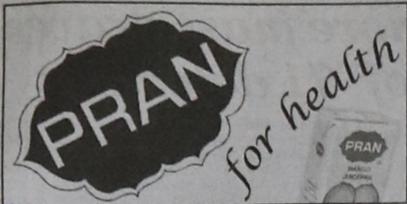


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Ours is the most competent and popular govt since '75: PM

BOSTON, Apr 7: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina warned of massive backlash against any opposition move to topple her government by perverse means and said they would better wait for the upcoming elections, reports UNB.

"They (opposition) don't have logic, they don't understand the language of reasoning, their only obsession is how to grab power by any means," she told a reception accorded to her by New England Awami League at Charles Hotel Thursday morning.

Hasina said she would resign before the next general elections, handing over power to a neutral caretaker government. "If we did good to the people, they would vote us back into government and if not, the people will choose others."

However, the Prime Minister said despite opposition's negative campaign, the acceptability of the government increased over the years thanks to the government's pro-people policy and actions.

"Usually the party in power loses popularity, but in our case See page 11 col 4

Transport workers clash with police, block traffic on Dhaka-Aricha rd

By Staff Correspondent
Two police officials including an assistant commissioner were injured in clashes with transport workers at some places in Mirpur area of the city during nearly three hours of barricade programme by the workers, police said.

Movement of vehicles on Dhaka-Aricha road was disrupted for about three hours as transport workers put up barricades at different points from the Technical Institute to Aminbazar and damaged several vehicles.

The workers were protesting for the second consecutive day the arrest of President of Inter-district Truck Drivers Association Kafiluddin Ahmed.

Police said the two injured are AC Bellal Hossain and OC of Mirpur thana Nabui-lah. Besides, Saiful Islam, body guard of AC Bellal, was injured in attack by the workers on Thursday night.

The workers put up barricades at about 10 am and lifted those at around 1 pm with a declaration that they would go for tougher action if their See page 11 col 8



Sachin Tendulkar (left) and Saurav Ganguly (right) oblige autograph hunters at the hotel lobby while their Asia Eleven captain Wasim Akram (middle) gets off the car after they arrived in the city yesterday. —Star photo

Cricket carnival in city today

By Al Amin

Dhaka captures the fascination of world cricket today when stars from across the globe converge at the Bangabandhu National Stadium to showcase their craft and guile in a unique one-day match.

A sell-out crowd will live up the big bowl when Wasim Akram's Asia Eleven take on Mark Waugh's Rest of the World Eleven in the day-night exhibition match that kicks off at 2:15 p.m.

The game will also culminate the end of ICC's Cricket Week celebration throughout the world.

Satellite channel SET Max and Bangladesh Television will telecast the showpiece event live.

Pakistan legend Akram's Asian side will boast five Indi-



ans, four Sri Lankans and two compatriots.
On the other hand, the elegant Australian opener Mark Waugh will have two countrymen, three South Africans, two

Englishmen, a New Zealander, a couple of Zimbabweans and a West Indian as his charges.

Former Indian captain Srinivas Venkatraghavan and South Africa's Dave Orchard will officiate the match while South African umpire Doug Cowie will act as the TV umpire. Another South African, Peter van der Merwe has been appointed as the match referee.

The match promises a fascinating contest, with both teams going nothing short in firepower.

Akram has a dream opening pair in the right-left combination of Sachin Tendulkar, arguably the best in business, and the destructive Sanath Jayasuriya.

However, the World XI can See page 11 col 7



Cronje & co accused of betting

NEW DELHI, Apr 7: New Delhi police have registered charges against South African skipper Hansie Cronje and other members of his team for match-fixing during last month's one-day series with India, a highly placed police source said Friday, reports AFP.

Similar charges have been filed against two Indians and one of them, Delhi-based businessman Rajesh Kalra, has already been arrested, the source said.

The other was described as an Indian settled in London. He added that police had tape recordings of conversations between Cronje and members of a match-fixing gambling syndicate.

The charges relate to the five one-day international series South Africa played here between March 9-19. It was not immediately clear which other South African cricketers were allegedly involved.

World cricket has been rocked by betting and match-fixing charges in recent years, but this is the first time that fingers have been pointed at South African players.

The game's governing body, the International Cricket Council, has appointed its own panel to investigate various allegations of betting and match-fixing.

