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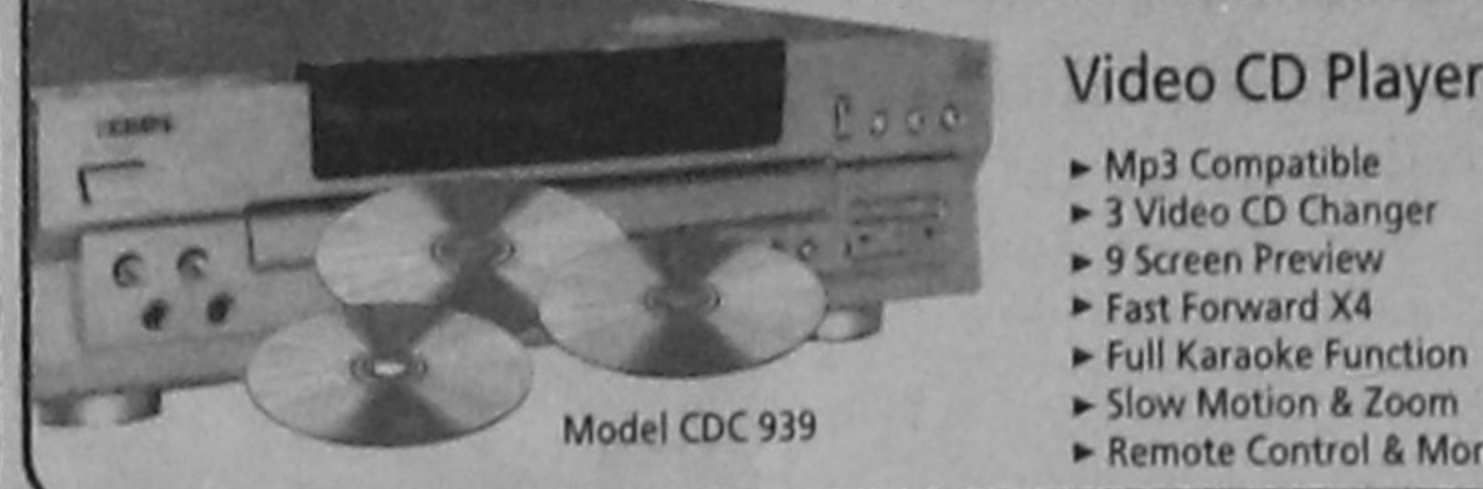
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Mujahideen chief urges Pakistan to send troops to Kashmir

ISLAMABAD, Aug 12: The militant Muslim group that spearheaded a truce with India urged Pakistan today to send troops into the disputed Kashmir region, even if it means a war in South Asia, reports AP.

"Pakistan should physically involve itself in Kashmir. We want war because war will also solve the issue," Sayed Salahuddin, chief of Hezb-ul Mujahideen told The Associated Press.

"We prefer to die 100 times than to live like this," he said referring to attacks by Indian troops against civilians in India's violent Kashmir.

Since the start of the violent secessionist uprising in Indian-ruled Kashmir in 1989, militant Kashmiris and Pakistan have accused Indian soldiers of widespread atrocities and human rights abuses. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have issued reports of widespread human rights abuses by Indian soldiers under siege by Muslim militants.

The silence of the international community to the hor-

rors committed by Indian soldiers in Kashmir is criminal," said Salahuddin. "It is better to have a war than to have this kind of life."

Indian soldiers are accused of arresting and torturing suspected militants, burning down the homes of sympathisers, forced evacuation and there are widespread reports of rape by refugees from the area.

India, meanwhile, accuses the militants of slaughtering hundreds of civilians during the 11-year-old insurgency. In the last two weeks more than 100 civilians, most of them Hindus, were massacred. India blamed the pro-Pakistan militants.

At his headquarters in a posh neighbourhood of Islamabad Salahuddin sharply criticised India for last week's collapse of the ceasefire offer issued by his group on July 24.

