

UNPAID FINES

# Bangladeshi flag carriers face confiscation in EU

STAR REPORT

Authorities in Amsterdam have reminded Bangladesh to immediately comply with a Dutch court verdict to avoid possible confiscation of Bangladeshi flag carriers in European Union (EU) countries. Airliners and ships carrying Bangladesh's flag will become liable to confiscation in EU countries in case Bangladesh government fails to pay Tk 31 crore to a Dutch computer farm in fine and compensations as per the court's ruling.

Tulip Computers International BV, an Amsterdam-based computer manufacturer, went to the court seeking redress for a Bangladesh government's decision not to award it with a contract to supply computers and accessories for an education ministry project. The Cabinet Purchase Committee cancelled the computer procurement project due to what it said was inflated price quoted by the Dutch supplier, Education Minister M Osman Farruk said recently. Tulip Computers quoted the price of a computer at Tk 99,000 in its first bid, which being found to be exorbitant was later reduced to Tk 70,000. But the second quotation too was found by the committee as

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A sea of wreaths bedecks the Central Shaheed Minar, hours after people from all walks of life offered tribute to language martyrs on Saturday.

# Blair seeks re-election

AFP, London

British Prime Minister Tony Blair, in a Sunday newspaper interview, said that despite the "lumps" of his job, he fully intends to seek re-election for a third term in Downing Street. Speaking with the News of the World newspaper, Blair said he wants to stay in power despite experiencing one of his worst months in office since he first led his Labour party to victory in May 1997. "You have people kicking lumps out of you, but you can live with it, and I do," he told the mass circulation Sunday newspaper. "Whatever the problems and pressures this is an immensely enjoyable and fulfilling job and I intend to carry on doing it. I will be putting myself forward."

Political analysts expect Blair -- who won re-election in 2001 -- to call an election in the first half of 2005, though Labour's current five-year term doesn't expire until 2006. Blair's popularity in the opinion polls has slipped since the Iraq war, and last month his government escaped serious criticism from a judicial inquiry into the suicide of Iraq weapons expert David Kelly. Kelly, who killed himself in July last year, was the source of a BBC news report two months earlier which alleged that Blair's inner circle embellished intelligence in the run-up to the March 2002 US-led invasion of Iraq. Blair also narrowly survived a parliamentary vote in January on plans to increase university tuition

# Saddam gives Red Cross a letter to family

AP, Baghdad

Captured former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein wrote a letter to his family for the international Red Cross to deliver, officials said yesterday. The message was handed over to a two-member Red Cross delegation that visited Saddam at an undisclosed location in Iraq on Saturday, spokeswoman Nada Doumani said. It was the first time the Geneva-based body checked on Saddam since his arrest in an underground bunker in Tikrit on Dec 13. The anti-occupation insurgency, believed led by Saddam loyalists, has persisted despite the arrest of the ousted Iraqi leader. Gunmen yesterday attacked Iraqi police in two northern Iraqi cities, sparking clashes that killed two attackers, police said. Guerrillas have increasingly targeted Iraqi security officers,

# M-16, bullets found in Bandarban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Armed forces personnel yesterday recovered an M-16 rifle with 6 bullets and a magazine at Naikhongchhari in Bandarban. Led by Major Arshad, second in command of Naikhongchhari zone army, a team of army retrieved the sophisticated firearm and its accessories at Baisharishila Baidhyapara at about 9:30am, official sources said. Security forces seized three M-16 rifles and 357 bullets in Bandarban during the last six months, sources added.

# MOUDUD ON ANTI-GRAFT BODY LAW

## Govt's case withdrawal power may be amended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed yesterday billed the passage of the Anti-corruption Commission Act as a landmark decision and a significant step towards eliminating corruption. "It's definitely a revolutionary step towards curbing corruption... and the passage of the [act] has been acclaimed both at home and abroad," Moudud told reporters at

his Secretariat office yesterday. He however admitted that there may be some weaknesses in the act, "but we can make changes when necessary and the weaknesses will be detected in future". On the provision of the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1958 that the new legislation uses as a base for prosecuting anyone -- which says the government can withdraw any corruption case at will -- the

minister said it has been kept just for 'check and balance'. "We will look into the matter and if necessary we will bring amendment when the Criminal Law Amendment Act would be further amended." As trial and settlement of corruption cases will take place under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the

# AC Akram flouts court order on surrender

UNB, Dhaka

Ex-assistant commissioner (AC) of Police Mohammad Akram Hossain has flouted a Supreme Court (SC) order to surrender before the court. Lawyers at court lobby yesterday suspected Akram, a life-term convict who was set at large on bail, has gone into hiding in the wake of the February 11 SC order that asked the ex-police official to submit himself before the law. The SC yesterday rejected a petition moved by Akram's counsel Monsurul Haq Chowdhury for the extension of time for his client's

