



Watch it from prison!

AFP, Kolkata

The government in the Indian state of West Bengal is installing television in jails so prisoners can watch World Cup matches, officials said Saturday.

"World Cup fever has caught on with both male and female prisoners. They are excited over the biggest soccer event and talking about the star players - (Brazilian) Ronaldo, (Frenchman) Zinedine Zidane and (Argentinian) Gabriel Batistuta,"

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# India asks Pakistan to withdraw its envoy

## Border fighting rages: Vajpayee meets top brass: Islamabad calls for dialogue



PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

In a diplomatic offensive against Pakistan, India yesterday ordered withdrawal of Pakistani High Commissioner Ashraf Jehangir Qazi.

The decision, taken at a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security presided by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee here, came a day after Parliament extended unanimous support to the government to take any step to effectively counter cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, especially the situation arising out of the attacks allegedly by Pakistan-based militants on an army camp and a civilian bus near Jammu on May 13. Thirty-four people died in the attack.

Meanwhile, the cross-border fighting between the two neighbours escalated, forcing thousands of villagers to flee their homes. Both sides used heavy weaponry to fire at each other across the border, sources said.

Emerging from a two-hour meeting of the cabinet committee on security, Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh told reporters that government has decided that the Pakistan High Commissioner be required to return to Pakistan for the sake of "maintaining parity."

India, it may be recalled, had withdrawn its High Commissioner to Pakistan Vijay K Nambiar soon after the December 13 attack on Indian Parliament by Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba militants. India had also

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Pakistan High Commissioner to India Ashraf Jehangir Qazi (left) speaking to journalists in New Delhi recently.

# Committee soon to review bad loan portfolio

## Taskforces to fight defaulters

STAR REPORT

The finance ministry has decided to form a high-level committee to scrutinise the entire loan portfolio of the nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) and suggest measures for dealing with big defaulters.

The committee will have one or more taskforces to segregate bad loans from the good ones. Thereafter, the banks will be instructed to gear up their classified loan recovery drive and take necessary legal steps.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman disclosed this yesterday during a meeting with the Bangladesh Economic Association (BEA) on the next budget. Earlier, the BEA proposed setting up of a

special tribunal to deal with the top 500 loan defaulters.

The BEA also suggested keeping defence expenditure for the next fiscal at the current level to put a cap on government expenditure and divert fund to human resource development.

When his attention was drawn to the proposal, Saifur evaded any direct reply and said the main aim of the government is to ensure proper utilisation of resources in a prudent way.

"We have to increase investment and for that, national security is a must," Saifur told newsmen.

The BEA delegation led by its President Moinul Islam placed different proposals for the next

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# Young man dies allegedly due to DB torture

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A young man died Friday following alleged torture by Detective Branch (DB) of Police in Narayanganj after he was picked up earlier by detectives.

The victim Mohammad Badal, 19, a butcher by profession, was picked up by the DB police from his house at Baraipara, Bandar in Narayanganj at 2:00am on May 7. The detectives, who did not produce any warrant for Badal's arrest despite his family's request, told them to report to the DB office later in the morning that day, family sources said.

At the DB office in the morning, sub-inspector Azharul Islam told Badal's family members to pay Tk 50,000 for his release. After some bargaining, the amount was reduced to Tk. 20,000, the victim's family claimed.

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# Heat wave spurts diarrhoeal attack

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of diarrhoea patients at the ICDDR,B at Mahakhali in the city suddenly increased in the last three days due to the hot spell.

But the average number is less compared to the patients admitted to the hospital this time last year, doctors there said.

Such sudden rise of diarrhoea patients is not unusual during summer, they said.

Till 6 pm yesterday, 280 patients, most of them children, were admitted to the hospital. It was 322 on Friday. The number may rise if the hot spell continues, they said. More 600 such patients can be accommodated on the hospital premises.

This time last year, about 400 patients were admitted daily, and it was not considered alarming, they said.

Diarrhoea is an acute illness

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# Bar on Titas union activities on cards

## Probe body suggests suspension of meter reader Mahub as minister lobbies to spare him

ZAYADUL AHSAN AND SHARIER KHAN

The government might consider curtailing trade union activities in the Titas gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd (TGTD) after reviewing the company's performance for the next three months.

The Titas authorities yesterday launched an all-out campaign to reduce systems loss, improved bill recovery, internal discipline and performance in other areas.

Besides, Titas has been asked to clear all disputes and pending cases regarding gas bill claims. A top Titas source said such disputed cases involve around Tk 200 crore and are pending with courts.

In the wake of press reports on corruption by a section of meter readers and trade union leaders, the three ruling BNP-backed trade unions last Thursday promised to

stay away from management affairs of Titas, giving the company a chance to improve its performance.

State Minister for Energy Mosharraf Hossain held a meeting with Petrobangla directors and Titas high officials yesterday morning. At noon, the Petrobangla authorities held a meeting with Titas management and in the evening, the Titas high-ups also held a manager-level meeting.

Titas trade union leaders were criticised at the meetings for misusing the company's resources for their personal benefits. The state minister asked officials to submit a report on how the union leaders were allowed to use Pajero jeeps without authority.

Mosharraf reminded the Titas authorities that after coming to power the BNP government had spelled out a 100-day programme under which the gas company was

supposed to improve its performance. But the Titas authorities did not bother to file a progress report.

Meanwhile, a Titas committee to probe the allegations of massive corruption by meter reader Mahubur Rahman yesterday submitted its report to the acting managing director. The report recommended immediate suspension of Mahub, who bought two apartments, a three-storey building with land and two industries in the recent years, among other assets.

But, sources said the authorities have been asked not to take any action against Mahub at this moment.

"A cabinet minister who backs Mahub has asked the energy secretary not to rock the boat too much on the issue. The minister has advised us not to take any action against the meter reader," said a

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Diarrhoea patients under a temporary shed on the ICDDR,B premises at Mohakhali in the city (left) while an anxious mother waits outside to get her baby admitted to the hospital.

# One killed as bomb hurled on AL procession in Chandpur

UNB, Chandpur

District Awami League has called for a dawn-to-dusk hartal in the town today to protest the killing of a Jubo League worker in a bomb attack in

Puran Bazar area yesterday.

Police said Khalilur Rahman, 30, and 20 others were injured when a bomb was hurled on an AL procession proceeding towards a meeting of the party at Shapla Chattar at

about 5 pm.

Hospital sources said Khalil, a resident of Sree Ramdi area of the town, succumbed to his injuries at Sadar Hospital. Two others, Kamal Hossain and Zafar Ullah Khan, were admitted there in critical condition.

Agitated AL workers broke windowpanes and doors on the ground floor of the hospital and brought out a protest procession. Police resorted to baton charge on AL men leaving 10 other activists of the party injured.

District BCL president Jasim Uddin Patwari was arrested from the scene.

The hartal programme was announced by district AL president

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# Raped girl dies at DMCH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 10-year old girl, who was raped allegedly by her grand father at Dhalkanar in the city's Sutrapur area on Thursday, died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday.

The victim's mother Rina Akther told the newsmen at the DMCH that the grand father took Hanufa alias Anika to his Dhalkanar residence as her father-in-law of her first marriage was sick. She also alleged that her father-in-law raped her.

However, other members of the family said Rina's second husband might have raped the girl.

The victim was admitted to the One Stop Crisis Center at the DMCH and died at there from severe bleeding. The body of the victim was sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

Anika was staying with her mother at their Gendania residence.

The duty officer of the Sutrapur Police Station said that they heard of the incident and were investigating it.

No further details of the incident could be known immediately.