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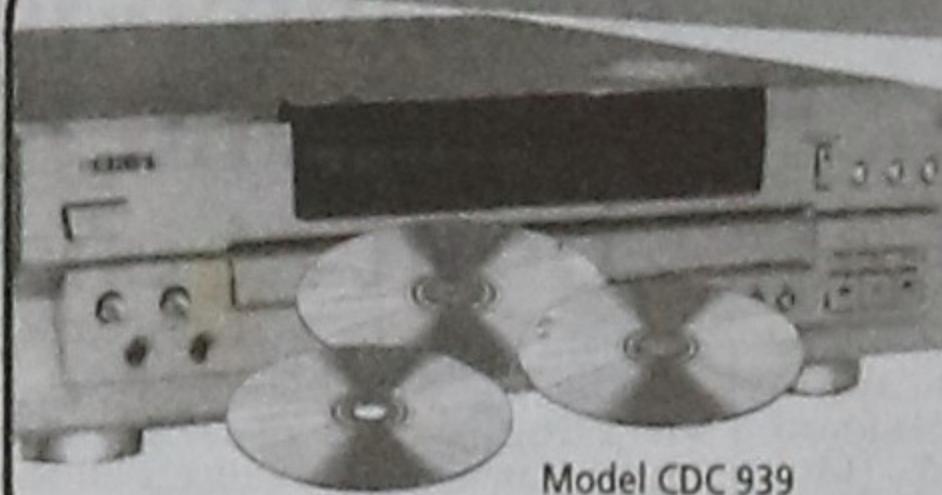
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Olympians lock doors as drug testers reach Sydney

SYDNEY, Sept 12: The ugly issue of drugs at the Olympics was on and off the agenda here today as final preparations went into overdrive with the greatest sporting show on earth just three days away, reports AFP.

The International Olympic Committee has boasted of its strongest ever clamp-down in the build-up to the extravaganza - but officials admitted testers were having problems with its programme.

Olympians at pre-Games training camps around Australia have resorted to locking their apartment doors when the drug testers hit town, one official said.

Australian Sports Drug Agency (ASDA) spokeswoman Vicki Kapernick confirmed not all competitors had been cooperative, but refused to discuss specific cases.

"Some have done some interesting things," Kapernick said, adding that sampling officers have field reports on a number of incidents without elaborating.

"It's been an interesting time for us, and I think we've done pretty well," Kapernick said.

China, still reeling from a scandal that saw 27 athletes booted off the team last week, were at pains to stress to avoid doing talk when they arrived at the athletes' village.

Officials were eager to avoid See page 11 col 7



Millie, one of the mascots of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games is shown at the Main Press Centre in Sydney yesterday, three days before the opening ceremony of the Games. Millie is an echidna, an egg-laying mammal, one of the rarest animals in the world. — AFP photo

Khaleda leaves for KSA today

By Staff Correspondent

BNP chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia leaves for Saudi Arabia today on a 10-day visit at the invitation of King Fahd.

Party sources said Khaleda will fly to Jeddah by a Saudi Airlines aircraft at noon.

She will perform Umrah and undergo medical checkup at the King Faisal Specialised Hospital.

Khaleda's eldest son Tareq Rahman, private secretary Md. Saddeq Ali and Chittagong city BNP president Mir Mohammad Nasir will accompany her, sources said.

Forex reserve hits all time low

Star Report

The country's foreign exchange reserve hit an all time low in recent times when it dipped to 1.37 billion US dollars on Monday.

According to Bangladesh Bank sources, the reserve is equal to the amount needed for imports of two months' merchandise.

The reserve dipped because of the recent payment to the Asian Clearing Union. Before the payment, the reserve was around \$1.5 billion.

According to banking sources, there had been an increase in over-invoicing in recent times. Illegal transactions in foreign exchange also increased, resulting in the reserve crunch.

Raspit Data asked to explain

Star Business Report

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has called for an explanation from Raspit Data Management and Telecommunications Ltd for its alleged overvaluation of expenditure and assets.

The company early this month offered initial public offering (IPO), inviting members of the public to subscribe its shares.

The explanation was sought after a complaint was lodged with the SEC.

Officials of SEC said the company will come up with an explanation today.

2 businessmen mugged in city

A group of muggers snatched Taka 51,600 from two businessmen at Shantinagar crossing yesterday, injuring one of them critically, reports BSS.

