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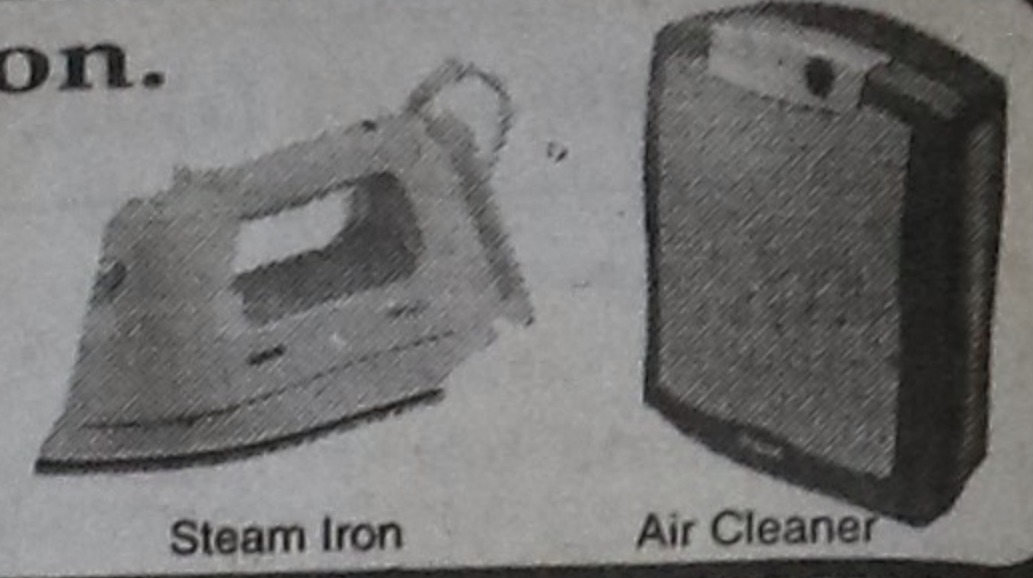
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FM explains new law to diplomats

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad briefed foreign diplomats in Dhaka yesterday about the imperatives that prompted the government to enact the Public Safety Act, reports UNB.

Azad said he explained various provisions of the new law, which was needed to ensure public order and safety, and the smooth running of business and the economy.

He also gave the envoys a comparative view of different provisions of the Public Safety Act and of the 1992 Anti-Terrorism Act passed by the previous BNP government.

Azad told the diplomats and representatives of international organisations the law would apply only to criminals and would not be used as a lot for political retaliation.

It will ensure quick investigations, trials and the delivery of justice within a reasonable period of time," he said.

The Foreign Minister told foreign diplomats trade and investment were virtually hostages of terrorism, and that could not be allowed to continue.

Azad said the last BNP government used the Anti-Terrorism Act for two years "for political considerations," but the present legislation would be permanent in order to rein in criminals for specific offences.

In the 1992 Anti-Terrorism Act there was a provision for capital punishment, but the present law prescribes a maximum life term. A unique feature of the law, Azad said, was that it contained provision for punishment for those who file false charges of harassment.

Photographs and video would be considered as evidence during trials. Under the new law, a case must be finished in 120 days. In the 1992 Anti-Terrorism Act, the timeframe was 90 days.

Azad quoted the Prime Minister as saying "It is a law for the people and the economy to

meet the demand of the time." "By opposing the law the opposition political parties are virtually trying to protect the terrorists," he said.

Asked about possible abuse of the law as apprehended by the opposition groups, he said: "Wait and see how it will turn out to be a good law."

The Foreign Minister was asked about the diplomats' response to his explanation of the tough law. "Oh yes, they all supported and appreciated the law," Azad replied swiftly.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury was present in the briefing session with the mission chiefs and representatives of international organisations, held at State Guesthouse Padma.

Babri Masjid Case Advani, Kalyan Singh, Joshi asked to appear before court

LUCKNOW, Feb 10: A special CBI court hearing Babri Masjid Demolition Case today directed all the accused including union ministers L K Advani and M M Joshi and former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Kalyan Singh to appear personally before it on March 28 for framing of charges unless they got a stay order from the High Court, reports PTI.

It was argued before the special judge (CBI) J P Srivastava by the counsel for the accused that the charges could not be framed as four criminal revision petitions challenging the summoning order of the CBI court was pending before the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court.

