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Privatisation Commission's rejoinder

The Privatisation Commission (PC) protested a news item headlined "Rupali Sale Off: Legal notice served on Saudi prince for \$458 million" published in The Daily Star on December 13.

In the rejoinder it said, "To our utter surprise, the captioned report is unfounded, baseless and fabricated. No notice as stated in the report has been sent to the Saudi prince under the signature of Barrister Tofaelur Rahman from the Privatisation Commission. Such misleading news has created a lot of confusion in the minds of public. Moreover, Barrister Tofael has no authority to issue any notice to the Saudi prince on behalf of the PC."

It said, "In PC's letter there is no mention of taking action against the buyer, nor anything about discontinuing the sale process. The PC also did not say anything about 'breach of international norms'."

"Such an unfounded and

SEE PAGE 19 COL 5

Govt plans covering up Sidr loss by extra HYV coverage

STAR REPORT

The government looks to produce an additional 7.5 lakh tons of rice by growing high-yield varieties over 10 lakh hectares of land to cover an estimated 14 lakh tons of shortfall caused by back-to-back natural disasters this year.

Agriculture and Environment Adviser CS Karim spoke of the plan at a view-exchange meeting at The Daily Star office yesterday. He also said the government would work in unison with the NGOs to provide the affected farmers with agricultural implements, seeds and fertiliser.

Karim observed that the country needs to invest in agricultural research to meet the challenge of



CS Karim

securing increased crop yields in the coming years and also to adapt to climate change.

Explaining the government

plans to make good the shortage in rice production—8 lakh tons due to floods and 6 lakh tons for cyclone Sidr—he said the government has decided to plant high-yield hybrid Boro over 10 lakh hectares instead of 2.5 lakh hectares.

Asked about demand for the government to give tillage equipment to the farmers in Sidr-hit areas, the adviser said this was done after the 1991 cyclone too, but most of the tools ended up being in the hands of corrupt officials.

This time the government would work with the NGOs so that there is little room for corruption in distribution of tools, seeds and fertiliser and disbursement of agricultural loans.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 4

Tales of the Biranganas

DU CORRESPONDENT

"I was so frightened seeing the eyes of a Pakistani army personnel that were staring at me. He snatched my son from my lap and threw him away... My mother begged for mercy grabbing his legs, but he did not care," said Birangana Hasna Banu of Sirajganj.

"At the beginning of the war, we hid ourselves in our village but the heinous Razakars took the army to our village and let them violate us," she said while telling her experience of the Liberation War.

She said she was violated by the Pakistani army and their native collaborators.

Sammito Sangskritik Jote yesterday launched a four-day victory festival to mark the Victory Day, December 16, at the Central Shaheed Minar, Hasna Banu and seven other Biranganas (valiant women freedom fighters) from different parts of Sirajganj

SEE PAGE 19 COL 4



PHOTO: STAR

Eight Biranganas place a floral wreath at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday to pay tribute to the martyrs of the Liberation War in 1971.

Power import from India unlikely for high tariff

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh is unlikely to respond positively to an offer for the import of electricity from the Indian State of Tripura because of high tariff rate.

India recently offered to sell electricity to Bangladesh from a 4,000MW power plant being built in Tripura.

About the Indian offer, Power and Energy Adviser Tapan Chowdhury, speaking at the concluding session of the 16th Indo-Bangladesh Dialogue in the city, said the power tariff of the proposed plant is about 7 rupees (about Tk 11) per unit, which is very

high from Bangladesh perspective.

Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) organised the dialogue at Brac Inn with its Chairman Prof Rehman Sobhan in the chair.

Tapan Chowdhury said due to high tariff rate it will not be viable for Bangladesh to import electricity from the Indian plant.

Indian High Commissioner Pinak Ranjan Chakrabarti, however, said the tariff offer is negotiable and Bangladesh can negotiate the power price.

Identifying the mistrust as the main obstacle to the promotion of relations between the two neighbouring countries, the adviser said

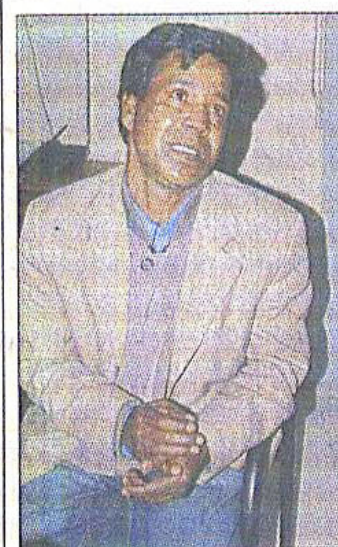
SEE PAGE 19 COL 6

JOBS ABROAD

Another story of heartbreak

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A victim of human trafficking who was brought back home yesterday revealed how Bangladeshi jobseekers are lured by prospect of



Ramizuddin

jobs in Europe and other developed countries and eventually deserted in Africa by international racketeers.

Ramizuddin said he along with 14 other jobseekers was abandoned in a Moroccan jungle where

a gang looted their money and other belongings.

