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US daily reports Clinton to make a brief stop at Lahore Airport

WASHINGTON, Feb 26: US President Bill Clinton will make a brief stop at Lahore Airport at the end of his trip to India to prop up pro-western forces in Pakistan, PTI quoting the Washington Times reported.

It attributed the information to a prominent Pakistani-American.

AFP from Srinagar adds: A political separatist group in the troubled Kashmir region today called for US mediation to solve the five-decade-old dispute between India and Pakistan.

The Freedom Conference, an umbrella grouping of some two dozen separatist outfits, urged Clinton to step in to resolve the Kashmir dispute.

Clinton will visit India on March 20-25 and it will be the first visit by a US president since Jimmy Carter's visit in 1978.

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Loadshedding: Dhaka to take the brunt

Lean season starts next month with faulty distribution

By Sharier Khan

Power supply in Dhaka city will continue to be erratic during this lean season starting from mid-March though generation has improved significantly compared to that in previous years.

During lean seasons in the last four-five years, the country experienced load shedding rising up to 700 MW-800 MW. But this year, load shedding will mainly affect Dhaka, which consumes nearly half of the total power generated in the country, sources said.

"Dhaka is likely to have 100 MW to 150 MW load shedding everyday during the lean season

this year, not because of lack of supply but because of the lack of a proper distribution system," one source said.

As some new power plants have come into operation since late 1998, the shortfall in generation will be very little against the peak demand. However, a power expert said the country should be prepared for a load shedding of up to 300 MW during this lean season.

"Now, we have a power generation capacity of 2700 MW. We are expecting the demand to rise up to 2800 MW - 2900 MW," he said. "But at times, we will be compelled to shut down one or

two major plants."

To face the potential problem in Dhaka, the government had plans to undertake and complete three transmission and distribution projects before March. But the Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA), which was supposed to prepare details of the projects and get financial clearance, could not make yet any headway. These are Dhaka-Siddhirganj-Ulan project, Manikganj-Shampur project and Tongi-Ulan-Bashundhara project.

"DESA is running without any vision or drive," the source

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Indo-Bangla rail link for goods traffic next yr

NEW DELHI, Feb 26: Rail link between India and Bangladesh will be restored for goods traffic next year, Indian Railways Minister Mamata Banerjee said here today, reports BSS.

Placing the railway budget for 2000-2001 in the Lok Sabha, she said "Our rail links with Bangladesh and Nepal are going to be restored for goods traffic."

Mamata said India would also make efforts to begin passenger services with Bangladesh soon.

She said the Indian Railways were playing a pivotal role in the development of Trans-Asian Railways that would span China, Thailand, Myanmar, Bangladesh, India, Iran and Turkey onwards to Europe.

Meanwhile, five ministers of the state governments of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Tripura, in a memorandum submitted to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, today called for improving trade ties with countries bordering north-eastern states of India.

They urged the central government to take up the matter of transport and communication link with north-east India through Bangladesh using rail, road and waterways.

Such a step will not only remove the feeling of remoteness and isolation but can also provide alternative economy of trade with Bangladesh, they said.

The ministers for food and civil supplies of five states who signed the memorandum are: C C Singpho of Arunachal Pradesh, Pradip Hazarika of Assam, P Enay Konyak of Nagaland, Nimarson Momin of Meghalaya and Gopal Das of Tripura.

Sylhet bomb blast Hearing of charge against AL MP Manik Feb 29

From Staff Correspondent SYLHET, Feb 26: Hearing of the charge framed against the ruling party MP Muhibur Rahman Manik in bomb blast case will be held in the Sunamganj District Judge's court on February 29.

Manik's lawyer sought a new date for hearing which was earlier scheduled for February 22. The District Judge Iktedar Ahmed allowed it and fixed February 29 for hearing.

The bomb exploded at Manik's residence at the thana headquarters of Chhatak on March 15 in 1999. Two young men - Arif Haider, a Jubo League activist and Babul, cousin of Manik were killed in the blast. Some others including his another cousin, Abul Lais Chowdhury were injured.

