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5-yr import policy

Restriction on gold, silver, crude, palm oil goes

The Cabinet yesterday approved the five-year (1997-2002) import policy, reports UNB.

The approval came at the regular cabinet meeting held at Sangsad Bhaban with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

This is for the first time that an import policy has been formulated for five years instead of two years.

The new policy has withdrawn the mandatory provision of rationing of perishable items within the SAARC countries.

Official sources said the import policy will be discussed in the next session.

JS extends time for report on CHT bills

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday extended the time to report back the four Chittagong Hill Tracts bills by the special committee by another 7 days, reports BSS.

Chairman of the special committee Advocate Rahmat Ali submitted to the Chair that it would require another seven days for better scrutiny and examination of the four bills on CHT and the House approved his proposal by voice vote.

The four CHT bills were introduced in the House on April 12 by the Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Advocate Abdul Matin Khasru. On the following day, the House sent the bills to the special committee to report back within seven days after scrutiny and examination.

Govt lingering JS session to foil BNP grand rally, says 7-party alliance

The BNP-led seven-party alliance has criticised the government for "abnormally" lingering the parliament session in a bid to foil the grand rally of BNP at Manik Mia Avenue, reports UNB.

A meeting of the alliance yesterday said that holding of any rally at the venue is not possible during the parliament session as Section 144 remains in force at that time.

It said, "In the past, no session of parliament continued for about four months. Lingering the current session is a conspiracy to foil the planned grand rally of BNP."

As Manik Mia Avenue is the only venue to hold such a big gathering, the meeting decided to hold "Dhaka Rally" by all the component parties of the alliance instead of their planned grand rallies.

Nor'westers kill 3 in two dists

Nor'westers swept over the Lalmonirhat and Sirajganj districts in the early hours yesterday, killing three persons and injuring 67 others, reports UNB.

Witnesses said Abu Sayeed, 28, of village Jhaoli in Kamarkhand thana died in a house collapse during the storm that lashed nine thanas of Sirajganj district. Twenty-seven others were also injured in different areas.

Seven of the injured were admitted to Tarash, Royganj and Chowhali thana health complexes in critical condition. The storm also damaged property.

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Three newspapermen held for publishing 'leaked' questions

By Staff Correspondent

Three newspapermen were arrested in Chittagong and Comilla for publishing 'leaked' question papers of the SSC examinations.

Police Sunday night arrested the publisher and the Joint News Editor of a Chittagong daily. The Editor of a Comilla daily was arrested yesterday.

Our Staff Correspondent in Chittagong adds: Publisher of the Daily Karnafuli Absar Uddin Chowdhury and Joint News Editor Mamunur Rashid were arrested on charge of 'leaking' official secrecy.

They were, however, released on bail yesterday. Police said both of them

were arrested in connection with a case filed by the Secretary of Chittagong Education Board for publishing a report on 'leakage of question paper' (English second part) along with the said question paper on the day of the examination on April 18.

Police said charges were also brought against two other staff of the daily—Editor Al Mahmud and Reporter Abul Hasnat—for violating Official Secrecy Act of Public Examination, 1980.

They could not be arrested, police added. Both Absar Uddin and Mamunur Rashid were produced before the CMM Court yesterday

afternoon. They were granted bail in the evening.

Police said, if the charges proved true, the accused would face a four-year imprisonment or fines or both.

Staff of the Daily Karnafuli informed this correspondent that some plainclothes policemen came to their office at 11 Sunday night and took the publisher Absar Uddin and Joint News Editor Mamunur Rashid to the Assistant Commissioner of Police.

They were later interrogated and arrested at midnight, the staff of the daily said. See Page 12 Col 1

Examination held despite leakage of question paper

CHITTAGONG, Apr 20: The SSC examination in Bangla second paper was held in the district as per schedule today, although all the three sets of question papers leaked out earlier, reports UNB.

Different dailies, including Dainik Azadi, published the hand-written copies of the question papers of Bangla second paper. The authority took the examination through Ka set.

When contacted, Deputy Commissioner K M Habibullah admitted the leakage of Ka, Kha and Ga sets of the question paper. See Page 12 Col 8

PCJSS team 'satisfied,' returns to CHT today

By Special Correspondent

Talks between the government and the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) ended in the city yesterday, with both sides expressing satisfaction on the progress of implementing the CHT peace accord.

"We have had detailed discussions on implementation of the peace treaty... taking up and explaining in depth the backdrop, aim and contents of the four bills placed before parliament," Abul Hasnat Abdullah, MP and Chairman of the accord implementation committee told newsmen yesterday evening.

The PCJSS delegation accepted the explanations." Abdullah said in a briefing after eleven hours of talks, since Saturday at the state guest house Padma. PCJSS chief Jyotindriyo Bodhipriyo Larma alias Shantu Larma stood beside him and also made certain remarks. But both declined to give details.

