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Chiefs of three services put on new rank badges

UNB, Dhaka

Army Chief Lt Gen Moeen U Ahmed, Navy Chief Rear Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam and Air Chief Air Vice Marshal SM Ziaur Rahman were yesterday adorned with the rank of general, vice admiral and air marshal.

In presence of President and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Iajuddin Ahmed, the navy and air chiefs adorned the army chief with the rank of general, the army and air chiefs adorned the navy chief with the rank of vice admiral and the army and navy chiefs adorned the air chief with the rank of air marshal at the Armed Forces Division.

Among others, Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Lt General M Jahangir Alam

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Ctg port turns less costly

RAFIQ HASAN

The overall shipping charges for inbound cargoes have decreased significantly after cancellation of terminal handling charge (THC) and replacement of the outmoded stevedoring system with berth operators at the Chittagong port.

The shipping agent sources said the feeder vessel operators have lowered the freight rate by at least 30-40 percent as the country's premier port has been congestion-free, reducing the turnaround time to 3.8 days in May from 11.6 days in

January.

The shipping lines can now operate more voyages than they did before. So, instead of \$300-340, they charge \$230-240 for per twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) on Chittagong-Singapore or Chittagong-Colombo route, the sources pointed out.

The rate however varies from company to company. The charge for carrying empty container too has come down to \$85 per TEU from \$170.

Before cancellation of the terminal handling charge on May 20,

the shipping agents used to charge \$200 for per TEU container and \$400 for per forty-foot equivalent unit (FEU).

"The efficiency of the port increased by at least 50 percent and the cost of business dropped by more than 50 percent," said Mohammad Amirul Haque, chairman of the ship and port standing committee of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI).

He said the exporters and importers have been relieved as the

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CA asks govt officials to work for fair polls

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday asked government officials to work for implementing the caretaker government's main programme for holding a free, fair and neutral election.

He made the call while addressing the annual dinner of the Officers' Club at Bailey Road in the capital.

The CA also urged the civil bureaucrats to deliver service to the people keeping in mind that the government is a service-providing institution.

He said the government's main objective is to hold a free, fair and credible election along with keeping the wheels of country's economy moving.

The chief adviser recalled his

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GULISTAN-JATRABARI Flyover design, layout found seriously flawed

RASHIDUL HASAN

The experts team appointed to examine the construction of the Gulistan-Jatrabari flyover said its design and layout is seriously flawed and will cause unnecessary traffic congestion as the constructors aimed to maximise tolls rather than speed up traffic.

The experts from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) suggested bringing significant changes in the present design and layout of the flyover, including cutting the number of ramps (slip roads) to the flyover for the entry and exit of

vehicles.

They criticised the design for the way it artificially forces traffic onto the flyover apparently to increase revenue.

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), the implementing agency and coordination body for the project, accepted the modified design and layout prepared by the Buet experts team.

The concessionaire of the Gulistan-Jatrabari flyover, Belhasa-Accom and Associates Ltd, however, said the experts team's proposals are impossible to implement.

"It is not possible to implement

the modified design at this stage", a DCC official quoted a Belhasa-Accom official as saying.

Meanwhile, the construction of the Tk 670 crore flyover, which had been advancing at a snail's pace since June 2006, has remained stalled for the last four months.

The project has also been dogged from the very beginning by the allegation that contractor Belhasa-Accom won the contract improperly.

The joint venture of the UAE-based construction firm Belhasa International LLC and Orion Group's Accom Engineering

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ESSENTIALS' PRICES Govt in a fix over hike on int'l market

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is in a dilemma over how to keep essentials' prices low as domestic fuel price increase in line with international market movement has affected transport cost of goods.

Press Secretary to the Chief Adviser, Syed Fahim Munaim, yesterday said the government is becoming increasingly concerned over the price spiral of fuel on international markets but is yet to find a way to rein in the ever-increasing prices of edible oil along with other essentials.

Asked how the government will pin down spiralling prices when its

reported plan for a 10 percent fuel price hike would further bump up transport costs resulting in further rise in prices, Fahim said, "These are the dilemmas of the government... The cabinet is intensely discussing how we are to balance it."

