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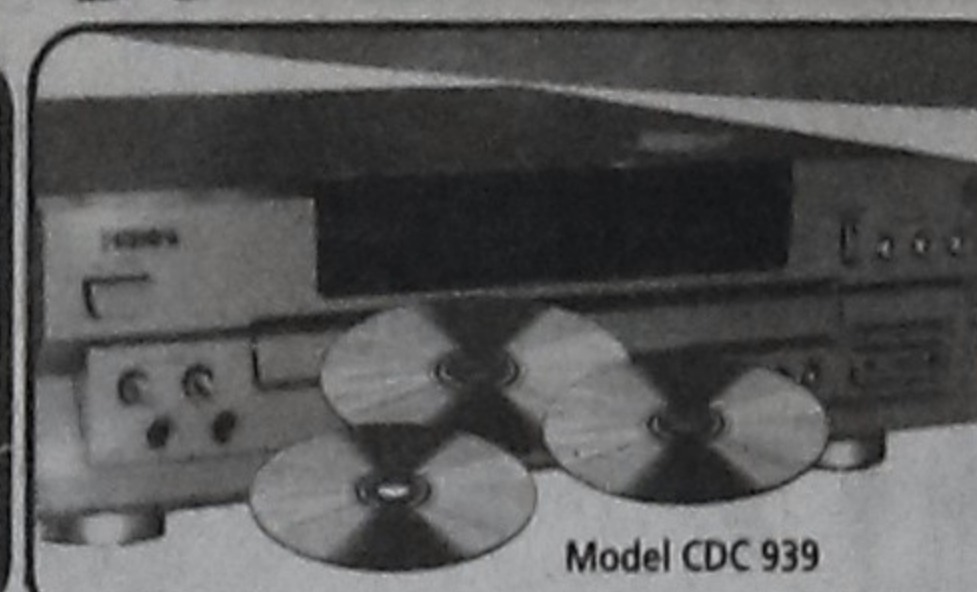
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Vajpayee won't meet Musharraf during UN summit in NY

NEW DELHI, Aug 27: Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee will not meet Pakistani military ruler Gen Pervez Musharraf on the sidelines of a UN summit in New York, India's ambassador to the United States said yesterday, reports AP.

"No, no meeting is planned... this has been overblown by the media," Ambassador Naresh Chandra told the private Star News television channel. "There is no prospect of such a meeting."

A meeting between Vajpayee and Musharraf would have been the first since the former Pakistani army chief took power in a coup in Islamabad and a near-war between the two South Asian enemies in the summer of 1998 in the mountains of northern Kashmir.

Vajpayee begins his 13-day tour of the United States on Sept 5 in New York. He will address the United Nations Millennium Summit on Sept 8 and will hold separate meetings with world leaders gathered at the UN headquarters.

Vajpayee, who is leading a high-powered delegation of Cabinet ministers, prominent lawmakers and business leaders, will address a joint session of the US Congress on Sept 14. He is scheduled to meet US President Bill Clinton after a ceremonial reception at the White House on Sept 15. Vice President Al Gore will also host a lunch for Vajpayee.

Transfer: Ctg customs officials stage protest

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Aug 27: Customs officials opposing the inter-departmental transfer staged demonstration at Chittagong Customs House this morning protesting the government's move, sources said.

The agitating custom officials urged the government to withdraw the decision of inter-departmental transfer immediately.

Recently the government ordered transfer of over 70 customs officials of Chittagong Customs House. Such a large scale transfer order also created scare among custom officials.

Garments fire: Tk 5 lakh demanded for each victim

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Garments Workers Federation demanded Tk five lakh compensation for each of the 12 workers killed in a fire incident at a garments factory at Babani in the city yesterday.

In an emergency meeting, leaders of the federation alleged that the incident took place due to lack of safety measures.

The meeting, presided by its President Khurshid Alam, demanded formation of a BGMEA committee to monitor safety measures in garments factories.

The National Garments Workers Federation in a statement held the factory owners responsible for the incident and demanded Tk two lakh compensation for each of the dead and Tk 50 thousand for treatment of each of the injured workers.

Meanwhile, the BGMEA and the Fire Service and Civil Defence Department have initiated separate investigations into the incident. BGMEA will also carry out a survey on safety measures in garments factories, sources said.

Mizan Chowdhury gets bail in cheating case

By Court Correspondent

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka yesterday granted bail to former prime minister Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury in a cheating case.

Mizan Chowdhury is also chairman of a faction of Jatiya Party.

Barrister Abdullah-Al-Mamun and Advocate Golam Sarwar Moni yesterday brought Mizan Chowdhury to the CMM's Court with a prayer for bail petition. After hearing both the sides the court granted him bail against a bond of Tk 5,000.

