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Road march

Nasim says he has reports of possible sabotage

Home Minister Mohammad Nasim yesterday said he has intelligence reports of possible sabotage during the opposition road march planned for Sunday through the Bangabandhu Bridge, reports UNB.

"Despite good intentions of the opposition leadership, some people might do something to create a law and order situation, apart from the risk for the bridge," he told newsmen at his official residence in the evening.

Without elaborating the intelligence reports, Nasim said Bangabandhu Bridge is a top graded Key-Point-Installation (KPI) and requested the opposition to choose alternative route for their road march.

He said the Bridge is graded A-1, meaning top security installation and its surrounding.

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Road march will be peaceful: Khaleda

BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday called upon the people and political leaders and workers to make the three-day road march programme towards Panchagarh a success, reports UNB.

BNP-led alliance of four opposition parties announced the road march programme, beginning tomorrow.

In a statement, Begum Zia said the road march programme has been organised to protest the failure of the government in running the country, its inefficiency, corruption, nepotism, politicisation, mismanagement and anti-people policies.

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BNP to go ahead with planned road march

Main opposition BNP is determined to go ahead with its planned Dhaka to Panchagarh road march beginning tomorrow through the Bangabandhu Bridge.

"We have completed all our preparations for the road march. Now we have no scope to change the route of the road march or postpone the programme. We must have to implement our planned programme," said BNP secretary.

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Prayer Timings

May 15		
Azan	Jamaat	
Fajr	4-15	4-20
Zohr	12-45	1-30
Asr	4-45	4-55
Maghrib	6-40	6-43
Esha	7-55	8-10

Source: Islamic Foundation

Opposition's march thru' JMB

Fresh talks fail to resolve dispute

By Staff Correspondent

The government and the BNP yesterday failed to resolve the dispute regarding the latter's planned Dhaka-Panchagarh road march through the Bangabandhu Bridge.

The opposition's "road march" is scheduled to begin tomorrow.

The government on Thursday imposed restriction on the planned "road march" through the Bangabandhu Bridge in view of "public interest, safety and security of the structure and in its surrounding areas".

The government earlier

urged the BNP to use an alternative route but it rejected the proposal.

Yesterday, Home Minister Mohammed Nasim had talks over telephone with BNP leaders Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Moshed Khan. But they failed to convince the minister that the "road march" would be peaceful and, in no way, pose any threat to security of the bridge, sources close to the BNP leaders said.

Nasim apprised them of the government's view that a political programme of that magnitude might "go out of control"

and create a law and order situation, the sources said.

Nasim told newsmen at his official residence in the city last night that the government would extend all possible co-operation if BNP uses the Aricha-Nagarbari ferry route instead of the Bangabandhu Bridge.

Steps will be taken to arrange enough ferries at Aricha and Nagarbari ghats for the march. "If they (BNP) still intended to proceed through the Bangabandhu Bridge, law will take its own course," he said.

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Commentary

Govt would be wise to lift ban on march over the bridge

By Mahfuz Anam

In a move that hits at the very root of democratic norms the government has banned the use of the Bangabandhu Bridge by the opposition for its proposed motorcade from Dhaka to Panchagarh. The reason for the ban is security. Government fears that the processionists while crossing it may damage the bridge.

We consider the ban to be a most ill conceived move, which is likely to further deteriorate the already bad relations between the government and the opposition, with serious consequences for the future of our democratic politics.

First of all why has the government waited so long to raise the security issue? The opposition's programme was announced weeks earlier. Why didn't the government point out in time that it was not possible to permit such a huge car march over the bridge? The very fact that the government waited almost till the very end forces us to conclude that this decision is based more political calculations rather than on security considerations of the bridge, and that the move is meant only to foil the opposition's programme.

Second, is it the assumption

that opposition supporters will deliberately damage the bridge? Md. Nasim's claim that there are intelligent reports to that effect sounds a bit to convenient to be credible. If the opposition is so bent on damaging the bridge they can attempt to do so at any time. Why should BNP specifically choose the occasion of its march? It does not make sense. It will be suicidal for the opposition to damage the bridge during its programme. For then people of Bangladesh will be upon them. People of Bangladesh will condemn the opposition for such an act and public opinion will swiftly and completely sway against them. We consider the bridge to be a national treasure. We are extremely proud to have built it. No party or group will be ever forgiven if they try to harm this magnificent national achievement.

