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Anti-graft body launches drive in Ctg port, customs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday launched a drive against corruption and irregularities in Chittagong customs and port.

A five-member team of the anti-graft watchdog arrived in the port city yesterday morning and visited different sections of the Customs House and Chittagong Port Authority (CPA).

Led by ACC Commissioner Moniruddin Ahmad, the team spoke to top officials to know first-hand about the state of corruption in these two key components of the state machinery.

"The action against corruption and irregularities in customs and port is launched from today and it would continue till we bring order," Moniruddin told reporters, adding, "Customs House requires special attention in this regard and there is no scope to neglect this."

Explaining the ACC's objectives of the inspection, he said the commission will work in three phases.

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Dhaka may get MCA aid in next phase

US charge d'affaires hopes

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh is likely to receive the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) assistance from the US government in its third version, Charge d'Affaires of the US Embassy in Dhaka Judith A Chammas said yesterday.

"I think Bangladesh is going to be considered for the assistance. But it is not the US government, but the Millennium Challenge Corporation who will take decision to allow any country on the basis of the set criteria," she said.

Chammas was talking to reporters after a meeting with the Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI) leaders in the capital.

MCA is a special assistance package for selected developing and least developed countries to facilitate poverty reduction. Bangladesh

was in the preliminary list of MCA in the last two years but excluded in the final selection.

The MCC Board selects eligible countries based on their demonstrated commitment to "ruling justly, investing in people, and encouraging economic freedom."

The US diplomat said Bangladesh's trade and commerce in the existing economic situation would be more challenging as the election approaches.

The rising oil and commodity prices, especially scrap metal price and strong demand for imported capital goods to support industrial growth, are putting pressure on the country's foreign exchange reserve, she pointed out.

Trade deficit is increasing and remittance flow has slowed down contributing to the depreciation of the taka and rising inflation, she

added. Chammas said Bangladesh maintained strong economic growth for several years and the industrial sector grew dramatically at over seven percent last year.

She said overall export to the US significantly increased over the last few years and US export to Bangladesh has also increased, though at a slower pace.

About foreign direct investment, Chammas said US investors are again looking to Bangladesh for opportunities, specially in the power sector. Two US investors' groups are placing projects on power generation, she added.

BCI President AK Azad urged the US authorities through the charge d'affaires to give Bangladeshi readymade garment products duty-free access to the US market.

HYGIENE DRIVE Haque Brothers fined for second time

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court yesterday fined Haque Brothers Limited for the second time for not mentioning net weights on the packages of some of their biscuits.

The court also filed a regular case against the company, situated in the Tejgan commercial area, under the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) act for not using an expiry date on biscuits named 'Narang'.

However, Selim Uzzaman, assistant general manager of Haque Brothers Limited, denied the allegation of not using an expiry date and has decided to contest the case directly in the court.

The court, led by Magistrate Rokan Ud Doulah, fined the

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India mulls pullout from Siachen

4 rebels die in Kashmir shootouts

AGENCIES, New Delhi/Srinagar

India and Pakistan have agreed on the need to withdraw troops from the Siachen Glacier but are stuck on verifying each other's positions before they pull back, the Defence minister said in an interview on Wednesday.

Several thousand soldiers of the two countries have died on the world's highest battlefield.

The two sides have held several rounds of talks to end the stand-off but have never been able to agree on finalising a deal.

"We have agreed, they have agreed to withdraw troops from the present positions," Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee said in an interview.

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US lifts some defence bans on Libya

REUTERS, Washington

President George W. Bush on Wednesday waived some defence export restrictions on Libya to allow US companies to participate in destroying Tipoff's chemical weapons and to refurbish eight transport planes.

It was another step in improving ties after Libya decided in December 2003 to abandon its nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programmes.

