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WTO talks: Dhaka rejects inclusion of new issues

SEATTLE, Dec 1: Bangladesh today rejected the idea for inclusion of new issues in the agenda for new round of trade talks, reports UNB.

Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed made his statement in the afternoon session that started under tight security after 30 minutes behind the schedule. Demonstrators disrupted the opening session.

Tofail said the next negotiations, which is supposed to start from January 1, 2000, should be on "implementation issues" and built-in issues, as agreed by the WTO members in the second ministerial declaration.

Therefore, there is no need for holding a new or comprehensive round of multilateral trade negotiations."

Elaborating pictures of LDC economies due to globalization and liberalization, the minister regretted that the share of LDCs in global trade declined to less than 0.4 per cent in 1998. He said the share of FDI in 1997 was as low as 0.5 per cent.

He said although Bangladesh posted the highest growth in export and FDI inflow due to government's special measures and initiatives, most of the LDCs were affected by globalization.

Overseas development assistance flow to LDCs has also declined sharply. He noted that LDCs had signed the Uruguay Round agreement with the hope that the expected global trade

liberalization would enable them to raise their incomes and thereby improve the lot of 600 million people.

"We have faithfully followed the liberalisation agenda of the Uruguay Round at the cost of further marginalization."

To get rid of this unbecoming situation, the minister forwarded 8-point comprehensive new plan of action on behalf of LDCs for implementation by WTO members.

These are: 1) provide duty-free market access to LDC products, 2) ensure balanced implementation of existing WTO agreements, 3) strengthen special and differential provisions to specific needs of LDCs, 4) extend transitional periods of different agreements under WTO for LDCs, 5) grant free movement of natural persons, 6) enhance technical assistance and technology transfer initiatives, 7) increase ODA and FDI flow to LDCs and expedite debt-relief programme, and 8) simplify accession procedures for LDCs to the WTO.

The minister stressed "market access" issue saying that it has been restricted by tariff peaks and tariff escalation as well as by non-tariff barriers.

He said majority of tariff peaks of developed countries is in textile and agriculture sectors where LDCs and developing countries have comparative advantage.

To compensate the deprivations we want duty-free market

access," he told the ministerial conference of the highest regulatory body on global trade.

He said compensatory measures should be provided to LDCs after quotas would be phased out to protect their interests.

"Unilateral imposition of non-tariff barriers by developed and higher developing importing countries in the form of health, safety, social and environmental standards are unfair and deprive the LDCs of the opportunity to derive the full benefit of liberalization."

Tofail informed the forum that Bangladesh had taken export-diversification measures that could be geared up by increased technical assistance and technology-transfer initiatives from developed nations.

The ministers of Australia, Canada and EU in their speeches endorsed the justification of providing the LDCs with duty-free market access.

Audit finds financial irregularities in Food Ministry

Thirteen audit reports, placed before the Parliamentary Committee on Public Accounts, have shown financial irregularities of Tk 7.56 crore in Food Ministry during the period 1980-1995, reports UNB.

The reports, prepared by the Auditor and Comptroller General, were placed at a meeting of the committee at Sangsad Bhaban yesterday.

The meeting discussed the reports and asked the ministry to take legal action against those involved in the financial irregularities.

It also emphasised the need for ensuring transparency and accountability in food management and administration removing all kinds of irregularities.

Chaired by committee chairman SM Akram, the meeting was attended, among others, by Prof M Ali Ashraf, MK Anwar, Abdul Kalam Azad, Nurul Islam Nahid, Hafizuddin Ahmed, Abdul Mannan and AHM Mustafa Kamal.