From the outset Salahuddin said the ceasefire hinged on "meaningful dialogue." For Salahuddin and his group

"meaningful" meant peace talks that included Pakistan. India and the Kashmiri leadership.

For India it meant bilateral talks with the Kashmiris,

which New Delhi quickly agreed to.

"But bilateral talks have not worked in the past. We have a history of talks between the Indians and the Kashmiris and they have failed," he said.

He accused India of sending mixed signals vacillating between talks within the framework of the Indian constitution to statements from Indian politicians that the Kashmir dispute was an internal problem of India's.

Divided between India and Pakistan after British rule of South Asia ended in 1947, the former princely state of Kashmir has been the flashpoint of two previous wars between the uneasy neighbours.

Salahuddin warned of another one that could result in the use of nuclear weapons un-

less a settlement is reached.

Both India and Pakistan exploded nuclear devices in 1998 and declared themselves nuclear powers. They both say they have nuclear weapons in their arsenals.

He warned that Hezb-ul Mujahideen will step up attacks against Indian soldiers until New Delhi agrees to tripartite talks. The attacks will be more sophisticated and targeted aimed at Indian army facilities inside Indian ruled Kashmir as well as elsewhere in India.

His group took responsibility for last Thursday's car bombing that killed 10 people in Srinagar, the capital of Indian Kashmir.

"Hezb-ul Mujahideen put its reputation and credibility at stake for the ceasefire and it was up to India to show its willingness," he said.

He said Hezb-ul Mujahideen gave India only a few days to respond to its demand for tripartite talks because they were concerned about their fighters on the ground in Kashmir.



Teachers and employees of non-government schools and colleges staged a demonstration in the city yesterday to press their six-point demand including 100 per cent salary from public exchequer.

— Star photo

600 'freed' foreign nationals still languishing in jails

By Raziur Rahman

Nearly 600 foreign nationals including 14 women are in different jails in the country although they have completed their jail term or have been acquitted of the charges against them.

Top jail officials said lack of initiative by the foreign missions concerned to take the person from jail. If the mission wants to do so, jail authorities in the presence of Special Branch of Police hand over the person to mission officials, sources concerned said.

The number of such detainees in Dhaka Central Jail is 30, six of them from Myanmar. Seventy-six released prisoners including seven women are from India and six from Sri

Lanka. Besides, there are some from Thailand, China, Pakistan, Tanzania, Ghana, Nigeria and Liberia.

As soon as an expatriate detainee is acquitted of the charges against him or his jail term is over, the home ministry is informed of this.

After getting permission from the ministry for repatriation of the released prisoner, jail authorities contact the foreign mission concerned to take the person from jail. If the mission wants to do so, jail authorities in the presence of Special Branch of Police hand over the person to mission officials, sources concerned said.

The mission concerned then sends the foreigner back to his country. In reply to a question about the 600 prisoners, a top jail official seeking anonymity said, "Despite repeated requests from

jail officials, the foreign missions concerned have been apparently reluctant to take them for repatriation to their respective countries."

He pointed out that as countries like Tanzania, Ghana, Nigeria and Liberia do not have resident missions in Dhaka, it is difficult for jail officials to contact them repeatedly.

A number of the released prisoners have been in jails for more than two years. The government is spending about Tk 4.86 lakh per month only on foods for the expatriate released prisoners, jail sources said.

When contacted over telephone, the Myanmar Ambassador in Dhaka said they have already informed their government about repatriation of the citizens concerned. He however could not say when it would take place.

Executive jets

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Another official however hinted that procurement of the jets would not take place during the current financial year.

In the budgetary tender, no particular brand of aircraft was mentioned.

He said, "Normally we are looking for a 100-seater aircraft which would have a cruising height of 30,000 to 35,000 feet. In one hop, it should be able to fly around 4,000 kilometres. After procurement, the 100-seater aircraft would be converted into VIP version. It would then be a 50-seater aircraft with three main enclosures. These would be for the VIP, his or her entourage and the security staff."