Chhatak thana OC lodged a case in this connection. The case was later transferred to the CID.

CID Inspector Sirajul Islam investigated the case and submitted chargesheet against the ruling party MP.

24 shops, goods worth Tk 50 lakh gutted in Cox's Bazar

COX'S BAZAR, Feb 26: Twenty-four shops and goods worth about Tk 50 lakh were gutted in a devastating fire on Friday night at Betua Bazar under Chakoria thana here, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the fire originating from a tea stall soon engulfed the adjacent shops. Local people fighting for two hours eventually extinguished the fire.

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Misgivings centring president over PSB The notion is fully wrong, says Bangabhaban

The Bangabhaban has "refuted the notion being created" that the president had recommended the Public Safety Bill (PSB) for placing before the parliament as a money bill, reports BSS.

The Speaker's certificate is final to ascertain whether a bill is money bill or not, which can not be questioned in any court, a press release issued from the Bangabhaban said yesterday.

"A bill involving mere public expenditure is not a money bill," the unsigned press release issued in the name of the press secretary to the President said.

According to "Rules of Business," any bill involving government expenditure must be sent to the president through

the ministry of finance, it said.

The ministry of home affairs sent the PSB to the president through the prime minister, the release said, adding as per the Constitution, proposals of all ministries come to the president through the prime minister.

Following is the English rendering of the press release:

"It has been noticed that a notion is still being created that the President has recommended the Public Safety Bill-2000 as a Money Bill for placing in the parliament. This notion is fully wrong. It was clearly said in the Prime Minister's proposal that the bill involved government expenditure. A bill having involvement of mere government

expenditure is not a Money Bill. The Speaker will give the final decision whether a bill is Money Bill or not after it is passed by the Speaker and the Speaker, in this regard, would give a certificate as per Article 81(3) of the Constitution which could not even be questioned in any court of law. A certificate of this kind was given in this case.

It may be mentioned that either the proposed bill was a 'Money Bill' or 'related to government expenditure' it needed recommendation of the President for placing it in the parliament. But the Speaker's certificate is applicable only in case of money bill.

In this regard, there is a lack See page 11 col 8



Minister Alauddin dead

Dr Alauddin Ahmed, State Minister for Housing and Public Works, died at All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi yesterday. He was 76, reports UNB.

His body will arrive in Dhaka on Tuesday, according to a message from New Delhi last night.

Dr Alauddin left behind his seven sons, four daughters and a host of admirers.

He was admitted to CMH, Dhaka on February 6 where he underwent operation in prostate gland. He was gradually recovering.

But his condition deteriorated on Friday and he was flown to Delhi the same day. He died at 12:30 pm (BST) yesterday.

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US Human Rights Report '99 Violence a pervasive feature of politics in Bangladesh

By Staff Correspondent

The US State Department has identified violence as a pervasive feature of Bangladesh politics.

"Elections are frequently marred by violence, intimidation of voters, and rigging," it said in its 1999 Country Report on Bangladesh.

"Both the ruling and opposition parties and their activists routinely employed violence, causing many deaths and numerous injuries," the report on human rights practices released in Dhaka yesterday said.

The report blamed the major opposition political parties for making the parliament a less effective deliberative body by their often boycott or otherwise absence. The report also accused the ruling party of abusing its parliamentary majority to prevent real debate on legislation and national issues.

The 33-page report on Bangladesh, while describing the state of human rights in different sectors, contained a wide range of issues from practice of

parliamentary democracy to rights of workers.

The government continued to restrict or deny many fundamental rights and failed to prevent or punish abusers of human rights, it said adding that police committed a number of extra-judicial killings.

"Police routinely used torture, beatings and other forms of abuse while interrogating suspects. Police frequently beat demonstrators, at times members of parliament. The government rarely convicts and punishes those responsible for torture or unlawful deaths," the report said.

Quoting government figure, it said that 101 people died in prison and in police custody during the first nine months of 1999.