The CBI counsel argued that no order had been passed by the High Court for staying the proceedings of the special court for framing charges.

Alliance finalises jt rally arrangement

By Staff Correspondent

The Liaison Committee of the BNP-led opposition alliance yesterday finalised arrangements for Sunday's joint public rally and mass procession of the four component parties in the city.

As decided by the committee, a dais will be erected at Paltan Maidan and BNP Chairperson Khaleeda Zia, Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad, Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Golam Azam and Islami Oikya Jote chief Azizul Haq will address the joint public meeting prior to leading the procession.

Elderly politician Oli Ahad is likely to address the meeting on behalf of the seven-party alliance, sources concerned said. Khaleeda Zia will announce fresh programmes from the joint meeting.

The liaison body sat twice yesterday and resolved the dispute over the arrangement of hunger strike on February 8 and finalised Sunday's joint programme.

It decided that the procession of the four parties will proceed one by one. BNP's procession led by Khaleeda Zia will first start from Paltan Maidan while that of JP, Jamaat and IOJ will follow it.

The liaison committee instructed the city unit presidents/convenors of the four parties to make joint efforts to make the programmes a success.

Meeting sources said that yesterday's meeting did not finalise the programme to be announced from the joint public meeting.

They said there is possibility of calling a 36-hour "blockade hartal" on February 16-17. The committee decided to settle everything including sitting arrangements for party chiefs before finalising future joint programme.

It is likely to meet again tomorrow. Yesterday's meeting was attended by BNP leaders M Shamsul Islam MP and Anwar Zahid, JP leaders Kazi Firoz Rashid, ABM Golam Mostafa and Shah Mohammad Abu Zafar, Jamaat leaders Mohammad Kamaruzaman, Abdul Qader Mollah and ATM Azharul Islam and IOJ leaders Fazul Haq Amin, ARM Abdul Matin, Muslehuddin, Abu Bakar and Masud Khan.

Most of the textbooks are printed using low quality paper and ink in violation of the specifications given by the National Curriculum and textbook Board (NCTB), sources concerned said. Side by side, "revised and updated" textbooks of all subjects for class IX and X have started appearing in bookstalls, but these are also incomplete. These have to be purchased along with "due parts" (additional parts), which are not available. The Board had advised the students to collect textbooks with "due parts", which would be available free of cost.

Major slums in city raided: 231 bottles of phensidyl seized

By Staff Correspondent

Dhaka Metropolitan Police began a combing operation against drug traders in the city on Wednesday night, official sources said.

Heavy contingents of police raided major slums in different areas including Teigaon, T and T Colony at Mogh Bazar, Chankhar Pool, Ananda Bazar near Shahidullah Hall and Geneva Camp of Stranded Pakistanis at Mohammadpur.

Armed Police and BDR assisted DMP in the operation. Dog squad was also used.

Police recovered 231 bottles of phensidyl, 21 litres of homemade alcohol and arrested eight persons on the first day of the operation, the sources said.

The operation aims at identifying drug dens in the city and arrest those involved in the trade. A similar operation will be launched to arrest other criminals and recover illegal arms and ammunition, a senior police official said.

The operation began two weeks after the home minister announced that an operation similar to that in south-western part of the country would be launched in the capital.

Verdict in Jainal Khan murder case Feb 20

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Feb 10: Verdict in Jainal Khan murder case will be pronounced on February 20, said Hasan Imam, Additional District and Sessions Judge today.

Jainal Khan, a day labourer, was killed by Ershad Shikder and his accomplices on April 2, 1995.

The argument in the murder case which began on Tuesday last ended today in the Special Court.

Ershad Shikder, Liaquat Lashkar, Idris Jamal, Tendu Harun, Noor-e-Alam and Nazim Sarder were produced before the court.

Three of the accused in this case are still at large.

They are Jamal Faruque, Jainal Sheikh and Shaheh Ali. According to a source at the Special Court, lawyers defending Ershad were given more time than those of the prosecution side.

Relatives of most of the accused were found loitering in the court compound. But police did not allow any of them to go near to the accused breaking the cordon.



For knowledge A devout performs Saraswati Puja rituals. Star photo: A K M Mohsin

Textbook trouble Old-edition with new cover confuses students

By Mustak Hossain

Old-edition textbooks with new cover for classes IX and X for the current academic year have flooded the city book stalls, creating confusion among students.

