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Pakistan rejects Indian call to extradite 5 hijackers

Delhi's claims unfounded: Islamabad

ISLAMABAD, Jan 16: Pakistan has dismissed India's call for the extradition of five hijackers of an Indian Airlines jet and insisted New Delhi has no evidence to back its claims of Pakistani involvement, report agencies.

"Pakistan has once again rejected Indian accusations of Pakistan's involvement in the hijacking of the Indian Airlines plane," the Foreign Office said in a statement late Saturday.

The comments came after India on Saturday demanded Pakistan extradite the five hijackers to stand trial for terrorism.

It was India's first official demand since December 31 when, after a week-long ordeal, the hijackers finally released their 160 hostages at Kandahar Airport in southern Afghanistan and fled into the desert.

Many analysts believe they crossed into neighbouring Pakistan and were linked to Kashmiri militant groups fighting in the disputed Himalayan state.

India continues to make allegations which are unfounded and not supported by even a shred of credible evidence," Pakistan's Foreign Office said.

It said Pakistan's High Commissioner to India, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, was handed documents containing the accusations against Islamabad on Saturday.

The High Commissioner rejected these allegations forthwith," the statement said.

"The Indian purpose is to deflect domestic criticism of the government's mishandling of the hijacking incident," it said.

The nuclear rivals have traded highly charged accusations since the hijacking ended on December 31, with India saying Pakistan masterminded the drama, and Islamabad saying there was no proof of that and that New Delhi was using the

incident, in which 155 people were held hostage for eight days, to try to isolate Pakistan.

Given that a large number of terrorists whose release was sought by the hijackers are Pakistani nationals and the first destination chosen by the hijackers was Lahore, there were strong grounds for believing that the hijackers were currently in Pakistan," India's Foreign Office spokesman said on Saturday.

The hijackers have not been seen since they handed over the hostages in return for three militants freed from Indian jails.

Edward College principal's office ransacked

PABNA, Jan 16: The students of Pabna Edward University College ransacked office of the principal and put up barricade on Dhaka-Pabna-Ishwardi highway at Gachhpara bypass crossing, disrupting traffic movement for about an hour from 12 noon today, reports UNB.

The Honours part-III examinations put up the barricade on the highway demanding shifting of their examination date from January 24 to March 24.

The students withdrew the barricade after intervention of police and local administration.



Firemen and Red Cross personnel inspect the crash of a Salvadoran-registered light aircraft which crashed into a house yesterday in San Jose, Costa Rica. Four people are reported to have died and fourteen wounded in the crash.

Fresh arguments in Humayun Zahir Murder Case begin

By Court Correspondent

Fresh arguments in the Humayun Zahir Murder Case began in the court of Metropolitan Sessions Judge Sheikh Rezwana Ali yesterday after five months. The hearing was adjourned till 2:30 today.

The arguments were held on the deposition of 10 prosecution witnesses.

The hearing was earlier adjourned for at least nine times after the case was sent to the recently created Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court.

Humayun Zahir, a leading businessman and chairman of the United Commercial Bank Ltd (UCBL) of Bangladesh, was murdered on April 8, 1993 by a group of assailants on the premises of his residence in Dhanmandi.

Father-in-law of Humayun Zahir filed a case with Dhanmandi police the same day accusing seven people including Akhteruzzaman Chowdhury Babu.

Babu and Abdul Matin, chargesheeted accused in the case, appeared before the court yesterday.

Of the other five accused Hedayetul Islam and Touhidul Islam are absconding while Tanmooy, Alamgir and Kausar are in jail.

'Industrialisation damages environment'

By Staff Correspondent

The exploitation of natural resources for the sake of development is a major threat to the environment, concluded a Dhaka professor at the International Conference on Environment in Bangladesh on Saturday.

Dr. AKMA. Quader, a chemical engineering professor at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, presented his paper entitled "Environmental Rules and Regulations of Bangladesh" at the event.