"(Essentials) Prices in our neighbouring countries have also gone up. If you look at India, they have recently had their worst production in 35 years. They have stopped exporting lentils, which we now have to import from countries like Australia and Canada," said Fahim.

He said, "Domestically, there is

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Workers to be sent to ROK under new scheme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

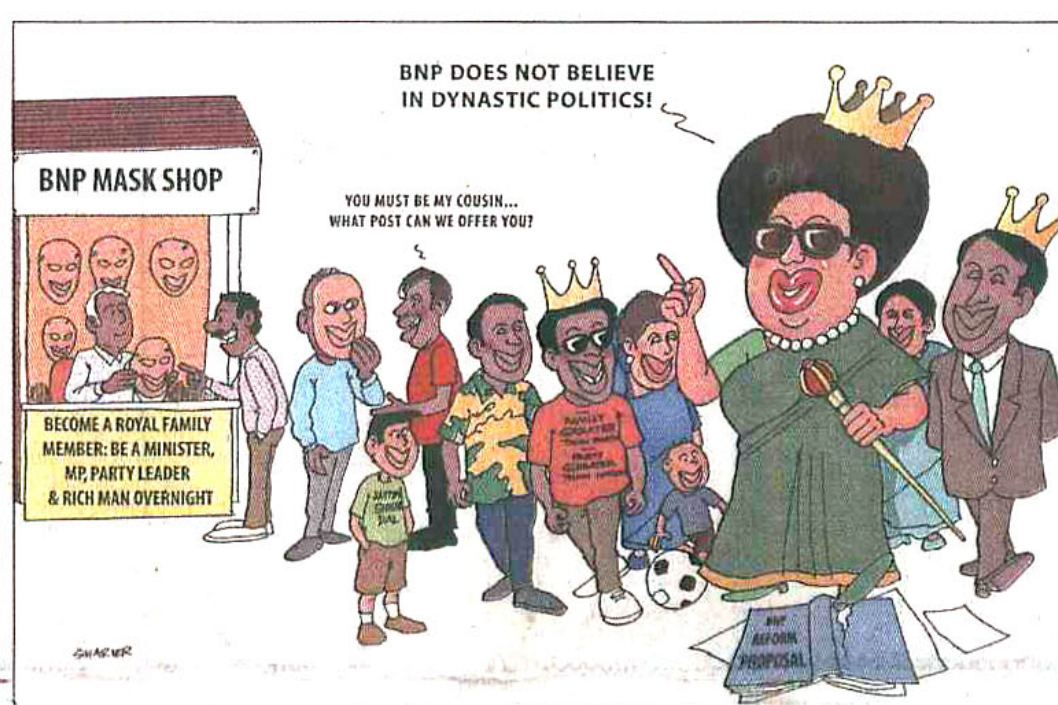
The council of advisers yesterday approved a deal to send workers to South Korea on a government-to-government basis rather than through private recruiting agencies.

Besides, the advisers discussed about designing a permanent National Hajj Policy.

Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury is expected to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with his Korean counterpart on manpower export during the 6th Asian Cooperation Dialogue in Seoul slated for June 4-6.

The agreement will allow sending

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Sycophancy destroyed democracy in AL, BNP Party leaders say on BBC Sanglap

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Practice of intra-party democracy, transparency, accountability and decentralisation of power in Awami League (AL) and BNP has been quashed by the practice of rampant sycophancy in the two major political parties of the country, observed their leaders yesterday.

