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PHILIPS

Armed Forces Day observed

The Armed Forces Day was observed in the country yesterday, reports UNB. In view of the post-flood situation, no display of military hardware has been arranged in Dhaka or elsewhere in the country. The day's programme began with offering of Munajat after the Fajr prayers in all mosques at army garrisons, naval ships and establishments as well as airforce bases throughout the country.

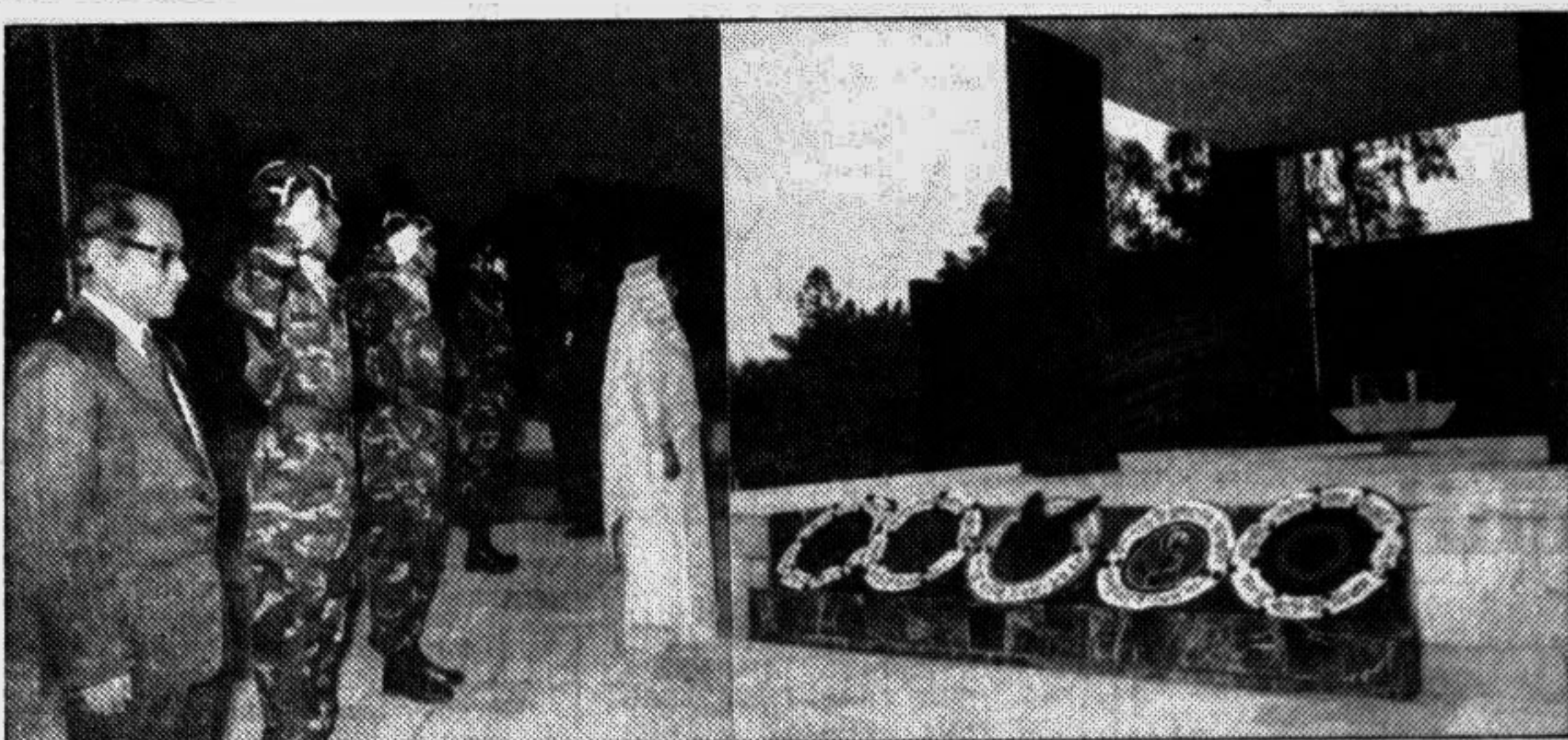
In Dhaka, President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina placed floral wreaths at the "Shikha Anirban" (the Eternal Flame) at dawn.

