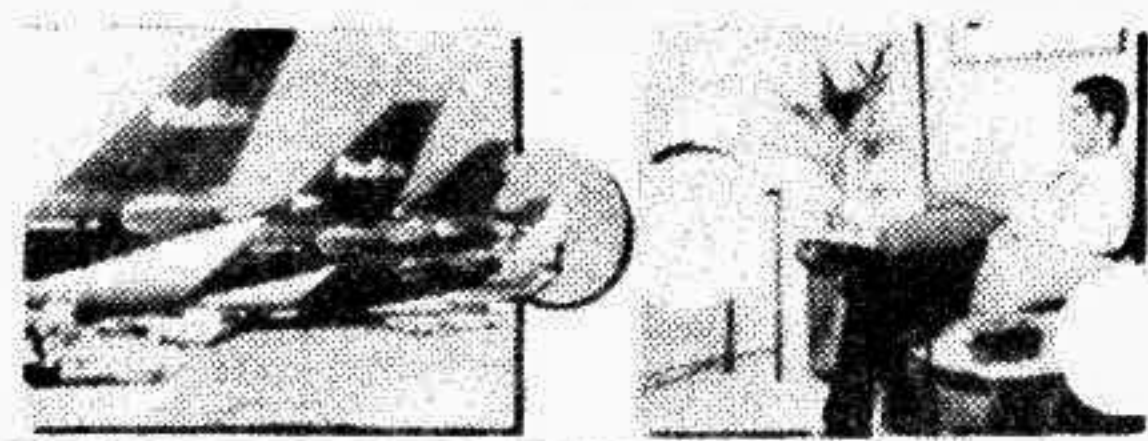


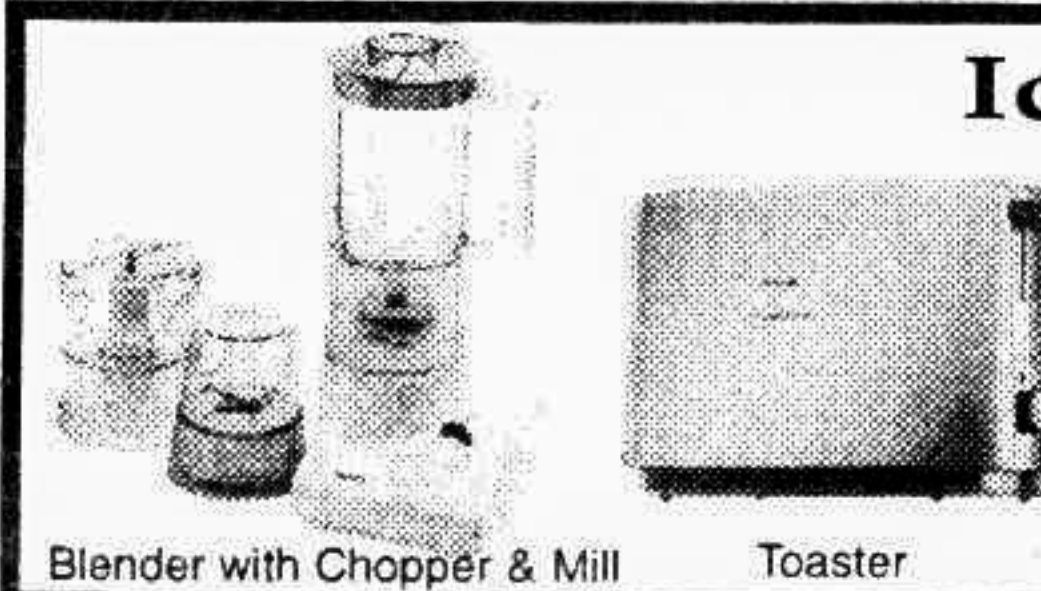
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Recommendations at int'l seminar

Downsize govt, strengthen local govt, increase transparency

By Staff Correspondent

Reduction of the size of government machinery, closure of unnecessary departments and directorates and transfer of maximum powers to district level authorities were the main recommendations made at an international seminar on administrative reforms that concluded here yesterday.

Transparency and accountability at government offices, abolition of the Office Secrecy Act 1921 and openness in signing contracts with foreign companies were also recommended by the three-day seminar for development of the country.

At least one lakh posts out of 13 lakh can be abolished right now because those posts remained vacant over the years, it said.

Former finance minister A M A Muhith who was chairman of the drafting committee read out the recommendations.

The rule providing for declaration of assets and properties by government officials and politicians, never followed earlier, should be enforced to curb corruption by government officials and bring transparency in the administrations, the recommendations said.

