PSI firm's

contract

cancelled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Board of Revenue

(NBR) yesterday cancelled appointment of Cotecna

Inspection SA, a pre-shipment

inspection (PSI) company, on

charge of violating laws and regula-

yesterday, an NBR statement said.

The decision came into effect

NBR sources said some 64,000

The NBR recently found

allegations of irregularities and

corruption were lodged with it

Cotecna involved in serious irregu-

larities including evading duty by

giving false information in import

inspections, particularly for sports

utility vehicles (SUV) like Hummer

seized from high-profile corrup-

replaced Cotecna for pre-shipment

inspection of imported goods from

B Block countries like China,

Thailand, Korea, the Philippines

and Cambodia and SGS Societe,

Switzerland for D Block countries

including Japan, Hong Kong,

Taslima leaves

India for Europe

Bangladeshi writer Taslima

Nasreen has left India for Europe

after being hounded into hiding by

death threats from Islamic mili-

tants, her publisher and friends

New Delhi this (Wednesday) after-

noon to Europe for medical treat-

ment," her publisher Sibani

disclose the exact destination.

that she had left India.

(Shame)

Muslim backlash.

UNB, Dhaka

two countries.

Mukherjee told AFP, declining to

Close friends also confirmed

Nasreen was forced to leave

Bangladesh in 1994 after the reli-

gious fanatics accused her of blas-

phemy over her novel 'Lajja'

She had been seeking perma-

nent residence in India, where she

moved after spending time in

Europe and the United States, but

New Delhi has been fearful of a

Malaysian trade

fair begins today

A three-day Malaysian trade fair,

'Showcase Malaysia-2008', will

begin today at Dhaka Sheraton

Hotel to facilitate interactions

between the businessmen of the

members of Bangladesh Malaysia

Chamber of Commerce and

Industries (BMCCI) said they are

organising the exhibition in collab-

oration with Malaysia High

Commission in Bangladesh and

Malaysia South-South Association.

At a press briefing on Tuesday,

"Taslima Nasreen flew out of

Australia and Taiwan.

AFP, New Delhi

told AFP yesterday.

BIVAC International SA

against the PSI company.

tion suspects.

Release Khaleda before Independence Day

Demand pro-Khaleda BNP leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Senior leaders and some former lawmakers of pro-Khaleda faction of BNP and top leaders of party's front organisations in a joint meeting yesterday demanded release of party Chairperson Khaleda Zia and her two sons before the Independence Day.

The meeting also decided to send a letter to the chief adviser within two days demanding the release of party chairperson and hersons.

"We will send the letter soon," said Dr RA Gani, a member of the party's standing committee who presided over the meeting, while talking to reporters, adding that they think the party is united.

the leaders and former lawmakers in their speeches urged the senior leaders to announce programmes for the release of the party chairperson and her two sons.

But senior leaders said they will take all necessary decisions in due

Some leaders stressed on unity and discipline within the party as

Bangladesh

army receives

Indian army

A CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

six horses from

Indian army formally handed over

six horses to the Bangladesh army

at a ceremony at Benapole in

on the other side of Benapole

border at about 11:00am.

Bangladesh army officials received

them and took them to Ali Kadar

Warehouse where they were given a

The horses will be used for

breeding and helping improve the

standard of equestrian sports in

TFI members

to interrogate

Emon, Ishaq

Dreaded criminal Sanjidul Islam

Emon and smuggling ring member

Ishaq Ali were taken to the custody of

Taskforce for Intelligence (TFI) from

the custody of Criminal Investigation

five-day remand in an arms case

and a currency smuggling case

the investigation officer of the

cases, said both the criminals were

handed over to the TFI cell yester-

tors would verify the information

provided by the two criminals to

the CID interrogators during the

DHAKA

Shamunnay, Kodek and the daily

Prothom Alo jointly organise a pre-

budget roundtable on PRSP and next

budget. Venue: Cirdap Auditorium.

A national conference on 'Rights to

mobility with dignity will be held.

Venue: Bangladesh-China Friendship

Media Award 2007 giving ceremony of

CDMP component of Ministry of

Disaster Management will be held.

Venue: Dhaka Reporters' Unity, Time:

Centre for Democracy and Peace

Studies organises a roundtable on role

of professionals in conducting

acceptable election. Venue: National

The regular meeting of Rotary Club of

Grater Dhaka will be held. Venue: Hotel

Eastern Residence, Banani. Time:

Press Club. Time: 10:00am.

Rotary Grater Dhaka

Conference Centre. Time: 8:30am.

ODAY

Inspector Shyamal Chowdhury,

Sources said the TFI interroga-

Emon and Ishaq are now on a

Department (CID) yesterday.

respectively.

day for interrogation.

eight-day remand.