Thirdly, the alternative that the government is suggesting — to use ferry at Aricha Ghat — is no alternative at all. Even if the government provides additional ferry, how long will it take to ferry across hundreds of vehicles? There is no way that the opposition can even remotely stick to its scheduled programme by using the ferries. Then again consider the absurdity of the government's offer. Even if all the ferries available in Bangladesh are brought to the Aricha Ghat, how many will it take? Not more than a few dozens. Can even that many ferries be serviced from the limited facilities and space at the Ghat? It will take many hours, if not days, to move hundreds of cars that the opposition plans to mobilise. And then what happens to the other ferry ghats of the country while the government brings all of them at Aricha? Will not ferry service in the rest of the country come to a complete halt?

Government must see that what it proposes is physically absurd. It is very absurdity makes the political nature of the decision so very apparent.

We propose on the other hand that the government withdraws the ban and seriously negotiates with the opposition about how to use the bridge in a manner that takes care of whatever real security concerns that the structure requires. It is our understanding that preliminary contacts have already taken place between Home Minister Md. Nasim and the BNP secretary general. It has been reported that the BNP

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England pacesman Darren Gough about to let go a delivery. — AFP photo

England upset champions

LONDON, May 14: Alec Stewart won his grudge battle with Sri Lankan Arjuna Ranatunga here on Friday, out-thinking and out-playing his bitter rival during an eight-wicket win for England in the opening match of the 1999 World Cup, reports AFP.

Stewart marshalled his team impeccably as defending champions Sri Lanka, sent in to bat in overcast conditions, were dismissed for 204 with eight balls of their 50 overs to go.

He then cracked 88 as the hosts cruised home in the Group A encounter with 19 balls to spare in front of a 30,000 capacity crowd at Lord's.

Graeme Hick helped his captain to pick off the bowling, ending with 73 not out after putting on 125 with Stewart.

England's other hero was left-arm pace bowler Alan Mullally, who found movement in the air and off a moist pitch to finish with four wickets for 37 in his 10 overs.

Ranatunga, whose relationship with Stewart is frosty at best, had promised a string of "surprise tactics" before the match but it was Stewart who did not put a foot wrong.

His captaincy, so often derided as lacking in imagination, was first-class as he kept up the pressure on the Sri Lankans.

England attacked throughout and were still using two or three slips late into the innings.

Sri Lanka's openers had made 42 in good time before Mullally came on as first change and sparked a collapse

that saw five wickets fall for 23 runs.

First he dismissed Roshan Mahanama who hit across the line and skied the ball off a leading edge. Hick took the catch running back from the slips.

Mullally's next two victims were Sanath Jayasuriya — the star of the 1996 tournament — and Aravinda de Silva, who made a match-winning century in the final three years ago.

Jayasuriya survived one chance before edging to Hick, while de Silva fenced a catch to Graham Thorpe at first slip.

Soon Sri Lanka were tottering at 65 for five but Romesh Kaluwitharana — normally a pinch hitter but batting at seven in the match — fought back with a string of lavish boundaries, including two fine square drives off the expensive Darren Gough.

He passed 50 off 52 balls. Ranatunga joined in with a

score on 155 for seven was the final nail in the coffin, leaving the tailenders to scrape their way through the final 13 overs. Eight of Sri Lanka's 10 wickets fell to catches within the slip cordon.

The game was preceded by a low-key opening ceremony, a speech by British Prime Minister Tony Blair and a helicopter fly-past.

Scoreboard
Scoreboard of the World Cup Group A opening match between England and Sri Lanka

ENGLAND

N Hussain	st	K tharana	b
Muralitharan			14
A Stewart	c K tharana	b Vaas	88
G Hick	not out		73
G Thorpe	not out		13
Extras	(lb-6, W-12, nb-1)		19
Total	(For 2 wickets, 46.5 overs)		207
Fall of wickets:	1-50, 2-175,		
Did not bat:	N. Fairbrother,		
	A Flintoff,		
	A. Hoolioake, M. Ealham, I.		

Bowling

	O	M	R	W
Vaas	10	2	27	1
Wickramasinghe	10	0	41	0
Upashantha	8	0	38	0
Muralitharan	10	0	33	1
Jayasuriya	7.5	0	55	0
De Silva	1	0	7	0

Austin, D. Gough, A. Mullally.

straight six but then, after making 32 in an 87-run partnership, he was caught in the gully to give seamer Mark Ealham his second wicket.

Kaluwitharana's departure for 57 soon afterwards, with the

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WB, ADB suggest govt Don't go on with crash programme on power

By Sharier Khan

The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have suggested the government to refrain from proceeding with the power sector "crash programme" under which it was inviting private sector power companies to set up, on the basis of unsolicited negotiations, a number of power plants.

Sources concerned said a joint energy team of the WB and ADB on Monday called on Secretary for Power G M Mandal and advised him against going on with the crash programme.