"All the local governments should be strengthened with decision making powers and accounting and auditing offices be separated."

The concluding session of the seminar was also addressed by Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria, Education Minister A S H K Sadique, Country Director of the World Bank Frederick

T Temple and Public Administration Reforms Commission Chairman A T M Shamsul Haque.

The seminar was jointly organised by the Public Administration Reforms Commission (PARC), Centre for Policy Dialogue CPD and Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP) at the Sonargaon Hotel.

Kibria blamed the previous governments for increasing the size of the government. "The process has been stopped after this government came to power," he said.

The government has started a reform process and public opinion should be created to make it successful, he said.

The World Bank's new Country Director said administrative reform is essential for economic growth and poverty alleviation.

Many governments including that of Bangladesh are too sensitive to the potential opposition to reforms as some groups become vocal against it. But they do not consider the large number of silent people who are the beneficiaries of the reforms, he said.

"Politics in Bangladesh is too much of a zero sum game at the top, with the main parties competing for power, the pervasive power which comes with forming a government. If effective local government could be introduced, political power would be more diffused and political competition would be more widespread," Temple said.

Earlier, speaking at a working session in the morning, former finance minister M Saifur Rahman criticised the government for 'over centralising power'.

"Everything depends on one person as all decisions come from one table."

Even lower level officials like OCs and SPs are being transferred as per orders from the highest authorities without informing the offices and ministries concerned," he alleged.

Two other sessions of the seminar were held yesterday, one chaired by Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury and the other by Civil Aviation and Public Works Minister Mosharraf Hossain.

CPD Executive Chairman Prof. Rahman Sobhan proposed that the budget should be scrutinised by an expert committee before its passage.

Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury accepted the proposal but said it will not be possible for the next budget but can be done for the following one.

Others who took part in the discussion included Advocate Rahmat Ali MP, Tasmina Hossain MP Nurunnabi Chowdhury, Hasanul Haq Inu, Kazi Saleh Ahmed, Manjurul Karim, Dr. Harun ur Rashid, Jan-Erik Lane of Switzerland, Tariq Siddiqi of Pakistan, former World Bank mission chief in Bangladesh Pierre Landell-Mills, N R Ranganathan, Abdul Haq, Enam Ahmed Chowdhury and Zahurul Alam.



Pakistan captain Wasim Akram receives the Meril Challenge Cup trophy from Home Minister Mohammed Nasim.
—Star photo by Anisur Rahman

Bangladesh defeated

From Page 1

fore, Aminul, who survived three close calls on his way to a rusty 54-ball 16, was declared run out by the third umpire.

Dropped on nought by Wasti in the second slip, Aminul was out of the crease at the non-striker's end when a straight drive from Akram hit the wicket touching the outstretched fingers of bowler Afridi.

Akram scored a defiant 28 off 82 balls before being taken by wicketkeeper Moin Khan off Wasti, who, on his debut, took three wickets with his off-spinners.

But it was hard-hitting Mohammad Rafique, who entertained the otherwise disappointed full-house crowd at the big bowl with an enterprising 29 off only 19 balls. The south-paw smashed a huge sixer against Wasti over long-on.

Earlier, Aminul Islam won the toss and asked the Pakistan bats to bat first.

Having an inexperienced batter at his disposal, Aminul's decision to chase under the lights, that too against a world class bowling, was rather surprising considering the fact that the wicket was pretty flat.

The Pakistani openers began with an uncharacteristically subdued fashion which yielded just nine runs in the first four overs.

Wajahatullah Wasti showed the first sign of aggression by whacking two boundaries in the fifth over bowled by Hasibul Hossain.

In the very next over, debutant fellow new-ball operator Manjurul Islam got a taste of the raw power of Shahid Afridi, who cracked two fours and then lofted the left-arm paceman straight into the sight screen.

Just when Wasti and Afridi decided to cut loose, Manjurul got the first breakthrough for Bangladesh.

Wasti, then at 18, gave a thick edge while playing an outgoing delivery. Wicketkeeper Khaled Masood took the brilliant catch diving to his right.

Saeed Anwar came in and got into his usual stride right away. He despatched Manjurul across the ropes twice to take Pakistan to 50 in the 10th over.

In the next over, Afridi was hit on the pads while playing across to Hasibul and umpire Doug Cowie adjudged him leg before wicket.

Mass killing case

From Page 1

Chittagong District and Sessions Judge's Court for trial.

Raqibul Huda was then arrested following court order but released on bail after two months on High Court order.

The CID ASP Abdul Kader Khan, after a six-month fresh investigation, submitted his report with the higher authorities.