Roundtable

Time: 10:00am.

Conference

Media award

Roundtable

11:00am.

6:00pm.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

red-carpet reception.

Bangladesh.

standing committee members did not address the meeting, which apparently turned into a showdown among the pro-Khaleda faction leaders.

Standing committee members Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmad and M Shamsul Islam, BNP chairpersons' adviser Brig Gen (retd) Hannan Shah, joint secretaries general Goyeswer Chandra Roy and Selima Rahman, acting office secretary Rizvi Ahmed, Krishok Dal General Secretary Shamsuzzaman Dudu, Chatra Dal acting president Sultan Salauddin Tuku and General Secretary Shafiul Bari Babu, and Mahila Dal Dhaka city unit General Secretary Shirin Sultana attended

During about two-hour meet-Meeting sources said most of ing, many leaders and workers gathered outside the meeting room and they demanded programmes to free the party chairperson. They also angrily protested the unity initiative, saying that 'no unity...we want madam's release', 'no unity with the agents'

worried about whether or not

party's vocal leader Hannan Shah will attend the meeting that began at 5:00pm. Later they welcomed Hannan by giving claps when he reached the meeting venue at about 6:00pm.

Later at a press briefing, RA Gani said they have finalised a 5 day programme to mark the Independence Day and accordingly BNP will hoist national and party flags atop party office in the morning. Then they will visit national mausoleum at Savar to pay tributes to the martyrs of the liberation war. On return the party men will place bouquet at the grave of late president Ziaur Rahman. A discussion meeting will be organised in the evening.

When asked about the party meeting Gani said, "Wife and sons of late president Ziaur Rahman are in jail and we want their release before the Independence Day."

When a reporter asked him about the ongoing conflict in the party over reforms issue, he said, "We want reforms and they (pro-Saifur faction) also want reforms Party leaders and workers were So there is no problem in the



Bangladesh army officials receive six horses from Indian army officials at a ceremony at Ali Kadar Warehouse at Benapole in Jessore yesterday.

Call to scrap Official Secrets Act

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday called on the caretaker government to bring major changes to the draft of the Right to Information Act and to scrap the Official Secrets Act 1923 that contradicts the RTIAct.

They also urged the government to induct representatives from the political parties, civil society and the media into the committee that will finalise the draft.

Shushashoner Janney Pracharavijan (Supro) or Campaign for Good Governance organised the discussion at the National Press Club, with its Chairman Abdul Awal

in the chair. Welcoming the government initiative to formulate the RTI Act, the speakers said there are some loopholes in the draft, which need to be

removed. They urged the government to provide information free of charge and to shorten the list that restricts

disclosure of information. They also called for scraping the sub-section (jha) of Section 8 of the

Human rights activist Hameeda Hossain said the government should scrap Official Secrets Act that contra-

dicts the RTIAct. She also urged the government to ensure maximum disclosure of information.

Workers Party leader Haider Akbar Khan Rono called on the government to simplify the draft so

that general people can easily

understand it.

Former Awami League lawmaker Lt Col (retd) Faruk Khan, former BNP lawmaker Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman, General Secretary of CFSD Mahfuz Ullah, Workers Party leader Saiful Haq, Deputy Editor of the daily Somokal Mozammel Haq and Barrister Tania Amir also spoke.

Science fair held in Chhatak

The first ever science fair at Chhatak in Sunamganj was held on Sunday, says a press release.

Lafarge Surma Cement Limited in collaboration with the upazial administration organised the fair.

The fair drew nearly 300 students from the educational institutions under Chhatak upazila.

In the fair students displayed as many as 49 models or projects that included multiple rat traps to save crops, flood warning system, recycling tube lights to make TV antennas, hygienic cooking oven, ecopark, low cost disaster management, herbal mosquito coil etc.

The awards of excellence were won by Chhatak Bahumukhi High School in junior group, Chandranath Girls High School in intermediate group and Technical College in senior group.

Sunamganj Deputy Commissioner Md Saber Hossain attended the prize giving ceremony as the chief guest while noted educationist and writer Dr Mohammad Zafar Iqbal attended as the special guest.



No change in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at one or two places over Rajshahi and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Dhaka, Comilla, Tangail and Mymensingh in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Weather may remain mainly dry with temporary partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country, Met Office said, predicting nearly unchanged day temperature over the country. Highest temperature 35.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yester-

day at Rangamati and lowest 18.8 degrees Celsius at Dinajpur. The sun sets in the capital at 6:10pm today and rises at 6:01am

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Humidityin City/Town Temperature in percentage Celsius Morning Evening Min Max 24.2 33.8 Dhaka 81 21.6 29.0 Chittagong 62 21.0 Rajshahi 33.0 63 33.2 24.6 Khulna 71 23.5 33.2 Barisal 20.2 73 31.7 Sylhet 76 21.7 31.1 Cox's Bazar

BBC Bangla on FM radio in six more districts soon

METROPOLITAN/NEWS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BBC Bangla service programmes will be available on FM radio in six more districts soon in addition to Dhaka.