The worst hit have been See page 11 col 4

All set for buying eight more Chinese fighters

By M Anwarul Haq

Bangladesh is likely to acquire shortly eight sophisticated Chinese F-7 MG fighter aircraft to bolster fleet strength of Bangladesh Air Force, highly placed sources said.

Dhaka is planning to procure the supersonic attack and defence fighters following receipt of a deferred payment offer from the Chinese government. The offer of credit purchase is learnt to have been made considering the "friendly ties" between the two countries.

The plan to procure Chinese F-7 MGs has received green signal from the highest authorities following clearance from the Ministry of Defence, the sources said.

The Chinese offer is "very attractive" and is being availed due to "cost consideration." Said a top official. The jets are likely to cost much less than the Russian fighters.

According to terms of the offer, Dhaka will have to make no payment for at least two years after arrival of the Chinese jets. Besides, a "spread out" payment schedule would be worked out by the two governments through "negotiations".

The F-7 MGs are the latest multi-role fighters being produced by China and this version is an improvement over the F-7 MBs, two squadrons of which are in the possession of Bangladesh Air Force.

The aircraft acquisition process goes back to October, 1997. At that time, recognising the need for augmenting the fleet capacity of BAF, a policy approval was given by the government for procurement of two squadrons of fighter jets.

One standard squadron comprising 16 aircraft was to be procured from Russia while another squadron was to be

bought from China. After the policy approval, it was decided to go ahead with the procurement plan in two phases due to budgetary constraints -- in the first phase, eight Russian MIGs and eight Chinese fighters.

When the process of purchase through DGDPA was going on, the Russian government proposed an inter-government deal at a "cheaper price and on convenient financial terms."

The government then decided to proceed first with the inter-government deal and acquire eight Russian MIGs and defer the procurement of Chinese fighters.

The F-7 MBs earlier were specially made for Dhaka, it is learnt. At that time, Dhaka's policy planners thought of procuring See page 11 col 8

Telephone installation charge highest in the world

By Mustak Hossain

Telephone installation charge in the country is the highest in the world, according to a World Bank study.

The Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board charges Tk. 18,300 for a new telephone connection. The charge is about 14 times higher than in India and 3.6 times higher than in Pakistan.

The charge is 79 US dollars (Tk 5,029) in Pakistan, 25 dollars (Tk 1,305) in India, 254 dollars (Tk 12,954) in Sri Lanka, 40 dollars (Tk 2,040) in Nepal and 146 dollars (Tk 8,446) in the Maldives, according to a WB study done with 1997 data taken from the International Telecommunication Union.

The rates were lowered in Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka where those were 88.9 dollars, 57.1 dollars and 263.1 dollars

respectively in 1995, according to the ITU.

The installation fee was Tk 10,000 in the country till 1989 when there was analogue system. When digital telephone was introduced in 1989, the installation charge for such a telephone was fixed at Tk 18,300. Since then, it is almost impossible to get a telephone with analogue connection at Tk 10,000 installation fee.

"The average connection charge is 100 dollars for Africa, 163 dollars for Asia, 170 dollars for Americas, 194 dollars for Europe and 68 dollars for Oceania", according to the World Telecom Development Report of ITU.

The monthly subscription rate for a telephone line is 3.7 dollars (Tk 150) in Bangladesh, 1.8 dollars in Pakistan, 1.6 dol-

lars in Sri Lanka and 4.7 dollars in India.

The WB said the high charge is used in Bangladesh to "control the registered demand for telephone".

When contacted, a high official of BTB said they feel the installation fee should be lowered. "But despite this exorbitant fee, the demand for telephone is so high that we can not cope with the situation", he said.

He said few telephone connections can be given now because of inadequate infrastructure.

About 1,50,000 applications for new telephone connections are now pending with the BTB. sources there said. Pending applications will rise to 3,00,000 by the year 2002, the WB report said.

Arsenicosis eating away Abdur Rahman

By Naimul Haq



Doctors amputated Abdur Rahman Khan's left hand last month, closing the latest chapter in the 54-year-old man's fight against cancer caused by drinking arsenic contaminated water.

Unfortunately, the cancer that cost Khan his hand is slowly poisoning his remaining tissues, despite a Tk 50,000 loan he received for treatment.

Hair and nail samples show Khan has very high levels of arsenic in his body. The toxin accumulated during a 10-years period when he and his family drank water from a contaminated tube well in the village of Izerapara.

