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Will little Abdi get back her eyesight?

By Staff Correspondent

Tortured housemaid Abdi has to wait till tomorrow to know if she will get back her eyesight.

She now cannot see anything with her left eye and sees very little with her right eye.

The eight-year girl was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital on Thursday with severe injuries in her eyes and on the forehead and back as her mistress allegedly tortured her at a Gulshan residence in the city.

Police arrested the housewife - Salma Azim - on Saturday, produced her in the CMM's Court and the court sent her to Dhaka Central Jail.

Just before the home minister visited the victim at about 11 am on Saturday, DMCH doctors in a hurried move did an X-ray of her head. Since then she remained unattended until doctors paid a routine visit at around noon yesterday, hospital sources said.

Asked about the minister's instruction about Abdi's treatment, doctors told The Daily Star she was kept under observation. "Pus and clotted blood in her forehead were removed by an operation," said one of them.

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Two envoys recalled

By M Anwarul Haq

Two Bangladesh ambassadors have been recalled to the headquarters. Foreign Ministry sources said yesterday.

Besides, one ambassador has sought voluntary retirement, while a senior diplomat has declined an offer for extension of service.

Syed Mohammad Hossain, Ambassador to Morocco and Rashed Ahmed, envoy to Japan, have been asked to report back to Dhaka. The reasons for their recall were not known. Hossain is due to retire on January 8 and Ahmed on January 17. Both were seriously lobbying for extension.

Meanwhile, of the three senior diplomats granted extension recently on contract for one year each, Anwar Hashim is learnt to have declined to accept the offer.

Anwar Hashim, the second senior most diplomat is now serving as Principal of the Foreign Service Academy. There were suggestions that his service

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Election expenses MP candidate jailed for not submitting accounts

JESSORE, Dec 8: A contestant in the 1996 parliamentary election has been sentenced to two years' RI and fined Tk 5,000 for not submitting accounts of his election expenses, reports APB.

According to a judgement passed by Mahmuda Khatun, Additional Sessions Judge-1, Narail, Torikul Islam, who had contested in Narail-1 constituency with a Gano Forum ticket will have to suffer RI for six months more if he fails to pay the fine.

The judgement was passed on November 23 under Clause 4 (A) of the 1972 Public Representation Act, court sources in Narail has said.

According to a delayed report available here today, three other contestants in Narail - Bimal Biswas, Sheikh Asad and Gazi Ashra - are awaiting judgement for the same offences.

Deputy Commissioner of Narail, Taj Mohammed, had filed these cases on behalf of the government.

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BAPEX 'crippled' further

By Sharier Khan

Oil and gas exploration by BAPEX may be limited further and its financial position has become "crippled" following two government decisions.

The energy ministry last week decided that BAPEX should be "prepared for competition" with foreign oil companies, which sources and experts say, means denying it any government-sponsored exploration work.

Furthermore, it will have to depend on the sweet will of ministry officials for funds instead of a share of Petrobangla's profit which it is receiving now.

The Ministry has also asked Petrobangla to outline a future exploration strategy for BAPEX in the light of "competition" and make an official presentation about the strategy.

The sources said, under this decision BAPEX would not be given any exploration area without any competitive international bidding. "The priority and importance that was verbally given to BAPEX by higher authorities have all become meaningless with this decision," an official source said.

Prior to taking the decisions, high officials of Petrobangla and energy ministry had discussed on several occasions that all "ring fenced" or government-reserved oil and gas exploration areas which were excluded from the Second

Round Block Bidding process should be kept for competitive bidding in future.

It was also discussed that the "relinquished" areas in various blocks being explored by foreign companies under Production Sharing Contract (PSC) would also be subjected to competitive bidding.

About 25 per cent area in

Meghnaghat plant

Cabinet body's 'no' to giving contract to Marubeni

Star Report

The Cabinet's Purchase Committee yesterday rejected an energy ministry proposal for awarding without any bidding or negotiations a contract to Japanese company Marubeni to set up the second phase of 300 MW-450 MW Meghnaghat Power Plant.

Sources said that the finance minister rejected the proposal at the Committee's meeting.

Negotiations for signing a contract for the first phase of plant is still incomplete.

Energy ministry officials

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each block is relinquished every three years when the foreign companies concerned fail to achieve the maximum target. These relinquished areas were previously earmarked for BAPEX's exploration with local funds.

The ministry in its last week's meeting did not specifically discuss about the "ring fenced" or "relinquished" areas. Rather, it focused on putting BAPEX in competition with giant foreign companies.

The sources said, the ministry was well aware of the fact that with poor equipment and technology, BAPEX would not score in any competitive bidding. "It is still not ready for competition," said an official. "At this hour, BAPEX needs government support so that it can stand up on its own. It needs some exploration activities."