The government initiated the programme late last month for the setting up of power plants with some 1000 MW generation capacity. Already some power projects with 1100 MW

generation capacity were in the pipeline. But those were being delayed due to bureaucratic bottlenecks and other reasons, the sources added.

The WB and ADB joint team maintained that the government's "imprudent" response to the short-term power crisis would have serious and adverse consequences in the long term.

The delegation suggested that the country's power generation capacity should be enhanced on the basis of "least cost generation plan" and not on any ad-hoc basis.

The Secretary was told that if the government proceeded with the unsolicited crash programme, it would put the other

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BAPEX asked to sign accord with Nico Resources

Star Report

Petrobangla instructed the country's lone oil and gas exploration agency, BAPEX, on Thursday to sign a joint venture agreement with Canadian firm Nico Resources to develop the "reserved" gasfields in the country as per recommendation of the Energy Ministry, sources said.

BAPEX had earlier proposed that instead of signing a joint venture agreement with Nico for gas field development, it could sign an agreement for study of three "reserved" gas fields because the company was disqualified in the Second Round Bidding.

Petrobangla rejected the BAPEX recommendation on the ground that the Energy Ministry's instruction was different, the sources said.

The Energy Ministry earlier

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ALEC STEWART
Man of the Match

Beyond the boundary No conclusions

By Shakil Kasem

The World Cup predictably got off to a stuttering start. Why the English would want to stage the ultimate cricket show on earth at this time of the year may well be one of the mysteries of our times. It was proved once again, if proof at all was needed, that the English play the wrong game at the wrong time of the year. What must also boggle the mind is why the rest of the world got conned into it.

The opening match of World Cup 99 began with a blanket of tension hanging over a world-wide audience of millions. Rain threatened right from the start. Only the fact that the Sri Lankans continued to lose wickets for no apparent reason, at regular intervals, ensured that the first of the two innings of the day could be completed.

Gough bowled an inspired first spell and the highly ungainly Austin had the temerity to keep Jayasuriya quiet. Mullally angled the bowled well getting the required edges. The catches stuck and before the next bout of rain could dictate terms Sri Lanka were well on their way to being put out of misery. Kalu scored a rampant fifty off putting the bowling in proper perspective. But 204 always looked too thin to make a difference.

Alec Stewart ran into form at the most opportune time for England. The start of the innings was slow, as indeed all starts in this competition are likely to be. The weak link in the Sri Lankan bowling armour, the wayward pace attack

we score... while others watch

Standard Chartered

Sonali Bank plans legal action against a Kazakh bank

By Rafiq Hasan

Sonali Bank may go for legal action against a foreign bank to recover an overdue credit of USD 6.60 million.

Legal action may be taken against Turan Alem Bank of Kazakhstan to recover the amount as it declined to pay against import of goods from Bangladesh under a "credit line system". The amount is due since 1996, sources in the bank said.

The Sonali Bank had provided the credit with the permission of the ministry of commerce to increase exports to the Commonwealth Independent States (CIS) immediately after collapse of the Soviet Union.

The ministries of commerce and finance held several meetings on this matter and tried to communicate with the Turan Alem Bank to recover the amount but it did not respond.

The finance ministry then asked Sonali Bank to seek legal opinion what action could be

taken against the bank to recover the amount.

"We have sent all the documents to our lawyers for preparing papers to take legal action against the bank," said a senior official of Sonali bank.

"The bank may go to the International Court for recovery of the amount," he said.

The government allowed 25 million dollars 'credit line' to CIS countries to increase exports to the CIS countries and subsequently goods worth USD 17 million were exported.

The goods were exported through SBR Bank of Russia and Turan Alem Bank of Kazakhstan.

The SBR Bank has made payments against imports but the Turan bank did not.

As many as 50 local companies exported goods to Kazakhstan under the 'credit line system', introduced in 1993. Sonali Bank got payment of only 3.03 lakh dollars.

Under the system, the exporters realised bills from Sonali Bank which was supposed to get the amounts from Turan bank within 360 days of export, under an agreement signed between the two banks on May 17, 1994. The finance ministry of Tazakhstan had given guaran-

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Hasina to address Hague peace confce today

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina left the capital yesterday morning for the Netherlands to attend the centenary celebration of the first peace conference being held at the Hague, reports BSS.

Sheikh Hasina will address the concluding day function today (Saturday) as a special invitee.

A number of organisations including the United Nations are participating in the celebrations which began on May 11.

The Bangladesh leader will hold talks with the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan on Saturday. She will also attend a press conference.

The Prime Minister will also attend a reception hosted by the Bangladesh community living in the Netherlands. She is expected to return home on May 16.

