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Delhi to free 148 Pak fishermen ahead of tomorrow's talks

NEW DELHI, Nov 2: In a bid to create a congenial atmosphere for the Indo-Pak talks beginning here on Thursday, New Delhi today announced that it was releasing all 148 Pakistani fishermen languishing in Indian jails, reports BSS.

"We feel that innocent fishermen should not remain in jail, an External Affairs Ministry spokesman said here today.

The spokesman said New Delhi had already informed Pakistan of its decision to release the Pakistani fishermen.

AP adds: Negotiations that begin here this week on trade, terrorism, drug trafficking and other issues will be a tough test of India's contention that it doesn't need to talk about Kashmir to improve relations with uneasy neighbour Pakistan.

Pakistan made a concession when it agreed to the New Delhi talks, but now insists they're merely a sideshow to negotiations on the Kashmir territorial dispute that has fuelled two

Delay promotions

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With all the cadres having their specialised service-related administrative ministries, the particular type of cadre officers should run the respective administration, they argued.

According to the BCSCS leaders, the administration cadres should not have any thing to do with controlling the ministry of establishment, "as the work they have been practically doing is magistracy and collection of the land revenue".

However, the parliamentary body headed by Awami League MP Khandaker Asaduzzaman, gave a patient hearing to the BCSCS leaders. A member of the parliamentary committee told The Daily Star that they had so far given hearing to most of the 29 cadre associations, including the one representing the administration cadre.

"Once the hearing is completed, we would prepare a set of recommendations for the government. We would try to devise some ways of resolving the inter-cadre rivalry," a member of the parliamentary body said adding that the state could not function smoothly with the present level of inter-cadre rivalry.

Ruling party legislators SM Akram, MS Akbar, Ahsan Ahmed, BNP lawmakers Mohammad Abu Hena and Shah Mohammad Abu Hossain were present at the meeting, which was chaired by Asaduzzaman.

Bangla-Thai JC meet begins in Bangkok today

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad left Dhaka for Bangkok yesterday on a two-week tour of three Southeast Asian and Pacific countries, reports APB.

Azad will lead a delegation at a two-day meeting of the Bangladesh-Thailand Joint Commission (JC) that begins in the Thai capital today.

His Thai counterpart Surin Pitsuwan will lead the Thai team at the talks which are likely to address measures for narrowing the huge trade gap between the two countries.

At present, Bangladesh is suffering heavily from imbalance in its trade with Thailand.

This is the sixth meeting of the Joint Commission set up between the two countries in 1982.

JC will also deal with matters relating to further expanding bilateral ties in other fields, including economic cooperation and investment.

During his stay in Bangkok, the Foreign Minister will also discuss with the Thai authorities on extradition of Major (ret'd) Bazul Huda, an alleged accused in the Bangabandhu Murder Case, who is now detained in a Thai jail.

Azad will fly to Tokyo on November 6 on a six-day visit to Japan where he is expected to seek Japanese assistance for the post-flood rehabilitation works and investment for development projects in Bangladesh.

On his way back home, he is scheduled to visit Myanmar on November 11-12.

During his stay in Yangon, the Foreign Minister is likely to sign a land boundary treaty with Myanmar and hold talks on completing repatriation of the remaining Rohingya.

Petrobangla

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Block 9, Tullow will also be invited to go for partnership with Malaysian-US joint venture Tetronas-Mobil for Block 11.

It is currently holding negotiations with Danish company Maersk Olie for deep sea exploration in blocks 19 and 20.

Once the bidding committee finalises negotiations and the government announces the bidders as winners, these companies would hold talks with the PSC negotiation committee.

Although there had been talks on prioritising Bangladesh's exploration unit BAPEX, anything substantial is yet to be spelled out about BAPEX's share in various blocks.

"So far, the negotiations have actually been directed by a third committee, the high powered committee of four secretaries headed by the Principal Secretary," one source said.

The PSC negotiation committee would now discuss technical details of the PSC.

"This may take many months to complete. It is the hardest part of PSC negotiations," the source added.

Mukuli

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Mukuli Begum is a charge sheeted accused in the case. It was alleged in the charge sheet that she induced the DB men to arrest Rubel who subsequently died in police custody.

Senior Advocate M A Malek moved the petition.

Flying Club Cessna-150 kills boatman

From Our Correspondent NARAYANGANJ, Nov 3: A light aircraft flying very low over the river Sitalakhya hit and killed a boatman near Kanchanbazar under Ruggana thana in the district at around 12.30 pm today.