Quader said industrialisation led to economic growth and poverty alleviation but also caused long term environmental damage.

Technological development and industrial design didn't consider their impact on the environment, he added.

To make matters worse, Bangladesh's environmental laws are in a formative stage, nowhere near as comprehensive as those in the United States or the United Kingdom.

However, Quader said industrial and development projects are coming under increasing scrutiny due to increasing public interest in environmental issues.

"The ultimate focus of the federation is to ensure the security of the investors. Exchanges can provide better services through sharing their collective experiences," said Deena Mehta, vice-chairman of The Stock Exchange of Mumbai, India.

But how ambitious is the target of getting cross border trading in place?

Hiran Mendis of Sri Lanka and Syed Mahmudul Huq of CSE argued that it might look far-fetched at the moment but that regional players should start working towards achieving the target in future.

"It may not be a possibility tomorrow... it may not be possible with domestic operators now but we can get foreign investors to start with," said Mendis, the vice chairman of SAFE.

"Cross-border trading is very common in other parts of the world, especially in Europe. We should start lobbying with governments," Mendis said, speaking to The Daily Star after adoption of the declaration that gave birth to SAFE.

Assault on woman

DU temporarily expels Tutul

By DU Correspondent

The Dhaka University authorities temporarily expelled a student following a charge of assaulting a woman at the TSC during the New Year's celebrations, officials said.

The three-member inquiry committee headed by pro-vice-chancellor Md. Shahadat Ali took the decision at a meeting yesterday after primary investigation confirmed Tutul's involvement in the assault, said a DU press release.

Tutul, a third year student of statistics and a leader of pro-ruling Awami League Bangladesh Chhatra League, was arrested from the Shahidullah Hall of the university on Friday night.

Asked what would happen to other DU students who, according to press reports, were involved in the assault, the university proctor A K M Nurun Nabi said, "Action will be taken against any student if found guilty. The university authorities are investigating the matter," he said.

The inquiry committee is collecting all necessary evidences in this regard."

Earlier, Fazlul Huq Russel, a second year botanical science student of the university was temporarily expelled on the same ground.

Russel, the prime suspect of the assault was arrested from the Sherpur bus stand in Bogra on Friday. The Detective Branch of Police took Russel and Tutul on a five-day remand on Saturday.

CU reopens amid siege programme

From CU Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 16: Classes at Chittagong University (CU) resumed today amid indefinite siege programme enforced by Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) after a month-long vacation for holy Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr.

Shibir enforced the siege programme on the campus protesting killing of its two partymen in a gunfight with Bangladesh Chhatra League on the campus on December 19.

Most of the teachers could not join their duties as Shibir activists prevented the drivers from operating teachers' buses that ply between the campus and Chittagong city.

Shuttle train service was as usual but attendance of students in the classes was thin.

In the morning, the Shibir activists tried to hold a rally on the campus defying a ban, but police looted their bid.

Shibir activists kidnapped a train driver from Portopura area while he was driving a railway engine from Pahartali Workshop to Chittagong Railway Station at around 8:30 am today.

Humayun A Kamal envoy to China

Government has decided to appoint Humayun A Kamal as Ambassador to China, reports UNB.

Kamal, now Ambassador to Poland, was given the new assignment with concurrent accreditation to Hungary and Slovak Republic, said a press release.

The reception was held at Peelkhana.

Guests included Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina as well as ministers, MPs, diplomats, bureaucrats, high officials and a cross section of Dhaka's elite.

Arrangements were made for 12,000 guests.

Govt giving shelter to criminals: BNP

By Staff Correspondent

Senior BNP leaders at a public rally in the city yesterday said that the deteriorating law and order in the country would improve if 'terrorists' belonging to the ruling Awami League were arrested and punished.

They alleged that all terrorists, snatchers, hijackers, killers and criminals have taken shelter in the ruling party and the government is protecting them. This has resulted in deterioration of law and order, they said.

