



The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XV NO. 323

DHAKA TUESDAY DECEMBER 13, 2005

People's Right to Know

www.thedailystar.net

AGRAHAYAN 29, 1412 BS

JULQAD 10, 1426 HJRI

16 PAGES PLUS STAR LIFESTYLE PRICE: Tk 10.00

Fresh voter list move challenged in court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two separate writ petitions were filed with the High Court yesterday, challenging the legality of the activities to prepare a fresh voter list for the next parliamentary election.

Both the petitions--one filed by Awami League (AL) General Secretary Abdul Jalil and the other by two AL lawmakers--are likely to be heard at the High Court today.

Noted jurist Dr Kamal Hossain and Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud will move for AL lawmakers Advocate Rahmat Ali and SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Dhaka's joining Asian Highway at stake

Cabinet decides not to sign deal without route change

RAFIQ HASAN

Bangladesh will remain out of the Asian Highway network, connecting 32 countries with Europe, as a cabinet meeting last night decided not to sign the agreement without a change to the road map.

"We would not sign the agreement at this moment and turn Bangladesh a corridor of India,"

said a cabinet member after coming out of the meeting. "We have been fighting for not to give transit to that country," he added.

The deadline for signing the agreement is December 31, and the cabinet has decided to send a fresh proposal to bring change in the direction of the route. But the proposal is unlikely to be accepted unless Bangladesh signs the deal

first, according to sources.

The cabinet asked the foreign ministry to take diplomatic efforts and pursue the ESCAP for accepting Bangladesh's proposal and extend the deadline for signing the agreement.

"We would join the Asian highway only after acceptance of our proposal," the cabinet member added.

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BNP MPs for watch on areas of Jamaat, Bangla Bhai

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A number of ruling BNP lawmakers have said the areas where Bangla Bhai ran his activities and some parliamentary constituencies belonging to Jamaat-e-Islami and situated along the border should be kept under strong surveillance to trace militants.

They made the statement when the BNP has directed its district leaders and legislators to form committees at union and thana levels to build up public resistance against the militants.

The lawmakers said the directive

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Tele-tapping legalised

President's ordinance termed black law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President Iajuddin Ahmed has promulgated an ordinance, with immediate effect, allowing intelligence and law enforcement agencies to tap telephone conversations of any individual amid a national outcry.

The president on Sunday night signed the ordinance, labelled as black law by legal experts, rights activists, political, social and business leaders, fearing harassment and misuse of the telecoms act.

The ordinance has to be passed by the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) in its next session due in January next year.

Telephones can be tapped only

with the permission of the chief executive of the home ministry, the ordinance says.

The cabinet on December 5 approved the proposed amendments to Bangladesh Telecommunications Act, 2001, allowing law enforcers eavesdropping on phones. Although the amendments were supposed to be passed in the next session of the JS, the government promulgated this ordinance.

The telecoms act, 2001 however provides that phone tapping is an offence and punishable with either a six-month imprisonment or fine not exceeding Tk 50,000 or both.

The ordinance has been passed

with immediate effect to help combat criminal activities, sources said.

The proposed amendment also includes a new section 97 (a) in the act, which says the government can authorise an official of intelligence agency, national security intelligence, investigating organisation or person to tap and collect conversation, and to resist the phone service operators from sending messages and conversations in the interest of national security.

The authorised official can order the phone service providers and the service providers would be compelled to carry out the orders.

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DIALOGUE ON MILITANCY BEGINS Kader Siddiqui for purging Jamaat from govt, ruling alliance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The national dialogue of the prime minister on ways to combat militancy began yesterday with Krishak Samik Janata League proposing expulsion of Jamaat-e-Islami both from the government and the ruling alliance for having 'links to the militants'.

"I don't know Harkatul Jihad, JMB and nor do I know the names of the militant youths. But I do know that Jamaat is their father. So,

we have suggested the prime minister axe Jamaat from the government," the party Chairman Abdul Kader Siddiqui told reporters after the talks with Khaleda Zia.

Siddiqui, a valiant freedom fighter, said he asked the prime minister to arrest those whom the people suspect of having involvement with the militant outfits.

Asked about the reply of Khaleda Zia, he said she told them that her government is probing the

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Yadav's father, brother released

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Police on Sunday night released Sattayan Das and Biplob Das, father and brother of Yadav Das, after keeping them about 40 hours in their custody.

Barhatta police picked them up at their house in Bish-Chaparkona in Barhatta upazila at dawn Saturday.

Sattayan and Biplob told The Daily Star yesterday they were confined in the police station's cell on the first day. On the second day, they were given a chair to sit on outside the cell.

Contacted, Superintendent of Police (SP) of Netrakona Ali Hossain Fakir said they detained the two to quiz them about Yadav and his activists.

Meanwhile, Yadav's sister Dipa

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PHOTO STAR

Tired of waiting for hours, an elderly pilgrim lies on the floor of the Hajj Camp near Zia International Airport yesterday as their flight was delayed.

Biman messes up hajj flights

Pilgrim dies at ZIA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hajj pilgrims witnessed utter mismanagement by the Biman Bangladesh Airlines and the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) yesterday. In the meantime a pilgrim, whose flight had been delayed, died at the airport.

Biman said hajj pilgrim Sujat Ali, 55, died of a heart attack. Other pilgrims, who were scheduled to fly with him, said the elderly man fell sick while waiting anxiously in Zia International Airport (ZIA) to catch his rescheduled flight.

Sources at ZIA said five hajj flights of Biman were cancelled between Sunday night and yesterday evening causing a pandemonium in the airport as Biman employees were scrambling to reschedule the flights of several hundred stranded pilgrims.

Protesting the mismanagement and cancellation of flights, a few hundred pilgrims demonstrated at the airport several times between Sunday night and yesterday noon.

A Biman press release said Sujat died at about 1:30am yesterday.

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Politicians should deal with terror unitedly: UK minister



DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

UK Secretary of State for International Development Hilary Benn has suggested that the politicians in Bangladesh should unitedly address terrorism and resolve other problems to ensure free and fair elections.

Terrorism is one of the biggest challenges facing the world and "all of us face the threat of terrorism and respond to it globally," Benn said. He was addressing a press

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