Nazrul Islam (25), who received multiple injuries in his neck, head, chest and hand, died of bleeding on way to a doctor at Kanchanbazar, Narayanganj police said.

Nazrul Islam, in control of a trawler, was hit by the propeller of the aircraft. He was a resident of Daspara of Palash thana in Narsingdi district.

The killer plane was a Cessna-150 aircraft of the Flying Club and was on a training session for low flying, sources said.

Body of the victim was sent to Narayanganj General Hospital Morgue for autopsy.

Taslina asked to show up in court: Bail rejected

By Court Correspondent

A magistrate yesterday rejected bail petition to Taslima Nasreen, an accused in a blasphemous case.

The lawyer for the feminist writer sought bail for her at the magistrate's court, Dhaka in a case filed against her by a citizen alleging that her writings hurt his religious feelings.

Taslina did not appear before the court. Magistrate Lokman Ahmed rejected the petition and asked her to appear in the court before January 5, the next date for hearing of the case.

One Zainal Abedin Babul, a resident of Keraniganj, filed a petition reviving a case he lodged against the writer accusing her of hurting his religious feelings in her publication, *Selected Columns*.

Counsel Idrisur Rahman appearing for Taslima Nasreen said his client had come to know about the case from newspaper reports after her return to the country. She had been abroad since 1994.

She could not appear before the court as certain groups of people staged demonstrations and issued threats against her. They would lynch her, he argued.

The magistrate rejected the petition.

Amartya Sen

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"Amartya has by choice identified himself as an Indian and a Bengali who comes from Manikganj, his paternal ancestral home," Prof Sobhan said. Sen himself was, for a period, a student at St Gregory's and stayed at 14, Larmini Street in Wari, which he visits every time he comes to Dhaka.

He said Sen's work represents a commitment to the people of Bangladesh, whom he supported in crucial ways during a critical phase of the Liberation struggle.

Md Anisur Rahman, in his paper entitled "Amartya Sen, Flood, Deprivation and Rabin-drath" said that Sen's work on famines was his best as an economist. "This masterly investigation has exposed the nature and working of some of the cruelest processes of deprivation of man by man."

Rahman said that every time Sen came to Dhaka he wanted to visit his Wari residence. "But unfortunately that house has changed hands and belongs to someone else," Rahman said appealing to the government to consider giving Sen the house where the world famous economist spent his childhood.

Prof Yunus

From Page 1

tion appeared to have originated from Greater Myensingh, Greater Rangpur, Madaripur, Barisal and Natore. The concentrations coincide to a large extent with traditionally vulnerable zones during the lean period.

Others who presented papers were Carlo del Nino, M Abdullah and Sajjad Zohir during the first session of the seminar. The seminar observed a minute's silence in respect of the death anniversary of the four national leaders who were killed in the Dhaka Central Jail 23 years ago this day yesterday.

Windies

From Page 1

bandhu National Stadium will be day-night affairs.

The Caribbean team with a blend of youth and experience will play the other limited-over match at the Rajshahi Stadium on November 9. The three-day match starts on November 12 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The West Indies A will leave the city for their month-long tour to India on November 15.

The squad: Ian Bishop (captain), Sherwin Campbell, Floyd Riefer, Keith Sample, Adrian Griffith, Wayne Philip, Courtney Brown (wicketkeeper), Carl Tuckett, Wavel Hinds, Pedro Collins, Neil McCordel, Rawl Lewis and Reon King.



Abdul Mannan Talukder, former general secretary of Netrakona District JP, presents a bouquet to BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday at the latter's Minto Road official residence on his joining the party.

Bumper production Govt to buy 10000 MT of salt for buffer stock

The government will soon buy 10,000 tonnes of salt from the producers to build up a buffer stock, reports APB.

An official announcement said yesterday that the decision was taken to give price incentives to the farmers who garnered a bumper output of salt this year.

The suppliers will have to procure salt through tenders from the growers in Cox's Bazar. They will also have to submit certificates from the local BSCIC unit and Cox's Bazar Salt Producers' Association to ensure that the supplied salt has been purchased from the salt farmers of the coastal district.

There has been a bumper production of salt in the coastal areas of Cox's Bazar and Anwara in Chittagong this year," the government handout said, adding that a huge quantity of salt is still under processing in these areas.