Talking to The Daily Star, Chief of Air Staff Air Vice Marshal Jamal Uddin said purchase of executive jets is in a "fluid state." Before purchase, the government would like to explore the cost and capabilities of the aircraft.

If procured, the aircraft would be maintained and run by Bangladesh Air Force. "All VIP flights worldwide are run by air force," Jamal Uddin noted.

Asked to describe the type of VIP flights now in the country, the Air Chief said the current fleet comprises two American Bell 212 helicopters and one Russian Mi-17 helicopter. The helicopters are used by the President and the Prime Minister and sometimes by other VIPs on requisition through payment.

The aircraft or helicopter in which the President flies is sometimes identified by the call sign "Golden Eagle" while that of the Prime Minister is identified by the call sign "Air Force One."

Asked about the recent tender, the Air Chief confirmed, "It is not a procurement tender. It is for evaluating the type of aircraft and to find the range of price."

Several countries including neighbouring India operates exclusive executive jets for the President, the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, special envoys and Chiefs of Staff. India's VIP squadron includes at least eight aircraft including Boeing 737s. These are used both for foreign and domestic visits.

One of the main reasons for having a separate VIP fleet including executive jets is to enable top government leaders to move anywhere within a short time.

A senior official said, "The VIP fleet already exists in Bangladesh. It is only a matter of inducting fixed wing aircraft."

Most all of the 400 prisoners in the Al-Jawf Central Prison in the northern city of Al-Jawf began rioting Thursday after dozens of inmates beat up a guard and set fire to blankets and mattresses, the official said by telephone from the capital, Riyadh.

Riot police and special security forces dispatched by Riyadh on two C-130 military planes helped prison guards quash the protest Friday, the official said on customary condition of anonymity.

Saudi authorities do not tolerate any sort of dissent, and the official said the riot was the first of its kind in the kingdom. Damage was extensive, the official said.

The largely Saudi prisoners sought a meeting with the governor of Al-Jawf, Prince Abdul Elah, following repeated unfulfilled promises of improvements from the warden, the official said. An envoy met with them after the riot was quashed and promised to take their demands — which include better food, cleaner living conditions, newspapers, recreational facilities and doors on bathrooms — to the governor.

Al-Jawf is 700 kilometres north of Riyadh.

The authorities have also stepped up security in the country's remote northeastern region where a dozen rebel groups have vowed to sabotage the independence Day celebrations.

India's landlocked northeast region, racked by separatist violence for the past 50 years, is made up of seven mountainous states surrounded by China, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Bus workers attack teachers training instt in Barisal: 40 hurt

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Aug 12: At least 40 people including teachers, students and employees of Abdur Rab Serniabat Teachers Training Institute were injured as unruly bus workers attacked the institute today.

The trouble began following an altercation over bus fares between a bus conductor and some students on way to the institute from Barisal at about 10 am.

The transport workers stopped playing of long route passenger buses from Barisal to rest of the country soon after the incident.

The students of the institute, some 3 kilometres from the town, started boycotting classes for 3 days protesting the incident.

Following the incident students damaged a bus in front of the institute.

Later, the bus workers put up a barricade on the road keeping some buses on the road.

A passenger bus was set ablaze by the students.

The agitating bus workers ransacked the college office and student hostels, leaving 40 people injured.

Seriously injured Kamal Hossain, Nazrul, Biswajit, Milon, Jewel and Santosh of the college were admitted to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMCH) in critical condition.

Police were deploy on the college campus to avert further clash.

Flood

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Meghna basin area, the flood situation in greater Sylhet region is likely to deteriorate it said.

Seven rivers at nine points are flowing above danger level, the bulletin added.

At 11 o'clock the Brahmaputra-Jamuna marked further fall at all points in last 24 hours. The Jamuna was flowing 3cm and 39cm above its danger level at Bahadurabad and Aricha respectively.

