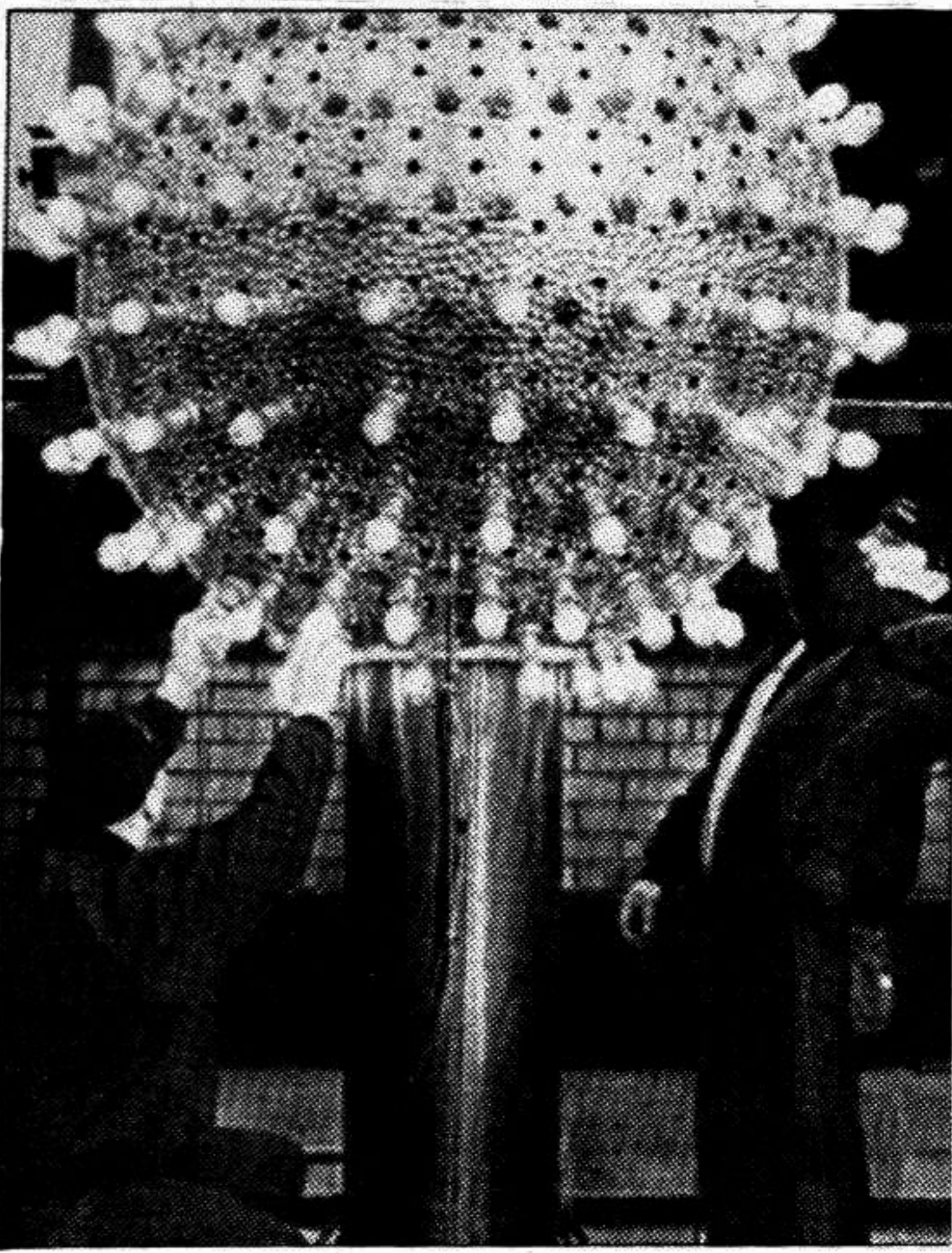


BRIEFLY



Electricians replace burned out bulbs on the Times Square New Year's Eve ball in New York, Wednesday, during a dress rehearsal for New Year's Eve festivities. A tradition started by The New York Times in 1907, the lowering of the lighted ball in Times Square has become a symbol of ushering in the New Year. — AP/UNB photo

Turkey arrests Islamic leader: Police arrested the leader of a violent Islamic group, foiling a string of planned attacks on bars and discos across Turkey on New Year's Eve, news reports said Wednesday. AP says from Istanbul.

