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Two bills tabled in JS

By Staff Correspondent
Law Minister Abdul Matin Khashru yesterday moved in Jatiya Sangsad a couple of Bills including one seeking to update the country's century-old admiralty laws.
The Admiralty Court Bill - 2000, if adopted by the House, will replace the Admiralty Court Act - 1840, the Admiralty Court Act - 1861 and the Court of Admiralty Act, 1891.
Under the proposed law, the High Court will be considered as admiralty court. It will deal with cases relating to disputes over ownership and income of ship, claim arising out of renting ship, claim relating to towage and pilotage of ship, claim under Merchant Shipping Ordinance, 1983 and so on.
Usually, an admiralty case would be filed with and heard by the single benches of the High Court. The Chief Justice would enjoy the authority to constitute division benches comprising two or more than two judges, the proposed law says. The division benches would also hear appeals against verdicts delivered by the single benches.
The Law Minister told the House that his ministry prepared the Bill following the Law Commission's recommendation for making admiralty laws.
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Doubts over holding of NAM summit

By M Anwarul Haq

Doubts may be raised about holding of the next NAM Summit in Dhaka because of inadequate infrastructures, logistics and security concerns, sources said.
Bangladesh will be asked to present a detailed report on preparations it has taken up and progress made for hosting the summit, scheduled for September next year, the sources said yesterday.
The report will be reviewed at the two-day NAM Ministerial Meeting in Cartagena, Colombia on April 8 and 9, which will be attended by other country representatives also.
Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad is likely to head the Bangladesh team at the meeting.
Besides reviewing the progress of the 114-member organisation, the Cartagena meeting will deliberate on the arrangements required and progress made for holding the next summit in Dhaka, proposed at the last NAM summit held in South Africa.
The meeting will want that the Dhaka Summit is held in time. As per tradition, the NAM Summit is held in early September every four years.

The September schedule helps the NAM leaders prepare for attending the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) which begins on the third Tuesday of September. Holding of NAM Summit in early September also enables the member states to place any relevant resolution at the UNGA.
Arrangements for some 5000 delegates have to be made for the NAM Summit. Dhaka has taken up comprehensive plans for the guests. But observers feel that given the limited time frame, plans for construction of an International Conference Centre for the summit, building

new hotels, flats and other infrastructure and expansion of existing hotel accommodation are still mostly on the drawing board.
This may create considerable concern at the Cartagena meeting, the sources said.
Another aspect that may be a cause of concern is that during Clinton's visit to Bangladesh, the White House team ruled out Dhaka as "unsuitable for overnight stay", ostensibly for what they felt "absence of requisite logistics and accommodation".
Clinton's night halt in Delhi both before arrival in Dhaka and after a day-long visit has undermined the country's security, logistics and accommodation capabilities.
These aspects were never seriously contested by the government, which made the US position tenable, the observers said.
Observers feel that Dhaka should take emergency steps "on a war footing" to create enabling conditions and finalise preparations if it hopes to hold the NAM Summit next year.
Jordan and another South Asian country earlier expressed their desire to hold the NAM Summit, it was learnt.

Depression

A depression over the southwest Bay to Bengal and adjoining area moved in northerly direction and lies over southwest bay and adjoining southeast bay, reports UNB.

It was centered about 1,120 kilometres south-southwest of Chittagong Port, 1,140 kilometres south-southwest of Cox's Bazar and 1,100 south of Khulna at 6 pm yesterday, according to meteorological office bulletin.



The second Buriganga Bridge was supposed to link Dhaka with Jinzira at Babu Bazar to ease traffic pressure. But that won't happen anytime soon. Work has been progressing at a snails pace, raising questions about the bridge's fate. — Star photo by AKM Mohsin

2 troubling hours at Sonali Bank headquarters

Star Report
Work at Sonali Bank's headquarters came to a standstill for two hours yesterday due to a function organised by its Collective Bargaining Agent to mark Independence Day.
The CBA of Sonali Bank, the largest nationalised commercial bank with about 1,307 branches across the country, organised the event to discuss the significance of Independence Day. Home Minister Mohammad Nasim was the chief guest, while A. I. Aminul Islam, chairman of the bank's board, was the special guest.
Bank officials said they felt embarrassed by the function. They said they couldn't concentrate on their work, since the
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Demolition drive: A palatial building partially hit

By Staff Correspondent



Bulldozers demolishing boundary walls of the palatial building of 'Sher-e-Khawja' at Dhanmondi yesterday. — Star photo

The joint drive for demolition of illegal structures in Dhanmondi lake area entered its second day yesterday with partial demolition of the palatial building of a peer (preacher) known as Sher-e-Khawja.
Officials of Public Works Department (PWD) and Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) took more than an hour from about 10:30 am to convince an angry Khawja that they simply intended to recover the 1.67 kathas of public land on which he illegally built part of his house.
Superintending Engineer of PWD Shahiduzzaman told newsmen at the site that Khawja and his son threatened the officials and asked them to keep away from his house.
As a DCC payloador demolished the boundary wall of the house, the giant engine's piston broke down. The officials immediately asked for a replacement. At the Nagar Bhaban, a rumour spread that this happened due to Khawja's 'spiritual power'. Two more payloadors arrived at the spot at about 3 pm.
PWD officials measured the land and cleared about half of it using bulldozer. As Khawja insisted that he did not get any notice prior to the demolition, a payloador knocked down one of the six large coconut trees.
"These are forty-year old trees. They have not done any-
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Mehdi murder BNP calls hartal in Barisal today

