



Pranab Mukherjee due today

UNB, Dhaka

Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee arrives in Dhaka today to invite Bangladesh to attend the 14th Saarc summit to be held in New Delhi on April 3-4.

Mukherjee will hand over a formal invitation letter from Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh to President Iajuddin Ahmed

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2 outlaws killed in 'crossfire'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Two top activists of outlawed Sramajibi Mukti Andolan of Kushtia were killed in an 'encounter' with Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) early hours Sunday at Char Ghoshpur village in Pabna sadar upazila.

Three Rab personnel were also injured during the encounter.

The dead were identified as Shahidul Islam, 32, son of Ahmed Ali from Sadarpur village of Kumarkhali upazila in Kushtia district and Nasir Uddin, 25, son of Aher Sheikh from Berkalua village of the same upazila.

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Prayer Timing		
February 19		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-20	5-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-03	6-07
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

Revenue collection to fall short of target

NBR projects 13pc growth against targeted 21pc in FY07

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) yesterday projected that revenue collections in the current fiscal year will see hardly a 13 percent growth against 21 percent targeted in the budget for FY 2006-07.

The projection came at a meeting of fiscal and monetary coordination council chaired by Finance Adviser AB Mirza Azizul Islam.

Terming the current revenue target ambitious, he said in no way would it be possible to attain that much growth. It would rather hover around the usual rate of 13 to 14 percent, he said.

The adviser said the political unrest in the last couple of months might have accounted for the short-fall in revenue collection.

The meeting discussed the overall economic situation including budget implementation, foreign aid and bank borrowing.

NBR sources said taxes on some essential commodities including sugar had to be brought down from the rates set in the budget. As a result, the government will suffer a shortfall of Tk 1000 crore in revenues from these sectors.

Besides, due to a huge number of pending tax-related cases, Tk 1,620 crore may not come into the government exchequer, said meeting sources.

As per the NBR statistics, the revenue growth in July-January was 9.06 percent while it was 12.11 percent in the corresponding period of the last fiscal.

At the meeting, the central bank expressed concern over the government's huge bank borrowing.

It observed that the government's borrowing from the banks must be reined in, otherwise, it might lead to higher inflation.

According to the central bank statistics, the government borrowed Tk 6,300 crore in July-December period of the current fiscal. But the amount came down to Tk 5,800 crore due to cautious fiscal measures of the present caretaker government.

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Bomang King Aung Shoi Pru Chowdhury receives taxes from the subjects during Raj Punnah (revenue collection programme) in Bandarban on the 122nd celebration of the traditional festival yesterday.

LOSS CURTAILING STEP Biman won't fly to Jessore, Rajshahi from today

UNB, Dhaka

Biman Bangladesh Airlines has decided to discontinue two of its domestic flights on Dhaka-Jessore and Dhaka-Rajshahi routes from today to reduce huge losses.

Earlier, the national flag carrier also closed down 10 of its international flights on eight different routes, a source at Biman's flight information department said.

The discontinued flights are one on Dhaka-New York route, one on Dhaka-Tokyo, two on Dhaka-Yangon, one on Dhaka-Paris, one on Dhaka-Brussels, one on Dhaka-Frankfurt, two on Dhaka-Bahrain and two on Dhaka-Bombay route.

Biman has also decided to close down its eight overseas stations on the closed routes.

At present, Biman operates a total of 90 flights on 19 international routes.

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PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

The consignment of 1,065 tonnes of inedible ghee, which the joint forces seized in Chittagong yesterday. The ghee, imported 25 years ago, has been taken to Eastern Refinery to destroy.

CHT ACCORD 16 army camps withdrawn in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

The caretaker government withdrew 16 temporary camps of security forces from Rangamati hill district since Friday -- a measure seen as a move by the government to implement the landmark Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) peace accord.

A total of 16 temporary camps of the army, BDR (Bangladesh Rifles) and Armed Police Battalion (APBn) have so far been withdrawn from different places of seven upazilas in the district in the last couple of days since Friday, sources said.

