

Dhaka-Yangon talks proposed to ease border tension

Bangladesh on Tuesday proposed holding talks with Myanmar to ease frontier tension in the wake of a cross-border shootout, a foreign ministry official, reports AFP.

The official, quoted by the BSS news agency, said Dhaka had requested Yangon to honour a 1966 border agreement and argued that controversial shrimp cultivation in Bangladesh, close to the frontier, did not violate the accord.

"Shrimp cultivation is not contrary to the agreement," he said referring to Myanmar's reported objection to the cultivation.

Also Tuesday, Dhaka sent a proposal for a flag meeting between the border guards of the two neighbouring countries, Colonel Shawkat, speaking from the southeastern frontier town of Cox's Bazar, was quoted as saying by BSS.

Talks on joint PSC for Block 9 hits another snag

Star Report

Negotiations for a joint production sharing contract (PSC) for block 9 has once again been stalled, after US oil company Chevron, in a recent letter, said that Petrobangla should not interfere with equity sharing of the companies involved in the talks.

At the instruction of the Ministry of Energy, Petrobangla was mediating a joint PSC, involving Chevron, Texaco, Tullow and BAPEX, for the most coveted block. The government was also pushing for an equity sharing formula following a disagreement amongst Chevron, Texaco and Tullow on the issue.

Chevron apparently agreed to the Petrobangla proposal, which envisages 30 per cent equity each for the foreign companies and ten per cent carried over interest for BAPEX, the Bangladeshi company. However, it had reservation against a government plan for the future of Texaco's share.

Last year Texaco expressed willingness to withdraw from the bid and transfer its share to fellow US company Chevron. Rejecting the idea, Tullow, the Irish company, called for equal distribution of Texaco shares between foreign companies.

As a compromise formula, the government suggested proportional distribution among the remaining three oil companies. According to its plan, Chevron and Tullow, each having 30 per cent share, get 12.5 per cent each from Texaco's share while the remaining five per cent carried interest holder.

The joint venture agreement (JVA) requires that BAPEX sacrifice its five per cent share in favour of Chevron, making the US

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Hired gun of Titu killed Tayebi: Wife tells court

CHITTAGONG, Jan 17: Priti Chatterjee, wife of Indian merchant Zibran Tayebi who was murdered in June, 1999 told the court today that gunmen hired by Yasin Rahman Titu killed her husband, reports UNB.

Deposing as prosecution witness in the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, she said she suspected that Tayebi was killed following a dispute over love affairs.

Priti came here with her father-in-law TA Khan. She appeared before the court at 11.30 am.

She said that they got married on June 18, 1994 in court and came here on November 8, 1994.

Zibran Tayebi, country manager of Entrans Maritime Bangladesh Private Ltd, was shot dead on June 9, 1999 on his way home from office at Agrabad.

His wife had left the country along with the body the following day.

After investigation police submitted charge sheet against eight persons including son of a leading industrialist on November 25, 1999.

Six of them are in jail and two others including Yasin Rahman Titu are absconding.

The deposition of Priti Chatterjee will resume tomorrow.

The court earlier completed cross-examination of 32 prosecution witnesses.

Notebooks flood market despite govt ban

By Mustak Hossain

Notebooks have flooded book-stalls in the city as an alternative to textbooks, still unavailable in the market, thanks to the failure of three Beximco concerns to print and distribute these in the market as per the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) schedule.

In violation of a government ban on printing and publication of notebooks up to class six, imposed with a view to maintaining standard of education, some publishing houses are cashing in on the prevailing textbook crisis, said sources.

Pustaka, Shuktara and Free Press, the three Beximco concerns which were awarded the right to print and distribute textbooks for the academic year 2001, are yet to print and distribute around eight crore textbooks despite two extensions on the original deadline.

It is learnt that a syndicate of

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Notebooks, banned by the government, have flooded the markets in the country since their demand has gone up following non-availability of textbooks. The ultimate sufferers are the students and, of course, the guardians.

--Star photo

Arguments in cassette case continue

By Special Correspondent

Arguments in the cassette case regarding an alleged conversation between jailed former president H M Ershad and a High Court judge and contempt charges against four newspapers continued at the High Court yesterday.

A division bench comprising Justice Amirul Islam and Justice Shafiqul Islam is hearing the case.

The charges following after Daily Manob Jamin published on September 16 last year a story-based on the alleged conversation between Ershad and a judge of the High Court Division, which had sentenced him in Janata Tower Case.

He has been accused of trying to influence the court and justice.

The Manob Jamin was accused of contempt and the other three dailies the Ittefaq, Sangbad and Janakantha faced similar charges for publishing reports and comments on the conversation between Ershad and Justice Naimuddin Ahmed.

Opposition politicising courts: Hasina

CHITTAGONG, Jan 17: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday accused the opposition of politicising the courts to deprive the people of justice, reports UNB.

"They will not be allowed to do so, you must remain alert against those who are letting loose terrorism on the court premises," she told a huge public meeting at Sitakunda High School ground.

The Prime Minister, who came here to open an eco-park, said the people should be cautious about

those who dared to unleash terrorism at the highest court and kicked the door of the Chief Justice's office.

