

JMB threatens to kill 3 more judges

STAR REPORT

Outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) has threatened to kill three judges and blow up Mymensingh Press Club.

Meantime, police yesterday arrested three youths in two villages in Faridganj upazila in connection with the threat letter sent to the British High Commission in Dhaka on Sunday, reports UNB.

Moreover, law enforcers arrested six JMB men including a suicide squad member in different parts of the country in the last two days.

In Kishoreganj, a court has ordered to attach moveable properties of JMB chief Abdur Rahman and JMB Operations Commander Bangla Bhui as they did not appear before it.

JUDGE THREATENED

The local press club on Sunday night received the JMB letter, which threatened to kill the senior special judge, sub-judge and senior

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CEC contradicts press reports

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) secretariat in a clarification on Sunday said the chief election commissioner (CEC) did not make the remark that there was no need to separate the EC secretariat from the Prime Minister's Office.

The news item published in different dailies on Thursday quoting the CEC's remark is not true, it said.

According to the clarification, the CEC had said, "The Election Commission secretariat is working as per the commission's directives. We are happy with the activities of the secretariat."

CTG ARMS HAUL

Accused placed on fresh 5-day remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed Hafizur Rahman, a charge-sheeted accused in the Chittagong arms haul case, on a fresh five-day remand in an abduction case filed in the capital in September 2003.

He was also shown arrested in another murder case filed with Mirpur Police Station and remanded for 10-day.

Earlier, Hafiz was placed on

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134 killed in China coalmine blast

AFP, Qitaihe

An explosion at a coal mine in remote northeastern China has killed 134 miners and another 15 are trapped underground, the China News Service said yesterday.

A total of 221 miners were underground when the cave-in occurred about 9:40 pm (1340 GMT) Sunday at the state-run Dongfeng coal mine, near Qitaihe city in Heilongjiang province, not far from the Russian border with Siberia.

However, after a day of intense rescue efforts, 72 survivors had been pulled from the rubble, said the semi-official China News Service.

Xinhua news agency said a rescue team of 269 people was involved in the search for those still trapped, and that not all hope was lost.

"There are possibilities for the

survival of other trapped miners," Xinhua said, citing officials at rescue headquarters.

Investigators said the accident was caused by a coal-dust explosion, which knocked out all the ventilation systems in the pit, according to Xinhua.

A coal-dust explosion is often caused when there is a gas blast, which ignites the coal dust suspended in the air or stuck on walls, Professor Rui Susheng from the China Coal Research Institute told AFP.

Heilongjiang Longmei Group, a mining conglomerate of four major state-owned coal businesses with a registered capital of 13 billion yuan (1.6 billion dollars), owns the Dongfeng mine, Xinhua said.

The Longmei group, the second biggest coal producer in China, had a combined output of 27 million tonnes

of coal in the first half of this year and intends to list publicly in Hong Kong next year, according to previous state press reports.

Although many of the accidents in China's coal industry occur in illegal mines, the work safety watchdog said the Dongfeng mine was fully licensed.

An official from the Dongfeng mine production management office told AFP the mine was one of the smaller ones in the Longmei group with an annual capacity of 500,000 tonnes a year.

The accident came as the government said Monday all the 18 miners trapped in a flooded coal mine in northern Hebei province since Thursday last week had been confirmed dead.

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PHOTO: STAR

Injured by a running train seven days ago, Belal Hossain, accompanied by his sister, lies on the entrance to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital yesterday. Belal died a few hours later the same day.

Pubali, City come out of problem bank status as loan defaults decline

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pubali Bank and City Bank have finally rid themselves of the dubious distinction of being problem banks.

The Bangladesh Bank yesterday sent letters to both the banks lifting the status of 'problem bank'.

The number of problem banks has now come down to four -- United Commercial Bank Ltd, Oriental Bank Ltd, First Security Bank and Social Investment Bank.

Pubali Bank's default loan has declined to less than 16 percent of its total loan. It has no provision and capital shortfall, rather it has a surplus of Tk 43 crore than the required capital volume.

The condition of City Bank has also improved substantially. Its

default loan has come down to 6.5 percent and it does not have any provision shortfall.