The President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister stood in solemn silence to pay homage to the members of the Armed Forces who had embraced martyrdom in the War of Liberation in 1971. They also signed the visitors' book. Army Chief Lieutenant General Muhammad Mostafizur Rahman, Bir Bikram, Navy Chief Rear Admiral Mohammad Nurul Islam, Airforce Chief Air Vice-Marshal Jamal Uddin Ahmed, Defence Secretary Syed Yusuf Hossain, Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division Major General Imamuz Zaman, Bir Bikram, other Principal Staff Officers, Formation Commanders, Officers, JCOs and all ranks of the three services were present during the wreath-laying ceremony by the President and the Prime Minister.

Later, the chiefs of three services placed floral wreaths at the "Shikha Anirban" separately. Principal Staff Officers and other senior officers of the three services were present during the wreath laying by the three chiefs while smart contingents of the respective services presented arms salute.

Later, the three chiefs paid courtesy call on the President and Supreme Commander of the Arms Forces of the President Shahabuddin Ahmed at the Bangabhaban and stayed with them for some time. They also paid courtesy call on Prime Minister Hasina at the Armed Forces Division.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina met with the family members of Bir Shresthos and a number of other gallantry awardees.



ARMED FORCES DAY: President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina stand in silence at the altar of Shikha Anirban in the Dhaka Cantonment yesterday after placing wreaths. —ISPR photo

'Govt determined to build modern armed forces'

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said that the government was determined to build modern and efficient armed forces along with the development of other sections of the society, reports UNB.

"Besides protecting the sovereignty and independence of the country, the members of the armed forces stand beside the people during natural calamities," she said while addressing a reception organised on the Armed Forces Day at Senakunja in the Cantonment.

Referring to the warning of a cyclone today, Hasina urged all to remain alert and pray to the Almighty to save the country from any disaster.

"She also called upon all irrespective of party and opinion to work unitedly to build up the country with the spirit of the Liberation War."

"Let us work together to build a happy and prosperous Sonar Bangla as dreamt by the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman," she said.

The prime minister said the 21st November occupies a glorious place in the history of the Liberation War.

"On this day in 1971, the united forces of army, navy and airforce had launched an integrated offensive against Pakistani occupation forces."

US-Bangladesh confce on investment in Dec likely

A high-profile conference between the United States and Bangladesh is likely to be held in Washington in the middle of December in a bid to woo American entrepreneurs to invest in Bangladesh, reports APB.

The US Chamber and Commerce is going to organise the meeting in which the US team is expected to be led by Energy Secretary Bill Richardson. A high-level delegation will represent Bangladesh at the meeting.

The conference was planned in Washington recently when the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) President Abdul Awal Mintoo met US Chamber of Commerce Vice-President Willard A Workman.

An FBCCI press release also said the US Chamber of Commerce was trying its best to encourage American entrepreneurs to come in a bigger way to invest in Bangladesh in different sectors like energy, power and telecommunications.

The US Chamber also urged the Department of Commerce and Energy to institute a bilateral commission for regular high-level consultations with Bangladesh on trade and commerce.

The meeting, held at the head office of US Chamber in Washington, was attended by Dr Herbert J Davis, Executive Director of US-Bangladesh Business Council, which is also a part of the US Chamber of Commerce, and Cooper L Kinney, Assistant Director of International Division of US Chamber.

Dr Herbert told the FBCCI President that they had formally invited Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to address the forum during her upcoming visit to the United States.

5 truckers held with smuggled sugar, placed on remand

The five truckers who were arrested at Jatrabari crossing in the city on Friday night for allegedly carrying smuggled sugar were produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court yesterday.

The court placed them on a day's remand, police said. The trucks were carrying sugar illegally brought from India, police said.