Addressing the rally held at Mukhtang, the BNP leaders expressed deep concern at the killing of a joint secretary, assault on a woman at TSC and on another at Eskaton. They blamed 'terrorists' of the AL-backed Chhatra League for the incidents.

City BNP organised the rally

BSF kidnaps 2 Bangladeshi fishermen

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Jan 16: Two Bangladeshi fishermen were kidnapped by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) personnels from the river Padma near Shonaikandi Kharehaka Border outpost on Friday.

The abducted fishermen were identified as Hashmat Ali, 32, son of Zabbar Ali and Anisul Islam, 29, son of Shirajul Islam.

Local people said, a BSF patrol party swooped on the fishermen while they were fishing in the river. They picked up two fishermen at gunpoint and took them to the Indian side along with their boats and nets.

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Trial of Mummy murder case begins: Three granted bail

NARAYANGANJ, Jan 16: The hearing of the sensational Mahmuda Sultana Mummy Murder Case began in the District and Sessions Judge's Court today, reports UNB.

After hearing Judge Abdul Mukit Majumder granted bail to Mummy's father-in-law Abdul Aziz Sikder, brothers-in-law Abu Zahir Swapan and Abu Bakar Siddique.

The judge, however, rejected the bail petition of her mother-in-law and sister-in-law and fixed February 1 for the next hearing.

Cool sources said none of the accused was produced before the court on the first day of the hearing. Lawyers filed bail petitions on behalf of all the accused except the main accused, the husband of the victim.

Housewife Mummy was murdered at Beparipara in the town on October 30 last year.

Mummy's husband Abul Kalam Ripon, parents-in-law, sister-in-law and two brothers-in-law were arrested in connection with the murder.

One shot dead in city

By Staff Correspondent

A young man was shot dead during a gunfight between two rival groups near Suhrawardy Hospital in the city yesterday.

The dead was identified as Nizam, 38.

Nizam received bullet wound in his chest and was taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the attending doctors declared him dead. The body was sent to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

Tajgaon police said they heard about the incident but no case was filed in this connection.

Nikunja murder

From page 1

Ramna police so far picked up 95 people in connection with the killing. Many of those released later alleged that they paid amounts up to Tk 500 to Ramna police for their release.

Debnath, 55, joint secretary of the ministry of local government and rural development was stabbed to death by muggers near the Swadhinata Sangram (struggle for independence) sculpture at the road intersection between the SM Hall and Jagannath Hall on the Dhaka University campus on January 11 morning. He was returning to his Azampur residence from Kamalapur Railway Station in a rickshaw.

A committee has been formed to find out how a convicted prisoner could write such letters inside the jail and then try to pass them out evading the security guards.

Meanwhile, an unprecedented security measure was taken in the court today during trial of Jainal murder case where Ershad Shikdar and other accused were present. They will again be present in the same court tomorrow to face the trials.

Noor-e-Alam has been shifted to Satkhira jail from Kusthira district jail. He is being given special facilities in addition to additional security as he has become a government approver, said a KMP source.

Upgrade DEOs

From page 1

that of district level officials getting the lowest pay scale.

However, the EC proposal for upgrading the post of DEO reached the Ministry of Establishment in May 1995. But the ministry took more than three years to be convinced that the status of DEOs should be higher than that of TEOs.

Recommending this, the Establishment ministry referred the matter to the Finance Ministry in November 1998, observing it is the Finance Division that can take a decision on change of pay scale.

The matter eventually went to a cabinet committee headed by Finance Minister SAMS Kibria for approval. But the committee has not yet taken it up.

Meanwhile, two meetings of the cabinet committee have been postponed. The first meeting was scheduled for November 10, 1999 but it was not held as the finance minister was abroad. The second meeting scheduled for January 6 this year also did not take place.

"We came to know about the postponement only a few hours before the meeting was scheduled to be held," a top Election Commission official said.