The results have been fatal. Khan's entire family is affected to some degree by arsenic cancer, or arsenicosis.

"My wife, son and daughters are also affected and exhibiting similar symptom," said Khan, a farmer. "There is no treatment or advice offered at the thana health complexes. We are really helpless and in panic."

Khan was admitted to Dhaka Community Hospital on Febru-

ary 23 and underwent surgery on March 3, 2000. His only hope are radiation treatments to the parts of his body where the cancer is more pronounced.

"Arsenic is slowly killing Khan," said a doctor at the Dhaka Community Hospital yesterday. "We have witnessed thousands of people suffering from similar poisoning."

Dulal Mia is one of those thousand. Another villager from Izerapara, Mia came to Dhaka Community Hospital to get relief.

"It often bleeds and I feel burning pain," said Dulal, examining his destroyed left palm. "I have been suffering from this disease for the last nine years, but no doctor could identify it. I learnt about the poisoning from a televised awareness programme. I realised then I had developed arsenicosis."

Doctors have performed amputations on at least four people at Dhaka Community Hospital recently.

There are many more pa-

Some CMCH docs attend pvt calls during office hrs

From Staff Correspondent CHITTAGONG, Apr 7: Some doctors of Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) are attending calls at private clinics in the city during scheduled office hours, hospital sources said.

Those doctors allegedly leave the hospital without taking permission from the authorities, sources added.

Medical services at the hospital are badly hampered due to such practice of the doctors, sources said.

When contacted, Director of CMCH, Brigadier Md Shahjahan said steps have been taken to check such practice.

"I warned the doctors of punitive measures if they were found involved in unauthorised absence during office hours from 8 am to 2:30 pm to attend to private calls at private clinics," the director said.

"I issued letters officially on March 22 to all doctors and heads of department working at CMCH not to indulge in such unauthorised absence it particularly during office hours", Shahjahan added.

Besides, all heads of department were advised to be See page 11 col 5

Gas supply suspension adds to miseries

Residents in about half of the city areas were made to suffer yesterday due to inadequate publicity on suspension of gas and water supply, reports UNB.

The situation in Malibagh, Maghbazar and some other adjoining areas turned critical as gas crisis was compounded with short supply and in some cases no supply of water.

However, city restaurants did brisk business as many families rushed out to buy cooked foods when they came to know about the Titas trial.

Kerosene also ran short of

supply due to the buying pressure in absence of gas.

Titas Gas Transmission in an advertisement had informed that there would be no gas in Nandipara, Bashabo, Goran, Khilgaon, Sabujbagh, Malibagh, Shahjahanpur, Rampura, Maghbazar, Noyatala, Teigaon, Gulshan, Banani, Moakhali, Badda and Kawran Bazar for 24 hours from 9 am Friday.

But, apart from those areas, snapping of gas supply was reported from Kalabagan, Kathalbagan, Green Road, Ele-

See page 11 col 6

One killed, 16 hurt as BDR open fire on truck workers at C'nawabganj

RAJSHAHI, Apr 7: One person was killed and 16 others were injured as BDR opened fire to disperse agitating truck workers at Chapainawabganj Bus Stand today, reports UNB.

Traffic on the Dhaka-Chapainawabganj highway was disrupted as angry people and the truck workers put up barricade on the road protesting the killing of Rashel, 18, a rickshawpuller.

Police said truck workers See page 11 col 6

Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha
RAJUK Bhaban, Dhaka

Corrigendum to International Tender Notice

This for information of all concerned that in partial modification of tender notice regarding leasing out of 3.68 acres of land at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Agargaon, Dhaka for construction of 5 Star International Chain Hotel published in the national dailies "The Bangladesh Observer" on 5-4-2000 and "The Daily Star" on 6-4-2000.

It is hereby notified that the buying date of tender schedule will be from 6-4-2000 to 13-4-2000 instead of 6-4-2000 to 21-4-2000 and submission of tender forms will be on 14-5-2000 instead of 7-5-2000.

All other terms & conditions will remain unchanged.

Chairman
Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha
RAJUK Bhaban, Dhaka.

GD-318

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April	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
8	-	6:18pm
9	5:43am	-

Prayer Timings

April 8		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:00	5:30
Zohr	12:45	1:30
Asr	4:45	5:00
Maghrib	6:25	6:28
Esha	8:00	8:30

Source: Islamic Foundation