Such textbooks include English for Today, Bengali Language and Grammar, Hindu Religion Education, General History.

Most of the textbooks are printed using low quality paper and ink in violation of the specifications given by the National Curriculum and textbook Board (NCTB), sources concerned said.

Side by side, "revised and updated" textbooks of all subjects for class IX and X have started appearing in bookstalls, but these are also incomplete. These have to be purchased along with "due parts" (additional parts), which are not available. The Board had advised the students to collect textbooks with "due parts", which would be available free of cost.

"We are yet to get due parts from the distributors", a book seller said when asked about it. But the "revised and updated" books are almost same as old-edition books as regards contents. The NCTB has changed only the colour, but the contents are almost the same as old-edition books, some teachers and guardians told this correspondent during a visit to some bookstalls at Nilkhet in the city yesterday.

Moreover, the "revised and updated" books are not easily available as book sellers prefer selling the old-edition books to earn more profit, they said. NCTB had earlier notified

that six textbooks would remain unchanged and be available in the market along with "due parts". These include Mathematics and Social Science for class VI, General Science for class VII, Agricultural Education and Mathematics for class VIII and Secondary Geometry for class IX.

Most of the book sellers this correspondent talked to alleged that the massive irregularity has taken place due to lack of monitoring by the NCTB and an unholy alliance between a section of its employees and some unscrupulous publishers.

They said such old-edition books have bigger markers in district towns and remote areas where NCTB's monitoring net-
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COMBING OPERATION: Police recovered 231 bottles of phensidyl from major slums in the city yesterday. —Star photo

Plane hijack drama ends, hostages released

STANSTED, England, Feb 10: The hijackers of an Afghan plane released their hostages safely and surrendered early Thursday, ending a four-day standoff at an airport outside London, reports AP.

Police said they had arrested 19 of the 151 people who came off the aircraft and seized four guns and other weapons. The suspects were not identified, and police said it wasn't immediately clear if any of the suspects were related.

"It became clear in the last hour of the negotiations that they were expressing concern about the political situation in Afghanistan," said David Stevens, chief constable of Essex County police.

"For the first 75 hours they didn't talk about the political situation at all."

He said police were still not clear about the motive for the hijacking, but said the expressions of concern about the political situation were not made in the context of any demand for asylum.

"No guarantees have been given on any subject," Stevens said. "No requests or guarantees on asylum were made and none have been given."

Press Association, the British news agency, quoted government sources as saying about 60 people from the aircraft had appealed for asylum. Officials would not comment on

the report.

Police recovered four handguns, five knives, one set of brass knuckles, two detonators and two grenades, though they did not appear to have fuses, Stevens said.

He anticipated a long process of interviewing all the people aboard the aircraft, mainly through translators, to build a case.

"We are now into a very complex and involved criminal investigation," John Broughton, an Essex County assistant chief constable, said shortly after the drama ended. "We're in the process now of building a detailed picture of what is required and what people want."

Before dawn, the passengers left the aircraft with little warning — first a group of around 85 at 3:50 am, then 65 more two hours later. Women and children came first down the runway, illuminated by bright lights from police vehicles on the tarmac. The men exiting the plane held their hands in the air.

The released hostages were taken to a safe location for medical tests, police said. Before the releases, police had said 151 people were on the plane, including 21 children. After it was confirmed no one remained on board, the Boeing 727 was swept to make sure it was safe for investigators. Broughton said.

It remained unclear why the hijackers seized the plane early Sunday, 20 minutes into a domestic flight from the Afghan capital, Kabul. They then took it on stops in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Russia before landing in London.

The end of the standoff capped days of negotiations between British authorities and the hostage-takers.

Just before the releases this morning, two of the hijackers had left the aircraft for a meeting with negotiators on the tarmac, deputy chief constable Joe Edwards said.

The atmosphere became tense Tuesday night after four crew members — the captain, second captain, first officer and flight engineer — scrambled out of a cockpit window and down a rope. Hours later, the hijackers ejected a flight attendant, who was seen tumbling down a set of stairs at the rear of the plane.

Immediately after that, Stevens said the hijackers made threats against the passengers.

There were threats quite significant threats, being made to the passengers — threats of injuries," Stevens told a news conference.

However, communications between police and hijackers resumed later in the day. Throughout the talks, authorities insisted the armed men had made no formal demands, political or otherwise.