The report noted that the civil authority's control over police was weak and there was widespread corruption and lack of discipline in police.

The condition of prisons is

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Saurav named India captain

Sports Monitor

Indian selectors named Saurav Ganguly as captain for the five-match one-day series against the touring South Africa on Saturday, says an Internet report.

The 28-year-old vice-captain from West Bengal was widely tipped to take over the reins once Sachin Tendulkar announced last Sunday that he would be stepping down after the two-test series against South Africa.

"It is the greatest honour for any cricketer and we are overjoyed and thankful to God that Saurav has been able to achieve it," said Chandi Ganguly, the proud father of Saurav to our

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Prayer Timings
February 27

| | Azan | Jamaat |
|---------|-------|--------|
| Fajr | 5:00 | 5:30 |
| Zohr | 12:45 | 1:20 |
| Asr | 4:30 | 4:45 |
| Maghrib | 6:00 | 6:05 |
| Esha | 7:30 | 8:00 |

Source: Islamic Foundation

BJP sweeps into power in 2 states riding on its allies

NEW DELHI, Feb 26: India's ruling Hindu nationalists today swept into power on the shoulders of their allies in two of four states following local polls, seen as the first test for the government since it assumed office last October, reports AFP.

The main opposition Congress Party of Sonia Gandhi accepted defeat in Orissa and Haryana states even before Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's National Democratic Alliance had emerged as winners.

Vajpayee's Hindu nationalists and their local electoral ally, the BJD party, won 106 seats in the 147-member Orissa legislature, prompting state Congress Chief Minister Hemananda Biswal to quit his post.

The BJD emerged the dominant partner with 68 seats in Orissa, election commission officials said.

Haryana state's regional Indian National Lok Dal party too stormed to power in the 90-member state assembly, bagging 47 seats as its partner, Vajpayee's BJP party, fared poorly by picking up just six seats.

The Lok Dal said it would set up its own government in case the BJP was averse to a coalition in the politically prestigious state adjoining New Delhi.

Italian-born Sonia's Congress, which won 21 seats in Haryana, threw in the towel in coastal Orissa after winning 26 seats compared to its previous tally of 80 members in the Provincial House.

Outgoing chief minister Biswal conceded that criticisms for his failure to tackle the aftermath of a cyclone that killed 10,000 people in October was one of the key reasons for the

route of the Congress, India's oldest political entity.

The BJP and its three electoral partners were locked in a neck-and-neck race Saturday with their rival RJD party in Bihar, India's second-most populous state, according to the latest count, election commission officials said.

The alliance had won 61 seats and were ahead of opponents in 58 other legislative constituencies of the 324-member Bihar Assembly according to the count at 11:30 am (12:00 noon BST).

The RJD on its own had picked up 73 seats and was gaining in 33 more by the same count, sparking worries that an intense horse-trading to woo fringe regional parties and independent candidates for support would soon begin.

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Cattle await their turn for slaughter at the 'abattoir' on Elephant Road in Hatirpool. The cattle are penned on what had been a pavement and part of the road. The carcasses, offal and blood are left on the road, making the area as stinky as ever. A City Corporation dustbin, always overflowing, adds to the residents complaints. Newspapers have been routinely reporting it, but to no avail. The City Corporation is supposed to act against such illegal activities and safeguard public health, under municipal law. It seems to have ignored the inconvenience to the tax payers for reasons only known to them.



Armed gang occupies land at Central Rd in city

By Staff Correspondent

An armed gang with the help of police occupied about 2.25 bighas of land worth about Tk 10 crore at Central Road in the city on Thursday night, the owners of the property told The Daily Star last night.

The gang also took with them construction materials worth about Tk 15 lakh and Tk 30,000 in cash under police protection, claimed Musa Majid, one of the owners.

It is now demanding 25 per cent of the property or equivalent amount of money for a settlement, he said.

When some of workers at the site protested against the intruders, Dhamondi police threatened to sue them under the Public Safety Act, Majid alleged.