Country's total demand for edible and common-use salt is 8,34,000 tonnes. The production target this year was fixed at 8 lakh tonnes. But the output surpassed the target, said the handout.

The bumper harvest coupled with smuggled salt brought down its prices at grower's level, reports from the area said recently.

In addition to the current stock, salt producers are being engaged in developing saltbeds for the next season which commences in the first week of December.

"Under these circumstances, the government has decided to purchase salt in order to encourage farmers to produce salt, although there is no deficit or short supply in the country," said the announcement.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) has launched a massive awareness campaign to motivate some 35 thousand salt producers for producing white salt.

"If the farmers can produce white salt, Bangladesh will soon be a salt-exporting country," the government hopes.

50 people

From Page 1

The official added: "We are keeping ourselves on alert to face any untoward events."

Other law enforcing agencies are also keeping track on professional killers and hard core criminals across the country.

"Normally, police maintain a list of professional killers and criminals. But on special occasions police keep track on their movement," said the police official.

Directives have been issued to all the police stations and field-level units across the country to keep on alert.



Wan Azizah Ismail, left, wife of Anwar Ibrahim, and two of their daughters, Nural Issah, 18, second from left, and Nurul Hana, 6, leave the court where Anwar is being tried on charge of corruption and sexual misconduct in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. —AP/UNB photo

First prosecution witness says Anwar asked police to tamper with evidence

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 3: The first witness in the sensational corruption and sexual misconduct trial of Anwar Ibrahim said today the ousted deputy prime minister asked police to tamper with evidence showing he had committed adultery and sodomy, reports AP.

Mohamed Said Awang, the former chief of the country's top police unit, the Special Branch, was the first of 52 prosecution witnesses expected to take the stand in the government case against the jailed dissident.

Anwar faces five counts of corruption and five counts of illegal sex acts. He denies the charges and says they were cooked up to undermine his growing challenge to the 17-year leadership of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

Mohamad testified that the Special Branch had launched operation Solid Grip, an investigation into sexual misconduct by Anwar, back in 1992. That was before he was named deputy prime minister and finance minister in 1993.

It wasn't until August 1997, however, that the investigation turned serious with a letter and a sworn statement that accused Anwar of adultery and sodomy.

Anwar got police officers to force retractions by the writers of the two statements, the prosecution said.

The statement by Anwar's personal driver, Azizan Abu Bakar, said Anwar sodomised him 15 times. The other, by Ummi Haslida Ali, the sister of Anwar's private secretary, said her brother's wife had sex with Anwar.

Both statements were also sent to Mahathir, who said he fired Anwar after he himself talked to people who said they had sex with his handpicked successor.

Mahathir said Anwar was morally unfit to run the Southeast Asian nation and dumped him on Sept. 2.

"Whatever witnesses and documents the prosecution will bring to the court will prove beyond doubt that the accused abused the position as deputy prime minister and finance minister for his own personal gain," Abdul Gani Patail, the chief prosecutor, said in his opening statement.

It was unclear whether the police who are alleged to have forced the retractions would be charged with any crime.

"A poison-pen letter has become evidence," snapped Anwar, just after the trial adjourned and he was whisked off to the lock-up in the court basement.

Earlier, Anwar's mother could be seen hunched over during the humiliating testimony. At one point, Anwar mouthed to her, "have you eaten?"

Defense lawyers on Monday opened their case by asking the judge to hold Mahathir in contempt of court for saying publicly that Anwar should be convicted.

Mahathir was also on the witness list, but it was doubtful he would actually be called.

Today, riot police with shields and tear-gas launchers stood guard across the street from the red-bricked High Court at Independence Square, where Anwar led a huge anti-government protest just hours before his arrest.

30 more held in Karachi 2 gunned down, huge arms recovered

KARACHI, Nov 3: Gunmen killed two people here today as police and paramilitary troops detained around 30 people in an ongoing crackdown on criminals, police said, reports AFP.

An unidentified man was shot dead in central Li-aquatabad area and another was killed when assailants smashed his head with a hammer in the Eastern Lines area, they said.

A large quantity of arms was also seized during overnight raids at the hideouts of suspects in several neighbourhoods of violence-marred Karachi, police said.

The 30 detained included suspects involved in the murder of retired army colonel Bilal Ahmed who was shot dead by unidentified assailants on Monday, they added.

Around 50 angry women of Lines area, a thickly populated poor neighbourhood, staged a protest against the 'highhandedness' of paramilitary troops and police during search operation.