# 7 dead, scores hurt in Jerusalem blast

REUTERS, Jerusalem

A Palestinian suicide bomber killed seven people on a crowded Jerusalem bus yesterday on the eve of World Court hearings into a controversial barrier Israel says will ensure its security against such attacks. Police said around 60 people were wounded in the blast, which turned the green number 14 bus into a charred skeleton at a busy intersection near the Inbal Hotel, where leaders of major US Jewish organizations were meeting. "People were screaming 'mommy, daddy'. There were body parts everywhere including some hands and feet scattered outside the bus," medic Reuven Pohl said. The World Court begins hearings in The Hague Monday on the legality of the West Bank barrier that Israel says keeps suicide bombers out, but which Palestinians call a land grab. The militant group al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, part of President Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction, claimed responsibility for the bombing in a statement that called the barrier "a Nazi wall which will not stop us attacking." But Arafat's office condemned the attack and called the timing deliberate and harmful for the diplomatic campaign against the barrier. The top Palestinian security body vowed to bring those responsi-

ble to justice. When one Israeli minister suggested at yesterday's cabinet meeting that the bombing could be seen as a protest against the barrier, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said: "We don't have to look for a reason why Jews are killed and they won't stop killing Jews ever." The bomber struck during the morning rush hour at the start of the Israeli work week. Police said the bomb was packed with metal shards to make it more deadly. "The Palestinian murderers have again shown that Israel is not the aggressor, the Palestinians are, and that the fence was not meant for anything other than to save lives," said Justice Minister Yosef Lapid. "I hope that the 15 justices in The Hague understand the message.... If there was a fence around Jerusalem there would not have been an attack today." Al-Aqsa named the bomber as Mohammed Zaal, a 23-year-old from Hussan village near the West Bank town of Bethlehem. It said the attack was a reaction to the barrier and to an Israeli raid that killed 15 Palestinians in Gaza City on February 11. In a farewell video, the bomber read a prepared statement that warned Israelis "the more your army attacks our people, the more martyrdom operations there will be."

# Speaker bans demos in JS precincts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar yesterday banned demonstration and procession at the chambers, lobbies and galleries of the Jatiya Sangsad. The ban followed a point of order raised by a whip, Rezaul Bari Deena, demanded a ruling from the speaker banning the planned demonstration by the main opposition Awami League on February 25 in protest at the repression on the opposition lawmakers. Standing on a point of order, the whip said he learnt from press reports that the Awami League lawmakers had planned to stage a demonstration at the parliament premises wearing black masks. "But the rules of procedure and parliamentary convention do not allow such programme," said the

# Khaleda seeks multilateral aid in power sector

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday sought multilateral support for the country's old power plants to improve generation and supply of electricity. "Our power plants are very old and the private sector is shy to invest in this field," she said while seeking multilateral support when a World Bank (WB) delegation led by its Vice-president for South Asia Region Praful C Patel called on her at her office yesterday. Khaleda also sought more assistance from the WB for rural electrification and launch of drinking water plants in Dhaka, Chittagong

and Khulna cities. She thanked the WB for its increased and continuous aid and said she was hopeful that it will offer more cooperation in poverty reduction, microcredit programme and education. The WB delegation assured the prime minister of continued support for socio-economic development and said the WB would allocate more funds after the use of current allocations in different sectors. Other members of the delegation were Vice-President (Operation, Policies and Country Service) James Adams and Country Director in Dhaka Christine Wallich.

| Prayer Timings |       |        |
|----------------|-------|--------|
| February 23    |       |        |
|                | Azan  | Jamaat |
| Fair           | 5-30  | 6-00   |
| Zohr           | 12-45 | 1-15   |
| Asr            | 4-30  | 4-45   |
| Maghrib        | 6-00  | 6-05   |
| Esha           | 7-30  | 8-00   |

Source: Islamic Foundation

# GK PROJECT

## JS body finds wrong with job re-tender plan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary sub-committee, formed to probe a decision for re-tender of rehabilitation of a key irrigation project pumps by an inter-ministerial committee, found the process faulty. The report of the sub-committee of the parliamentary standing committee on the water resources ministry said the tender body sidestepped a Water Development Board technical committee report for awarding the work under the Ganga-Kobadak project to the lowest bidder. Japanese firm Ivra International offered to rehabilitate three pumps of the irrigation project at a cost of about Tk 132 crore as the lowest

bidder. The sub-committee, formed on January 14 after the filing of a complaint by Shahidul Islam, a lawmaker from Kusthia, came up with its report at the standing committee meeting. Shahidul challenged the re-tender decision of August 5 last year and sent a complaint to the parliamentary committee with a copy to the prime minister. The sub-committee handed over the report to Water Resources Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, who assured that he would scrutinise the report and take a decision accordingly. The report on re-tender would also be sent to the prime minister,

