

Hearing on writ challenging PSA begins

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Hearing on the first writ petition challenging constitutional validity of the Public safety Act (PSA) began in the High Court (HC) yesterday.

A Division Bench of the HC comprising Justice MA Aziz and Justice Mohammad Shamsul Huda is hearing the writ filed by Barrister Abdur Razzak on behalf of Afzalul Abedin and others, all activists of Islamic Chhatra Shibir.

They were arrested in a case filed against them under the PSA at Dinajpur late last year.

Razzak challenged validity of the PSA passed by parliament as a finance bill, certified by the Speaker and cited a Bangabhaban statement that it was assented to by the President as it involved the question of monetary expenditure, but not as

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

PM addresses Brussels conference Dhaka's 4-pt proposal to improve lot of LDCs

UNB, Brussels

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has tabled a 4-point proposal seeking debt waiver, increased aid from the rich nations and other special measures to improve economic status of the world's 49 least developed countries (LDCs) representing 600 million people.

"We're standing at the crossroads of the future development of LDCs. If we take the right course, this could be the start of a new journey to end injustice, inequity

stagnancy, deprivation and ever-growing marginalisation of the LDCs," she said as a weeklong summit meet open here yesterday morning to determine fate of the poorer nations in the globalised

Related stories on page 7

economy.

The LDC-111 Conference got off to a formal start at the Paul Henry Speak Building of European Parliament in the Belgian capital. The Bangladesh prime minister placed the proposals before the

world leaders in her inaugural address to the UN-sponsored conference.

The opening session of the high-profile world meet was also addressed by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, French President Jacques Chirac, President of the European Union Goran Persson, EU Parliament President Nicole Fontain, Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt and President of the European Commission Romano Prodi.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3



French President Jacques Chirac speaks as (L) Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina looks on during the third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries in Brussels yesterday.

Border along 4 southeastern districts Smugglers transact goods worth over Tk 100cr a day

NAZRUL ISLAM, back From Frontiers

More than 150-km stretch of the border on the country's southeastern frontiers with India has become a safe haven for a syndicate of smugglers, who transact goods worth over Tk 100 crore per day, according to sources in the Customs Department, the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and local people.

Arms, drugs, heroin, phensidyl, timber, sugar, powdered milk, medicine, and motor parts are among the goods that are being smuggled into Bangladesh from India with the connivance of the law-enforcement agencies and border guards of the two neighbouring countries, said a customs official who preferred not to

be named.

On the other hand, electronic goods, versailles, aluminum, kerosene and Hilsha fish are smuggled out into India through the same routes.

The recent Indo-Bangla border tension could not put any brakes on the illegal trade even for a single day, said an official at Bouara in Comilla.

During a visit last week, small groups of goods transporter were seen carrying baggage loaded with various Indian goods and crossing the border at Bibir Bazar, Chouddogram, Bouara and Shashital points in Comilla.

"The smugglers have no day or night; they can continue their operations under any circumstances," a BDR officer told The Daily Star at

Bouara Bazaar, adding that such clandestine operations by the illegal traders in this belt are unbounded.

This zone covering four bordering districts of Brahmanbaria, Comilla, Feni, and Khagrachhari has as many as 50 places known as illegal trading points. Besides, the government has only two customs stations and one corridor for legal cattle trading.

On average, Tk 1 crore is being deposited with the public exchequer a month as import duties collected from various consignments at the two customs stations- Akhaura in Brahmanbaria and Bibirbazar in Comilla, said a senior customs

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3



Trinamool Congress (TC) leader Mamata Banerjee angrily gestures as she speaks at a press conference in Kolkata yesterday.

Mamata breaks silence, makes allegations

SAKYASEN MITRA, Kolkata

Dramatics continued yesterday at the 7C Harish Chatterjee Street, the residence of Mamata Banerjee and the Trinamool Congress headquarters. After making the media wait for more than seven hours, the Trinamool supremo finally came out of a self-confinement. She looked devastated.

"I have to accept the verdict of the people," was the way she began.