He also told journalists how they crossed 400 kilometres in Sahara desert without enough food and water to reach Bangladesh Embassy in Rabat in 26 days.

On the way they faced sand storms several times and narrowly cheated death. Each time the storms piled huge load of sand over them and in their desperate effort to survive they managed to escape.

"During those days I never thought I'd ever return to my home again. I request every jobseeker not walk the way we did," he said at the Police Headquarters with tears flooding down his cheeks.

"I was so fortunate to return home after spending a stranded life for two years and seven months. I don't know whether my mother is alive or not," Ramizuddin who hailed from Chandra Gram village in Moulvibazar said.

He had been languishing in the custody of Bangladesh Embassy in Rabat since he managed to reach there.

Luckily, Ramizuddin came across Inspector General of Police Nur Mohammad who went to Morocco last month to attend the 76th General Assembly of Interpol.

The IGP assured him of doing

SEE PAGE 19 COL 7

Charges pressed against Ershad in theft case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday pressed charges against former president and Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad, his wife Rowshan Ershad and JP presidium member Abu Hossain Babla in a theft case filed by Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) in January last year.

The police also pressed charges against CPB President Manzurul Ahsan Khan, acting general secretary Shah Alam and 14 others in connection with an attempted murder case filed by the JP the same year.

Meantime, the Anti-Corruption

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Wife, son of Ziaul Haq jailed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Wife and son of Ziaul Haq Zia, former BNP state minister for LGRD and cooperatives, were handed down six and eight years' imprisonment by a special court yesterday in separate tax evasion cases.

Judge Shamsunnahar of the Fourth Special Court set up at the MP Hostel on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises delivered the verdict against Zia's wife Nasima Hug and their son Mashfiqul Huq.

Both the convicts are currently on the run. The mother has been found guilty of evading Tk 44.86 lakh in taxes while the son has been convicted of Tk 90.43 lakh tax evasion.

The court also fined Nasima Tk 2 crore, in default of which she would have to stay in jail for an additional nine months. Similarly, the court

SEE PAGE 19 COL 3

Musharraf set to end Pakistan emergency

AP, Islamabad

President Pervez Musharraf will lift Pakistan's state of emergency on Saturday only after changing the constitution to ensure that he cannot be hauled before a court, a senior official said yesterday.

Musharraf purged the judiciary, jailed thousands of opponents and silenced television news channels after he suspended the constitution and declared emergency rule on Nov. 3.

The US-backed leader said he acted to prevent political chaos

and give authorities a freer hand against Islamic militants, though critics accuse him of a last-ditch power grab before the previous Supreme Court could declare his continued rule illegal.

On Thursday, Attorney General Malik Mohammed Qayyum told The Associated Press that the president, who has acknowledged that he breached the constitution, will amend the charter to protect his decisions from legal challenges.

Qayyum said government legal experts were finalising the changes and that they would be announced

before Musharraf lifts the emergency on Saturday, but provided no details.

"The president will lift the emergency to restore the constitution and the fundamental rights," he said.

Qayyum's comments came a day after Information Minister Nisar Memon rejected claims that the government was trying to stifle the media ahead of next month's parliamentary elections.

The Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists accused the government Wednesday of "an attempt to

SEE PAGE 19 COL 8

EU to give 33.6m euro for food security

UNB, Dhaka

The European Union will provide a grant of 33.6 million euro (Tk 336 crore) for expanding food security in Bangladesh under an agreement signed here yesterday.

Economic Relations Division (ERD) Secretary Aminul Islam Bhuiyan and head of EC delegation to Bangladesh Ambassador Stefan Frowein signed the agreement at the ERD office for the funds, which will be spent under the Food and Security Programme 2006 in Bangladesh over the next five years.

The overall objective of the Food Security Programme is the reduction of extreme poverty and malnutrition in Bangladesh "by improving socio-economic condition of the very poor and by managing and improving food security in an effective way".

The programme is developed in

line with the overall objectives of the European Commission's 2007-2013 Country Strategy Paper for Bangladesh, which focuses on reducing poverty and assisting Bangladesh's integration into the world economy.

A European Commission release on the agreement said the intervention would tackle several specific areas of food insecurity aimed at improving the availability, access and utilisation of food among vulnerable groups and strengthening the capacity of Bangladesh government.

The programme's main goals are improvement in nutrition and educational performance of poor and ultra-poor primary school children in area with high levels of food security, setting up a sustainable national surveillance scheme to monitor nutrition indicators and

SEE PAGE 19 COL 6

High Court grants bail to Sigma

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday granted bail to convict Sigma Huda, wife of former communications minister Nazmul Huda, also jailed, in a graft case that earned her three years' imprisonment.

The court also granted bail to another convict, Barrister Mir Helaluddin, jailed for three years on July 4 for aiding and abetting his father, former state minister for civil aviation and tourism Mir Nasiruddin, in amassing property illegally.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 3

Prayer Timing

December 14

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-15	5-50
Dhuhr	12-30	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-19	5-22
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

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