In the Brahmaputra basin, the Lakhya was flowing 40cm above danger mark at Narayanjan despite a slight fall, the Turag was above 8cm at Mirpur and the Kaliganga above 60cm at Taraghat.

The Padma, in the Ganges basin, was flowing above red mark by 38cm at Goulunda and by 62cm at Bhagyalul.

In the Surma basin, the Surma at Kanaighat rose by 20cm and was flowing 25cm above danger mark. The Meghna at Bhairab Bazar rose slightly and was flowing 4cm above red mark.

Highest 115mm rain was recorded at Sunamganj 100mm at Sheela, 86mm at Sylhet, 85mm at Sathkira and Kanaighat, 72 mm at Gaibandha, 70mm at Dewanganj and 66.9 mm at Nogaon.

Musharraf, Vajpayee may meet in UN next month

KARACHI, Aug 12: Pakistani military ruler General Pervez Musharraf and Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee may meet at the United Nations in New York next month, a minister said today, reports AFP.

"When the two leaders are present in the gathering nothing can be ruled out," Information Minister Javed Jabbar said.

"Though nothing has so far been discussed and agreed upon they may decide to meet separately," he said.

Jabbar said Musharraf would brief the world leaders and the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan about the situation in South Asia and the necessity of finding a peaceful solution to the Kashmir issue.

The dispute over the Himalayan state, divided between Pakistan and India and claimed by both, has caused two of the three wars between the two countries since their independence in 1947.

11 Feni BNP men chargesheeted in arms case

From Our Correspondent

FENI, Aug 11: Police on Thursday submitted a chargesheet in an arms case against 11 BNP men, including district unit president Prof Joyal Abedin.

The ten other accused are: Jahangir Alam, Nurul Alam, Belal Hossain, Abul Kalam, Jasinuddin, Khokon, Moinuddin, Mamun, Taslim and Shahabuddin.

Police in a raid on March 9, this year, arrested the BNP men from a house at Kaziabagh village under Feni thana, and recovered huge arms and ammunition.

The recovered arms and ammunition include five rifles, five shotguns, one short gun, two revolvers and 232 bullets.

Govt abusing detective agencies to spread false propaganda: BNP

By Staff Correspondent

BNP has accused the government of using different detective agencies as tools for spreading false propaganda, to create grounds for intensifying repression on the opposition activists.

"It is not only immoral, but also dangerous," said the party's Secretary General, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan MP.

Addressing a press conference at 29 Minto Road in the city yesterday afternoon, Bhuiyan requested the official agencies not to feed the press any unfounded or misleading news.

The BNP leader referred to some recent newspaper reports as instances of abusing the official agencies for nasty political purposes.

He said those papers quoted the detective agencies to report on the so-called secret plans allegedly, by some opposition leaders for destructive activities including attacks on the prime minister and members of her cabinet.

"No BNP leader had any secret meeting with any other opposition party to plan such destructive activities. BNP does not believe in the politics of killing, sabotage or conspiracy, nor is it engaged in such practice," he said.

The BNP leader said that while using the agencies against the opposition, the government provided three newspapers with false and inconsistent information.

UNB adds: Bhuiyan said one of the newspapers mentioned that six leaders Khairul Kabir Khokon, Jahangir Alam, Absar Ahmed Chowdhury of BNP, Quamruzzaman, Prof Mojibur Rahman and Engineer Nurul Huda held a secret meeting at

the residence of Khokon end of last month.

The report said the meeting was held for subversive acts at bus and launch terminals, gas and power stations, embassies, Secretariat and government institutions.

He made it clear that BNP is a democratic party and it is continuing movement in democratic way. The opposition parties cannot be refrained from current movement by spreading false and unfounded propaganda.

The BNP secretary general said the information supplied to newspapers by intelligence agencies was "baseless, a figment of imagination of the concerned persons of the intelligence agencies as well as part of evil design for implementing government's conspiracy."