Mizan Chowdhury along See page 11 col 7

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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Remains of a teak plantation of Forest Department at Baghaichhari in Rangamati: an illegal harvest of logs lies on the roadside for shipment (left), stacks of seized timber at Baghaichhari forest office (middle) and logs fuel the fire in the clay oven in a tea shop at Baghaichhari bazar (right). —Photo by Dr Ali Mohammad Ali Reza Khan (Story on page-1.)

Leadership dispute

15 trade bodies kept out of FBCCI voter list

By M Shamsur Rahman

The election board of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) has kept 15 trade bodies out of its preliminary voter list due to leadership dispute in those.

Two committees in each of these organisations are claiming to represent these.

Of the organisations, five are chambers and 10 are associations, according to preliminary voter list of the FBCCI.

Business sources said many district chambers and associations remain inactive for most of the year but suddenly become busy before the biennial election of the apex trade body.

"So dispute over leadership often crops up before FBCCI election as their votes are deciding factors," in the polls," a business leader said requesting anonymity.

The apex trade body had earlier sought applications from business organisations for preparing voter list for the election scheduled for October 12.

The FBCCI Secretariat published the preliminary voter list on August 17 and appeals from 77 organisations are now being heard. The problems concern their outdated trade licences and failure to provide income tax certificates. The election board will dispose of the appeals and prepare the final list tomorrow.

Of the 77, names of 11 district chambers and 19 business associations were already dropped.

Foreign Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and American Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AMCHAM) failed to become voters due to outdated trade licence.

None of the Gazipur chamber representatives were included in the preliminary voter list due to dispute.

Leadership dispute also surfaced in Manikganj chamber as two committees submitted ap-

plications, resulting in dropping its name from the voter list.

Other chambers whose representatives could not become voters are Tangail, Bandarban, Jamalpur, Gaibandha, Gopalganj, Sunamganj, Pabna, Sirajganj, Laxmipur, Khagrachhari and Bhola chambers.

The associations whose representatives were not included in the voter list includes Paper Importers Association, Vegetables and Allied Product Exporters Association, Jewellery Association, Foreign Exchange Dealers Association, Bangladesh Association for Software and Information Service, Finished Leather Goods and Footwear Association, Bangladesh Poddar Samity, PVC Manufacturing Association, Chemist and Druggist Association, Marine Surveyors Association, Grocery Business Association, Sandmining and Merchants Association.

Six snatchers jailed for 20 yrs at Barisal

From Our Correspondent

BARISAL, Aug 27: A Special Tribunal here today sentenced six people to 20 years rigorous imprisonment under PSA for looting a bus counter in the town in March this year.

The accused are Sajjad alias Sohag, Amir Hossain alias Arju, Zahid Hossain alias Manik, Delwar Hossain, Prince alias Jewel and Kamrul.

The tribunal also fined them Tk 40 thousand each, in default to suffer four years more in jail.

According to prosecution, the accused attacked a bus counter in the town on the night of March 22 and took away Tk 5,400 at gunpoint. They beat up Abul Kalam Azad, in-charge of the counter and stabbed his brother Shanul Ahmed.

Police submitted charge-sheet against the accused on April 22.

Mohammad Abdus Samad, Judge of the Special Tribunal, after examining witnesses and records, pronounced the judgement.

Smuggling of forex, goods at ZIA A section of CAAB employees involved

By Shaikh Nazrul Islam

A section of employees of Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) is involved in illegal exchange of foreign currency and smuggling of goods by incoming transit passengers at Zia International Airport, sources said.

These employees who are mostly cleaners, conveyer belt personnel and security guards have links with some high officials, they claimed.

They exchange foreign currency with local currency when incoming passengers approach the conveyer belt to collect their luggage.

Passengers who do not have anybody to receive them at the airport become easy victims of the gang because they need local currency to pay taxes and fare to reach their destinations.

Asked why the passengers do not go to banks, an airport official said brokers offer better rates than banks. Moreover, some people prefer brokers to get local currency quickly, he added.

A section of officials keep mum as they get a share of the illegal currency trading inside the customs hall, one security official said requesting anonymity.

"The customs hall is out of bounds for all including journalists but the gang members have access there and move freely even after their duty hours", he added.

Asked how they enter the restricted area, he said all the entry points are guarded by employees of CAAB, which recruits these employees, "So deals are reached very easily", he said.

They collect contrabands form transit passengers at the airport, get those cleared by customs and security departments and then hand over to their owners before they board aircraft, another security personnel said.

Boral murder

Chitalmari thana attacked: Another suspect arrested

BAGERHAT, Aug 27: Local people attacked Chitalmari police station twice today protesting failure of police to arrest the killers of Advocate Kalidas Boral, reports UNB.

The mob ransacked furniture of the thana, disconnected its telephone lines and set fire to five motorcycles.

Witnesses said several hundred people, who were marching towards a protest meeting at Chitalmari, attacked the police station while passing by the area at about 2.30 pm.