The muggers stopped the rickshaw carrying the businessmen and demanded the money. One of the businessmen Joynal was stabbed as he refused to give the money.

The injured was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

CPD dialogue in city told Market forces should be the real stimulus for SAARC's success

By Staff Correspondent

Market forces need to be the real stimulus for South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation's (SAARC) success. This was the unanimous conclusion at the dialogue titled *South Asia: Recent Trends in the Region*, organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue yesterday.

The dialogue, attended by a varied set of specialists from both home and abroad, was chaired by CPD Chairman Professor Rehman Sobhan, while Jim Junke, Director (South Asia) of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada presented the keynote paper.

Pointing at the necessity of regional cooperation, and praising Bangladesh's role in

initiating the SAARC, Jim Junke said: "Even before the establishment of the SAARC, Bangladesh has been contributing positively to South Asian affairs." Its commitment to peace was evident when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited both India and Pakistan after they ran nuclear tests. However, the Indian decision to stall the summit owing to political changes in Pakistan was certainly very short-sighted as far as regional cooperation is concerned," he added.

Focusing on the postponed SAARC summit scheduled in the Nepalese capital Kathmandu in October last year, Prof. Rehman Sobhan said, "Smaller nations have always

played important role, and they played it positively; and it is the people of the region who not only wanted to make Saarc work, but also wanted to strengthen it."

While explaining India's stance against the regional body, Prof. Sobhan tried to lessen the seeming pessimism among the discussants when he said, "The Indian factor has always been there right from the beginning. The very size of India says everything. The whole process of SAARC will be meaningless without it. What we need to do now is find ways to convince India to play its part," he added.

As there are strong entre-

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Pvt container port in Ctg: Rule Nisi on 7 officials

By Staff Correspondent

The High Court yesterday issued a *rule nisi* on seven high officials asking them to explain why the order for lease of lands to S S A Bangladesh to set up private container ports would not be declared illegal and unlawful.

The respondents include the secretaries of shipping and land ministries and the chairman of Chittagong port.

The shipping ministry earlier ordered the chairman of Chittagong port to lease lands to the American company at the estuary of Karnaphuli river in Chittagong and at Pangoor in Dhaka.

Abut 212 acres of land were earmarked for the container port in Chittagong, of which 20.77 acres belong to Chittagong port and 88 acres to Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA).

A Division Bench comprising Justice Nurul Islam and Justice

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SKOP's 48-hr programme ends

By Staff Correspondent

The second day of 48-hour rail-road barricade programme enforced by Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) ended yesterday without any incidents.

SKOP enforced the programme demanding implementation of agreement signed with the government two years ago.

The programme was observed in different industrial belts including Hajaribagh, Tejgaon, Tongi, Demra, Posnoga and other industrial areas in the country. SKOP leaders said.

Leaders and activists of SKOP brought out a procession and held a rally in front of Sonali Bank at Motijheel in the city yesterday.

The rally was addressed among others, by SKOP coordinator Dr Wajedul Islam Khan, Noor Hossain, Jafrul Hassan Nasu Miah and Paritosh Mandal.

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Putin survives attempt on life: Ukraine

KIEV, Sept 12: An assassination attempt against Russian President Vladimir Putin was foiled last month at a summit of ex-Soviet nations in Yalta, the head of Ukraine's security services, Leonid Derkach, was cited as saying by Interfax today.

He said the Ukrainian law enforcement authorities had "received information about an assassination bid against Russian President Vladimir Putin" during the informal August 18-19 summit.

"We have no official comment," an FSB spokesman told AFP.

However, Interfax cited an unnamed source from the Russian presidential bodyguard service as saying that the Ukrainians had been tipped off about the assassination bid by Russia's secret services.

The Kremlin for its part stonewalled questions today about the alleged assassination plot, saying: "We do not have this information."

Derkach said today that the Yalta case was "not the first time" the Ukraine security

Ukraine territory," Interfax reported.

Derkach added that the suspects "were expelled from Ukraine territory," Interfax reported.

Russia's domestic intelligence service, FSB (formerly KGB) refused today to confirm or deny Derkach's claims.

Elected president in March this year, Putin was the architect as prime minister of the Russian army's crackdown in Chechnya, where federal troops have been fighting an 11-month war against pro-independence rebels.

He said the Ukrainian law enforcement authorities had "received information about an assassination bid against Russian President Vladimir Putin" during the informal August 18-19 summit.