BAPEX's activities remained crippled for over a decade now on the pretext that the government did not have enough funds for exploration activities.

However, out of the three exploration schemes it undertook in the last 10 years, BAPEX struck gas in two at a cost lower than that of foreign oil companies, the sources said.

Since BAPEX was separated from Petrobangla in 1989, its funds were arranged from Petrobangla's annual profit at

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No Bangladeshi refugees in India, says Advani

NEW DELHI, Nov 8: Indian Home Minister L K Advani today told the Lok Sabha that there were no Bangladeshi refugees in his country, reports BSS.

Replying to a question from Congress member Sudhil Kumar Sinde he said detection and deportation of illegal infiltrators was a continuous process.

Answering a question whether the issue of illegal immigrants was discussed with Bangladesh, the minister said

the matter was taken up with the Bangladesh government on various occasions. This issue was also discussed during the home secretary level talks between the two countries in Dhaka last month.

He said the Bangladesh side assured that measures would be taken to strengthen security on the border to prevent illegal border crossings.

Replying to another question from a Congress member

Gulam Osmani on the harassment of people in the name of illegal immigrants, the Home Minister said those cases could be looked into.

Answering another question from Congress member Rajesh Pilot, Advani said that the government first proposed to detect the illegal immigrants and then issue them identity cards, saying that the dimension of the problem was major in eastern and north-eastern states of India particularly Assam.

The home minister, without giving any time frame, said separate identity cards would be issued to citizens and non-citizens.

Advani told the member that it was not correct to say that all illegal immigrants were agents of Pakistan's army intelligence ISI. He, however, said that some were deliberately infiltrated as ISI agents while many others came to India for economic reasons.



The Martyred Intellectuals Memorial at Mirpur in the city is being cleaned up ahead of the Shaheed Buddhijibi Dibash on December 14.

—Star photo

BNP conspiring to destabilise situation after bypolls: AL

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League has accused BNP of raising "imaginary and incredible" allegations against its opponent sensing the party's "sure defeat" in the Pabna-2 by-election.

Addressing a press conference at the party central office in the city yesterday, AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman also cautioned the people against what he said BNP conspiracy to destabilise the situation after the Pabna by-election.

Zillur blamed BNP chief Khaleda Zia for 'inciting terrorism and encouraging vote-rigging' in the by-polls through her statement at a public meeting in Pabna.

Several BNP leaders including Khaleda Zia, Badruddoza Chowdhury and Mayor of Ra-

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Armed ruling party activists threatening voters : BNP

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan has urged the Election Commission to ensure security of voters, specially women, so that they can cast their votes without any fear in the by-election in Pabna-2 constituency tomorrow.

"Silent terrorism is now going on in the constituency as armed activists of the ruling party have started moving door to door of voters, threatening voters not to cast votes in favour of BNP," he said at a press briefing at BNP central office in the city yesterday.

Bhuiyan alleged that terrorists belonging to Awami League were threatening the voters within the knowledge of police not to go to polling centres if they do not cast vote for "Boat", election symbol of AL.

"People of the constituency are now very much scared whether they will be able to cast their votes or not," he said and

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Both candidates 'optimistic' of winning polls

From Nurul Kabir

PABNA, Dec 8: Both the Awami League and BNP candidates for the parliamentary by-elections in Pabna-2 constituency said they are 'highly optimistic' of winning the December 10 polls.

"I am very confident about victory," AL candidate A K Khandaker told The Daily Star minutes after he addressed a projection meeting at Sujana-gar this afternoon.

He lost to a BNP candidate by some 10,000 votes from the Pabna Sadar seat of Jatiya Sangsad in the last general elections.

Khandaker denied opposition allegation that he is enjoying extra privileges in the campaign as a ruling party candidate. "Even the ministers involved in the campaign are not using the state facilities they are usually entitled to at other times."

He refused to comment on the Election Commission's de-

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Khaleda at election rallies in Pabna Guard polling booths, catch vote thieves

SUJANAGAR, Dec 8: BNP

Chairperson Begum Khaleda today said the government would be compelled to call a mid-term polls to save the people from its atrocities and the nation from ruination, reports BNP.

Addressing two election projection meetings at Dulai and Nazirganj, Begum Zia urged the people to vote for the BNP candidate.

"Cast your vote for the sheaf of paddy (BNP election symbol) and let the ruling party know that people do no longer want them. Vote for our candidate to strengthen the demand for a mid-term polls," she told the audience.

Begum Zia asked the people to resist wherever they faced obstacles. "Guard the polling booths closely and catch hold of the vote thieves," she said.