Riot police arrested Salih Izzet Erdil, leader of the outlawed Great Eastern Islamic Raiders Front, on Tuesday at a house in Istanbul where he was in hiding, Turkey's Anadolu news agency said. Authorities had learned the group was plotting to bomb places where alcohol is consumed, private Star television said.

Women with 500g heroin held in Iran: Iranian police have arrested a woman with 500 grams of heroin hidden in packets in her stomach, a newspaper reported Wednesday. AFP says from Tehran.

The woman was caught at a police checkpoint near the city of Esfahan as she was travelling with her husband in a coach coming from the province of Sistan-Baluchestan, bordering Pakistan. She was taken first to a nearby hospital, where 80 small packets of heroin were retrieved from her stomach, then into police custody.

8 prisoners continue fast in Brazil: Eight jailed kidnappers, nearing death after a 45-day long hunger strike, refused to break their fast after a government offer of repatriation, inmate spokesman Breno Altman said Wednesday. AFP reports from Rio de Janeiro.

Brazil has agreed to repatriate seven of them — five Chileans and two Argentines — but refused to pardon the Brazilian in the group. The Chilean and Argentine inmates have vowed to reject any deal that does not include a pardon for the Brazilian.

The Nation



A first day cover and commemorative postage stamp released yesterday on the occasion of birth centenary of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam.

'Introduce computer courses in educational instts'

Speakers at a seminar laid emphasis on introducing computer courses in school, college and university, providing training to the trainers and establishing more computer institutes for achieving the goal of producing 10,000 programmers annually, reports BSS.

Intensive programmes should be taken by the government to reach this target, they said, citing examples of India that is now producing around 70 to 80 thousand programmers each year.

The day-long seminar on "Producing 10,000 programmers annually: The role of the academia and the industry" organised by Bangladesh Computer Council (BCC) was held at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), yesterday.

State Minister for Planning Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir inaugurated the seminar as chief guest while eminent information technology expert Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury read out the key-note paper. Presided over by secretary of

the ministry of science and technology M Fazlur Rahman, the inaugural session was also addressed by Prof Abdus Sobhan, Executive Director of BCC.

The state minister said "the government is pledges-bound to develop skilled human resources based on information technology. The government will also provide support to the expansion of information technology in the country," he said.

Laying emphasis on introducing computer course in the educational institutions, he said the computer course should be compulsory for every student.

Prof Jamilur Reza made a set of recommendations to achieve the goal and develop skilled human resources.

The recommendations include doubling seat capacity in the educational institutions, providing certificate by the BCC to those who have learnt computers from different training centres and establishing more IT-based institutions.

What's on today

Fashion wear exhibition: Organised by K Kraft, the 4-day exhibition begins today. Venue: Alliance Francaise. Time: 11 am.

Seminar on theatre: A seminar on theatre will be held as part of the ongoing Nagorik Drama Festival '99 organised by Nagorik Natyangan. Venue: Guide House Auditorium. Time: 10 am.

Dress exhibition: A 4-day exhibition of *Salwar Kameez* by Daman will begin. Venue: Alliance Francaise. Time: 4 pm.

Discussion meet: Jatiya Party has organised a discussion meeting to mark its 13th founding anniversary. Venue: Sobhanbagh Community Centre. Time: 3 pm.