Textile, RMG

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agreement (MFA) regulating garment business with quota-GSP etc. will be phased out and the WTO trade regime will come into force under which there will be no barriers to market access.

"This will mean that the protection which our RMG industry enjoys today will not be there and all the fabric suppliers will overnight become our competitors as they would also prefer value addition to their export," the BTMA president said.

He mentioned that in India and Pakistan, textile industries are unable to utilise their yarn and fabric and they would be able to supply these at prices below the international market price.

Rab's guard held

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programme. Chitra League and Juba League submitted a memorandum to the IGP.

They will lay a siege to the KMP headquarters tomorrow to press their demand for arrest of Rab's killers and removal of "inefficient" police officials from KMP.

Tension still runs high in the city. Sporadic incidences of violence were reported from different places despite deployment of BDR, Armed Police Battalion and riot police in the city.

The OC of Khulna thana, C B Majumdar, was manhandled and abused by angry BCL activists for his alleged corrupt practices and failure to contain crimes in the town.

Earlier on Friday night, Rab's eldest son Arifur Rahman Mithu filed a case with Sonadanga thana without naming any accused. In the FIR, he stated that his father was killed as a result of a deep-rooted conspiracy hatched up by vested quarters.

Leaders of Khulna city AL have blamed some KMP officials for "creating circumstances that ultimately resulted in the murder." Rab had reportedly sought security of his life several times from the police commissioner, they claimed in a statement on Friday night.

They alleged that a section of corrupt police officials are responsible for creating a law and order situation in the city. Inci-

dents of murder, dacoity and mugging have become rampant. Khulna city has become a safe haven for murderers, terrorists and armed cadres of outlawed organisations due to police inaction, inefficiency and corruption, the statement said.

The statement, signed by, among others, State Minister Talukdar Abdul Khaleque, warned that no police official including the police commissioner would be allowed to leave Khulna without accounting for their failure to ensure Rab's security, contain terrorism and recover all illegal firearms.

They also sought intervention by the Prime Minister and the Home minister in these matters.

Meanwhile, Purbo Banglar Communist Party claimed responsibility of the murder. In a message faxed to some newspaper offices, the PBPC said Rab was murdered for being a scapegoat of the ruling party and one of the godfathers of the killers of journalist Shamsur Rahman.

The message, sent in the name of Zahid Hasan, Secretary of the Divisional Committee of outlawed PBPC, said that Rab was killed as he was the "most hated enemy of class struggle."

But some police officials said the fax message may be an attempt to obstruct the investigation and divert people's attention. "Authenticity of the fax message will be checked and re-checked," said a KMP official.

BEA: Saifur

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Chairman of Grameen Bank Dr Mohammad Yunus presided over the seminar.

Noted economist Prof Rehman Sobhan, Chairman of Centre for Policy Dialogue, Dr Abu Abdullah, Director General of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), Prof Jamal Nazrul Islam of Physics Department of Chittagong University, Rashed Khina Menon of Bangladesh Workers Party and Husain Jilur Rahman, Senior Research Fellow of BIDS spoke at the seminar.

The political system in the country is "rotten" and it will not be possible for any government in future to deliver good unless the system is changed, he said.

Only a qualitative change in leadership can stop the "degradation in politics".

Rehman Sobhan said, "In any civilised democratic society it is really rare that the prime minister and the opposition leader do not have any political discourse between them for 10 years."

He asked Saifur Rahman to take initiative with his counterparts in ruling Awami League to talk to both the ladies to change the situation.

Dr Yunus said a peaceful and acceptable election is the most important issue before the nation. "But the politicians are determined to do the opposite." He urged the civil society to take initiative so that "politicians can not jeopardise election."

"Although I am blaming politicians, all the politicians are not dishonest. But the honest politicians are very weak these days," he said. He urged honest politicians to come forward and said people will rally behind them.

Identifying Information Technology (IT) as one of the potential sectors where the country has a chance to prosper in the globalised world, Dr Yunus urged the government to open up all the avenues for proper growth of the sector.

