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INSIDE TODAY

COMMENT

In view of the heightened awareness about human rights in recent years and revulsion against violation of the same, and also on the precedence of the ongoing war crimes trials in The Hague and Arusha, Bangladesh Government should now formally approach the UN for convening a similar tribunal to try the war criminals of 1971, writes **Hasnat Abdul Hye** in *Never Too Late*

Mohammad Badrul Ahsan's
Success of Failure, Failure of Success

SOUTHASIA

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Future of the RMG Sector: The Need for Strategic Initiative

SPORTS

News and views on the 27th Olympic Games in Sydney in colour plus others

Ferry sinks in Padma

All 35 passengers rescued

By Staff Correspondent

A ferry carrying eight trucks and two private vehicles (Dhaka KA 11-5034 and Dhaka CHA - 1845) sank in the river Padma near Hardinge Bridge late Wednesday night.

All 35 passengers on board were, however, rescued, our correspondent from Kustitia reports.

The 30-year-old ferry number 13 that left the Bheramara ferry ghat in Kustitia at about 11pm for Pakshey in Pabna drifted two kilometres downstream due to strong current in the middle of the river Padma and sank as a massive crack developed in its bottom. Pabna district officials quoted survivors as saying:

"Some country boats nearby helped rescue passengers until an empty ferry came for rescue after about half an hour of the incident," said one official of Pabna district.

The Deputy Commissioner of Pabna Md Mahbubur Rahman, when contacted over telephone last night said, "I sent officials to the spot and heard that the salvage ship 'Hamza' is on its way from Khulna to the accident spot."

It is not sure how long Hamza will take to arrive at the site," said one official of Roads and Highways Department that manages the Bheramara-Pakshey ferry service.

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EC proposes free access to 919 LDC products

By Rafiq Hasan

The European Commission (EC) has placed before the EU Council of Ministers a proposal for granting duty free and quota free access of all products, except arms, from 48 least developed countries including Bangladesh.

According to a message received in Dhaka from the Trade Directorate-General of the EC, the proposal seeks to allow export of 919 items as duty free and quota free to the 15 European countries.

The EC however proposed exclusion of 25 items in the arms and ammunition category from the benefit.

But access of three agricultural products -- rice, sugar and banana -- would be implemented in stages, it proposed.

As the Generalised System of Preference (GSP) facilities are going to be withdrawn in 2005, the least developed countries (LDCs) have been asking for some sort of facilities from the developed countries, EU sources noted.

Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan

and the Maldives are the LDCs in South Asia.

A senior official at the EU Dhaka Office confirmed the EC move and said it was taken in view of the 'EU commitment at the World Trade Organisation (WTO)' regarding opening of its markets to the least developed nations.

"If the proposal is implemented, it would eliminate all remaining obstacles to access of products originating from the least developed nations to the EU markets," said J B Ketelsen, first councillor in charge of trade and economic cooperation.

The proposal would now go to the EU Parliament. If endorsed by the parliament, it would become a law, he said.

In reply to a question, Ketelsen said if everything goes smoothly, it may take a couple of months to become a law.

Export from Bangladesh to EU countries would get a tremendous boost if duty free and quota free access is allowed, said Monjurul Hoq, President

of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

Apparel export to EU countries would almost double if the facilities are provided, he said.

Bangladesh exports apparels worth around 2.5 billion dollars to the EU market annually. Of this, the share of knitwear items is around one billion dollars, Hoq said.

Ketelsen pointed out that the EC proposal would have to be accepted by all member states of the EU. "There are certain member states who are yet to prepare for accepting goods from other countries, particularly agricultural items".

"After the EU takes such a move, it would be difficult for other developed countries like USA, Canada and Japan to refuse duty free and quota free access of goods from least developed countries," Ketelsen said.

The message received in Dhaka said EU trade commissioner Pascal Lamy welcomed

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Where rickshaws rule

Rickshawpullers have made the section of Mirpur Road between Nilkhet and Science Laboratory crossings their own way, creating traffic jams all day long.

Star photo: Amran Hossain

Raducan rekindles Romanian glory

SYDNEY, Sept. 21: Tiny gymnast Andreea Raducan rekindled Romania's Olympic past. Marie-Jose Perec preferred to flee the present, reports AP.

Raducan became the first Romanian to take the all-around gold since Nadia Comaneci in 1976, and did so with the same effortless grace.

At sweet 16, she led a Romanian medals sweep in the event, the first time a country has done that since the former Soviet Union in 1960.

"I am very happy that I was able to control my emotions," Raducan said.

It is more than Perec could muster.

France's track star could have gone for a fourth Olympic gold in Sydney. Instead, she fled the host city and was being questioned by Singapore police after her travel companion allegedly attacked a cameraman.

In the pool, Jenny Thompson did not let history slip away so easily: A tied bronze medal made the American the most decorated woman swimmer in history with nine career medals.

She broke a tie with Dawn Fraser of Australia, Kornelia Eder of Germany and American Shirley Babashoff, who have eight Thompson won seven golds in relay events but none in individual competitions.

"I think it's time for me to stop looking at what I don't

have, and look at what I do have," she said.

It was a rare day when a single bronze overshadowed second golds in the pool by Lenny Krayzelburg and Inge de Bruijn.

Krayzelburg, the Ukraine-born American, won by setting a new Olympic record in

fencing Olympic champion gained visibility by not showing up for races. She went into a shell and only communicated with the outside world through her website, where she claimed media harassment.