Recitation competition: Kendriyo Kachi-Kanchar Mela has organised a recitation competition for children on the occasion of the 96th birth anniversary of poet Jashimuddin. Venue: Kachi-Kanchar auditorium, Segun Bagicha. Time: 9:30 am.

Clinton's impeachment Senate leader proposes early censure vote

WASHINGTON, Dec 31: US Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott proposed Wednesday holding an early vote that would require a two-thirds majority to permit a full airing of evidence in President Bill Clinton's impeachment trial and open the door to censure if it failed. The lead prosecutor from the House of Representatives immediately objected, reports AP.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Henry Hyde urged Lott "not to sacrifice substance and duty for speed," and said the majority leader's plan "would unwisely short-circuit the process."

"We are especially concerned by your proposal to forgo a trial if one-third of the Senate fails to vote for the House position on a preliminary motion before the president and the House have fully presented their cases," Hyde wrote Lott.

The sudden split between Hyde, the leader of 13 lawmakers appointed by the House to be prosecutors, and Lott came as Senate leaders discussed more detailed plans for the first presidential impeachment trial in 130 years.

A Senate leadership source, speaking only on condition of anonymity, said Lott and

Democratic Senate Leader Tom Daschle discussed allowing a censure vote if a two-thirds vote for conviction appeared impossible. Both leaders appeared amenable to presenting the idea to their colleagues when the new Congress returns to work next week, the source said.

Another Senate source, also speaking on condition of anonymity, said Lott and Daschle discussed opening the trial in early January with as few as three days of presentation — one day each for the House prosecutors and Clinton's defence team and a third day for questions.

That would be followed by a vote on whether to proceed. If that failed to gain the support of 67 senators, a censure alternative could be brought to the floor, the two sources said. No final agreement was reached, they added.

Meanwhile, two friends of Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr said the prosecutor had not ruled out entering into a three-way censure deal with Clinton and the Senate that might preclude future prosecution of the president.

Starr's office has not been contacted about a possible deal, and the prosecutor is not soliciting such an offer but has not ruled out considering one if brought to him, the friends said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Some Clinton supporters have said the president was unlikely to sign on to a censure deal, that concluding — and then could be used against him by Starr in a criminal prosecution after he leaves office.

Some have suggested a three-way deal in which Starr would agree not to prosecute Clinton if the president admitted making false statements in his testimony.

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Orrin G. Hatch, Republican of Utah, has repeatedly said he favours censure if it becomes clear a two-thirds Senate vote for conviction was not attainable.

But three other Republican senators, Phil Gramm of Texas, Bob Smith of New Hampshire and Mike DeWine of Ohio, said Wednesday they wouldn't support censure under any circumstances.

As censure is a political deal and there is no pretense of impartial decision-making, DeWine said.

US to reduce forces in Gulf

WASHINGTON, Dec 31: The Pentagon said Wednesday it is going ahead with a draw-down of forces from the Gulf despite the second try in three days by Saddam Hussein's forces to shoot down Western warplanes patrolling a no-fly zone, reports AP.

US missiles blasted an Iraqi anti-aircraft site after Iraq fired on British patrols of the no-fly zone, the US government announced. Iraq said the attack killed a farmer and wounded two other civilians, although a US official questioned that claim.

After the attack, the Pentagon said it would continue with a reduction of troops, aircraft and ships in the Persian Gulf that took part in a mid-December attack on Iraq. The USS Enterprise carrier group is set to depart for the Mediterranean by week's end.

"The forces left will be adequate to do what we need to do," said Lt Col Pat Sivigny, noting that a carrier, more than two dozen ships, 200 aircraft and 20,000 troops will remain.

During Operation Desert

Fox, two carriers, the USS Carl Vinson and the USS Enterprise, about 40 ships, 350 aircraft and 29,900 troops were in the Gulf region.

In the latest US-Iraq confrontation, British bombers were targeted over southern Iraq by six to eight Iraqi missiles at about 9:30 am local time (0830 GMT) according to a British pilot who reported sighting the launches.