A women Sakina Bibi said her son was badly beaten up.

"We need peace but not armoured vehicles and harassment by the policemen," another woman in the area said.

Officials said security forces arrested 'terrorists' and criminals accused of involvement in murders, car-thefts and extortion.

Armed with a list of 800 suspects, they have detained scores of people since Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif dissolved the government in Sindh last week and vowed to stem lawlessness, eradicate terrorism and restore peace in the provincial capital and the country's commercial hub of Karachi.

Wrist of young man severed

By Staff Correspondent

A gang of terrorists severed a wrist of a young man at Taltola under Mohammdpur thana in the city yesterday afternoon.

The victim was identified as Selim, 26, son of Lutfur Rahman, a resident of East Pirebag.

According to police, the incident took place when Selim went to a saloon at Taltola at about 3 pm.

The gang attacked him inside the saloon as a sequel to previous rivalry. They severed the wrist of his left hand and stabbed him.

Selim was rushed to Orthopaedic Hospital and later shifted to DMCH where he was operated upon last night.

Dry Chilli

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market, onion was still being sold at its earlier price between Tk 52 to 60 per kg yesterday.

Turneric at the city's Mohammdpur, Hatirpool and New Market wet markets yesterday alleged that the prices of the two spices, dry chilli and turmeric, shot up due to hoarding by a section of wholesale dealers.

"Dealers of spices started hoarding for more profit as onions had become scarce in the market, pushing its price higher up," the retailers alleged.

Turmeric which was being sold at Tk 70 a few days back, was now selling for Tk 75 per kg in the retail market.

Masoor daal was at Tk 38 to 40 per kg, Tk 2 to 4 higher than its previous price. The price of dry chilli which was at Tk 90 to 100 a couple of days back, was selling for up to Tk 120 per kg.

Prices of other essentials, remained more or less stable.

Drilling at Bibiana

From Page 1

Bangladesh.

To remain cautious, Petrobangla did not accept Occidental's assessment right away. Instead, it suggested Occidental to confirm the gas reserve by going with the next step of exploration, drilling the appraisal well.

Occidental came up with its workplan for the next two months ago. The plan includes conducting a three-dimensional survey and drilling of the appraisal well with a budget of around 20 million dollars.

Petrobangla went through Occidental's work programme and after holding detailed negotiations, streamlined the programme and approved it with a budget of 11 million dollars.

The 3-D seismic would be the first of its kind in Bangladesh. This is a high-tech operation which would be undertaken to maximise geological data on the Bibiana field.

"The Bibiana field is located in a swampy area and normal seismic operations are usually very slow and not very thorough. The 3-D seismic operation would unveil a lot of information which can not be obtained otherwise. Petrobangla and BAPEX people are eager to learn from this operation," another source noted.

"Occidental had been insistent about this seismic operation which is much costlier than normal seismic procedure. Ultimately, Occidental agreed to bear 50 per cent of the cost for this operation and Petrobangla approved it," he said.

"This had been a negotiation which truly upheld Bangladesh's interest," the source said.

All expenditures approved by Petrobangla are recoverable by foreign oil companies from the gasfields they would develop. A loosely conducted negotiation could mean financial loss for the country, the source added.

While Occidental is in limbo in blocks 13 and 14, as the government is delaying the extension of the PSC on different grounds, the US company has made major progress in Block 12.

Beside the Bibiana field, it has completed drilling of four gas wells in Jalalabad gasfield. The Jalalabad field, which is

Prothom Alo

From Page 1

habuddin Ahmed in a message hailed the publication of the paper.

"Newspaper is the mirror of the country and society. As a multiplicity of people newspapers have to bring into consideration the entire scenario of the country and have to nurture liberal attitudes to help expedite social upliftment," the President said.

"Newspapers have to prioritise the national interest keeping it above any narrow outlook of individual, group or party," he said.

Matiur Rahman is an experienced journalist and he has made his mark in the realm of honest and value based journalism in the country," he said.

In another message Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina welcomed the publication of the daily and wished its success.

"The role of newspapers is important in establishing a democratic, transparent and accountable administration," the prime minister said in her message.

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia also welcomed the publication and hoped for its success.

"Independent newspapers are one of the preconditions for democracy and there is no alternative to independent newspapers to unveil faces of oppression and injustice and to establish transparency and accountability of government," she said.