



A demonstrator (R) is kept off the sidewalk by a Los Angeles police officer during an anti-war demonstration in Los Angeles on Saturday. Thousands marched to the CNN office building to protest the way CNN is covering the war in Iraq.

Govt yet to decide action against exam cheats

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The education ministry is yet to decide what the invigilators will do if copies for cheating in exams are found with the examinees during frisking at the examination hall gate.

The ministry convened a press conference yesterday to describe the measures to be taken against cheating during the forthcoming Secondary School Certificate (SSC), Dhakil and SSC Vocational examinations.

The education minister, state minister, deputy minister and the education secretary expressed their opinions on the matter.

State Minister for Education ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon said an examinee could be expelled if

she/he is found carrying copy materials during the search at the hall gate. Contradicting him, Education Secretary Mohammad Shahidul Alam said that such an act would be a violation of law.

Deputy Minister for Education Abdus Salam Pintu said an examinee could not be accused of cheating until he adopts unfair means at the examination hall.

Earlier, the state minister and the education secretary issued separate letters to deputy commissioners in this regard. The letters contradicted each other and the DCS did not

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Delhi to press Dhaka for free trade deal

STAR REPORT

New Delhi will press for a bilateral free trade agreement against Dhaka's demand of zero-tariff access for its products to Indian markets when the commerce secretaries of the two countries meet today in the Indian capital.

Dhaka is not interested, at least at this stage, to go for any free trade agreement with over \$ one billion trade gap with New Delhi, according to sources.

"Unless the trade deficit between the two countries is reduced significantly, a free trade agreement with New Delhi could jeopardise the country's trade interests," a high official of the commerce ministry told The Daily Star yesterday.

Bangladesh's trade deficit with India jumped to \$971.72 million in 2001-02 from \$32.12 million in 1992-93.

Commerce Secretary Suhel Ahmed will lead a six-member delegation at the two-day trade talks, while his counterpart Deepak Chatterjee will head the Indian side.

They will try to iron out the differences on various issues, and carry on the talks from the point they reached during the talks held

in Dhaka in April 2002.

The talks will also focus on a revised bilateral trade agreement and signing of a bilateral investment agreement.

Dhaka wants the 'inland waterway transit protocol' to be removed from the existing trade agreement. Rather, it said a separate waterway transit protocol could be signed.

Dhaka will place specific examples of non-tariff and para-tariff barriers its products face in the Indian market. And it will also raise imposition of anti-dumping duty on export of Bangladesh's lead acid battery to India.

New Delhi will raise the problem of an Indian pharmaceutical company, which invested around \$1.5 million in Bangladesh, is facing before starting production.

According to sources, the company got the nod for its investment from Bangladeshi authorities in 2000, but the drug administration is yet to give it permission to produce drugs and market it in Bangladesh.

New Delhi will also raise the ban Bangladesh imposed on the land route for importing a few goods.

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PONTING PUNCH: Australia captain Ricky Ponting pulls on his way to a majestic 140 not out during the World Cup final against India at The Wanderers yesterday.

Govt threatens stern action for hoarding fuel

UNB, Dhaka

The government has ordered stern action against stockpiling of fuel oils and artificial price hike taking advantage of the Iraq war in the oil-rich Gulf.

"We have asked all the DCs to cancel licences of any dealer found hoarding oils and charging extra prices," State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharraf Hossain told UNB yesterday.

He said the deputy commissioners had also been directed to release fuel on the open market in case of hoarding by any quarters and take lawful action against hoarders.

Mosharraf said they had received information that some unscrupulous quarters were hoarding fuel to create a crisis trying to advantage of the war situation.

"I want to make sure that there is no shortage of fuel in the country and there is no logical reason that price will mark a minimum rise," said the minister.

He informed that the country at present has a reserve of all kinds of fuels for 60 days and is able to bring kerosene or other oils from Singapore anytime.

"Besides, we have a stock of crude oil of 230,000 tons to meet the demand for fuel under any circumstances," said Mosharraf Hossain.

Also omitted was a follow-up on a call by French President Jacques Chirac, and echoed by former IMF chief Michel Camdessus, for a global watchdog to monitor progress made towards achieving the

UN Millennium Goals of more than halving to one billion the number of people without access to water and sanitation by 2015.

"Prioritizing water issues is an urgent global requirement," the declaration said, calling water a "driving force for sustainable development" and a tool to fight poverty.

The declaration urged better cooperation among nations sharing water resources and sought to spur the United Nations into taking a leading role in mediating, leading and cooperating with other organizations involved in the water sector.

"It is a good opportunity that, during such a conflicting time, representatives from 165 countries could come together and discuss these issues," said Belgium's minister of territory management, Michel Foret.

The United States was "pleased" by the declaration that came from ministerial consensus, said Susan Povenmire, a member of the US delegation.

"The United States looks forward to the G8 Summit in Evian (France) as an important next step to build consensus and develop coalitions that will create concrete and compelling infrastructure for bringing water to the world's poor," she said.

But criticism of the declaration

Water Forum fails to suggest concrete action to end woes

Ministers howl at toothless declaration

AFP, Kyoto

A declaration Sunday from the ministerial meeting ending the Third World Water Forum prioritized water issues as an "urgent global requirement" but failed to suggest concrete action to end the global water and sanitation crisis.