The withdrawn camps are Shikatachhara CIO army camp under sadar zone, Khaskahali army camp and Maksudtilla APBn camp under Ghagra zone, Triupurachhara army camp under Naniachar zone, Khagrachhari army camp, Pushkapara APBn camp and Mouzali APBn camp under Longodu zone, Hirachar BDR camp and Sijakmukh BDR camp under R a j a n a g a r z o n e ,

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Over 1,000 tonnes of ghee to be burnt 25 years after import

1 lakh sacks of fertiliser seized

STAR REPORT

The authorities yesterday seized around 1,065 tonnes of poisonous ghee, imported 25 years ago, from Chittagong Port and sent the consignment to Eastern Refinery to destroy it.

Around 15 tonnes of the inedible ghee were burnt yesterday on recommendation of a high-level committee.

Joint forces and senior officials witnessed the burning of the ghee.

According to an UNB report, some 23 importers had imported 2,500 tonnes of inedible ghee from Australia in 1982. Of that, 1,065 tonnes had been kept in the port shed and the rest in warehouses of different financing banks.

The customs officials did not release the consignments upon arrival after testing those.

Meanwhile, acting on a tip-off, the members of Bangladesh Coast Guard raided a warehouse at DSP Ghat of Majhirghat area at around 1:00pm and recovered more than one lakh sacks of different types of fertilisers, including MOP and FMT.

However, none could be arrested in this connection as no one claimed the ownership of the recovered fertilisers, a coast guard official said.

The fertiliser was handed over to BADCO (Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation) in presence of district magistrate and officials of Double Mooring Police Station, sources said.

In addition, the coast guard men also recovered some lubricants from the same Majhirghat area along the river Kamaphuli in the afternoon.

However, details on the recovery could not be had instantly.

ACID TRADERS JAILED IN DHAKA

A mobile court yesterday jailed seven acid traders in the capital including president of Bangladesh Acid Traders Association Shamsul Haque for violating rules and gross mismanagement.

Led by Metropolitan Magistrate Rokon-Ud Doula, the court found the acid importer and distributor guilty of owning two warehouses for storing nitric and sulphuric acid without permission from the

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Car bombs kill 56 in Baghdad market

Two US soldiers slain in attacks

AFP, Baghdad

A double car bomb attack on a crowded market in mainly-Shia east Baghdad killed at least 56 yesterday, medics in two city hospitals said, in the first blow to a major US-led security operation.

An official at the Kindi Hospital in downtown Baghdad said the emergency room had received 42 corpses and was treating 83 seriously wounded patients, including many women and children.

Another medic, at the city's Ibn Nafees hospital, said his teams had seen 14 dead and 20 critically wounded following the blasts.

Outside Kindi, ambulances and trucks continued to ferry in more dead and dying as wailing relatives demanded: "Where is the security plan?"

A first explosion ripped through a crowded vegetable market, while at almost the same moment another explosives-laden car detonated a few hundred metres (yards) away near a row of electrical goods shops, witnesses said.

Desperate relatives scoured the blackened debris for wounded loved ones, while shell-shocked bystanders loaded the injured into civilian cars for transport to the city's over-worked emergency rooms.

A large plume of smoke could be seen rising over the Baghdad Jadida or "New Baghdad" district shortly after the blast. Helicopters

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8 US troops die in Afghan chopper crash

AFP, Kabul

Eight US servicemembers were killed and 14 injured when a helicopter crashed in southeastern Afghanistan early yesterday after a "sudden loss of power and control," the US-led coalition said. The twin-rotor chopper crashed in the southeastern province of Zabul, about 250km southwest of the capital Kabul, not far from a main highway, residents and officials said.

"Eight coalition personnel were killed and 14 others were wounded early Sunday when a coalition CH-47 helicopter had a sudden, unexplained loss of power and control and crashed in eastern Afghanistan," a coalition statement said.

"The helicopter was transporting a total of 22 people, including aircrew, at the time of the crash," it said.

The coalition said an investigation would be launched to verify the cause of the crash. It had said earlier the chopper came down after reporting engine failure.

"Recent reporting indicated a Taliban build-up for operations against the coalition forces in the region," the statement said.

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