Highly placed sources said the former guerilla chief is returning to his heavily guarded villa at Khagrachhari this morning, succeeding in obtaining certain changes in the bills on the three hill district councils and the proposed Regional Council (RC), tabled before Parliament on April 12.

"These are mainly changes See Page 12 Col 1



Shantu Larma



A view of a slum in the city's Kamalapur area after heavy rain yesterday.

—Star photo

Debate on Apr 15 incident

Brief walkout by BNP as B Chy not allowed to complete statement

By Staff Correspondent

The opposition BNP staged a brief walkout from the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday as the House was witnessing a debate over the April 15 incident.

The BNP legislators walked out of the House at 6:30 pm after the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the parliament Badrud-Doza Chowdhury was not allowed to complete his statement on the April 15 incident. Later, he held a press briefing at the Sangsad lobby. The BNP lawmakers returned to House after the Maghreb recess.

Earlier, Chowdhury took the floor to say that the Speaker had acted as the 'judge, jury and complainant' all at the same time in dealing with April 15 incident and castigated the Speaker for misusing Article 300 of the Sangsad Rules of Pro-

cedure by allowing the Home Minister to speak first without giving the Opposition MPs the floor on Wednesday last.

At that point, Prime Minister and Leader of the House Sheikh Hasina took the floor and termed the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's explanation as indecent as the Speaker had already referred the incident to the Sangsad Business Advisory Committee. As soon as the Leader of the House took the floor, the BNP lawmakers led by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition staged the walkout. Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid was chairing the sitting at the time.

Sheikh Hasina noted that instead of seeking an apology for hurling abuses and throwing See Page 12 Col 7

Saifur questions Noor Uddin's authority

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday witnessed a debate between the Treasury and Opposition benches on minister without portfolio Noor Uddin Khan's authority to reply to questions on the energy ministry.

Noor Uddin Khan, who was recently striped of his Energy, Power and Mineral Resources Ministry portfolio, also blasted former finance minister M Saifur Rahman for calling him a "dismissed" minister.

When Khan started replying to various questions and supplementaries on the energy ministry, Saifur Rahman of BNP rose to challenge the minister's authority in doing so.

Calling Noor Uddin Khan a "dismissed" minister, the BNP lawmaker viewed that Khan could not reply to questions when both the Prime Minister, who is holding charge of the energy ministry, and the state minister of the ministry were present in the House. "There should have been prior notice for such an arrangement", he noted.

Deputy Speaker Abdul See Page 12 Col 5

Rape at court bldg Obaidul Matbar chargesheeted

By Staff Correspondent

The Criminal Investigation Department yesterday submitted the chargesheet in connection with the rape of a six-year-old girl at CMM's court building in the city on March 10.

Obaidul Matbar alias Mora, 25, has been named as the only accused in the chargesheet lodged under Section 6(1) of the See Page 12 Col 2

Land transit with Nepal via India New route to operate seven days a week

By M Anwarul Haq

New arrangements for Bangladesh-Nepal land transit via India will lead to increased flow of goods between the two countries.

The transit through Kakarbhita-Phulbari-Banglabandh route will be open for seven days a week instead of two days and formalities in the Indian portion will be simplified, according to the Nepalese ambassador to Dhaka.

Arrangements are being made to operate an alternate route by-passing Siliguri town

in India to avoid local municipal restrictions and other formalities, Lok Bahadur Shrestha told The Daily Star recently.

This was agreed at a review meeting on operation of the route between Indian and Nepalese officials in New Delhi on March 30 and 31, he said.

A joint Indian-Nepalese team will go to the spot and examine the proposed arrangements. "If agreed, it may be operational any time," he said.

The Kakarbhita-Phulbari-Banglabandh route was inaugurated on September 1 last year.

But the route was found to be 'restrictive' in nature because the transit protocol between India and Nepal allowed movement of Nepalese transit cargo via Siliguri (in India) only on two days a week — Saturdays and Sundays—and also required transportation of cargo in container trucks with insurance coverage. This seriously impeded functioning of this route.

The foundation was established recently with the money donated to the United Nations by Ted Turner, founder of the Cable News Network (CNN). Ted Turner announced in 1997 that he would donate one billion US dollars to the UN in 10 installments.

Seven eminent personalities from different countries of the world have been elected to run the newly created UNF.

The principal task of the Foundation would be to provide new and extra resources for different welfare activities sponsored by the United Nations.

A United Nations International Partnership Trust Fund will be established to coordinate the activities of the projects which would be taken up by the new Foundation. See Page 12 Col 8



Yunus elected UNF governing body member

By Staff Correspondent

Founder of the Grameen Bank Dr Muhammad Yunus has been elected a member of the Governing Board of the newly created United Nations Foundation (UNF).

