and election would be held under a caretaker government.

Former works minister Mostafa Jamal Haider and former works secretary M A Rouf are co-accused in this case which relates to spending public money in renovating an abandoned house for use of the Jatiya Party.

Rule Nisi

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release yesterday.

Dr Farooque moved the petition himself and alleged that the respondents had failed to take efficacious measures in dealing with the radiated milk which was produced in Estonia and imported from the Netherlands by the Danish Condensed Milk Bangladesh Limited on August 7, 1994.

After testing the samples of the imported milk, Chittagong and Dhaka Centres of Atomic Energy Commission found it containing high concentration of radioactivity beyond the permissible level fixed by Bangladesh.

Jamaat held another protest rally at the Poura Point with Moulana Habibur Rahman in the chair. District Jamaat President Dr Shafiqur Rahman and other speakers condemned the government for what they called using the army in the election.

The Jatiya Party also protested the police action on the opposition workers.

Thirty-one lawyers of Sylhet Bar Association today criticised the police action at the court premises during the opposition-called hartal.

Begum Zia asked the party leaders and workers to carry out the election campaign in full swing in favour of 'sheaf of paddy', BNP's election symbol.

Finance Minister Saifur Rahman, State Minister for Social Welfare Fazlur Rahman and party leaders including Khandaker Abdul Malek, Fatema Chowdhury, Khaleda Rabbani, Abul Haris Chowdhury, Ilyas Ali, Nazir Hossain, reports Reuter.

Srinagar, Jan 24: A separatist militant shot dead a local politician in Srinagar in the northern Indian state of Kashmir today, police said, reports Reuter.

Cong leader shot dead in Kashmir

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Continuing, he said, if he did not hold the elections any one can file a complaint against him in the supreme judicial council for violating the constitution.

A number of the persons whose loan status is being enquired, when contacted yesterday, said that they were unaware of any such government move.

The Midnight File

Arafat-Peres meet held

EREZ (Gaza Strip), Jan 24: Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres met Yasser Arafat today for a first summit. The PLO head swept a poll on Saturday to head a self-rule government for the next three years in the West Bank and Gaza Strip while negotiating a final end to the conflict with Israel, reports Reuter.

Hasina's statement untrue: Talukdar

BNP secretary general Abdus Salam Talukdar yesterday contradicted the statement of Awami League chief and former Leader of the Opposition describing it as total untruth and devoid of political decency, reports BSS.

In a statement, the BNP secretary general said: "We expect from the former Leader of the Opposition political opposition but not untrue statement, aspersion or imaginary allegations."

Referring to the statement of the former Leader of the Opposition as published in some newspapers, the BNP secretary general said by going through the statement in some newspapers he (Salam), along with the conscious citizens of the country, was surprised.

The BNP secretary general referred to the continued launching of imaginary allegations that the Prime Minister was violating the Constitution and described it as an evil design aimed at misleading the people. The former Leader of the Opposition should have understood the fact that such evil design would not mislead the people, he observed.

On the contrary, Talukdar said, the Prime Minister had not fallen into the trap of the Leader of the Opposition and her new allies who wanted the government and the majority party in the Sangsads to go for extra-constitutional activities. The Prime Minister has sustained the constitutional rule and democracy in the country.