

Bill to ban tobacco ad placed in JS

AL stays away from House

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A bill proposing a ban on advertisements on tobacco products and smoking in public places and transport was placed in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday as it resumed its session after a week's recess amid abstention by the main opposition Awami League (AL) lawmakers.

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Political leaders, journos slate bomb attack

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Political leaders and journalists at a protest rally here yesterday deeply condemned Saturday's bomb attack in which four Khulna journalists were injured.

They called for a greater unity among journalists of the country to build up strong resistance against continuing bomb attacks launched by criminals.

Khulna Press Club (KPC), Khulna Union of Journalists (KUJ) and Metropolitan Union of Journalists (MUJ), Khulna jointly organised the protest rally.

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2 US doctors hurt in road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Four people, including two US physicians, were injured in a road accident in Kaikhang Jhiri area, 48km off the district town, yesterday.

The injured are Dr Jenny, 45, Dr Efferson, 45, Bangladeshi driver Mushtaque, and another Bangladeshi whose name could not be known.

Police said the accident occurred near Ruma army garrison at about 11:45am when a jeep carrying the

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Nepalese HR groups seek int'l intervention for democracy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-five Nepalese human rights organisations expressed concern in a statement yesterday over the declaration of a "state of emergency" by the King on February 1 and his virtual hand-over of the country's governance to the Royal Nepali Army.

The organisations urged for intervention from the international community to restore democracy and human rights in the country.

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Prayer Timing

February 9

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-52	5-56
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Italy to hire 2,600 workers this year

RAFIQ HASAN

Italy wants to recruit over 2,600 workers from Bangladesh this year to support the growing demand in its industries.

The major European industrial country informed Dhaka in a letter recently that the job quota for Bangladeshi workers in Italy has been increased to 3,300 from 1,800, according to sources in the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment.

Out of the previous job quota, only 676 Bangladeshi workers were able to go to Italy last year as qualified workers. The job quota for Bangladeshi workers will remain valid up to 2006.

Italy, which did not grant visas to Bangladeshi workers before 2003, now wants to recruit skilled and semiskilled crews. In the past, Bangladeshis went to Italy mainly

for family reunions, medical treatment and tourism purposes.

The employment of workers overseas also got a boost when Malaysia decided to take back Bangladeshi workers who left the country on expiry of their job tenures.

Bangladesh is one of the 10 countries from which Italy officially recruits workers, sources said. But the recruitment is done on the basis of employers' sponsorship and without any involvement of recruitment agencies. The Italian employers send a sponsorship letter stating the job and accommodation arrangements for a worker, which the embassy in Dhaka uses to grant a visa for the nominated worker.

The expatriate welfare ministry asked the workers who returned from Malaysia to enlist their names with the district employment offices, after which the government would proceed to finalising their jobs in Malaysia.

Over 10,000 workers can secure jobs in Malaysia through this process, according to sources.

Over 35,000 Bangladeshis are

now staying in Italy with legal documents, according to sources.

Meanwhile, despite the recent development, Malaysia has yet to resume hiring fresh Bangladeshi workers, who it stopped recruiting in 1997.

Many Bangladeshis also returned home in the last couple of years as Malaysia launched a massive crackdown on foreign workers who lack valid work permits.

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Khaleda, Hasina greet Thaksin

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday congratulated Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra on his Thai Rak Thai Party's landslide victory in the parliamentary elections held on February 6.

Khaleda made a phone call to Thaksin Shinawatra and wished further progress of Thailand and its people under his dynamic leadership.

She hoped that economic cooperation and bilateral relations between the two countries would be "deepened and expanded" in the days ahead.

Khaleda also inquired about the tsunami victims in Thailand and their rehabilitation.

The Thai prime minister thanked Khaleda for felicitating him over telephone.

He hoped that the ongoing development activities being carried out in Bangladesh under the leadership of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia would be non-coercive and more

Bush seeks regime change in Iran

Blair brands Tehran a sponsor of terrorism

AFP, Washington

US President George W. Bush has been actively behind "regime change" for Iran, but the route to that end has yet to be defined and the perils are great, US experts said.

Bush and his top aides have turned up the volume in their verbal attacks on the Islamic republic, calling it an "outpost of tyranny" and one of the principal backers of international terror, on its way to developing a nuclear weapon.

It was three years ago that Bush plotted Iran on an "axis of evil" alongside North Korea and Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

US officials shy away from pronouncing "regime change," a controversial phrase on the international scene, but their intentions are

clear, analysts said.