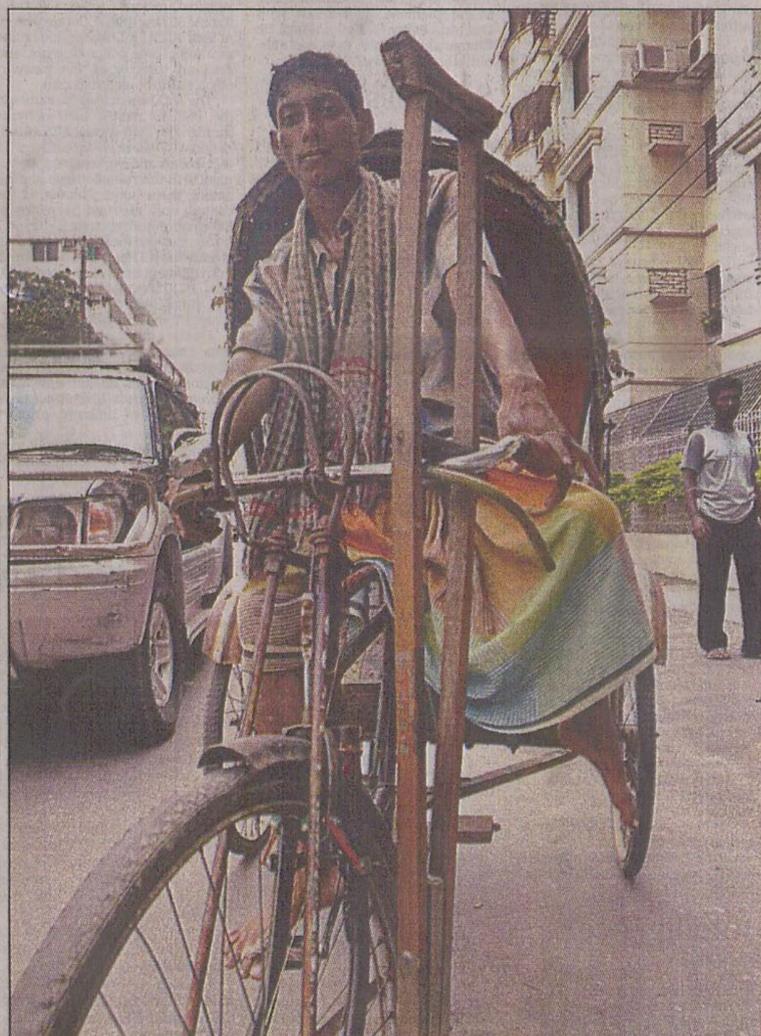
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Prayer Timing

September 30

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-35	5-10
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	6-00	6-05
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation



Rabbani, who lost a leg to polio in childhood, chose to become a rickshaw-puller rather than draw people's sympathy to earn his livelihood. People often hesitate to hire him but self-dependent Rabbani of Hazaribagh area, who does not own his rickshaw, does not want to bow down to fate.

Qaeda-linked group chief caught in Pakistan raid

AP, Islamabad

Pakistani security agents raided a home near the capital of Islamabad and arrested the head of an al-Qaeda-linked militant group accused of killing hundreds of minority Shias, a security official said Wednesday.

Asif Chotto, the reputed head of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, was captured with other suspects in Rawalpindi, a garrison city near Islamabad, the official said on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to the media.

Chotto is believed to have trained suicide bombers and masterminded major attacks against Shias in recent years.

Although Interior Minister Aftab Khan Sherpao refused to confirm or deny the arrest, another intelligence official said Chotto was in the custody of a Pakistani spy agency and was being questioned.

"He is a major catch. We were looking for him for the past three years," said the official, who also did not want to be named because he was not authorised to discuss cases with reporters.

"He (Chotto) is the person who trained a group of suicide bombers and attacked Shias," the official said.

The official would only say that Chotto was involved in several bomb attacks against Shias in the southern city of Karachi, the eastern city of Lahore, Sialkot and elsewhere.

Police investigator Farooq Awan, who has been involved in the arrests and interrogations of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi's men, said he knew about Chotto's arrest through the media, but he had not been informed about it officially.

However, he said Chotto began leading Lashkar-e-Jhangvi in 2002 after its chief, Akram Lahori, was arrested.

"Chotto is a very dangerous

person. He was involved in all major attacks against Shias in Karachi," Awan said.

In June, police said they found a letter from Chotto claiming responsibility for a bombing at a Shia mosque and a shootout in Karachi that killed five people. The message was in the pocket of one attacker killed during a shootout with police guards outside the Shia mosque.

According to Pakistan's independent Geo television, Chotto was planning new attacks when captured in Rawalpindi.

Pakistan has a history of sectarian violence, mostly blamed on rival majority Sunni and minority Shia extremist groups. Although most of Pakistan's Sunni and Shia Muslims live peacefully together, small radical groups on both sides often target each other's leaders and activists.

About 97 percent of Pakistan's 150 million people are Muslim, and Sunnis outnumber Shias by a 4-1 ratio.



Three buses race to overtake each other, violating all traffic rules and posing serious threat to the lives of passengers as well as pedestrians. The photo was taken in front of the Engineers' Institution yesterday.

PM goes to Malta in November

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is expected to attend the three-day Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) at Valeta in Malta beginning November 25.

Speaking at the weekly press briefing yesterday, Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin told diplomatic correspondents that the CHOGM will deal issues of global challenges, terrorism, conflict resolution, democracy, transparency, freedom of judiciary, economic stability and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Hemayet, who will leave here for New York on October 2 to attend the current UN General Assembly (UNGA) session, said he will attend the meeting of senior officials of the

SEE PAGE 19 COL 6

Rab man sent to jail on rape charge

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sent a Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) member to jail as he appeared before the court to surrender and seek bail in a rape case filed against him.