Four F-16 fighters and one EA-6B electronic warfare aircraft responded by firing two anti-radar missiles and dropping up to eight bombs, said Col Richard Bridges, a Pentagon spokesman. Four British and 20 American planes were on patrol at the time, he said.

"It appears we hit the targets," Bridges said, referring to the Iraqi air defence site.

The Pentagon said US and British planes returned safely to their bases Wednesday, although Iraq claimed it "almost certainly shot down a Western plane."

Baghdad also claimed to have shot down an American plane in Monday's confrontation when Iraq fired three mis-

siles at US Warplanes patrolling the northern no-fly zone and US pilots destroyed the site with missiles and six laser-guided bombs, Iraq said four soldiers were killed and seven injured in that attack.

Bridges disputed claims that Western planes were hit in either incident. The Pentagon spokesman also questioned Iraq's allegation that the second attack near Tali killed a farmer and wounded two other civilians in a village.

"We don't target farmers," Bridges said. "We target SAM (anti-aircraft) sites."

Asked if the Iraqi missiles came close to hitting Western planes, Bridges said, "I have no indication they were anywhere near successful. The Iraqis often turn on targeting radar at the last second, making it almost impossible to score a hit — in order to avoid drawing a radar-seeking missile response, he explained.

"I'm sure Saddam is hoping he's going to get lucky at some point," Bridges said. "We have robust rules of engagement that allow us to defend ourselves adequately"

'86 air raid Libya orders arrest of 9 US officials

TRIPOLI, Dec 31: Libya's Attorney General ordered Wednesday the arrest of nine senior US officials who served under former president Ronald Reagan for involvement in the 1986 air raid on his country, reports AFP.

The order has been issued to the "Libyan Foreign Ministry to have it sent via the diplomatic route to US authorities," the attorney general said in a news release.

If US authorities "do not respond to this request and do not hand over the suspects, the next stage will be to go to the (UN) Security Council to request their extradition," the release said.

This step would be "similar to the one taken by the United States and Britain to obtain, in a less important incident, the extradition of two Libyan suspects in the Lockerbie affair."

20th Century heroines

LONDON, Dec 31: The greatest heroes or rather heroines, of the 20th Century in the minds of the British public are Mother Teresa and Diana, Princess of Wales, according to a recent poll. The Times reported today, says AFP.

Former Teresa, the Albanian nun famous for her work for the poor in India, was named by 25 per cent of Britons as the most enduring 20th Century hero.

She was followed by Princess Diana with 17 per cent, US black civil rights leader Martin Luther King at 11 per cent and South African President Nelson Mandela with nine per cent.

Sir Winston Churchill, Britain's wartime leader, stood at eight per cent, Indian Fascist leader Mahatma Gandhi had five per cent, while Queen Elizabeth II, her 98-year-old mother, the Queen Mother, and scientist Albert Einstein each had three per cent.

UNSC gets 5 new members

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 31: Canada, Malaysia, Namibia, The Netherlands and Argentina become members on Friday of the prestigious 15-member United Nations Security Council on two-year terms, reports Reuters.

The new members replace Costa Rica, Japan, Kenya, Portugal and Sweden whose two-year terms expire today. Five other non-permanent members still on the council for another year are Brazil, Gabon, Gambia, Slovenia and Bahrain.

Angola fighting continues

LUANDA, Dec 31: Rebels in Angola bombarded the country's second-largest city for an hour Wednesday, killing five people and injuring three others, the army said, reports AP.

Artillery shells landed in downtown areas of the central highland and city of Huambo about 480 kilometres southeast of the capital, Luanda, state radio RNA reported from Huambo.

The explosions reportedly began at noon and caused panic among residents in the government-held city, which the army is using as a base to fly in reinforcements for fighting in surrounding areas. The city is also a base for United Nations and aid agency staff.

