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Manmohan seeks Dhaka's help to fight insurgents

 PALLAB BHATTACHARYA,
from New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has expressed hope that Bangladesh and Myanmar will help India deal with the northeastern Indian insurgent outfits allegedly operating in those countries.

"We've made separate representations to Bangladesh and Myanmar to provide us assistance in dealing with north-east based militant groups in those countries," Singh told reporters in Assam's capital Guwahati on the second day of his visit to the state.

He said Myanmar in particular has assured India that it would not allow insurgents its (Myanmar) territory to use against India.

Singh's comments came after Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi

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Local demand pushes gas export issue back

Mosharraf admits hasty deals with IOCs

 REAZ AHMAD And
REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Surging domestic demand for gas has defused the pressure to export gas but is compelling the government to strike hasty deals with international oil companies (IOCs), says State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources AKM Mosharraf Hossain.

To meet the demand, the government recently started buying 25 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) gas from Feni gas field that was developed by Canadian company Niko Resources along with Bapex under a joint venture agreement. But the price has not been fixed yet.



AKM Mosharraf Hossain

And on November 8, Petrobangla had to sign an agreement with US company Unocal for gas supply from Bibiyana. Under this deal,

Unocal can stop gas supplies if Petrobangla fails to pay for the gas in due time.

Both these cases are unusual but the demand hike has forced the government to go ahead with them, the state minister says.

On the brighter side, the pressure for gas export is gone and the World Bank (WB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have jointly given assurance of \$1.5 billion assistance for preparing a 20-year gas sector strategic plan. "Appointment of a consulting firm for preparing the strategic plan is now at final stage," Mosharraf disclosed.

In recent times, Indian giant Tata

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A scene from Amrao Pari, a local television documentary, that has won this year's prestigious Emmy Award.

Bangladesh documentary gets Emmy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A team of juveniles from Bangladesh has won this year's prestigious International Emmy Award for a television documentary.

The 16-member team of private TV channel ATN Bangla won the award in the best international television production category for the documentary titled 'Amrao Pari' (We too can).

For the first time, any TV programme made in Bangladesh has achieved such an internationally acclaimed award, said ATN's Chief Advisor Saiful Bari yesterday at a press conference at the

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Handmade bomb found at Bogra school

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Army experts yesterday defused the home-made bomb that was recovered from a school in Sonatola upazila Monday.

Panic gripped the locals when some students of Sonatola Pilot

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Microsoft to go Bangla in a year

MABDUR RAHIM

Microsoft plans to complete developing Bangla interface for its products within 12 months as part of the global software giant's technology localisation drive worldwide, top official of its Asia Pacific office said.

Once the Bangla interface is developed, operating system -- Windows -- and other application software will be available in Bangla. The announcement much to the delight of Bangladesh came when the world's largest IT service company opened an office in Dhaka on Monday.

"Presently, three Bangla characters are missing in uni-code. We are working on it and likely to incorpo-

rate it within six months and developing other Bangla interfaces in other application software may require six more months," said Faycal Bouchlaghem, business development director for Emerging Markets, Microsoft Asia Pacific.

In an interview with The Daily Star on Monday in Dhaka, he said Microsoft believes in localisation of its products and presently it has developed its products in over 60 languages. The wider technology localisation makes its products more user-friendly worldwide.

In India, Microsoft has products in more than one language, he added. Availability of Bangla version will make it easier for Bangladeshis

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Rab's help to get textbooks in time

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State Minister for Education ANM Ehsanul Haque Milon yesterday said the ministry would seek assistance from the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), if necessary, to prevent illegal and unauthorised printing of board textbooks and facilitate transportation of books and other activities necessary to reach the books in time.

Talking to journalists at the conference room of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), Milon reiterated his pledge to print and distribute textbooks of academic year 2005 in time as the government did in previous years.

"All necessary steps have been taken in this regard," said the state minister.

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Pak PM flies to India for peace talks

AFP, New Delhi

Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz arrived in New Delhi yesterday for talks on Kashmir with Indian leaders after earlier playing down a spat over the scope of their peace talks.

Aziz, dressed in traditional Pakistani formal dress, was received at the airport by Indian Foreign Minister Natwar Singh.

"He drove straight to the Taj Mahal hotel in the heart of the capital's Central Vista where he was scheduled to hold talks with the foreign minister yesterday.

Aziz, who is on his first visit to India, is scheduled to meet Prime Minister Singh on Wednesday for regional and bilateral talks, as well as

an assessment of the peace process began in April last year when then-Indian premier Atal Behari Vajpayee offered a "hand of friendship" to Pakistan.

A fresh disagreement broke out last week over the talks between the two nations, which have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir.

"My visit tomorrow will improve the atmosphere of relations between the two countries," Aziz said in Colombo Monday. "The relations have improved considerably. It is very sportsmanlike across the board."

In an interview with the BBC, Aziz noted that Pakistan and India have in the past year restored air, road and rail links as well as cultural

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EU'S NEW REGIONAL CUMULATION OFFER

GSP perk to go as Dhaka drags foot

STAR REPORT

As Bangladesh has not implemented the Saarc Cumulation yet, it is still uncertain whether Bangladesh would be able to avail of the Super Regional Cumulation (SRC) facilities that of the European Union offers under its Generalised System of Preferences (GSP), commerce ministry officials said yesterday.

"The EU offered us the Saarc Cumulation, but we could not avail it. They have offered the SRC covering both the Saarc and the Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). It means, they will accept

goods if raw materials are imported from the Asean countries, too," a commerce ministry official said yesterday.

The recent guidelines issued by the European Commission on the GSP scheme for the 10-year period (2006-2015) encourage regional cooperation as a means for achieving greater improvement, benefit and utilisation of the GSP rules of origin by southern countries.

Sri Lanka has already prepared a concept paper on the SRC and is pursuing it to be included in the Saarc (South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation).

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