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4 arrested for torturing minor boy

By Staff Correspondent

Police yesterday arrested an elderly woman, her daughter and two sons on charges of torturing a 10-year-old boy who worked as a domestic help at her house in the city's Shahidbagh area.

Police identified the four as Shabiha Hossain, wife of Amir Hossain, her daughter Afroza Afrin and sons Zahid Hossain and Shahid Hossain.

The victim, Sohag, son of Hasmat Ali, bore several burn and assault injuries, police said, adding that after being treated at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, the boy is now under police custody. Police said one Sohag brought Sohag from Comilla about a month ago to the house See Page 12 Col 6

Buta Singh fired

NEW DELHI, Apr 20: Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee today fired a Cabinet minister accused of corruption in hopes of defusing a dispute with a key ally, reports AP.

The Prime Minister's political adviser, Pramod Mahajan, told reporters two other ministers targeted by the angry ally would not be dropped, because they face no formal charges.

Buta Singh, the independent communications minister accused in a bribery case, was dropped at the insistence of J Jayalalitha, leader of regional All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhgam. Jayalalitha's party and her southern allies control 30 seats in 545-seat Parliament and See Page 12 Col 6

Methanol behind tragedy at Gaibandha

From Naimul Haq and K M Rezaul Haque

GAIBANDHA, Apr 20: Reports on viscera, blood and urine tests confirmed that methanol was mixed with rectified spirit and sold as drink on the Bangla New Year Day that caused the deaths in the town.

This was disclosed by the DG of Narcotics Control Department at a meeting of high officials convened by the Home Minister at the circuit house here today.

The official death toll from the incident stood at forty-nine so far. The unofficial figure was, however, much higher.

According to various sources, more than 900 people drank the 'poisonous' liquor. Many of the victims are hiding

and undergoing treatment at their residences and in clinics in neighbouring districts. Many went India, the sources said.

The main accused Rabi Sankar, involved in the illegal sale of poisonous liquor, is absconding. Some sources claimed that he fled to India.

Meanwhile, Rabi's shops — National Homeo Pharmacy, Kipa Homeo Hall, and his residence have been sealed by police since Wednesday.

Home Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah, accompanied by the home secretary, flew in here today.

He went to the Gaibandha General Hospital to see the See Page 12 Col 3

Owners of sick industries demand Outline rehabilitation measures in a month

By Staff Correspondent

Several hundred owners of sick industries at a rally in the city yesterday gave the government one month's time for taking "specific policy measures" for rehabilitation of sick industries and threatened of an action programme for non-compliance.

But they did not elaborate on the action programme. The entrepreneurs demanded implementation of the 9-point recommendations made by a government review committee in November last

year. Agitations against the government will not be launched within the period of the government decides not to proceed with the cases lodged against them for realising defaulted loans and stops harassing them. It was agreed at the rally, held at the auditorium of the National Press Club.

Organised by Inter-Association Council for Rehabilitation of Sick Industries Rehabilitation, the rally was addressed by FBCCI President Yusuf Abdul-

lah Harun, its Vice-President Kazi Shafiqul Islam, President of Bangladesh Association of Banks Abdul Awal Mintoo, Chairman of Bangladesh Shop Owners Association Amir Hossain Khan and Convener of the Council Alauddin Ahmed.

They also demanded punishment of 'willful defaulters' publication of the names of 'corrupt bureaucrats and bankers who took bribes from the willful defaulters.' The decision to give one See Page 12 Col 4

আমরা কৃতজ্ঞ

অপসোনি ফ্রপ অব ইন্ডাস্ট্রিজ -এর প্রতিষ্ঠাতা চেয়ারম্যান জনাব আবদুল খালেক খান গত ৬ এপ্রিল '৯৮ সন্ধ্যা ৭-১৫ মিনিটে ইন্তেকাল করেন (ইন্সাল্লাহুহে রাজেউন)। গত ৭ এপ্রিল '৯৮ 'অপসোনি ভবন' ঢাকা ও বরিশাল জিলা স্কুল ময়দানে পৃথক পৃথক জানাযার পরে বিকেল ৫-৩০ মিনিটে মরহমকে বনানীস্থ গোরস্থানে দাফন করা হয়। ৯ এপ্রিল '৯৮ বাদ আছর ঢাকাস্থ 'অপসোনি ভবন'-এ এবং ১০ এপ্রিল '৯৮ বাদ জুম্মা বরিশাল মুসলিম গোরস্থান মসজিদে মরহমের কুলখানি অনুষ্ঠিত হয়।

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তারিখ : ২১ এপ্রিল, '৯৮