"I have no doubt the president and his closest advisers believe that the way both to solve the nuclear problem but also to deal with terrorism and improve the lives of the Iranian people is regime change," said George Perkovich, an Iran specialist at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a Washington think tank.

"The question is how this regime change happens, and that's the issue.

"It's very important to distinguish between the idea of regime change and the means. And on the means I think there is a division in the administration, but that (Secretary of State Condoleezza) Rice made very clear that the means that they will pursue

political."

Bush clearly encouraged opponents to the regime last week, during his annual State of the Union address before Congress: "To the Iranian people, I say tonight: As you stand for your own liberty, America stands with you."

Bush also said Iran "remains the world's primary state sponsor of terror -- pursuing nuclear weapons while depriving its people of the freedom they seek and deserve."

Administration "hawks" have been promoting the idea that the regime is teetering and easy to topple.

"I think it's much easier than in

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PHOTO: AFP

TIME FOR TRUCE. Palestine Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas, left, shakes hand with his Israeli counterpart Ariel Sharon before their landmark summit in Egypt.

Bid to snatch criminal from cops foiled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police and local people yesterday foiled a bid to snatch notorious criminal Idul from the custody of two jail guards at Shyamoli, where they had taken him for an x-ray.

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AL enforces hartal today in Karimganj

UNB, Kishoreganj

The Awami League (AL) will enforce a day-long hartal today and a half-day hartal tomorrow in Karimganj upazila protesting Monday's police action that left one of its activists killed and more than 100 injured.

Paramilitary BDR in addition to 20 platoons of armed police have been deployed at different places.

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ACC to meet today over Miah ire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Commissioner Maniruzzaman Miah may regain his administrative and establishment related responsibilities which the ACC chairman has taken over for a temporary period.

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72 fall sick in Ctg from food poisoning

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

At least 72 people including 18 children and seven women fell sick from food poisoning after having their breakfast at village Zheuri of Anwara upazila in the district yesterday morning.

Of them, 38 were rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) and they were improving fast, hospital sources said. Others were admitted to different city clinics.

The upazila authorities are trying to find out why such a massive food poisoning took place, and a general diary was filed with Anwara Police Station. Doctors say the victims might have taken food mixed with insecticide at roadside restaurants.

Police have arrested three persons from three restaurants.

The victims and witnesses attributed the incident to food and tea sold at a hotel -- Babur Dokan --

owned by one Imtiazuddin Babu at village Zheuri. The males took 'nanrooti' (bread made of coarse flour) and tea as their breakfast at the hotel and then took those home for women and children of their families.

All of them fell sick within 10 to 20 minutes of taking those and many of them vomited.

"I sent at least 72 people to CMCH and some clinics by autorickshaws," said Officer in-Charge (OC) of Anwara Police Station Rafiqul Islam.

Wajed Ali, a farmer, said, "I was among about 50 people who were having breakfast at the hotel. I took nanrooti and tea. I started feeling discomfort within 20 minutes and fell unconscious."

Md Idris Ali, an electrician, said he bought two breads for his sons and both of them fell sick in 10 minutes.

Many other victims also narrated similar stories.

Dr Basana Muhuri of the CMCH

said acute food poisoning caused the illness but the situation was managed well due to timely admission of the sick persons.

She suspected presence of bacteria in the coarse flour used to make the breads. "Bacterial toxin might develop if coarse flour becomes too old or its expiry date is over. These germs could cause stomach problem," said Basana, assistant professor of paediatrics.

Meanwhile, UNO of Anwara, Kamrul Amin, OC Rafiqul Islam and officials of food department searched the factory -- JC Food Ltd. at Anwara -- from where the hotel owner bought the coarse flour. They collected some samples for further investigation.

"We are now looking for the reason behind such a massive food poisoning and we will file a case, if necessary," the UNO said.

Tk 20 lakh mobile phone sets seized at ZIA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs intelligence on Monday night seized mobile phone sets worth about Tk 20 lakh from a transit passenger at Zia International Airport.

Tipped off, a customs intelligence and investigation department

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HABIGANJ ATTACK

JIC to quiz BNP leader, 4 others in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP leader Abdul Quayum and four other arrestees, who were nabbed and remanded in connection with the grenade attack on the Awami League rally that killed Kibria and four others on January 27, were

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Hasina demands fresh polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the alliance government to quit immediately and take people's mandate through a fresh election.

"If the BNP-Jamaat coalition government has enough confidence, why doesn't it go for early elections?" the Awami League (AL) chief said addressing a press conference at her party's Dhanmondi office.

Hasina made the comment countering LGRD and Co-operatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan's claim at a public rally on Monday that Awami League would not secure more than 40 seats in the next election.

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