"Government should take initiative to lift all sorts of control of Bangladesh Telephone and Telegraph Board (BTB) on IT and form an independent regulatory body to oversee growth of this sector," he said.

He also urged the government to leave the task of laying submarine optic fiber cable and all sorts of international Telecommunication to the private sector.

Dr Yunus also suggested transforming BTB into a commercial organisation and floating its share in the market.

Dr Yunus also said a common open market in SAARC region is a pre-requisite for the countries of this region in the context of globalisation. "An open market with India is beneficial for both the countries and we have to open all the doors of the border," he said.

Rashed Khan Menon said, "We are living in a country where we do not have any control on its wealth. Foreign powers decide the fate of our wealth."

He claimed that the decision to export natural gas through pipeline was finalised four years back.

Prof Jamal Nazrul Islam said dependence on foreign aid should be as less as possible because it increases corruption and violence in society.

Int'l Youth Day observed

International Youth Day was observed in Bangladesh yesterday as elsewhere in the world with maximum stress for creating more awareness among the youth to help them contribute in a greater pace towards the national development pursuits, reports BSS.

A resolution proclaiming August 12 as the International Youth Day was adopted in the first session of World Conference of Ministers responsible for

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Taliban close public bath houses

KABUL, Aug 12: The hard-line Islamic Taliban closed public bath houses in the war-torn Afghan capital, saying today that Islam forbids men to publicly display their bodies, reports AP.

The 30 bath houses, where men collectively washed, closed last week following an edict by the religious police.

"Islam doesn't allow even men to expose their bodies in public," Ahmedullah Sahafi, a spokesman for the Kabul municipal administration told The Associated Press.

Bearded men and young boys wore shorts or tied towels around their waist while bathing in giant tubs. The poorly lit rooms accommodated 80 to 100 men, mostly the city's poorest who do not have running water.

But not any more. The Taliban, who have very little money to run their war-torn country, say they will build small single occupancy public bath houses.

"Collective bathing is not just against Islam, but also a health hazard because people share water from pools," Sahafi said.

The Taliban, who espouse a harsh brand of Islam, closed public baths for women when they took control of Kabul in 1996.

The Taliban's strict interpretation of Islam does not allow men to wear shorts or sleeveless shirts in public. They also are forbidden to shave.

Women, who have been the target of many of their edicts, are required to wear the all-encompassing burqa and travel outside their home only accompanied by a male family member.

Islamic scholars in neighbouring Pakistan say the Taliban's laws reflect tribal traditions more than Islamic tenets.

30 hurt in clash over mosque fund in Rajshahi

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Aug 12: At least 30 people were injured, 13 seriously, in a clash between two rival groups of villagers at Durga Parila village in Poba upazila this afternoon.

The clash ensued as a sequel to continuing dispute over funds of a mosque.

NEW DELHI, Aug 12: India has stepped up security in its capital, the troubled Kashmir region and the remote northeast ahead of the August 15 Independence Day celebrations, officials and newspapers said today, reports Reuters.

The Indian Air Force has been asked to patrol the skies in New Delhi on Tuesday during a planned speech by the prime minister at the historic Red Fort, the third such vigil since India gained independence from Britain in 1947.

"Indian Air Force helicopters will maintain a strict vigil on the Red Fort area from where Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee will address the nation on August 15," Delhi's Commissioner of Police Ajai Raj Sharma was quoted as saying by the newspapers.

Traditionally, the prime minister addresses the nation from the ramparts of the historic Red Fort in the old city to mark the day. Newspapers said the air force has been asked to shoot down planes flying over the national capital without permission.

Indian parliament okays Jharkhand state

NEW DELHI, Aug 12: Parliament today approved creation of a new Jharkhand State with the Rajya Sabha passing the Bihar reorganisation bill by a voice vote, reports PTI.

The bill, already passed by the Lok Sabha, was approved after rejecting amendments moved by some members from RJD, Congress and BJD, and NDA partner.