GURDIAN OF THE LAW? The owner and tenants of a house at Islam Nagar at Arsaabad under Kamrangir Char caught Police Constable Abdul Wahab red handed when he raped Marjina a 13 year old girl in the building and handed him over to the police of Lalbagh Thana. —Star photo

Seminar on CHT

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people living there and a voter list, resettlement of Bangladeshes living in the cluster villages, ending acquisition of land in the name of afforestation, withdrawal of temporary army camps and ending what it called 'operational activities' under 'unwritten' orders from the army command.

Senior leaders of PCJSS Gautam Kumar Chakma and Rupayan Dewan, Convener of Land Commission Hansadhai Chakma, Ananta Bihari Khajia, former vice-chancellor of Dhaka University Prof. Maniruzzaman Mia, former Brigadier Commander at Khagrachari Major General (rtd) S.M.Ibrahim, Bangalee Krishak Sramik Kalayan Parishad Convener Mohammad Awal, Parbatya Adibasi Banagalee Kalyan Parishad General Secretary Gafur Ahmed Talukder, Jiten Chakma and Biplob Chakma of Pahari Chhatra Parishad, Chaitali Chakma of Hill Women's Feeration and Shaktipada Tripura of Pahari Gano Parishad were among the participants.

The workshop on "One Year of the CHT Accord: Progress, Problems and Prospects" had three sessions. Prof. C.R.Abrar of Dhaka University, Advocate Hasan Arif and Prof. Tasnima Arefa Siddiky of Dhaka University conducted the sessions. Abdulrahim Kayyum read out a keynote paper.

The paper, among other issues, noted that law and order should be improved in the CHT and illegal arms recovered.

Participating in the discussions, Major General (rtd) Ibrahim recalled his command at Khagrachari and the peace process that was initiated a decade ago.

He observed that if the Shantibahini had gone for a settlement with late president Ziaur Rahman in 1979-80, there would not have been settlers in the hills. Even if they had accepted the district councils in 1989, things would have been much easier to settle, he said.

He said if those living in the CHT can be taken as one entity, it will be easier to settle things. He emphasised consensus to resolve the problems in the hills.

Prof. Maniruzzaman Mia observed that the CHT accord sacrificed settlers' interests who constitute almost half of the population in the hills. It violated their constitutional and human rights by making provisions that those who have ownership of land and addresses only will be voters, he said.

Mohammad Awal said that as citizens of the country, Bangladeshes have right to settle anywhere in Bangladesh. He cited different problems in land ownership by the non-tribals since the flare up of violence in the hills in 1986 when land records were burnt.

He pleaded for amendments in the accord to preserve rights of the Bangladeshes saying that they also welcomed the accord

Sex scandal only a personal matter to Clinton

SEOUL, Nov 21: US President Bill Clinton said today the sex and perjury scandal that sparked an impeachment proceeding was no longer a political or legal issue for him but a personal matter in which "there has been a lot of suffering."

At a joint news conference with South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung, Clinton was asked whether he should face some kind of punishment or apology to bring the matter to closure, reports Reuters.

"There has been a lot of suffering — that is different from punishment, although it's hard to see the difference sometimes as you're going through it," Clinton responded. "For me, this long ago ceased to be a political issue or a legal issue and became a personal one. And every day I do my best to put it right, personally."

He said it would not be appropriate to comment on what Congress should do.

Women leaders at Star dialogue

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Women's rights activist Shaheen Anam called for breaking the silence over violence at home. "Violence at home is committed by people we trust. Marriage cannot ensure security of women even though that has been the traditional concept for generations," she said.

Sonia Nishat Amin of Dhaka University said the stigma of "losing chastity" must be driven out from the minds of women and that they must move with confidence to establish their rights.

Rehnuma Ahmed of Jahangirnagar University commented that from what had been said by others it appeared that the western world was a heaven for women, free from sexual exploitation and it is only the so called "traditional and backward" societies as ours where women are oppressed.

"It is far from the truth," she observed. "The absence of standard analysis of family and of sexuality, in women's movement in our country is compounded by the fact that the movement itself is very middle-class in its leadership, morals and outlook."