Before the civil war restarted Dec 4, Huambo had a population of about 300,000, but tens of thousands of refugees fleeing fighting in the countryside have converged on the city in recent weeks.

President Jose Eduardo dos Santos ruled out talks with the rebel group UNITA on ending the fighting, and said rebel leader Jonas Savimbi was a liar for not complying with a 1994 peace pact.

Dos Santos said in a speech broadcast on state radio RNA late Tuesday that the army had given "the correct response" to UNITA's failure to heed the terms of the United Nations-brokered peace accord.

The United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross headquarters in Luanda said there were no reports of injuries to staff in Huambo.

Off the Record

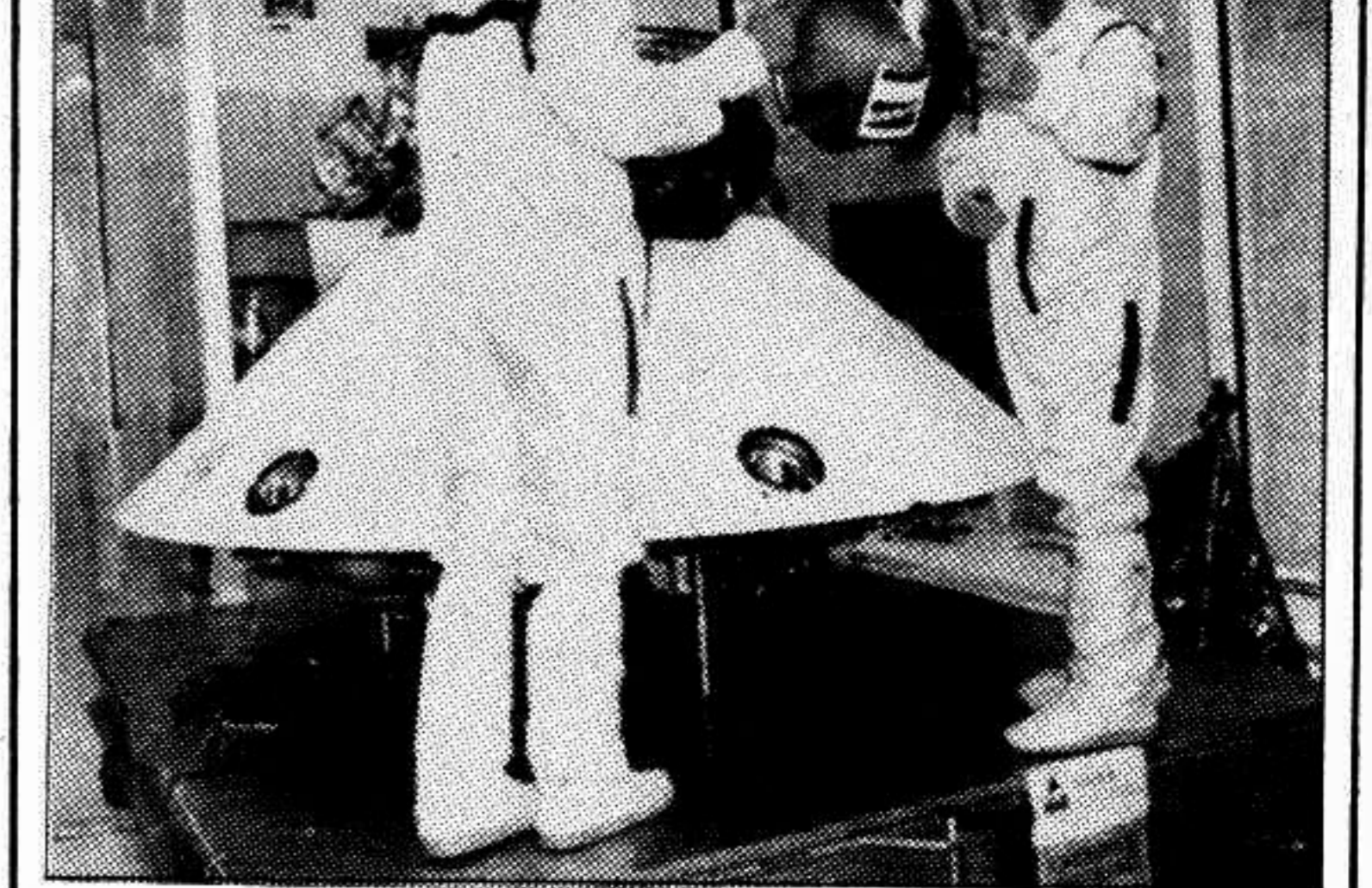
NASA naming contest
UNDATED: NASA is holding a contest to name the twin soil-penetrating probes to be launched Jan 3 aboard the Mars Polar Lander, reports AP.