She said the BNP-led opposition parties are creating problems in the court with an evil design to get their selected persons appointed as judges of the Supreme Court. They have obstructed the activities of the Supreme Court through terrorism, she added.

Hasina said, "They should be put into trial. They want to return to power through terrorism."

She said people are aware of their character, people also know how they came to power in the past by using arms and unleashing terrorism. She said General Zia ran the country by imposing curfew every night and General Ershad, following in his footsteps, introduced autocratic rule.

The Prime Minister said the leaders of BNP attacked an iftar shop and ransacked shops and stores in the port city of

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45,000 Bangladeshis to perform Hajj this year

With the introduction of new Hajj system, a total of 4,534 people will be able to perform Hajj this year under government management, reports UNB.

However, the other Hajj pilgrims will have to go to Makkah under the management of private agents appointed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

As per an agreement signed with Saudi Arabia, some 45,000 Bangladeshi pilgrims, including ballotees and non-ballotees, will perform Hajj this year.

"The new Hajj system will ensure better facilities for non-ballotee pilgrims," State Minister for Religious Affairs Moulana M Nurul Islam told a press conference yesterday.

Members of the visiting five-member Hajj delegation from Saudi Arabia led by the Advisor of Saudi Hajj Ministry Dr Darbesh Siddique Jastaniya were present on the occasion.

Addressing the press conference, Saudi delegation chief Dr Darbesh Siddique said the government of Saudi Arabia hailed the new system of appointing Hajj agencies.

He assured all possible help in implementing the new system and expressed hope that the pilgrims would get better services under the new system.

Investigation officer of Nikunja Murder Case cross-examined

By Court Correspondent

Mohammad Abdul Kahar Akand ASP of CID, the 25th prosecution witness as well as the investigation officer of the sensational Nikunja Bihari Debnath Murder Case was cross-examined in the Fifth Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court Dhaka yesterday.

Judge Syed Aminul Islam adjourned the proceedings of the case till January 24.

Abdul Kahar will be cross-examined again on that day.

Kahar in his statement said he took up the case on January 16 last year and started interrogating the arrested accused the same day.

He told the court that he arrested Gous Rana and Mojibur on the basis of statements of two other accused Deen Islam and Shahinoor.

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Two dacoities in city

By Staff Correspondent

Cash, gold ornaments and other valuables were looted and two people injured during two incidents of dacoity in the city yesterday.

A gang of six dacoits entered the house of one Abu Khair, a businessman at Riazbagh of Taltala in Khilgaon by cutting window grills at about 3.30 am.

They confined Khair's four daughters and wife in a room and Khair and his son Mahmud in another room.

The dacoits asked Khair to give them the key of almirah. As he refused to oblige, the gang became furious and hit Khair and his son Mahmud with lethal weapons.

Sensing the presence of dacoits, the guard of the house went to a nearby mosque and informed the Imam. The Imam

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Pedestrians' plight
Construction materials piled up on a Segun Bagicha road in the city pose immense inconvenience for pedestrians. The law forbids it, but lack of enforcement lets the offenders get away. --Star photo

CID seeks police protection for Jalal's family

By Staff Correspondent

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID), which investigated the Jalal murder case, has asked the police to ensure security of Jalal's family members who have been facing threats from different quarters, sources said.

"It is our prime duty to serve any people in trouble, and for this very reason we have sought protection of the family," CID Special Superintendent Lutfor Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday.

It may be recalled here that Shafi Ahmed Jalal, a Detective Branch (DB) source was brutally killed by fellow DB men. His decomposed body was recovered from the rooftop water reservoir of the DB building in the city.

The accused DB Inspector Ziaul Ahsan, Habilder Billal Hossain, Constable Abdur Rab, driver Abdul Malek and DB office canteen manager Anwar Hossain were awarded a charge sheet.

"We have asked the police to take

necessary steps as the family members demanded help from us," Lutfor said.

The CID has sent letters to the police commissioner, deputy commissioner and officer in-charge of the Mohammadpur Thana in this regard.

Lutfor, however, could not say last evening whether any measures have been taken so far in this connection.

AKM Mohsinuzzaman, Officer-in-Charge of the

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Inclusion of rebels in JCD body may defuse tension

By Staff Correspondent

The present crisis in the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) would be over if and when the representatives of the rebels are accommodated in the full-fledged central committee of the BNP-backed student front, party insiders said.

A large number of JCD activists began to agitate against the Pintu-Laltu-led new central committee when BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia announced the five-member body on December 23.

Pressured by Khaleda Zia, they however withdrew their movement

and agreed to accept the new leadership with Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu and Shahabuddin Laltu as president and general secretary. Khaleda at a January 8 meeting with the dissidents also warned them of dire consequences for insubordination.

The crisis seemed to have ended with Khaleda's threat, but problems again surfaced as the rebels drove Pintu-Laltu men out of Dhaka University campus after a gunfight on Thursday and refused to let them back until the central committee is full-fledged with representation

from the rebel group.

Talking to The Daily Star, a number of JCD leaders and activists said that Pintu and Laltu would have to accommodate them in the central body if they wanted to resolve the present crisis.

"There is no way for them but to include the dedicated student activists of JCD or else we'll resume our agitation," said a top

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