From Staff Correspondent
BARISAL, Mar 29: Dist BNP has called for a half-day hartal in the town, beginning 6 am tomorrow, protesting killing of Advocate ABM Mahmud Hasan Mehdi.
Mehdi, a city BNP leader, was gunned down by a group of unidentified armed assailants yesterday evening in front of his residence near C & B Road.
Namaz-e-janaza for Mehdi was held at the Government Hatem Ali College ground here this afternoon. Post mortem of the body was done at SBMC Hospital in the morning.
A city BNP leader filed a murder case with Kotwali thana in this connection last night.
Jahanara Begum, mother of Mehdi, filed a murder case accusing 8 people including Md Kamal. Other accused are Liton, Rantu, Jamal, Nasir, Rintu, Mazid and Mostafa Kamal.

APSA threatens to continue strike at CU

From Our Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, Mar 29: All Party Student Alliance (APSA) of the Chittagong University (CU) at a press conference yesterday threatened to continue its on-going indefinite strike at CU.
The APSA leaders said any attempt to reopen the university with the help of police or BDR, before the restoration of a
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Firm policy, political consensus needed to stop smuggling

By Staff Correspondent

Leading economists, businessmen and revenue officials have emphasised the need for a firm policy framework and a political consensus for checking illegal border trade and smuggling of goods.
Rationalisation of tariff structure, strict enforcement of laws and an end to administrative hassles are needed to control smuggling, they said at a seminar in the city yesterday.
The seminar on 'The Effect of Smuggling on Bangladesh Economy' was organised by the National Board of Revenue (NBR) and held at its conference room.
Finance Minister SAMS Kibria inaugurated the seminar. Dr Atiur Rahman, Senior Research Fellow of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), presented a paper on 'Indo-Bangladesh Informal Border Trade' and Faizul Latif Chowdhury, Joint Commissioner of Customs, Excise and VAT of Dhaka North Commissionerate, presented a paper on 'The Effect of Smuggling on Bangladesh Economy'.
The Finance Minister said Bangladesh is a 'net loser' due to smuggling and it is draining out foreign exchange from the country.
"This has been a very dangerous situation for us. We bring in oil at higher rates. As the prices of oil in India are higher, these are being smuggled out
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No clue yet to Nuhash Palli fire

By Staff Correspondent
Police are yet to unearth the mystery behind the fire at noted writer Humayun Ahmed's Nuhash Palli at Pirajuli village in Joydebpur.
The Bungalow at Nuhash Palli shooting spot was burnt to ashes March 25 night.
Joydebpur thana police said last night that they were investigating the incident but were yet to find any clue. Asked if they got any evidence, they said they are still looking for it.
A police team has been deployed at the Nuhash Palli.
When asked if he suspected any one responsible for the fire, Humayun Ahmed said he was tremendously busy with his film and he had no time to think about it.
He further said police were investigating the incident and he hoped they would identify the culprits.

Shahjalal varsity Opposition to demonstrate on April 2

SYLHET, Mar 29: The All Party Action Council (APAC) will stage demonstration on April 2 demanding cancellation of the proposed names of academic buildings and halls of Shahjalal University and withdrawal of cases filed against its leaders and activists, reports UNB.
In a press conference, held at local press club today, the APAC leaders also demanded reopening of the varsity soon.
They threatened to launch a tougher movement if the leaders and activists of APAC are not released soon and the government and administration will be responsible for the situation.
Jamaat leader Dr Shaifur Rahman, BNP leader M A Huq and Ariful Huq Chowdhury and Alauddin Chowdhury of Muslim League spoke at the press conference.

Shazneen murder Proceedings of case adjourned till April 19

By Court Correspondent
The proceedings of Shazneen rape case were adjourned by the Special Court of Women and Children Repression Prevention till April 19 as the judge was on leave yesterday.
Earlier the High Court Division had stayed the proceedings of the Shazneen murder case and the rape case upto May 5 last year on the grounds that two separate cases can not continue on the same incident.
Two separate cases, one of murder and another for rape of the victim pending respectively in the court of First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge and that of the Court of Women and Children Repression Prevention, Dhaka.
The HC stayed the proceedings of both the cases on a criminal appeal by two of the accused.
The latest order of the HC vacating the earlier stay orders regarding the cases was passed on February 22 following an appeal from the prosecution side.
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Mar	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
30	-	6-14 pm
31	5-52 am	-

Prayer Timings

March 30		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:00	5:30
Zohr	1:00	1:30
Asr	4:45	5:00
Maghrib	6:15	6:20
Esha	8:00	8:30