The probes, formally known as Deep Space 2, can be named after people, places or things from history, mythology or fiction. The only catch: NASA wants the two names to relate to one another and the people they're named after must be dead.

The names of explorers or pioneers are welcome, the names of super heroes are not. So forget Batman and Robin. Entries must be accompanied by an essay of no more than 100 words explaining why the names were chosen. The deadline is April 30, 1999.

Entry rules and forms are available at this internet address: <http://nmp.jpl.nasa.gov/ds2/contest/index.html>. Entries also can be mailed to: Deep Space 2 Naming Contest, Jet Propulsion Laboratory, 4800 Oak Grove Drive, Mail Stop 301-235, Pasadena, California 91109-8099.

The grand prize has yet to be announced. All 25 finalists will receive a Deep Space 2 poster signed by the project team.



Workers in the Spacecraft Assembly and Encapsulation Facility at Kennedy Space Centre prepare to mount a Mars microprobe onto the Mars Polar Lander Nov. 10, 1998. There will be two microprobes hitching a ride on this spacecraft to Mars scheduled for launch Jan 3, 1999. — AP/UNB photo

Taxpayers' dollars go down diplomatic drain

From Page 1

The high commissioner illegally paid Tk 18,000 from the mission fund for a return ticket for his maid and for extra daily allowance for himself during July 1993 to June 1995.

He took Tk 72,000 from the mission fund for his treatment at a private hospital, diet charges, dietician's fees and for collecting blood during July 1993 to June 1996. He was not entitled to the expenses.

In addition to his entitlement, he drew Tk 50,000 as entertainment allowance between July 1993 and June 1995 violating rules, the report said.

During July 1993 to June 1995, HC at London Dr AFM Yousuf purchased four mobile telephones without permission from the ministry and paid Tk 1.65 lakh as bills for the phones. This expenditure is totally "irregular" as the officials had no jurisdiction to buy mobile telephones and in this case, he was not permitted by the concerned ministry, the report said.

Dr Yousuf paid all utility charges from the mission fund causing a loss of around Tk 9,000, according to an audit for July 1995-June 1996.

A similar charge has been brought against his predecessors. High Commissioners Mir Shawkat Ali and Rezaul Karim (both BNP leaders now) — owe US\$ 30.47 and US\$ 126 respectively to the government as they paid all utility costs of their residences from the mission fund violating rules, an audit for July 1987-June 1991 revealed.

Counsellor Khairuzaman caused a loss of Tk 1.24 lakh for the government as he took more money for transporting goods than he was entitled to, the audit for July 1991-June 1993 revealed.

The auditors found that high commissioner Yousuf and other officials irregularly subscribed newspapers spending Tk 3.15 lakh during July 1993 to June 1995. First Secretary Mohammad Moniruzzaman and Counsellor Ashrafudoula at Singapore mission spent US\$ 259 for buying newspapers for their residence in violation of rules during July 1989 to July 1992, the auditors said.

In Manchester, assistant high commissioner Ahmed Rahim drew an extra amount of Tk 23,000 as transit DA violating rules during July 1993-June 1995.