Prof Salma Sobhan observed that the shelter centres made for women are virtually jails. Development worker Nibedita Das Purakayastha said the sense of security has been destroyed in the country because of negative politics. "Our politics has given birth to discrimination among mankind, unfaithfulness and insecurity," she said.

Mannan Bhuiyan blasts gov't for importing rice seeds from India

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday criticised the government for importing hybrid rice seeds without considering its adverse effect in the country's agriculture system, reports UNB.

"The government has imported rice seeds to satisfy Indian exporters and some local traders," Bhuiyan said.

He was addressing a seminar on "Wisdom of Importing Hybrid Rice Seeds, Bangladesh Scenario" at the National Press Club in the afternoon. The seminar was organised by Agriculturalists Association of Bangladesh (AAB).

Former Vice-chancellor of Khulna University Prof Mohammed Golam Ali Fakir and Dr Mohammed Aeybur Rahman presented key note papers at the seminar.

"There might have been necessity to import seeds. But the merits and the demerits of the hybrid seeds in our soil and climate should be examined before the import," he said.

Bhuiyan said "The government has no responsibility to the people of the country. That is why they have imported the hybrid varieties which gave a poor yield making the farmers poorer."

He said the production of rice can be increased 15 to 20 times by improving further the seeds in our Rice Research Institute.

The renowned agriculturist Dr Fakir said that the price of hybrid seeds is 15 to 20 times higher than that of local developed UFSHI variety. The price of per kg hybrid seed is Tk 200 to Tk 300 while the local variety cost Tk 10 to Tk 15.

Indo-Bangla talks Both sides agree to resolve outstanding issues

Bangladesh and India yesterday agreed to take appropriate steps to resolve outstanding bilateral issues between the two neighbours, reports UNB.

The agreement came at the Home Secretary level meeting held at the State Guest House Padma.

Home Secretary Safur Rahman led the seven-member home side while Indian Home Secretary BP Singh led his country's seven member team at the talks.

An official press release said the two sides discussed in details "effective and appropriate" steps to solve various problems between the two countries.

The press release did not specify the issues, but the two neighbours have problems like border demarcation, cross-border insurgency, smuggling, push-in, illegal trafficking etc.

Constable held on charge of raping maid

A police constable was arrested in the city yesterday on charge of raping a minor girl at his rented house at Purba Rasulgah, in Kamrangirchar area, Lalbagh police said.

Abdul Wahab Khan, 48, baton no 15503, was caught red handed by Tahmina Begum, landlady of the house, when he was forcibly involved in sex with 12-year old Rahela (not her real name). The owner of the house later handed the culprit over to Lalbagh police.

Rahela, 12, of Kishorganj was a maid at the house of accused constable Abdul Wahab. He brought the girl to Dhaka to deploy her in his daughter's house, sources said.

The family members of the accused rapist were away from the house during the incident.

Mother's kidney may save Asma

By Staff Correspondent

Asma Begum will soon undergo surgery for kidney transplantation, a doctor said.

"A kidney from her mother would be implanted by this December. Tissue matching examination showed positive results and Asma is now ready to undergo the surgery," said Professor Harun-ur-Rashid, head of nephrology department, who returned from abroad day before yesterday.

Speaking to the Daily Star yesterday afternoon at the Bangabandhu Medical University Hospital where Asma is admitted, the professor however said, "Asma is now suffering from chest infection. We cannot operate when she is sick. But we hope Asma would soon recover from her infection."

Asma's mother, Zahura Begum has agreed to give one kidney for the sake of her daughter's life. "I am very scared. Would the surgery involve a lot of pain?" she asked the visiting professor.

The professor assured Asma's mother that she could lead



Can her mother save her? — Star photo

a normal life with one kidney. After dialysis on Friday night, Asma's condition was stated to be "better but not out of risk."

Doctors during an operation at Dhaka Medical College Hos-

pital "mistakenly" removed Asma's only functioning kidney about two and a half months ago. A case was filed accusing the concerned DMCH doctors and health ministry officials.

Unocal's WRIP

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now been almost confined in the Energy Ministry.

However, the energy ministry negotiators also raised questions about various aspects of WRIP: specially Unocal's proposal on the pipeline.