Fog halts ship movement at Ctg Port channel

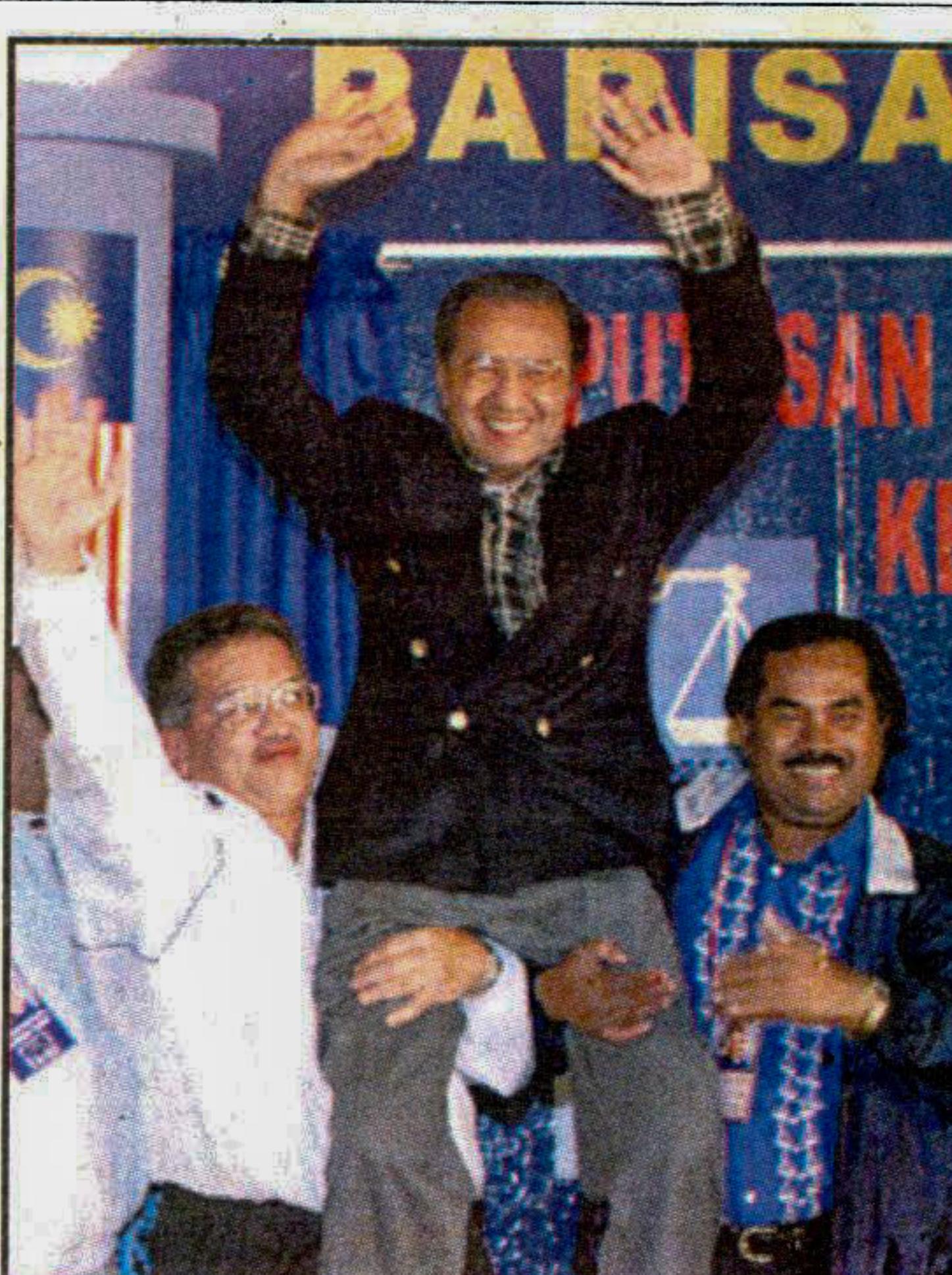
From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 1: Ship movement at Chittagong port channel was suspended this morning due to fog, port sources said.

As a result, no ship was allowed either to enter port jetties from outer anchorage or to sail out, sources added.

However, ship movement resumed in the afternoon.

Meanwhile, arrival of an international flight of Bangladesh Biman from a middle eastern country was delayed for over eight hours as it could not land at Chittagong airport at 7 am today due to fog, airport sources said.



Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad is carried by supporters on Tuesday after his ruling coalition won the election by a two-thirds majority. — AFP photo

Temple calls on Shahabuddin

World Bank Country Director Frederick T Temple called on President Shahabuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban in the city yesterday, reports UNB.

Temple apprised the President of the preparation of the judicial and legal capacity building project being financed by the World Bank.

He also referred to the Bank-financed judicial officers' training institute, which started functioning in the old High Court building.

President Shahabuddin appreciated the steps taken by the World Bank and hoped that these projects would lead to increase the efficiency of the judicial officers and help proper dispensation of justice in the country.

Chaired by committee chairman SM Akram, the meeting was attended, among others, by Prof M Ali Ashraf, MK Anwar, Abdul Kalam Azad, Nurul Islam Nahid, Hafizuddin Ahmed, Abdul Mannan and AHM Mustafa Kamal.

HC injunction on election of Administrative Service Assoc

By Staff Correspondent

The High Court yesterday issued an injunction on the election of the Administrative Services Association.

The Court also issued a rule asking why the order given by the tenth Additional District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka, on November 28 regarding the election would not be declared canonical.

A single bench of the HC comprising Justice Mahfuzur Rahman issued the injunction after primary hearing of a revision submitted by Zakirul Islam, private secretary to the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament.

Rina, however, escaped unharmed as police rushed to the spot.