An audit for the period also shows that an amount of Tk 2.23 lakh drawn by Rahim as TA at the time of his home leave was not adjusted with the mission's account.

Dalim at Nairobi
Convicted killer of Bangabandhu and former high commissioner to Kenya Lt Col

(dismissed) Shariful Haq (Dalim) illegally paid around Tk seven lakh for education and treatment of his adopted daughter.

The auditors said he violated rules as adopted children are not entitled to such benefits. They studied the mission's accounts from July 1993 to June 1995.

The mission officials made personal international telephone calls from the telephones of High Commissioner's residence and the Chancery causing a loss of Tk 1.19 lakh during July 1993-June 1995.

No telephone registrar was maintained at the mission and personal calls were shown as official ones, the audit report said.

A total of Tk 4.77 lakh was found to be virtually embezzled at the mission during July 1993-June 1995. The money was spent to buy furniture not listed with the stock register.

Stepping beyond his authority, the high commissioner irregularly spent around Tk 93,000 to purchase "various materials" during July 1987-June 1991.

High Commissioner Dalim paid Tk 2.05 lakh from the mission fund as entertainment allowance though he received the allowance regularly at the fixed rate offered by the government, an audit of the mission's account from July 1993 to June 1995 shows.

He also spent US\$ 39 for electric bulbs and paid US\$ 2325 dollars for fuel of 13 officials and employees violating rules, the audit report for January 1994-November 1995 said.

Rent for nothing
The embassy at Kathmandu spent a total of Tk 2.27 lakh for an empty house during January 1994 and November 1995. "The amount was paid as rent of the house for 11 months which had been vacated by Counsellor Azizul Haq. As per contract, the house could be abandoned with a 30-day notice, but it was not done," the report said. A total of Tk 13,000 was spent when the monthly rent was paid twice for the month of March 1994 of the same house, the report said.

Washington
Between July 1992 and June 1995, Minister at Washington mission Dr Toufiq Ali (later ambassador to the Netherlands and now additional secretary at foreign ministry) took US\$ 2000 for his son's education, auditors said.

The Washington audit also revealed that Minister Iftekharul Karim spent around Tk 80,000 for his son's education.

Both violated rules which say the allowances were only applicable for under-21 wards.

The government suffered loss of Tk 40,000 as first secre-

Pasha's payments
In Bucharest, Counsellor Abdul Aziz Pasha illegally drew around Tk two lakh for his daughter's education at American School of Bucharest. An audit found she was never a student there, according to a scrutiny into the mission's accounts from July 1992 to March 1995.

Ambassador at fault
In Kathmandu, Ambassador Syed Mohammad Hossain received around US\$ 6,000 as his son's education allowance at a high rate that he was entitled to, says an audit of the mission's account from January 1994 to November 1995.

On one occasion, the ambassador drew US\$ 2075 for transit DA, terminal charge and travel allowance for his son. The ambassador's son did not travel at all, the audit report said.

He also drew US\$ 519 as airfare for his son's Tamil Nadu-Kathmandu trip though he did not travel at all.

The ambassador drew festive bonus while on home leave violating rules and causing a loss of around Tk 19,000.

He spent US\$ 141 for cooking gas, paid full charges of US\$ 109 dollars for water, air conditioner and electricity from the mission fund violating rules. As per rules, the ambassador was to pay 25 per cent of the utility costs.

He also spent US\$ 39 for electric bulbs and paid US\$ 2325 dollars for fuel of 13 officials and employees violating rules, the audit report for January 1994-November 1995 said.

Habibullah Khan in SA
High Commissioner to South Africa Habibullah Khan paid US\$ 4,000 from the mission fund as school fees for his daughter.

The payment was made only two days before she became 21, the allowable age limit for educational entitlement. The audit found it was the second payment in the same academic year and that the money was in addition to the requirement.

