

Writ against govt move to drop charges facing MP's brother

UNB, Dhaka

A government move to withdraw a double murder case against the brother of Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu MP of the ruling BNP was challenged in the High Court Division yesterday.

A writ was filed challenging Section 494 of CrPC (Criminal Procedure Code) that empowered the government to withdraw criminal cases against those who are already on trial.

The counsel for the petitioner submitted that the home ministry has asked the Speedy Trial Tribunal, Dhaka to drop charges against Pintu's brother Reazuddin Ahmed Munir along with nine other persons.

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Tremor train shakes Chittagong

25 hurt, 500 buildings damaged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A moderate tremor and a series of aftershocks struck Chittagong and adjacent hill districts in 13 hours since early yesterday morning, injuring at least 25 people and damaging about 500 houses and government buildings.

The morning jolts scared residents into rushing out of their homes and staying outdoors for hours in the second largest quake since 1997 in Chittagong.

A pregnant woman, who gave birth to a stillborn baby in Rangamati, is among the injured.

The 20-second quake measuring 5.09 on the Richter scale with its epicentre about 186km off the city hit at 5.19am damaging a PGCB (power grid company of Bangladesh) transformer under Madunaghat substation in Hathazari, Chittagong.

Power was restored to the area through an alternative transformer after an hour of outages, substation officials said.

The quake also opened cracks in the four-storey Divisional Public Library building in front of the central Shaheed Minar.

The first aftershock with a 3.69 magnitude lasted 13 seconds since 1:34pm, followed by the second aftershock at 6:11pm and a third at 8:38pm.

Among the injured in Rangamati, Abdul Karim, 45, his eight-year-old twin daughters and son Rashedul Islam, 2, and Abiron Khatun 50, were admitted to district general hospital. They suffered wounds when the roof of Aamyachhara Health Complex came crashing down on them.

Fifty-year-old Madhulata

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Morning jolts leave buildings in cracks in the second largest tremor since 1997 that also left 25 people injured in Chittagong yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Maimed body found in Ramna Lake

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mutilated body of a young man was recovered from Ramna Lake yesterday.

Locals found the body of the unknown youth, aged about 25, floating in the lake at around 4:15pm. The youth was dressed in shirt and trouser.

Police could not confirm whether the man was murdered or not since the body was badly decomposed.

Notice

As many as 2,335 candidates have been provisionally selected for different cadre services of the 22nd BCS (Bangladesh Civil Service) Examinations, 2000. See results on Page 8.

4 auditors assigned for NCB health check

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The finance ministry has appointed four audit firms to look into the financial health of four nationalised commercial banks (NCBs).

The ministry has also taken up a plan to hire internationally reputed consulting firms to change the management of Agrani Bank and also to appoint management support groups to Sonali and Janata banks.

Sources said the ministry will

soon write to six preferred consulting firms, including PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Under a World Bank fund, the ministry appointed chartered accounting firm SF Ahmed & Co as auditor to Sonali, Rahman Rahman & Haq to Agrani, A Kashem & Co to Janata and Hoda Vasi Chowdhury & Co to Rupali.

The auditors will evaluate loans valued over Tk 1 crore each and review the health of the banks.

The ministry last week sent

letters to these banks asking them to cooperate with the auditors.

Sources said the government is considering appointment of managing director (MD), deputy managing directors (DMD) and general managers (GM) to Agrani Bank from private sector.

Barring the position of the MD, the government is open to recruiting foreigners for other posts.

Sources said the foreign consultants may be tasked with appointing

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Saddam missed by a day, 1 more US marine killed

REUTERS/AP, Baghdad

US soldiers said they missed catching Saddam Hussein's security chief -- and possibly the former Iraqi president himself -- by a mere 24 hours early yesterday, while a US Marine was killed in a grenade attack south of Baghdad.

Troops stormed three farms in Tikrit, Saddam's hometown, in simultaneous pre-dawn raids after receiving a tip that Saddam's new

security chief was staying at one of the farm houses, said Lt. Col. Steve Russell, who led the operation by the 4th Infantry.

"We missed him by 24 hours," Russell said, adding that residents told soldiers that the man they sought had been at one of the farm houses.

The military said one US soldier

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Number of criminals on crackdown list now 1,200

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Putting a brave face on the low-key success of the anti-outlaw crackdown in southwestern districts, Home Secretary Omar Farooq yesterday said the drive was making significant progress.

"We have arrested some 1,020 criminals, including 71 listed ones, and recovered 19 arms in the first week of the operation," he said at a

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FTA talks with India

MCCI identifies 968 items for negative list

STAR REPORT

The Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) has suggested the government exclude 968 items from the proposed Indo-Bangla free trade agreement (FTA) to protect local industries as a whole and agriculture in particular.

The list of the products, based on eight-digit HS (harmonised system) code, has been sent to the commerce ministry for consider-

ation, sources said.

The products on the 'negative list' represent the sectors like textile and clothing with 423 items, agriculture 167, steel and iron 59, plastic products 38, vehicles 44, pharmaceuticals 29, electrical goods 28 and others 180.

The 'negative list' approach means allowing all products duty-free access, except for those included in the list, which was pre-

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