During the second investigation, the investigators questioned 65 people, including 21 eyewitnesses and 15 lawyers.

In the report nine policemen were accused of direct involvement in the massacre, the sources told the news agency.

In the case Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, five ministers, 10 journalists and 15 lawyers have been made witnesses.

The report has got clearance of the higher authorities of CID and is expected to be submitted to the CMM's Court shortly.

Power accord

From Page 1

try Director Hareesh Jaysinghani signed the contract at the PDB office.

AES will build the 450 MW gas-fired combined cycle power plant at Meghna Ghat, about 20 km from the city, at a cost of 28 crore US dollars.

The contract will be followed by signing of an Implementation Agreement, Land Lease Agreement and a Gas Supply Agreement.

"Since the government has already signed a contract with AES for the 360 MW Haripur Power Project, the Energy Ministry expects that all other relevant contracts would be signed very soon," commented a source.

However, due to some differences between Meghna Ghat and Haripur Projects, the remaining contracts may take some time to be finalised, he added.

After PDB and AES finalise the PPA soon, the US company will have to arrange finances within six months and must start supplying power to the PDB on commercial basis within the next 30 months.

Anwar was in a majestic form. He welcomed off-spinner Naimur Rahman with four successive boundaries and treated all the Bangladesh bowlers with contempt.

Runs started pouring at an alarming rate. Pakistan reached 100 in the 18th over and with the mighty sixer of Anwar. In between, Ijaz Ahmed was dropped by Hasibul at mid-off.

Anwar went on to score 64 off 48 balls inclusive of eight fours and a six before a superb direct drive from Aminul had him well outside the crease.

Soon after scoring his half-century (51), Ijaz perished trying to loft Aminul over long-off. In the last 10 overs, Bangladeshi bowlers were treated mercilessly. Eighty-eight runs were produced during that period.

Man-of-the-match Inzamam-ul-Haq, fresh from his double-hundred in the Asian Test Championships final, blasted 70 and Moin Khan smacked some lusty blows to take the score to 293 for seven.

Among the local bowlers, Hasibul took career-best figures of three for 50 off ten overs. Naimur, Aminul and Manjurul captured a wicket each.

80 shops, houses gutted in Sylhet, Habiganj

At least 80 shops and houses were gutted in two incidents of fire in Sylhet and Habiganj yesterday.

Our Staff Correspondent from Sylhet reports: Over 30 shops and houses were gutted in the South Sylhet area of Sylhet town yesterday.

The fire originated at 8 pm and soon engulfed the adjacent shops, including restaurants, cotton stores, food godown and kutchas houses.

Firefighters extinguished the blaze after two hours as they could not reach the spot timely due to traffic jam.

UNB adds: At least 50 shops were gutted in a fire at Uttar Bazar in Chunarughat thana under Habiganj district yesterday.

Witnesses said the blaze, originating from an open petrol shop, swept the Bazar at about 4 pm. A stationary bus was also gutted in the fire.

Firefighters from Habiganj and Srimangal rushed to the spot and put out the flame with the help of local people after two hours of hectic efforts.

Enron

From Page 1

EOG.

"EOG felt that it was in the best interest of Petrobranga as well as of EOG to postpone discussions until the results of these matters are known."

"In the first such press statement in Bangladesh, the US company further said, 'Regardless of any proposals relating to EOG, Enron Corp. continues to have strong interest in the long-term investment opportunities in Bangladesh.'

"In 1998, Enron had record revenue earnings (US \$1.3 billion) and net income (US \$703 million). The EOG itself had a net income of \$6.2 million dollars despite the downturn in international oil prices throughout 1998."

"Over the past several years we worked with the government and other interested parties on a number of innovative solutions to Bangladesh's electric power needs and to help the country realise the greatest advantage from its abundant natural resources. We continue to work on a number of these projects," the statement said.

Sources said that other than participating in the second round bidding, Enron has so far proposed a "skid-mounted power plant" which is a mobile power plant, and "study" of some gas fields.

"Enron will stay in Bangladesh because it has a huge involvement in Tapti natural gas field in offshore India. Its involvement in Bangladesh is much more cost effective than many other companies. Besides it can follow the energy sector in Bangladesh with regional perspective and sufficient ease."

EOG, majority shares of which is owned by Enron Corp., is one of the largest independent oil and gas companies in the USA and operator of substantial proven reserves in the U.S., Canada, offshore India and Trinidad.

Bangabandhu Chair at DU inaugurated

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government is trying to ensure congenial academic atmosphere in all educational institutions.

Begum Jebunnessa and Kazi Mahabub Ullah People's Welfare Trust is installing the Bangabandhu Chair to facilitate research on the subjects relating to the emergence of independent Bangladesh, post-independence situation and future prospect of the country.