Kuala Lumpur mission accountant Mohammad Zakaria paid Tk 25,000, Minister at Riyadh AKM Mohiuddin Tk 9,000 for similar purposes — children's education.

High Commissioner Khan irregularly paid around Tk 5,000 from the mission fund for utilities during February 1995-June 1996, the report said.

Khan spent around Tk 27,000 during February 1995 and June 1996 to buy washing machine, which he was not entitled to, the report says.

He received Tk 2.67 lakh to pay for hotel expenses, violating government rules that do not allow hotel bills for more than 15 days.

The high commissioner received Tk 69,000 as joining allowance after he was relieved of his job on July 26, 1996.

Mir Nasiruddin
Ambassador Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin (former Chittagong Mayor and a BNP leader)

lary Imtiaz Ahmed did not pay 20 per cent of the bills of his wife's maternity treatment cost as per rules between July 1992 to June 1995.

The ambassador's driver was also paid an extra daily allowance of US\$ 822 creating a total loss of Tk 1.42 lakh for the government.

Accountant Entaz Ali drew Tk 1.22 lakh as travel allowance for his married daughter violating rules, according to auditors who checked the mission's accounts for July 1992-June 1995 period.

"The amount is recoverable as she was married and was not a dependent," the report said.

The ambassador too
Ambassador Abul Ahsan was illegally given Tk 1.17 lakh as joining and transfer allowance though he was sent on LPR on December 26, 1993.

The brigadier's batman
In Washington, Brigadier AM Mansur Ahmed drew Tk 42,000 as defence service and batman allowance which he was not entitled to when on diplomatic assignment, the mission's audit from July 1992 to June 1995 says.

Another defence attaché at the same mission Brigadier Faruk Ahmed Chowdhury drew Tk 11,000 as defence service allowance.

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Ambassador Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin (former Chittagong Mayor and a BNP leader)

owes Tk 2.53 lakh to the mission and Minister Ahmed Sharful Hossain Tk 2.77 lakh. Both paid for their personal international telephone calls from the mission fund. This was between July 1995 and June 1996.

Mir Nasir Uddin drew Tk 45,000 as his wife's travel allowance though the trip was not "formal" and "representational", Minister Hossain received Tk 63,000 as daily allowance violating rules.

Costly Kuwait
Counsellor Mohsin Ali Khan paid Tk one lakh as telephone bills in violation of rules during July 1987-June 1992. He was entitled to get Tk 5,000 as residential telephone charge but over Tk 1.05 lakh was paid from the mission fund for his residential telephone bills, the report said.

The Counsellor and First Secretary Meer Abul Hossain drew Tk 1.07 lakh as entertainment allowance which was more than they were entitled to between August 1987 and May 1993.

The then economic counsellor (name not mentioned) in Kuwait received an extra amount of around Tk 10,000 as transit DA, hotel bills, allowances, terminal charges and taxi fare, according to audit for August 1987-June 1992 accounts.

Counsellors Mohsin Ali Khan and AFM Moniruzzaman also received an excess amount of Tk 56,000 as duty allowance violating rules, an audit into the mission's account from August of 1987 to June 1992 revealed.

FM in Singapore
Some Tk 16,000 was illegally paid from the mission fund for hotel bills of former foreign minister Anisul Islam Mahmud during his stay in Singapore from July 1989 to June 1992, the report said.

First secretary Mir Maniruzzaman and counsellor Ashraf-ud-doula in Singapore drew US\$ 2700 for carrying personal belongings, says an audit of July 1989-June 1992.

Baghdad
Ambassador A K M Mahiuddin Ahmed overdraw Tk 92,000 as foreign allowance, entertainment allowance and duty allowance, an audit into the accounts during July 1993-July 1996 of mission shows.

He drew daily allowance at a rate of US\$ 98 instead of US\$ 90 causing a loss of Tk 20,000.

He spent Tk 1.45 lakh for repairing car without any tender or quotation as per rules.