Even French team officials had no clue to her whereabouts

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the 200 backstroke.

Even away from the Sydney Opera House, Perec's Olympic soap opera refused to end.

Perec fled on the eve of her first heat in the 400 metres, claiming she had been attacked in her hotel. It virtually forfeited any chance to add a third 400-metre title to those she won in Barcelona and Atlanta. She also won the 200 in Atlanta.

It climaxed a turbulent summer during which the de-

in Sydney.

A half-day after the scuffle in Singapore, she was allowed to leave the country again, destination unknown.

She was not the only star to have second thoughts about Friday's opening day on the track.

Canada's Donovan Bailey, who set a world record in winning the 1996 gold medal in the 100 metres, has a congested

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Brigadiers on bank boards

Star Report

Against the will of the Bangladesh Bank, the government yesterday appointed five brigadiers in the boards of some nationalised commercial banks and development financial institutions.

The army men who got the appointment are Brigadier Talibur Rahman in Sonali Bank, Brigadier Ismat Ahmed Chowdhury in Kishki Bank, Brigadier Md Manjur Alam in House Building Finance Corporation, Brigadier Ahmed Muktar Arif in Rupali Bank and Brigadier Md Abul Hashem Khan in Investment Corporation Bangladesh.

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SSF likely to be revamped

Experts call for review on its strength

By M Anwarul Haq

The elite Special Security Force (SSF) entrusted with protecting lives of the President and the Prime Minister and visiting VIPs may be revamped to beef up its capability, sources said.

Security experts feel that a high-powered committee should review the organogram, strength, modus operandi and technical capability of SSF.

The recent detection of two 'potential lethal devices' that could be a threat to lives of the Prime Minister and scores of people at Kotalipara spurred a

renewed thinking at the highest level about the need for review of the security agency.

The sources said although a few persons have been arrested and some police officers transferred after the Kotalipara incidents, SSF, the apex security apparatus responsible for the Prime Minister's security, has been spared of any scrutiny.

The SSF, it is learnt, has its own defence for any alleged lapse. It pleads that it is not responsible for the failure in timely detection of the two devices (at Kotalipara) or for any

'oversight'.

Normally, written certificates about security clearance of any venue for VIPs programme are provided to SSF by police, Special Branch and National Security Intelligence (NSI) when its personnel arrive there. Usually, SSF personnel take charge of a venue three or four days ahead of such a programme.

"Our mission is to ensure immediate protection of the VVIP. The area of the programme is to be secured by police and intelligence agencies. We receive written certificates

that everything is satisfactory," said a ranking SSF officer on condition of anonymity.

The SSF has a strength of 100 plus army personnel now. Unlike such agencies in most other countries, the SSF is composed entirely of commissioned army officers.

The experts say, its strength is inadequate and should be increased.

Although headed by a Major General, its command structure is lopsided, they say. There is no provision for the post of a

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Soaring prices fuel energy crisis fear

France proposes G7-OPEC meeting at Prague

WASHINGTON, Sept. 21: With soaring oil prices fueling anger on both sides of the Atlantic, leaders were scrambling yesterday to avert an energy crisis and all but begging oil producers to boost output, says DPA.

Politicians were meeting in Europe and the United States to find ways to bring down prices from a ten-year high of 37 dollars per barrel -- up from a low of about 10 dollars a barrel last year.

France proposed an emergency meeting this weekend at the IMF-World Bank summit in Prague between the G-7 group of most industrialised nations and OPEC, the cartel that largely controls oil production.

US President Bill Clinton was considering whether to tap national strategic fuel reserves untouched since the Gulf War. There were doubts, however, that releasing some of the 571-million-barrel stockpile will actually influence world oil prices.

In a Congressional hearing, Republican Dan Burton warned, "It looks to me like we're headed for an energy crisis this winter, and another one next summer."

Concern was heightened by news that the US trade deficit reached a record level of almost 32 billion dollars in July, due mostly to a record volume of oil imports of more than 300 million barrels.

In Europe, truckers and farmers kept up protests that have crippled many regions for weeks. Spanish fishermen and Swedish truckers again blocked access to ports.

In Britain, rumours of fresh lorry blockades sparked large-scale panic-buying that saw

10-kilometre-long traffic jams outside petrol stations.

European Union transport ministers meeting in Luxembourg, however, remained divided over how to tackle the crisis.

France, Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands were attacked for caving in to protests by slashing taxes, by nations who have refused to do so, like Germany, Britain, Sweden, Denmark and Australia.

In Brussels, the EU Commission also warned that cutting taxes was not an "appropriate response" because taxes serve to combat global warming and to encourage alternative energy use.

Officials conceded, however, that plans for an EU-wide eco-tax could be shelved for now in the face of public outrage at fuel costs.

The transport ministers ended their talks with an appeal to the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to "better adapt" oil supplies to market demand.

That call was echoed in Paris, by the International Energy Agency. The cartel could increase daily output by 2.2 million barrels a day, said its executive director, Robert Priddle.

He also warned oil producers that the current high prices bore "the seed of self-destruction" for oil-rich countries.

OPEC -- due to meet in Caracas, Venezuela in the middle of next week -- has rejected the criticism, saying it produces enough oil and blaming high-tolling governments and oil market speculators.

Energy experts meeting at

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