But the mob at about 3.30 pm entered the police station again and ransacked its doors and windows.

Police quelled the situation promising immediate arrest of the killers of Boral.

Another report says, Awami Jubo League district committee has expelled its Chitalmari unit

president Alamgir Siddique for his alleged involvement in the Advocate Kalidas Boral killing.

Khan Habibur Rahman, president of the committee, announced the decision before several thousand people gathered to protest the killing of Boral at upazila headquarters this afternoon.

Presided over by Awami League's Chitalmari upazila unit president Mokil Sirajul Haq, the meeting was addressed by Panchanan Biswas MP as chief guest.

Meanwhile, Detective Branch police today arrested another suspect in the Advocate Boral killing.

Shyamol Mondal, 25, of Charbania village in Chitalmari upazila was arrested from Birbhom village in Jhalakathi district.

Shahid's associate on fresh remand

By Staff Correspondent

Bachchu Miah, an associate of DCC Ward Commissioner Saidur Rahman Shahid, arrested in connection with the killing of city BNP leader Advocate Habibur Rahman Mondal, was placed on a fresh remand for three days from today, police said.

But they have failed to arrest Asad, who was driving the motor cycle on which Mondal was going to court on August 20 when the killing took place.

Sutrapur police arrested Bachchu on August 22 and he was placed on remand the next day. Police had earlier said Bachchu planned Mondal's killing.

Mondal was the joint secretary of the city unit of BNP. He had planned to be a candidate for the post of Commissioner of Ward No 83 in the next DCC elections.

The victim's wife earlier told the press that she suspected involvement of Shahid in the killing of her husband. Shahid is away from the country and could not be contacted for his comments.

Muslims are flesh of our flesh and blood of our blood

BJP's first dalit party chief declares

NAGPUR, Aug 27: India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) crowned its first low-caste party chief today and reached out to millions of minority Muslims who have long been wary of its Hindu origins, reports Reuters.

New BJP chief Bangaru Laxman, a member of the dalit community, or the so-called untouchables in the orthodox Hindu social hierarchy, vowed to foster closer ties with the country's 120 million Muslims. "This distance has not helped either our Muslim brethren or our party. Above all, it has not helped India and her democracy," he said after taking over the BJP's reins at a party convention in this western city.

Laxman succeeds Kushabhau Thakre.

Opposition groups in India have long criticised the BJP for pursuing a partisan Hindu agenda but the party has played down some of its pet programmes over the past two years.

These include the building of a temple at a site disputed by Muslims, a common civil code and end to the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, the country's only Muslim majority state. Laxman said there was nothing in the BJP's ideology or policies that should keep away the Muslim minority.

"Muslims are the flesh of our flesh and the blood of our blood," he said quoting from a speech made by one of the party's founding fathers. Some 1,200 BJP delegates are gathered for a two-day session of the party's national council, ending tomorrow.

Prime Minister and senior BJP leader Atal Behari Vajpayee, was forced to cut short a trip to the party con-

vention after doctors advised him to rest.

The conclave is also expected to give a ringing endorsement to the government's economic reforms programme and hand out a tough warning to Pakistan for a spiralling cycle of bloodshed in the disputed Kashmir region.

The BJP conclave is taking place in a city which is home to the 75-year-old hardline Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), or the National Volunteer Corps, widely regarded as the parent of all Hindu groups including the BJP.

The RSS has been the cradle of many of the BJP's leaders including Vajpayee. But in recent months, the chasm between its fiercely nationalist stands on the economy and national security and those in government has widened.

"Some critical voices are heard every now and then within our party and the adherents of our ideological fraternity," Laxman said, referring to the on-going economic reforms.

Pak military regime unacceptable: McKinnon

ISLAMABAD, Aug 27: Commonwealth Secretary-General Don McKinnon called Pakistan's military regime unacceptable today and demanded a quick return to democracy in this poor South Asian nation, reports AP.

The Commonwealth remains opposed to the military rule in Pakistan. McKinnon told a news conference in the federal capital at the end of a two-day visit.

"The attitude of the Commonwealth remains the same. We still do not see any acceptability to the military regime," he said.

High-level meet to discuss GSP issue today

By Staff Correspondent

The government has called a high level meeting today following a US move to cancel the Generalised System of Preference (GSP) facilities to Bangladeshi goods to its market, sources said.

The US government is planning to cut by 50 per cent of the GSP facilities as Dhaka did not allow trade union activities in its export processing zones (EPZs).

The meeting scheduled to be held at the prime minister's office would also discuss the issues related to duty free access of Bangladeshi goods to the US markets, garments export to the USA and overall relations between the two countries, sources said.

Principal secretary to the prime minister Dr S A Samad will chair the meeting and 10 secretaries holding different ministries, BOI chairman, executive chairman of Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA), and presidents of FBCCI, BGMEA and MCCI are expected to attend the meeting.

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