A pigeun was also recovered from there.

3 Shibir activists expelled from DU hall file writ

By DU Correspondent

Three activists of Islami Chhatra Sanghat (ICS), who were expelled from the Shamsunnahar Hall of the Dhaka University two months ago, filed a Writ Petition against DU, its VC and the Provost of Shamsunnahar Hall Tuesday, challenging the legality of their expulsion from the hall, said a press release issued by their counsel yesterday.

Authorities of Shamsunnahar Hall of DU expelled -- Nilufer Yasmin, Farida Yasmin and Shakhat Ara Khanom -- from the hall on September 6 for indulging clandestine activities in the hall. Five other residents of the hall were also given warnings on the same ground.

Wife of Shikdar's bodyguard attacked

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Dec 1: Rina, 24, wife of Noor-e-Alam, chief bodyguard of Ershad Shikdar, came under attack for the second time today at Station Road under Khulna thana.

The attack was launched by the supporters of Rani Begum, 35, one of the 'mistresses' of Ershad Shikdar. Rani is involved in illegal drug trading. She is also elder sister of Noor-e-Alam's wife.

Rina, however, escaped unharmed as police rushed to the spot.

A pigeun was also recovered from there.

Second anniversary of CHT peace accord today

By Special Correspondent

called upon fellow countrymen to join hands to build up a prosperous Bangladesh free from hunger and poverty in the next millennium.

She pointed out that the peace accord on CHT had helped open a new vista in our national life and added a glorious chapter to our national history.

The Prime Minister in her message said: We have undertaken massive programmes, including short, medium and long term ones to build up the scenic Chittagong Hill Tracts as an ideal place for all round development.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a message on the eve of the second anniversary of the peace accord on Wednesday,

Pink Panel sweeps CUTA election

From CU Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 1: Professor Dr Anupam Sen of Sociology Department and Dr Ishrat Kamal Khan of Economics department have been elected president and General Secretary respectively of the Chittagong University Teachers' Association (CUTA) yesterday.

Two panels — Awami League backed Pink and BNP-Jamaat backed White contested the election. Pink Panel bagged nine out of 11 posts while White Panel got the rest.

The elected office-bearers are Professor Dr Amin Uddin Mridha of Botany department (vice-president), professor Dr Nurul Anwar of Micro-Biology department (Treasurer) and AKM Tafazal Huq of Management department (Joint secretary).

The members are Professor Kazi Mostafa Billal of English department, professor Dr Golam Kibria Bhuiyan of Islamic History and Culture, professor Anwarul Azim Arif of management department, professor Hasanuzzaman of Sociology department, Dr Md Harunur Rashid of Physics department and Professor Dr Siddique Ahmed Chowdhury of Political Science department.

The election was held at the Science faculty gallery from 9 am to 1-30 pm and 417 teachers out of 503 cast votes in the election.

Saudi Deputy FM arrives: Official talks today

Saudi Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Ismail Shouara arrived in Dhaka yesterday on a three-day official visit to Bangladesh, reports BSS.

He was received at the Zia International Airport by Additional Foreign Secretary Mahabubul Alam and Director General (West Asia) Razia Hasan.

Shouara who is accompanied by two top officials of the Saudi Foreign Ministry will lead his government at the official talks with Bangladesh today.

Bangladesh side, will be headed by Foreign Secretary C M Shafi Sami.

The Saudi Deputy Minister is expected to reaffirm his country's support to Bangladesh candidate Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury for the post of OIC Secretary General.

Bangladesh side will request the Saudi government to recruit more Bangladeshi workers and technicians and ensure adequate facilities to the Hajj pilgrims from Bangladesh.

Khulna Jubo League activist held with arms

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Dec 1: Police today arrested Rajiv Shaikh, 22, an activist of city Jubo League and recovered a pistol from his possession.

He was allegedly taking preparation for mugging in Footpara area, police said.

them were absorbed in police and in other jobs.

Thousands of refugees also returned home shortly after the peace accord went into effect. They were helped with cash grants, building materials, cattle and farm inputs to help begin life anew.

However, a chill frost in the initial warmth between the government and the PCJSS over the procedural delay in implementing the peace agreement.

It delayed formation of the Regional Council for the CHT, key to run the CHT affairs under the CHT ministry.

In May this year PCJSS supremo Jyoti Rindri Bodhipriyo Larma, also known as Shantu Larma, agreed to take charge as its first Chairman for an interim period until elections.

The government also formed a Land Commission to carry out the survey of land, another key element of the agreement. A chairman was also appointed. But his death had so far stalled the commission's functioning.

The peace agreement, however, is holding despite complaints from the PCJSS, which held its first congress in public in October. Shantu Larma has

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