The opposition leader cautioned the administration

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Houses of DC, SP at B'baria attacked

From Our Correspondent

BRAHMANBARIA, Dec 8: A mob attacked the residences of the DC, the SP, judges, the office of DC and the TV relay station and damaged several police vehicles this evening after enforcing a dawn-to-dusk hartal in the town.

A local fundamentalist group backed by the teachers and students of a madrassah called the hartal protesting what they said the partisan role of police during a clash between the group and NGO workers on Monday.

The clash centred a five-day Victory Day programme drawn up by local NGOs in collaboration with the ADAB, which was due to begin at the Neaz Stadium here on Monday. The fundamentalist group termed the NGO activities as anti-Islamic.

The students and teachers of the madrassah brought out several processions in the town during the hartal. Pickets put up a barricade on the rail line,

interrupting movement of trains from and to Brahmanbaria.

Pickets also barricaded B'Baria-Chittagong, B'Baria-Sylhet, and B'Baria-Dhaka highways disrupting road communication during the hartal period.

Educational institutions and shops in the town remained closed due to the hartal. No NGO workers were found in the town. Police presence on the streets was thin.

Most of the NGO offices were burnt by the mob. No case was, however, filed in this connection.

In the evening, the teachers and students of the madrassah held a rally at the Paura Mukta Manch. Presided over by Sayed Muhammad Ahmed, the rally was addressed by Saikul Hadis Maulana Azizul Haq, Mufti Nurullah, Maulana Habibullah and BNP MP advocate Harun Al

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Jail Killing Case High Court rejects all three bail prayers

By SC Correspondent

The High Court yesterday refused to grant bail to BNP leader K M Obaidur Rahman, Nurul Islam Manzur and Jatiya Party leader Shah Moazzem Hossain in the Jail Killing Case.

The division bench of the HC comprising Justice Md Abdul Karim and Justice A B M Khairul Hoque after hearing the bail petitions for five days yesterday discharged the rules issued upon the government on October 29, 1998.

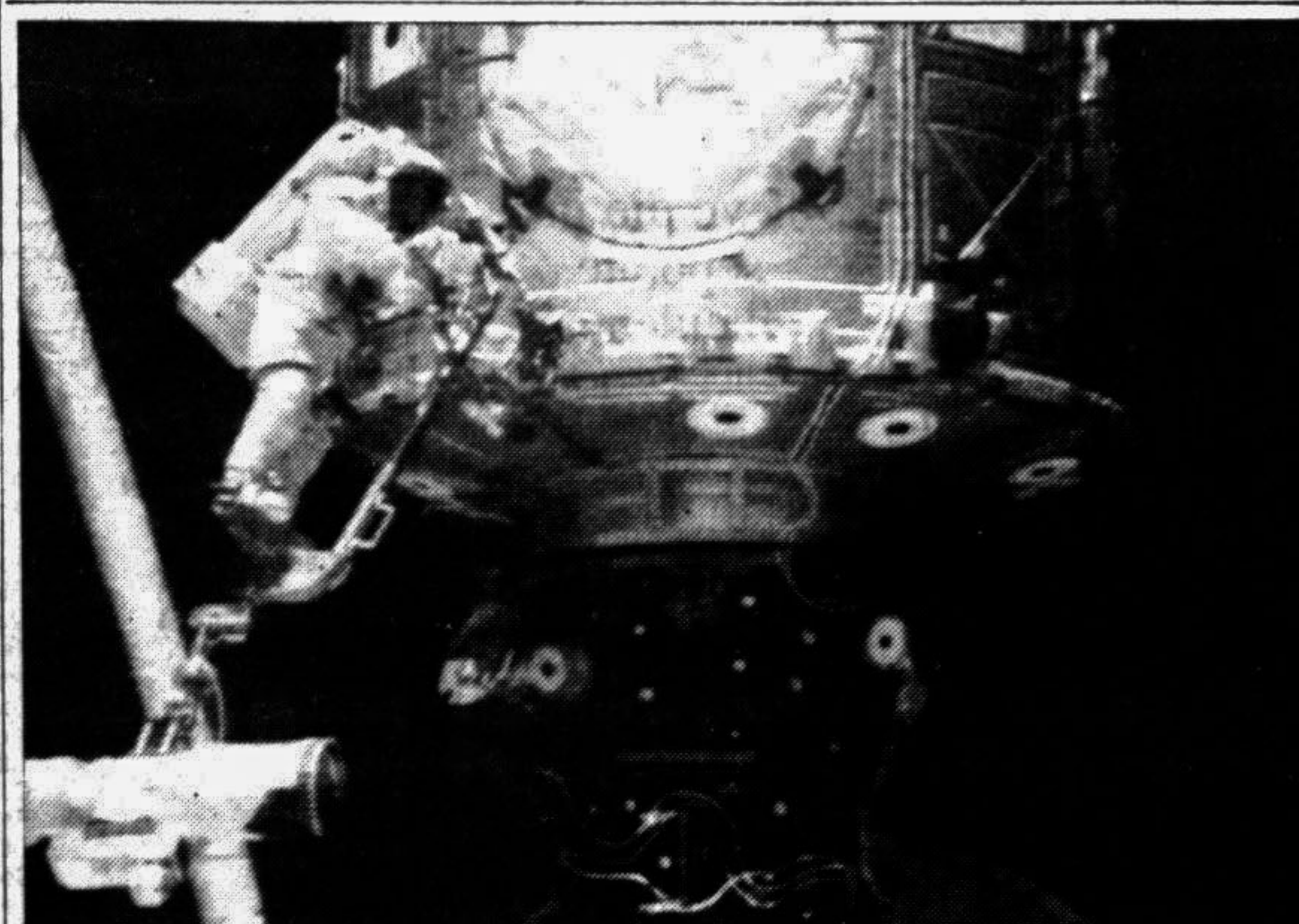
However, the court directed the government to send the accused persons within seven days to Pabangbandhu Medical