Unocal proposed setting up of a 24 inch diameter pipeline. Energy Ministry says, the Shahbazpur gas field does not have enough gas to justify such a pipeline. It suggested that the pipeline should be at least 16 inches diameter.

Unocal has been insistent about the pipeline diameter. Sources said, although this pipeline scheme is apparently for the Shahbazpur gas field, Unocal has a long term vision about setting up an international pipeline beginning from Central Asia, passing through Bangladesh and ending in the ASEAN countries.

To end this disagreement, it has now been decided that a foreign consultant would be appointed to see whether Unocal's proposal to set up a 24 inch diameter pipeline is justified.

The consultant will also scrutinise and evaluate tender documents and give advice on the issue of tariff and legislative matters relating to the project.

The government will also float a tender to select contractors for pipeline construction and horizontal drilling under the WRIP.

Besides, the government has decided to float a tender to match Unocal's proposals. If no other foreign company can match Unocal's proposal, the government will go for signing the final agreement with the American company.

If any other company can match UNOCAL's proposal or give a better project outline, the government will first ask UNOCAL to withdraw.

Extension of tax holiday to Indian power projects likely

NEW DELHI, Nov 21: The Indian union government plans to extend a 10-year tax holiday to mega-power projects in a bid to enhance power development in the country, official sources said here today, reports Xinhua.

Promoters of all mega-power projects would be given the same tax holiday. Under the new mega-power policy, promoters are allowed a 10-year tax holiday which can be availed of during the first 15 years after the project is commissioned.

At present, independent power producers can avail of a total tax holiday of five years and a 70-per cent tax holiday for another five years.

Dacoity in Jayantika Express

From Staff Correspondent

A dacoity was committed in the inter-city Jayantika Express at a place in between Sargaha and Rashidpur stations on Sylhet-Akhaura section tonight.

Passengers and GRP sources said, the train which was on its way to Sylhet suddenly stopped its journey sometime after it left Rashidpur Station at about 6:50 pm.

About 40 to 50 miscreants armed with lethal weapons swooped on the passengers. They beat up the passengers and took away gold ornaments and money, other valuables worth about several lakh taka during the half an hour operation.

About 50 passengers received injuries. Of the injured, eight were admitted to the Moulvibazar Sadar Hospital and four to the Srimangal Hospital.

The driver of the train, Abdul Baset, said that the miscreants pulled chain to stop the train. However, a number of passengers alleged that the miscreants committed the dacoity in collaboration with the driver and the conductor guard.

A case has been filed with the Srimangal GRP.

Hurricane

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Red Cross sources said it had deployed 33,000 volunteers in 30 coastal thana areas of the country where 60 lakh people live in risky zone.

Four control rooms have been opened at Chittagong port to work round the clock while police and port security people were kept on high alert at port area, they informed.

At least 10 ships already anchored at port jetties were taken outside in addition to other protective measures, port officials said.

All the coasters, trawlers and small vessels were ordered to move to the upstream of Karnaphuli river from around the port jetties for safety reason, they said.

The port officers on leave were called back to remain present at the office round the clock, official sources said adding that all the trucks from inside the jetties were forced out.

Port authorities took all these measures after holding an emergency meeting at port office, officials said. Chittagong district administration also held a meeting of disaster management with all concerned departmental heads at Chittagong circuit house at noon today and alerted all to take required measures for tackling the situation.

Degree exams 183 expelled in Rajshahi on 2nd day

RAJSHAH, Nov 21: Some 183 examinees were expelled on the second day today of ongoing degree examinations from 20 centres in the district, reports UNB.

Some unruly students damaged the car of a Magistrate as they failed to adopt unfair means in the examination at Prentali Degree College centre, police said.

Satellite

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service in disaster management during emergency period. It can also be used to boost rural telecommunication.

Iridium, which operates 66 low-earth-satellites with land-based wireless system for telecommunication, has also proposed services in some Southeast Asia countries including India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Maldives, the Motorola official said.

Already, it has signed agreements with 21 cellular operators in these countries to market its services, the Motorola official said.

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