Judge Samsul Arefin of the Special Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-5 sent Sub-inspector Mohammad Ujjal to jail, asking the Mirpur police to investigate the case.

The victim had filed the case with the special tribunal on September 1. Ujjal appeared before the High Court earlier on September 11 seeking bail in advance. The High Court, denying his bail, ordered him to appear before the tribunal concerned within three weeks.

In the complaint, the victim said she used to live at Ujjal's house at the Ansar Staff Quarters as a tenant.

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All accused in Khulna journo murder case acquitted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The Speedy Trial Tribunal of Khulna yesterday acquitted all the 16 accused in the journalist Nabor Ali murder case.

Judge Abdus Samad handed down the verdict with eight out of the 16 accused present in the courtroom. Four of the remaining eight are on bail with three others absconding and one of the accused died last year.

The case was transferred to the Speedy Trial Tribunal of Khulna on September 14 from the court of Kabita Khanom, additional district and sessions judge, Khulna. The verdict was delivered after fifteen prosecution witnesses had been examined.

All the acquitted are leaders of the outlawed New Biplobi

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Car bombs kill 60 in Iraq

5 US soldiers die in another attack

AP, Baghdad

Three suicide attackers detonated car bombs nearly simultaneously in a mainly Shia town north of Baghdad yesterday, killing at least 60 people and wounding 70 others, a hospital official said.

In the western town of Ramadi, a roadside bomb killed five American soldiers.

The car bombs occurred just before sunset, around 6:45pm, hitting a bank, a vegetable market and another location in downtown Balad, a mostly Shiite city 50 miles north of the capital, witnesses said.

Dr Khaled al-Azawi of Balad Hospital said at least 60 people were killed, and 70 were wounded, including the town's police chief,

Col. Kadhim Abdul Razzaq, and four other policemen.

AFF, however, said 37 people were killed and 50 wounded yesterday when three car bombs exploded within minutes of each other in the Shiite central town of Balad.

Quoting an interior ministry official, the news agency said a fourth car bomb exploded an hour later in northern Baghdad as an Iraqi army convoy was passing by, but there were no immediate reports of casualties.

In Balad, some 70 kilometres north of the capital, two pick-up trucks blew up in a central shopping street.

A doctor at Baghdad's Khadimiyyah hospital said 40 ambulances had been dispatched to Balad, but none had yet returned.

Govt denounces Tuesday Group's conference bid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Denouncing the Tuesday Group's move to hold an international conference on electoral process in Bangladesh as "unwarranted," the government yesterday said it will oppose any such move that is tantamount to interference in internal affairs.

"Any sovereign country, if it feels that some move by foreign governments is tantamount to interference in internal affairs, will oppose that. It is a normal practice," Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin told the diplomatic corps at a press briefing at the foreign ministry.

The brief but strongly worded reaction to the move came for the second time as the Tuesday Group, an informal club of several foreign diplomats and representatives of development partners of

SEE PAGE 19 COL 2

Bigots harass female photojournalist

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Some activists of the Islamic Constitution Movement (ICM), headed by the peer of Char Monal, yesterday hurled abusive words at an on-duty female photojournalist.

Laila Anwar Bindu, staff photojournalist of the private news agency, BDNEWS, was harassed by the ICM activists while she was taking photographs of the ICM rally at the north gate of the Baitul Mokarram National Mosque.

An ICM activist suddenly started hurling abusive words at Bindu as he said, she was not in 'Shariat-approved' attire in front of the males.

"Why is this girl here? Why a female photographer?" the man shouted and some of his party fellows joined him.

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Aids virus 'could be weakening'

BBC ONLINE

The virus which causes Aids may be getting less powerful, researchers say.

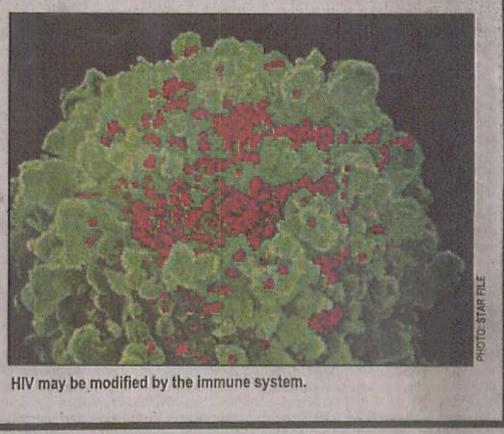
A team at the Institute of Tropical Medicine, in Antwerp, compared HIV-1 samples from 1986-89 and 2002-03.

They found the newer samples appeared not to multiply as well, and were more sensitive to drugs - some other studies argue they are becoming more resistant.

The researchers, writing in the journal Aids, stressed their work in no way meant efforts to prevent the spread of HIV should be scaled down.

They were only able to compare 12 samples from each time

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HIV may be modified by the immune system.