Several suspects believed to be preparing an attempt on Putin's life had been arrested in Ukraine's Crimea peninsula following a tip-off from intelligence agencies in other countries, he told Interfax.

Derkach added that the suspects "were expelled from

told a news conference Saturday that four Chechens and several Middle Eastern nationals had been arrested after Ukraine received information about the planned assassination of one of the leaders attending the CIS summit in Yalta last month.

He currently receives criminal inquiries relating to individuals who have come to Ukraine from other CIS countries and are wanted in connection with earlier crimes," he was cited as saying by Interfax.

The Consumer Association of Bangladesh (CAB) in a statement also expressed concern at the enhancement of transport fare.

The Commonwealth of Independent States is a 12-strong grouping of all the former Soviet republics except the three Baltic countries.

The Kremlin for its part stonewalled questions today about the alleged assassination plot, saying: "We do not have this information."

The Ukrainian security chief

Adel to surrender in court today

By Staff Correspondent

Jahangir Mohammad Adel, who is facing a sedition charge will surrender before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka today following an order passed by the High Court on Monday.

The Vacation Bench of Justice Nurul Islam and Justice Latifur Rahman on Monday ordered him to surrender before the trial court after hearing his bail petition. The court also ordered police not to harass or arrest him during the period.

Earlier, Adel went to the court on Sunday and spent the night in his lawyer's chamber since his bail petition could not be heard during the day for time constraint.

Adel has been charged for sedition for hoisting Pakistan's national flag atop his residence on the Independence day of that country on August 14.

Kotwali police brought the sedition charge against Adel on August 21. Police also attached his moveable property on September 8 following a court order.

The bidding that closes on October 10 is for procuring four aircraft on operating lease or lease purchase or lease with option to purchase. The lease will be for 10 years in three phases with phase-in/phase-out plan for four DC-10-30 aircraft of the Biman. The 10-year period includes one year of wet lease for training of crew.

The potential supplier has

Vajpayee's remarks at VHP function in NY spark controversy

From Pallab Bhattacharya

NEW DELHI, Sept 12: Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's participation in a function sponsored by Vishwa Hindu Parishad in New York on Saturday and some of his remarks there have set off a controversy.

The alliance will also stage demonstrations across the country tomorrow to protest government's "conspiracy" to export gas and "anti-state" remarks by the Prime Minister during her interview with BIP's "real agenda."

The focus of opposition attack is the reported remark by Vajpayee, now on a tour of the United States, that when BJP secured two-thirds majority in Parliament it would be able to build India of "our dream." The Congress charge at Vajpayee was led by the party's senior leader and former External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh who accused the Prime Minister of "indulging in linguistic acrobatics and verbal jugglery on Hindutva agenda" and "in the process the 'mukhota' (mask) has fallen and the true face of Vajpayee has been exposed."

After this, there need be no

illusion about the hidden agenda that Vajpayee represents and espouses," Singh said in a statement here yesterday.

The opposition parties say the BJP has put on the backburner its espousal to "Hindutva" ideology, as manifested in Ram temple construction at the disputed site in Ayodhya, uniform civil code and withdrawal of special Constitutional status to Jammu and Kashmir state, only for the sake of heading a coalition and would revive its own separate agenda if it came to power on its own strength.

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Shazneen case adjourned till Oct 1

By Court Correspondent

The Special Court for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka yesterday adjourned the proceedings of the Shazneen Tasnim rape case till October 1 following a time prayer by the defence lawyer.

Judge M Shah Alami Miah adjourned the proceedings of the case upon a petition filed by the lawyer for Shahidul Islam, the man accused in the case.

He submitted that it was not possible for him to be present in the court during cross-examination of the complainant

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Rubel murder Two more PWs cross-examined

By Court Correspondent

Two prosecution witnesses in the Shamin Reza Rubel Murder Case were cross-examined in the Third Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka yesterday.

Judge Mollah Mostafa Kamal adjourned the proceedings of the case till 2 pm today.

Havildar Dalil Uddin, the 19th prosecution witness in the case said he was on duty in DB office on July 23, 1998 and came to know that one Rubel arrested by Sub-Inspector Haukul Islam Thakur, fell sick and he would be taken to DMCH for treatment.

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Transport strike in Rajshahi continues

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Sept 12: Direct bus service between Rajshahi and other districts remained suspended for the second day today at the call of Rajshahi District Bus Sramik Union.