Source: Islamic Foundation

BNP won't respond to dialogue offer

By Rezaul Karim

BNP has decided not to respond to the Speaker's fresh offer to facilitate a Government-Opposition dialogue.
The fresh offer made by the Speaker is superficial and it is aimed at hoaxing the people," BNP Secretary General Abdur Mannan Bhuiyan told The Daily Star yesterday.
Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury at the opening sitting of the Jatiya Sangsad on Tuesday offered his good offices to facilitate a Government-Opposition dialogue to end the current impasse in parliament.
Mannan said the ruling party has "destroyed the atmosphere" at the Jatiya Sangsad and there is no scope for Opposition's return to parliament.
The Speaker mediated two dialogues earlier, which culminated in signing of four-point agreements twice. "But not a single point (in the agreements) has been implemented yet", he said.
The BNP secretary general alleged that the Speaker completely failed to maintain his neutrality in running the Sangsad. "He has lost Opposition's confidence. He is not at all neutral and is totally biased towards the ruling party," he added.
Bhuiyan declined to make any comment when asked if there was any possibility of Opposition's return to parliament in near future.
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958 charged under PSA so far, PM tells JS

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told Parliament yesterday 958 people have been charged under the Public Safety Act (PSA) since the law came into effect, reports UNB.
Replying to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (Jatiya Party) during the Prime Minister's question-answer time, she said from February 15 to March 22 these persons were accused under the law.
Crimes like theft, extortion and tender manipulation have declined since the new law came into effect. She said damage to vehicles and obstructing traffic have also declined.
Hasina said if punishment of criminals could be ensured by speedy trials, the law and order situation would improve.
Replying to a question from
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We had nothing to do: PM Clinton's security team cancelled visit to nat'l memorial at the last minute, JS told

By Staff Correspondent

The people of Bangladesh would have become happy and felt honoured had US President Bill Clinton visited the National Memorial at Savar to pay homage to martyrs of the Liberation War, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told parliament yesterday.
She said visit to the Memorial is a common practice by the visiting heads of state or government of foreign countries.
Replying to a question on the cancellation of Clinton's visit to Savar, Hasina said her government had taken all security measures for the planned visit and there was no negligence in this regard. "But it was Clinton's security personnel who decided to cancel the visit at the last minute. We had nothing to do about it".
Terminating security a sensitive matter, the Prime Minister said President Clinton also regretted cancellation of the programme.
In reply to a supplementary question, the PM told the House that Clinton had assured her of an extradition treaty to bring Bangabandhu's killers back from the United States. "We have already sent a draft of the extradition treaty to the US authorities," she said, hoping further progress soon.
In this regard, she said the US President emphasised the need for an extradition treaty between the two countries.
Hasina told another questioner that Bangladesh would prefer investments by US entrepreneurs instead of assistance from that country.
She mentioned that US investments in the country has increased from 20 million US dollars in 1995 to 750 million dollars now.
United States is the main market of Bangladeshi goods and the country earned over two billion dollars from export to
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Because of a broken generator Kailashtila LPG plant losing Tk 4 lakh a day

From Iqbal Siddiquee

However, the official refused to say when the plant would be fully operational. Frequent loadshedding by the Rural Electrification Board hampered production, he said.
Sources close to the plant said it would be weeks before the generator would be up and running.
The Sylhet Division Petroleum Dealers Association expressed concern over the crisis. In a prepared statement, the president and general secretary of the association called on officials to resume production as quickly as possible.
The plant, the first in the country to liquefy natural gas for bottling, has been plagued by technical problems and negligence since it opened.
The plant produced just 100 tonnes in January, 60 tonnes in February and 50 tonnes in March. It is supposed to produce 410 tonnes per month.
The plant was built in 1997 near the Kailashtila Gas Field for Tk 20 crore by Rupanarita Prakritik Gas Company Ltd., a concern of Petrobangla.
Test production began on May 5, 1998. The plant officially opened in August 1998 with a goal of producing 5,000 tonnes of LPG and 7,600 tonnes of petrol and diesel annually.
The LPG Storage and Bottling Plant was built nearby for Tk 24 crore. When operational, the plant can bottle about 15 tonnes of LPG daily.

Verdict in case against Nawaz Sharif Apr 6

KARACHI, Mar 29: An anti-terrorism court today said it would announce its verdict in a case against deposed Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif, his brother and five others accused on April 6, reports AFP.
"I have full faith in Allah. I am innocent," Sharif told reporters in the court as the trial ended.
AP adds: Earlier, the defence lawyer for a co-accused in the trial hammered away at apparent contradictions in testimony from prosecution witnesses.
Manzoor Malik presented closing arguments for former southern Sindh provincial police chief. Rama Marbool, who faces charges of hijacking, terrorism, attempted murder and kidnapping along with Sharif and five others accused.
The men have pleaded not guilty. If convicted they could face the death sentence.
The men are charged with refusing to allow the aircraft returning Army Chief Gen Pervez Musharraf permission to land
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