Accords to set up 3 power plants

By Staff Correspondent

The Rural Electrification Board (REB) yesterday signed agreements with a local private power developer for setting up of three small power plants in Savar, Comilla and Narasingdi on Build, Own, Operate basis.

The three 11 MW plants are likely to come into operation in December this year. Cost of power from these plants would be the lowest in the country till the AES Haripur power plant comes into operation next year.

Unlike in the case of other private power developers, who seek payment in dollars, REB

would purchase power in local currency.

The REB and the United Summit Power Company which set up the country's first private power plant — 110 MW Khulna barge-mounted power plant — yesterday signed a Power Purchase Agreement, an Implementation Agreement and a Land Lease Agreement.

"Installation cost wise, these plants would be the cheapest in the country," State Minister for Energy Prof Rafiqul Islam said at the signing ceremony. Summit Power would invest

a total of Tk 90 crore for the three plants. Of the amount, Tk 60 crore would be provided by the Infrastructure Development Company Ltd (IDCOL) and the World Bank's sister concern IFC in dollars and the rest by local financial institutions.

The signing ceremony was attended by, among others, Secretary of Power Division Arabind Kar, REB Chairman Brig MA Malek, Managing Director of Summit Power Hasan Mahmud Raja, its Chairman Muhammad Aziz Khan and Di-

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এতদ্বারা সর্বাঙ্গীণ সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানান যাচ্ছে যে, আমদানিকৃত পণ্যের স্বাক্ষরিত ক্ষেত্রে আগামী ১৫ ফেব্রুয়ারি, ২০০০ ইংরেজি তারিখ থেকে বাধ্যতামূলক প্রি-শিপমেন্ট ইন্সপেকশন (PSI) ব্যবস্থা কার্যকর হবে। পণ্য আমদানির জন্য ১৫ ফেব্রুয়ারি, ২০০০ ইংরেজি বা তৎপরবর্তী সময়ে ব্যাংক স্বপণ্ডে (letter of credit) বোকা হলে সেই ক্ষেত্রে PSI পদ্ধতি প্রয়োগ করা হবে। তবে এসআরও নং ৪১-আইন/২০০০/১৮-১৮/স্ক/তাং ০৮/০২/২০০০ইং দ্বারা যে সকল পণ্য বাধ্যতামূলক PSI পদ্ধতি হতে অব্যাহতি গ্রাণ্ড হয়েছে সে সকল পণ্যের ক্ষেত্রে বাধ্যতামূলক PSI ব্যবস্থা প্রযোজ্য হবে না।
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০৩। উল্লেখ্য, বাধ্যতামূলক PSI পদ্ধতিতে নিয়োগপ্রাপ্ত কোম্পানীগুলিকে সরকার সরাসরি ফি পরিশোধ করবে। আমদানিকৃত পণ্যের CIF মূল্যের ১% প্রি-শিপমেন্ট ইন্সপেকশন সার্ভিস চার্জ হিসাবে সর্বাঙ্গীণ কাস্টম হাউস/কাস্টম টেশনে অন্যান্য স্ক্রু করার সাথে একইভাবে আদায় করা হবে। আমদানিকারকদের সাথে PSI কোম্পানীর সরাসরি আর্থিক লেন-দেনের কোন ব্যবস্থা এতে নেই।
০৪। সরকার আশা করছে যে, বাধ্যতামূলক PSI পদ্ধতি চালু হওয়ার ফলে আমদানিকৃত পণ্য দ্রুত বালাস পাবে, এবং এতে পণ্য খালাসে হররানি ও বিপদ দূরীভূত হয়ে আমদানিকারকগণ উপকৃত হবেন। এ বিষয়ে জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ড সর্বাঙ্গীণ সকলের সহযোগিতা কামনা করছে। এ বিষয়ে কোন প্রশ্ন থাকলে কিংবা কোন তথ্য জানতে চাইলে সর্বাঙ্গীণ সকলকে নিম্নবর্ণিত টেলিফোন নাম্বারে যোগাযোগ করতে অনুরোধ করা হচ্ছে। এ ব্যাপারে প্রয়োজনীয় তথ্য জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ডের ওয়েব সাইটে (www.nbr-db.org) Features of Mandatory PSI হিসেবে পাওয়া যাবে।
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