This time Kibria was in town. But he was neither aware of the meeting nor its postponement. "Well, I would call a meeting some time this month. But I cannot say what would happen to the EC proposal as it involves money," he told The Daily Star Saturday night.

"It is very important for us to have our own officials at than level as the volume of work as well as responsibilities of the EC have increased over the last few years, let alone the need for greater control over the polling process," said the acting Chief Election Commissioner.

"But if we recruit them before upgrading of the post of district election officer, there would be no chain of command."

There are 83 posts of DEO in 64 districts. Some districts with larger areas and population have more than one post. Presently, 17 posts are lying vacant.

Upgrading the post of DEO is very important for other reasons, specially to enable them to effectively coordinate election management that involves other district level government officials.

While arguing for upgrading, the EC Secretariat said that the district election officers 'face problems when they need to coordinate election related work done by other district level officers'. In this regard, the EC pointed out that the status of other district level officers is much higher than that of the district election officers.

"To be honest, other district level officers give a damn to us when we seek cooperation or make attempts to coordinate their duties during elections," said a DEO. "The reason is simple, they are higher grade officers."

The present status of DEOs, both in terms of grade and salary, is much lower than that of all other district level officers. Even most of the than level officers enjoy higher status and salary than them. The status of DEOs (Grade IX in the national pay scale: Tk 4300-Tk 7740) is equivalent only to that

of than level education officers. At the district level, there is an agriculture officer, a livestock officer, a fisheries officer, an executive engineer (LGED) and a deputy director (Education). All of them are in grade V with the pay scale of Tk 9,500-Tk 12,100.

Besides, there is a relief and rehabilitation officer in each district. Of them, 20 per cent belong to grade VI with the pay scale of Tk 7,200-Tk 10,840 and 80 per cent belong to grade VII with Tk 6,150-Tk 9,750 pay scale.

District education officers and district primary education officers belong to grade VII with the pay scale of Tk 6,150-Tk 9,750.

At the thana level, there is an agriculture officer, a livestock officer, a fisheries officer, a deputy director (Youth Development), an assistant director (Education), headmasters (Education) and school inspectors (Education). All of them belong to grade VI having the pay scale of Tk 7,200-Tk 10,840.

This shows that even if the government eventually approves the EC proposal for upgrading the post of DEO to grade-VI, the problems faced by DEOs in coordinating election activities of other district level officials would hardly be removed.

Additional Secretary of the EC Secretariat Aziz Ahmed Chowdhury is, however, optimistic about it to some extent. "Let us upgrade the post to grade VI first. Things would then improve gradually."

The association of DEOs is, however, demanding grade V.

Cricket

From page 1

they required only seven runs from 11.1 overs. Rajin and Kuntal needed only four balls to finish off the match.

But that victory could hardly delighted the Bangladeshis when the result from Galle was announced: New Zealand, chasing India's 199 all out in 44 overs, were all out for 171 runs in 49 overs.

Babu and Abdul Matin, chargesheeted accused in the case, appeared before the court yesterday.

Of the other five accused Hedayetul Islam and Touhidul Islam are absconding while Tanmooy, Alamgir and Kausar are in jail.

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"Cross-border trading is very common in other parts of the world, especially in Europe. We should start lobbying with governments," Mendis said, speaking to The Daily Star after adoption of the declaration that gave birth to SAFE.

"My husband filed an appeal against the grounding order and won, but I didn't file an appeal."

Capt. Rahman said the termination letter she received on January 11 didn't cite the reason for her dismissal.

Biman's action coincides with a prosecution move yesterday for a hearing and confirmation of the death sentences.

Capt. Yasmin Rahman told UNB over the phone that "we don't know why the authority terminated me. I couldn't fly for the last three years, since the authority grounded me when I returned from Hong Kong."

"My husband filed an appeal against the grounding order and won, but I didn't file an appeal."

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