The prime minister's departure was, however, delayed by about four hours due to technical problem of the aircraft.

Ministers, senior civil and military officials and diplomats were present at the airport to see the prime minister off.

The world champions looked anything but miserable time of late. They have been rusty in recent times and it showed palpably in the way they batted. Even with the normally organised and in-form Mahanama opening with Jayasuriya opening the innings, the Lankan gameplan came unstuck. This was primarily due to some inept batting and surprise, surprise some penetrative English bowling.

Mahanama after helping to put on a sedate but decent opening stand in seaming conditions, committed harakiri for reasons best known to him. Atapattu played one airy fairy shot too many and Aravinda De Silva hung his bat to dry, before even getting off the mark.

Tillekaratne did not overly trouble the scorers and only a tenacious partnership between Ranatunga and little Kalu, brought some sanity in the Lankan ranks.

created no impression on Stewart who had been woefully short of runs until now. English batting was obviously out to prove a point, not just to Arjuna Ranatunga, with whom there is no love lost as far as Stewart is concerned.

There was a more than perceptible hint of things to expect in this World Cup. Strategies may be devised and runs are likely to come from the wrong end of the batting order, and the old ways of yore when sloggers in the end overs may be back in fashion. The outcome of the match was of little consequence. I am still convinced that these two teams are the no-hopers of this competition.

England simply had one of their rare good days. Sri Lanka had one of their usual bad ones. It is inconclusive from England's point of view but Sri Lanka's future in England this summer look grim and bleak as the weather.

We give you MORE

TODAY'S MATCHES

India vs South Africa
Venue: Hove
Live Coverage: BTV and ESPN (3:45 pm)

Zimbabwe vs Kenya
Venue: Taunton
Live Coverage: Star Sports (3:45 pm)

TOMORROW'S MATCHES

West Indies vs Pakistan
Venue: Bristol
Live Coverage: BTV and ESPN (3:45 pm)

Australia vs Scotland
Venue: Worcester
Live Coverage: Star Sports (3:45 pm)

Post of 'loan ombudsman' suggested

Star Report

A government appointed committee has suggested creation of a post of 'loan ombudsman' for quick settlement of disputed loan cases.

"We have recommended creation of a post of loan ombudsman in the report on restructuring Bangladesh Shilpa Bank (BSB) and Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha (BSRS)," a member of the restructuring committee told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity.

All financial institutions including BSB and BSRS will come under the purview of the ombudsman and his decision will be final in settlement of disputed cases, he said.

The Finance Minister has given us assurance that the ministry will take decision in this regard with the shortest possible time," he said.

An honest expert who has good knowledge in handling financial matters will be appointed to the post.

The ombudsman will deliver verdict in the shortest possible time. "Within a few months, after investigating the liabilities and responsibilities of parties, he said. "In the conventional system, it takes several years to give verdict on a case, specially in a civil case."

Several thousand cases are now pending with the Artha Rin Adalat.

Appointment of Nuruddin Kamal cancelled

The government yesterday cancelled the contractual appointment of Power Development Board Chairman Nuruddin Kamal in the wake of persisting electricity problem across the country, reports UNB.

The official order would be effective from May 17, a hand-out said last night.

Earlier, the government appointed LGED Chief Engineer Kamrul Islam Siddique as Chairman of the PDB on deputing. The order will also come to effect on May 17.

Meanwhile, retired Additional Chief Engineer of the Public Works Department (PWD) Md Sarfuzaman Bhuiyan has been made Chief Engineer of the Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) with a contract job for two years.

Navy Commodore M Shahabuddin has been appointed Director General of the Coast Guard while the DG of Relief and Rehabilitation Directorate, MA Jabbar, and Water Development Board member Habib Abu Ibrahim became joint secretaries of the Finance Division of the Finance Ministry.

In the latest shakeup in the administration, LGRD Joint Secretary Maksudul Haq has been made Officer on Special Duty while OSD Yakub Ali posted as Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Joint Secretary of the Election Commission Mosharrif Hossain was transferred to the Ministry of Environment and Forests. OSD Omar Farooq replaced him as Joint Secretary of the Election Commission.

Car lifting: Ring leader arrested in Bagerhat

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, May 14: Bagerhat sadar thana police have arrested Mozammel Huq, 35, alias Haji Shahed from Morkelganj on charge of stealing microbuses, private cars and motor cycles from different places of the country.

Three private cars were recovered from his possession.

Haji Shahed is the ring leader of an organised inter-district gang of car and microbus lifters.

Bagerhat sadar thana OC said Haji Shahed has a big network in Dhaka, Khulna, Chittagong and Rajshahi divisions. Members of his gang steal cars, and motor cycles from differ-

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