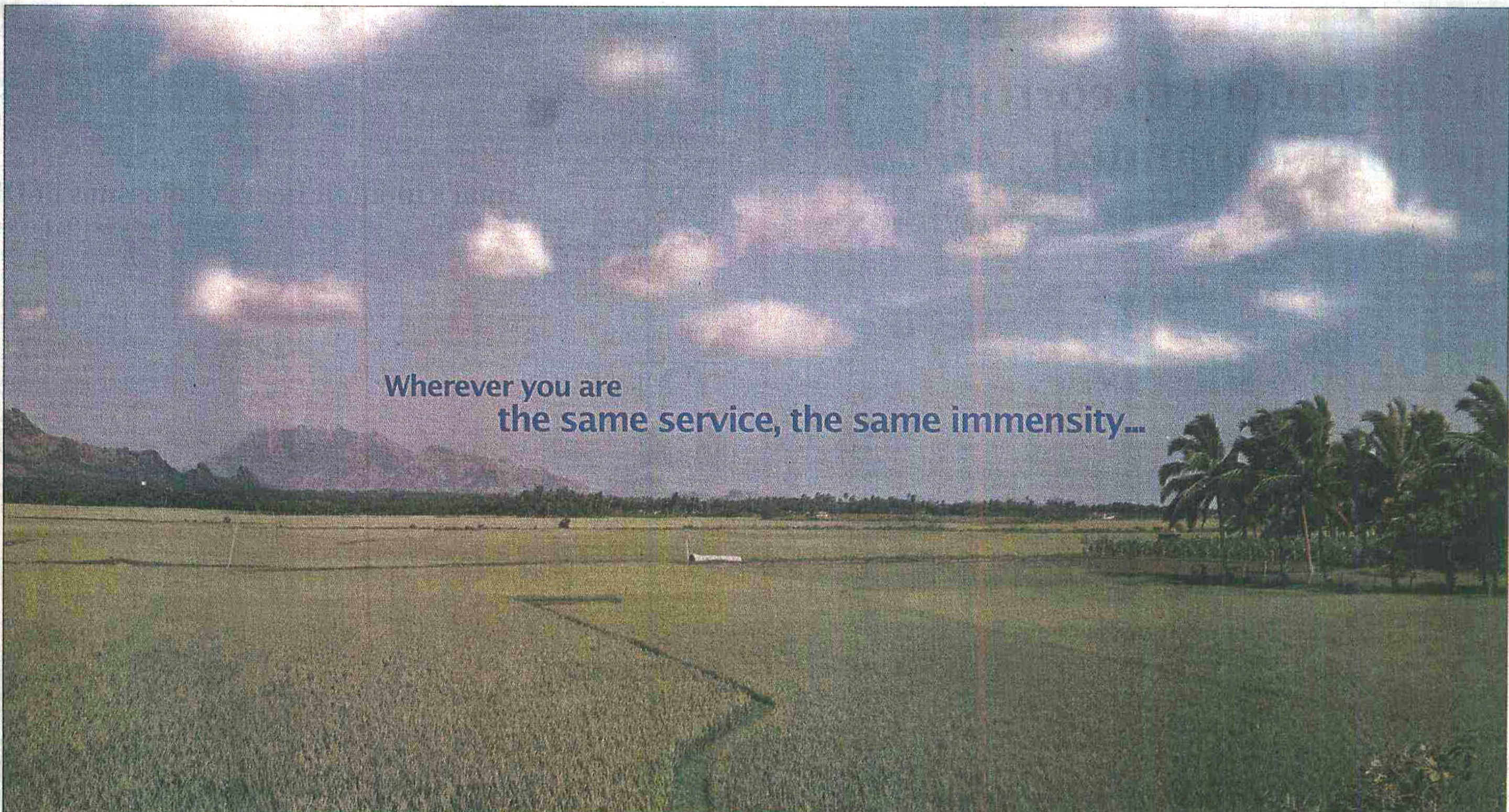
BNP Vice-chairman Maj (ret'd) Hafizuddin Ahmed, and AL Organising Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury made the observation on BBC Bangladesh Sanglap held in Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the capital.

"There are many undemocratic provisions in the constitution of BNP. But without knowing our constitution we are blaming the party chief for abuse of power. While the fact is that as leaders we all are trying to curry favours with her," said Hafizuddin, a former commerce minister.

"Truth is not told at party meetings sometimes only to flatter the party chief. And that's how abuse of power by the party chief is encouraged," said Saber Hossain, also political secretary to AL President Sheikh Hasina.

Saber suggested increasing the number of party members.

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