Pubali Bank's Managing Director Khandkar Ibrahim Khaled told The Daily Star that so long the bank was suffering from an image problem. "From now on it will work like a healthy bank," he said.

Pubali Bank was the first private bank owned and managed by Bangalees in the pre-independence era. After independence, it started its journey as a public bank along with five others.

During the rule of HM Ershad, the bank was privatised. But its condition continued to deteriorate and in 1994, it along with six other banks was declared problem bank. Since then, it continued to limp under the

close watch of the central bank.

On retirement from the central bank as its deputy governor, Ibrahim Khaled joined Pubali Bank as its managing director in early 2001.

"I joined Pubali Bank because it was the first Bangalee-run private bank in the pre-independence period. I took it as a challenge to lift this bank from its sick condition and today my objective has been achieved," he said.

A top official of City Bank said, "Since the bank has come out of the status of problem bank, we will now try to make it the best bank in the country."

Earlier, Uttara Bank, National Bank and National Credit and Commerce Bank were relieved of the status of problem banks.

Heated debate in JS body over militancy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The law minister and a senior Awami League (AL) lawmaker at a parliamentary body meeting yesterday had a brief but heated debate over the existence of militants in the alliance government.

Responding to a blistering attack by AL legislator Suranjit Sengupta that there are militants within the government, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed denied the allegation.

"It is not true. There is no militant

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Niko warned again of legal steps if it stops gas supply

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The Petrobangla yesterday once again cautioned Niko Resources that it will have to face legal action if the company stops gas supply from Feni field, official sources said.

The state-run oil, gas and mineral corporation informed the Canadian company that a committee will soon finalise the price of gas being supplied from Feni field. However, no timeframe has been given.

Petrobangla's caution to Niko came after its senior officials held a meeting with Energy Advisor Mahmudur Rahman earlier in the day.

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Moudud on Hena's JS membership

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed yesterday said parliament membership of expelled BNP leader Abu Hena should be settled in line with the constitution of the country as well as of the party.

Moudud said this while addressing a press conference at the Secretariat. His comment followed Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar's terming Hena an independent lawmaker.

Meantime, the law minister said

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Dhaka to ask WTO to save LDCs from antidumping steps

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

Dhaka will submit a paper to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) by the first week of December appealing exclusion of least developed countries (LDCs) from antidumping, countervailing and other safeguard measures.

The decision to submit the paper by Dhaka as the leader of the LDCs was taken in the mini ministerial meeting held in Livingstone, Zambia in June 2005, commerce ministry sources said, adding that the ministry has requested the Bangladesh mission in Geneva to submit it to the WTO.

Keeping in view the 6th WTO ministerial meeting to be held between December 13 and 18 in Hong Kong, the government will fight to gain binding commitment of duty and quota free market access as well as a compensation mechanism for future erosion of preference from developed countries.

Working together with other LDCs in attaining issues of common interests, Bangladesh will also bargain for free movement of human resources, exclusion of LDCs from all reduction commitments, assistance for fulfilling millennium development goals, commitment

on assistance to implement sanitary and phytosanitary measures and fulfil standard requirements.

To finalise government's position in the upcoming WTO ministerial meeting, the commerce ministry held a series of meetings with all stakeholders and took opinion of different ministries.

The ministry also sought opinion from the parliamentary standing committee in this regard.

The government puts the highest priority on the issue and wants to ensure ultimate accountability in taking national position on the negotiation, a high official of the ministry said.

One killed in 'shootout' with Rab

UNB, Dhaka

An alleged criminal of the city's Sayedabad area was killed in a 'shoot-out' between the members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and

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Prayer Timing		
November 29		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-10	5-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-19	5-22
Esha	7-00	7-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

the court was adjourned to December 5 to give time for one of Saddam's seven co-defendants to appoint his own defence lawyer.

Saddam, who faces charges including murder and torture that carry the death penalty, showed no

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AFP, Baghdad

A defiant Saddam Hussein yesterday exchanged angry words with the presiding judge and heard testimony from the first prosecution witness as the trial of the former Iraqi dictator resumed after a 40-day break.

After barely two hours in session,