When prompted a little to explain the cause of such a debacle, Mamata said, "Everybody was involved in a conspiracy to destroy the Trinamool Congress - the state government, the Election Commission and even the central government. It was expected that the state administration would be against us. However, I am surprised at the way the central government played an anti-Trinamool role. The BJP and its allies got back at me and my party for quitting the NDA. Along with that the EC also did not play an impartial role."

Time and again she lamented that she had misunderstood the behaviour of the masses. "I am really surprised at the way the voters behaved. If they had been against us why did the party leaders get such a huge reception

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



Jayalalitha Jayaram (L) hands over a letter signed by newly elected AIADMK legislators to Tamil Nadu Governor Fatima Biwi (R) in Madras yesterday.

Jayalalitha to form govt despite criminal record

AFP, Madras

An Indian governor yesterday invited an actress-turned-politician to form the government in Tamil Nadu state, despite controversy over her criminal record.

According to a statement put out by the office of Tamil Nadu Governor Fatima Biwi, Jayaram Jayalalitha, 53, who heads the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) party in Tamil Nadu, would be sworn in as the chief minister.

The AIADMK and its allies won a sweeping victory bagging 80 per cent of the state assembly seats during the May 10 provincial elections.

"Jayaram Jayalalitha met the governor today intimating her election as the leader of the AIADMK legislative party," said the statement.

"The government has invited her to form the ministry at the earliest and asked her to send the list of persons to be appointed as ministers with their portfolios," added the statement.

According to sources, with the governor's invitation, Jayalalitha could be

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

INSIDE TODAY

Article 4

End of India's nuclear thunder
Praful Bidwai

Focus 5

The challenge of eradicating poverty for sustainable development

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
May 15		6.34 pm
May 16	5-16 am	

Prayer Timings		
May 15		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fazr	4-30	5-00
Zohr	12-45	1-20
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-37	6-41
Esha	8-00	8-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

News Analysis

It's time for post-mortem

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Electoral battle in five Indian states, including West Bengal, is over. There were surprises indeed, not so much in the outcome - broader predictions made by most opinion and exit polls proved more or less right - as in the margin that separated the victor from the vanquished.

The elections brought the best news for Sonia Gandhi and her Congress, the principal opposition party. The Congress stormed back to power with two-thirds majority in Kerala, inflicting the worst electoral defeat on the ruling Left Front led by CPI (M). It was set to regain the reins in Assam in the north-east humbling ruling AGP and its ally BJP and in federally-ruled territory of Pondicherry where the poll produced a hung assembly.

However, the most stunning results were in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu. The Marxists-led Left Front swept back to power convincingly for a record sixth successive term in West Bengal, steamrolling

Mamata Banerjee's much-hyped challenge in the form an alliance between the Trinamool Congress and the Congress. In Tamil Nadu film star-turned-politician Jayaram

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

PP Quamrul withdrawn from another case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Mohammad Quamrul Islam, Metropolitan Public Prosecutor, Dhaka was withdrawn from the Fazlul Haq Murder Case pending with the Second Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka for his negligence in conducting the case.

Earlier, PP Quamrul was withdrawn from the Jalal Ahmed Shafi Murder Case on the same ground.

The solicitor of the ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, withdrew Quamrul from the case on May 10 following an application by Mohammad Selim Reza, the complainant of the case on May 7.

In the application, Reza said that his brother Fazlul Haq was shot dead at his Gulshan residence by a group of armed men on March 3, 1998. Later he filed a murder case with Gulshan thana accusing 20 people including Abul Bashar, the notorious criminal in the area.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

Tipu to undergo surgery today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Injured journalist Tipu Sultan will be operated upon at Bumrungrad Hospital in Bangkok this morning.

A team of specialised doctors will perform operation on his left arm and right wrist, which were fractured when he was beaten by musclemen of Joinal Hazari in Feni for his report. Tipu is UNB's Feni correspondent.

Doctors at the hospital said the operation will be a complicated one,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6