The trust donated Tk 20 lakh for creating an initial fund for carrying out research under the chair named after father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The Prime Minister thanked the Trust for installing the Bangabandhu Chair at Dhaka University, which she said would help the researchers and historians to project the glorious history of the nation.

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JCD's strike at DU protesting PM's visit

By DU Correspondent

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), the student wing of opposition BNP, enforced a day-long strike on Dhaka University (DU) campus protesting the prime minister's visit to the university yesterday.

Other student organisations including Ganatantrik Chhatra Oikya (GCO), a conglomerate of some left-leaning student organisations, and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD)-backed Chhatra League brought out separate processions and held rallies protesting the PM's visit.

All academic activities remained suspended during the day-long strike. The Central Library, however, was open.

Most of the rooms of the administrative building was found closed at noon.

The university bus service operated partially. At least six buses were attacked and damaged allegedly by JCD men in different places of the city and four people including two students and a bus driver were injured during the attack, DU officials said.

Bomb attack designed to kill me, says Muhibur

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Mar 16: Muhibur Rahman Manik, MP has alleged that an influential quarter was responsible for the 'bomb attack' on his residence yesterday afternoon.

"It was pre-planned and designed to kill me," said the ruling party legislator today while talking to The Daily Star in the premises of his residence at Chhatak thana headquarters in Sunamganj district. A severe bomb blast on the first floor of his house killed two men and injured one.

Without naming anybody of his own party, Manik also alleged, "Some strong groups of terrorists had been up against me and attacked me several times during the last three years, especially after the last parliamentary elections."

"I am still at great risk and feeling insecure."

Manik was in Dhaka when the explosion had occurred. He came to his residence last night hearing about the bomb blast. He also said the high-ups in the government know about all these incidents, but no action has yet been taken.

The ruling party MP filed a case today with the Chhatak thana regarding the blast. In the case, he alleged that some unknown men had exploded powerful bombs in his house with an intention to kill him.

Meanwhile, the badly damaged portion on the first floor of the two-story building has been sealed. SP of Sunamganj Asaduzzaman Miah, who has been staying in the thana headquarters since the blast, said it will be kept so until and unless a team of experts from the Army reaches here and gives clearance.

The bodies of the two persons

Khaleda

From Page 1

of Calcutta. They will have to run up Salt Lake, far from the main city.

On the other hand, they observed, buses from Calcutta could run in Motijheel area, the commercial heartland in Bangladesh's capital.

They feared that Bangladeshi transport owners and workers as well as passengers would be economically loser as such.

They were critical of the two-country bus service as it would give "a spurt to smuggling while various transmittable diseases will spread to the country from India."

Out of 64 districts, representatives from about 40 and central leaders were on the delegation.

killed in the blast was sent to Sunamganj sadar hospital this afternoon for post mortem. The identity of the 20-year old victim is yet to be known, police said. Police recovered a number of small containers of Zarda and Dano from the house this afternoon. When asked, the MP said that the unknown victim was neither his relative nor a party activist. He alleged that police were trying to manipulate the incident against him.

The Prime Minister's Advisor on Parliamentary Affairs Suranjit Sengupta visited the house of Muhibur Rahman Manik last night. Meanwhile, Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury, who issued a statement last night condemning the 'bomb attack' on the MP's house, withdrew the same after a few hours. The statement was faxed to the press in Sylhet last night.

EU fraud

From Page 1

rect." Karel Van Miert, the anti-trust commissioner told Belgium's RTBF radio. "Most of my colleagues took their responsibilities very seriously."

The report made clear that no commissioner 'was directly and personally involved' in fraud or personally enriched himself or herself.

But Pauline Green, leader of the Socialist group in the European Parliament, spoke of a collective responsibility for mismanagement at the EU head office. The 626-member assembly set up the inquiry by five independent experts, including two former EU auditors, in January.

The fraud report was harshest on Research Commissioner Edith Cresson, a former French prime minister who 'failed to act in response to known, serious and continuing irregularities over several years' in educational and other programmes for which she was responsible.

It said when informed of fraud and waste in an outside contractor that squandered 150 million euros (160 million dollar) meant for a youth training programme, she failed to stop it.

She also was criticised for getting a short-term EU research job for a friend in 1995. The man was later judged to be unqualified; his work was deemed to be grossly deficient.

Partly driving the anti-fraud sentiments in the parliament is the fact that the assembly faces elections in June. European Commissioners are easy targets: 20 political appointees earning 16,000 tax-free euros (17,280 dollars) a month and up.

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