University Hospital or Suhrawardy Hospital or to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for medical check up and treatment.

They will be allowed to stay there as long as necessary. If the trial begins in the meantime, they will be produced before the court, the HC ordered.

Attorney General Mahmudul Islam aided by Additional Attorney General Mahbubey Alam, Deputy Attorney General M. Farooque, K M Saifuddin Ahmed and AAG Golam Asek Rupak, Md Mahub Ali, Abul

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Astronaut Jerry Ross adjusts his tools from his perch at the end of the space shuttle's robot arm as he works on the international space station module Unity on Monday, in this image from NASA television.

Spacewalking astronauts do critical wiring job

SPACE CENTER (Houston), Dec 8: Spacewalking astronauts successfully hooked up 40 electrical connections between the first two pieces of the international space station, allowing power and data to flow from one side to the other, reports AP.

To NASA's surprise, Monday's critical wiring job took less time than expected.

Jerry Ross, NASA's most experienced spacewalker, deftly snapped the connectors together as James Newman handed him the attached cables. They were impressed with the seven-story station towering above them.

"This is sure a beautiful piece of hardware," Newman said. Ross worked nonstop from

the end of Endeavour's 15-meter robot arm, starting at the bottom with the American-made Unity module. He attached jumper cables there before being hoisted more than 12 meters to the Russian-built Zarya stacked on top.

"Jerry, How's the view?" Newman called out from below. "Fantastic if I had time to look," Ross replied.

Ross and Newman completed the electrical connections four hours into their nearly seven and a half hour spacewalk, the first of three scheduled for this week. Before the astronauts went back inside the shuttle, flight controllers turned on the power inside the fledgling station; electricity had been shut

off to the cables before the spacewalk, for the astronauts' safety.

Endeavour's crew used the robot arm and thruster rockets Sunday to snap together Zarya and Unity, forming a 23-meter, 35-ton tower in Endeavour's cargo bay. Construction of the space station hinged on making the electrical hookups, said NASA's lead flight director, Bob Castle.

Unity, a connecting passageway, needs the solar power generated by the Zarya control module to survive. The computers, heaters and fans inside Unity began humming for the first time in orbit once the electricity started flowing from Zarya.

Urgent Notice on Change of VAT Registration Number

Sub: Regarding New 10-digit VAT Registration Number being effective instead of old 8-digit VAT Registration Number from 1st January 1999.

It is notified for information of esteemed individuals & firms interested for VAT registration, turnover tax & cottage industry enlistment that, new form "VAT-6" has been prepared for VAT registration, turn-over tax & cottage industry enlistment in 1998-99 financial year budget. This form shall be applicable only in case of new application.

02. In respect of the new form the clientele will be given new 10-digit VAT Registration Number instead of old 8-digit VAT Registration Number.

03. Administrative steps have been taken for automatic change over of existing old 8-digit VAT Registration Number of holders to 10-digit number from 1st July 1998. Both the new & the old VAT Registration Numbers will remain parallelly effective up to 31-12-98. From 1st January 1999, only the new number will be effective and the old number will not remain effective from that date.

04. In view of collecting 10-digit new VAT registration certificate, the 8-digit VAT registration holders are requested to contact their respective Commissionerate/ Division/Circle from October '98. For further details in this regard, the nearest VAT office or the following addresses or phone numbers may be contacted:

First Secretary
Phone: 9330934
838120-6, Ex-226

Second Secretary
Phone: 406416, 412212
838120-6, Ex-(248, 339)

National Board of Revenue

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