Reference to water as a basic human right, a characterization approved last November by the United Nations, was also omitted from the consensus declaration of 101 ministers representing 96 countries and delegates representing another 69 nations.

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But criticism of the declaration

came at both the ministerial and non-governmental level, deriding the document as too soft and lacking in

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Bagerhat rape Jubo Dal leader admits involvement

UNB, Khulna

A newly elected UP member and local Jubo Dal leader accused in the Komporur killing and rape case in a confessional statement to the magistrate yesterday admitted his involvement in the crime.

Following his statement, Haroon Sheikh was sent to jail from the police remand.

Police said Haroon confessed that he and three others were behind the brutal killing of Tapan Bhattacharya, looting of gold ornaments and rape of three female inmates of the house on March 9.

Iris, another accused in the case, was also sent to prison after being produced before the court from police remand.

BSS adds: The government has decided to submit chargesheet against the accused soon for their trial under the Speedy Trial Tribunal.

Ten of the accused have been arrested so far. Four of them confessed their involvement in the crime at Komporur on March 9, a Home Ministry statement said here yesterday.

Ershad Shikdar awarded life term for keeping illegal pistol

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Condemned prisoner Ershad Shikdar has been awarded life term imprisonment for keeping an unauthorised pistol in his possession.

The verdict was pronounced yesterday by Sajedul Karim, Judge of the Special Tribunal Court, Khulna.

According to the prosecution, Ershad Shikdar purchased a 7.62 bore pistol from a local gunshop on October 17, 1990. But he obtained a licence mentioning the pistol's .32 bore.

During a search operation in his residence 'Swarnamakol' at Sonadanga in 1999, police recovered the unauthorised pistol. The fake licence of the pistol was also seized.

SI Zahidur Rahman of Sonadanga Thana filed a case in this connection as complainant.

Ershad Shikdar who is now in Khulna District Jail has already been awarded death penalty in seven murder cases.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia presides over a meeting on monthly evaluation of different ministries' and departments' activities at the International Conference Centre yesterday.

More Japanese aid assured

UNB, Dhaka

Japan assured enhanced cooperation in Bangladesh's development efforts and implementing various programmes aimed at poverty alleviation and people's welfare.

The assurances came from the visiting president of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Takao Kawamori, when he called on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday afternoon.

The prime minister sought Japanese assistance in construction of the planned Padma Bridge and developing industrial ventures in agricultural sub-sectors, particularly agro-processing industries.

The chief of JICA, a major development partner of Bangladesh for the last 30 years, appreciated the

time-serving trend to ensure welfare of the people," she said chairing a meeting on evaluation of different ministries' activities during the month of February.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, LGRD Minister Abdul Mamun Bhuiyan, Health Minister Dr Khondaker Mosharrif Hossain, Communications Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda, Information Minister Tarique Islam, Industries Minister Md Anwar, Agriculture Minister Matir Rahman Nizam and Post and Telecommunications Minister

Speed up process of recruitment to govt jobs: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Eight activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) were injured, two of them seriously, in an attack by Islami Chatra Shibir (ICS) cadres at the Chittagong Polytechnic Institute (CPI) on Saturday night.

JCD enforced an indefinite strike at the institute from today protesting the attack on activists.

The seriously injured JCD activists -- MKAkash and Sumon -- were admitted to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

Police and campus sources said the ICS cadres attacked the JCD men for establishing their supremacy on the campus.

They also damaged some rooms belonging to JCD men at the CPI dormitory and several rooms of the academic buildings, sources added.

Protesting the attack, JCD brought out a procession and held a rally on the campus yesterday morning.

At the rally, the JCD leaders announced an indefinite strike at the institute. They also demanded arrest of the ICS cadres involved in the incident.

The CPI authorities have deployed police on the campus to avert further incident. A tense situation has been prevailing on the campus.

Chief virologist at Hong Kong University, Malik Piers, called the new virus "tricky" and stressed it was important to conduct more study before forming any conclusions.

The Geneva-based World Health Organization (WHO) said that with the virus now isolated, scientists could focus on characterising the agent, determine its relationship with known viruses and establish a definitive identity.

The results of the team's research will be shared among 11 leading laboratories in a global network set up by the WHO.

Klaus Stohr, a WHO virologist who is coordinating the network, said the success achieved through mutual cooperation of scientists around the globe gave hope that SARS could be contained.

"Scientists, who are by default academic competitors, are now working virtually shoulder to shoulder. In less than a week, they have produced results

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Killer flu virus spotted

AFP, Hong Kong

A team of scientists in Hong Kong said yesterday they had identified a new virus believed to be behind the global outbreak of a mysterious respiratory illness that has so far killed 12 people.

The University of Hong Kong scientists said they had cultured the virus that causes the deadly pneumonia-like illness called Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) which has infected hundreds around the world.

The team isolated the virus from the lung tissue of a patient who developed SARS after contact with a doctor from southern China's Guangdong Province.

The 64-year-old Chinese doctor is believed to be at the origin of the epidemic here.

The doctor is believed to have infected at least seven other people who stayed on the ninth floor of the Metropole hotel in Hong Kong's Kowloon district between February 15 and 27.

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Source: Islamic Foundation

Prayer Timings

Mar 24

Azan Jemaat

Fajr 5-00 5-30

Zohr 12-45 1-15

Asr 4-45 5-15

Magrib 6-17 6-22

Esha 7-35 8-00