Officials at Dhamondi police station, when contacted, would not confirm whether anyone was driven out of the piece of land on Friday night.

Police went there on the basis of imposition of Section 144 by the chief metropolitan magistrate on the site on February 15, the OC, Dhamondi thana, said. He would not say why he was late by about 10 days to enforce it.

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Consultant on privatisation Biman gets green signal for signing deal

By Shehab Ahmed

Bangladesh Biman has received clearance from the ministries of law, finance and civil aviation to seal a deal with the New York-based Citibank to have it as consultant on privatisation of the national carrier.

"We have received the clearance and are expecting to initial the agreement with the company on Sunday," said a Biman official yesterday.

Earlier, the World Bank which is providing two million dollars for the privatisation programme cleared the draft accord between the Biman and the Citibank.

The Citibank was selected out of 44 bidders last year.

Under the privatisation programme Biman would retain 51 per cent of the share and its em-

ployees would be given nine per cent.

The rest would be off-loaded. The bank would help find a strategic partner and funding, the official said.

The work for the privatisation programme would start two weeks after signing of the agreement. The work is expected to be completed by middle of this year.

The signing had been delayed due to bureaucratic tangles to clear the draft from different ministries.

The Biman with about 5500 employees and 13 aircraft flies to 24 destinations worldwide. It is planning to open more routes and frequencies to increase its revenue to get back into the black from the red for

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Whereabouts of Shikdar's arms Farooq, Nasir both deny charge, blame each other

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Feb 26: 'Jama' Farooq has flatly denied the charge of either possessing Ershad Shikdar's illegal arms or having knowledge of their latest location.

Why should I conceal the fact about arms when I have already been condemned to death, he told the senior police officials who were interrogating him at Khalishpur thana on Friday night.

'Jama' Farooq has been sentenced to death in Zainal Khan murder case.

All firearms were in possession of Ayub Munshi and Nasir Khan, said Farooq who began his career as a labourer at Skid Ghat 20 years ago.

Nasir Khan, on the other hand, has denied the charge blaming 'Jama' Farooq for telling lies about arms.

Shikdar's armoury at Sholpur village under Rupsha thana was under control of 'Jama' Farooq, Liaquat Lashkar and Ayub Munshi, Nasir told the interrogators at Daulatpur thana this morning.

My duty was to maintain liaison with the press and politi-

cal parties and contact courts and govt officials to keep Shikdar free from problems and hold his position high in the society, Nasir Khan said.

Graduated from Adamjee Cantonment College, Dhaka, Nasir Khan got himself associated with Shikdar 15 years ago as caretaker of business firms.

He said it is Noor-e-Alam who knows how many people were killed by Shikdar.

Police today said Nasir Khan has given some startling information about different sources of Shikdar's income.

Both 'Jama' Farooq and Nasir Khan are being interrogated in connection with Kalu murder case.

Farooq will also face trial in 13 murder cases while Nasir is one of the accused in seven murder cases. They were arrested on August 11 last year.

Both of them had so far been in West Bengal along with Shikdar's first wife, Khodeja from where they used to contact some officials in the police department and some leaders of the ruling party of Dhaka and

Rickshawpuller beaten to death in city

By Staff Correspondent

A rickshawpuller was beaten to death by miscreants in front of the West End School at Atashkhana in Lalbagh yesterday.

The dead was identified as Alauddin, 30, and a resident of Jagannath Saha Lane in the old city.

The miscreants started beating Alauddin accusing him of stealing a rickshaw when he was waiting for passengers in front of the school at about 10 am, police and hospital sources said.

Some local people joined the gang and beat him mercilessly till the victim became unconscious, police added.

Alauddin repeatedly denied the charge of stealing rickshaw. The miscreants left the spot taking Alauddin to a nearby field in an unconscious state. Police recovered Alauddin and sent him to the Mitford Hospital where the attending doctor declared him dead. The body was sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

A case was filed with Lalbagh police. Police arrested one person in this connection.

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