Bangladesh Betar will relay the programmes in Chittagong, Khulna Rajshahi, Sylhet, Rangpur and Comilla four times a day -from 6:30am to 7:00am; 7:30am to 8:00am; 7:30pm to 8:00pm and 10:30pm to 11:00pm.

BBC and Bangladesh Betar signed an agreement in this regard

Director General of Bangladesh Betar Mohammad Mahbubul Alam, and Head of Business Development of BBC World Service Neil Curry signed the agreement, said an official handout.

Information Secretary Jamil Osman was present at the signing

Later at a press conference at Hotel Sonargoan, Head of BBC Bangla Service Sabir Mustafa said they will initially start relaying programmes through FM in one of the areas by March 26 and in others areas by April 14.

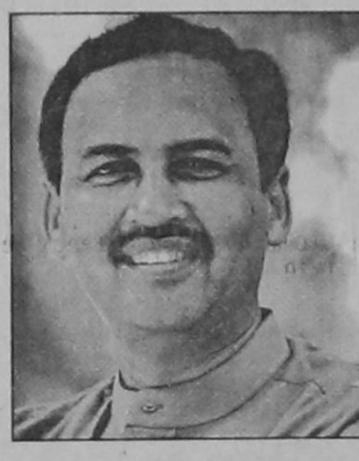
People living within 35 kilometres of the relay stations can receive the BBC programmes on their FM radio, he said.

BBC is also going to arrange different kinds of programmes in Bangladesh, he said, adding that they have plans to hold dialogues on elections.

As per the agreement, BBC will pay 46,000 pounds sterling to Betar a year and also provide training and technical supports, said Neil Curry. As far as BBC is concerned,

Bangladesh is a hugely important country, he said, adding that the agreement represents close ties between BBC and Bangladesh. Presently, about 17 million

people, out of 183 million global audience, listen to the Bengali service, he added.



POYI COMPETITION

Pavel wins Award of Excellence

Pavel Rahman, a Bangladeshi photojournalist of the Associated Press (AP), has won the Award of Excellence in the 65th annual Picture of the Year International (POYi) competition judged at the Missouri School of Journalism in Columbia, says a press release.

Pavel Rahman is among the seven AP photojournalists who have been named winners of the prestigious competition for their workin 2007.

The mission of POYi is to recognise excellence in documentary photography and photojournalism, within both still and motion formats. About 45,000 images were entered by photographers, magazines and news agencies around the world.

Pavel's photograph on victims of last year's mudslide in Chittagong also won him the first prize in the spot news photography in the 74th annual National Headliner Awards instituted by Press Club of Atlanta city in 1934.

40 DU students get Japanese scholarship

A total of 40 students including 10 first year students of the academic year 2002-03 and 30 students of 1999-2000, 2000-01 and 2001-02 academic year of Dhaka University (DU) received scholarship of Sumitomo Corporation of Japan yesterday, says a press release.

The scholarship distribution ceremony was held at the conference room of administrative building of the university.

Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof AFM Yusuf Haider chaired the distribution ceremony while Sumitomo Corporation, Bangladesh General Manager Masahiko Sugiyama and deans of different faculties of the university spoke. Prof Haider in his speech said

Sumitomo Corporation Scholarship is the most prestigious one in the Dhaka University and its recipients are the bright and brilliant students. Masahiko Sugiyama expressed

his hope that the recipients of Sumitomo Corporation Scholarship would contribute much to the development of Bangladesh after completion of their education. Each recipient of the scholar-

ship will get US\$ 250 per year.

Terming the RTI law an instru-"There was a general lack of awareness both among the officials and the people about the law," he said, adding that the NGOs and the media are playing a vital role in making people aware of the law "We are trained not to give and helping them with information about where and how to con-Habibullah said the draft needs some polishing in some areas. "You may build in the question proactively make key information of computerisation and network-

> accessible," he said. tion, he suggested the government

cannot afford. Farooq Sobhan, president of Bangladesh Enterprises Institute, said changing the attitude of gov-

ernment officials who have been keeping information secret will be a major challenge and in parallel to working to enact the RTI ordinance the government needs to launch a campaign to sensitise public ser-

report has to be made with previous permission from a governmentauthorised officer. The speakers observed that these sections should be omitted or changed

legal action against any police officer

and only keeps provision of accept

ing written report describing the

incident relating crime alleged

The section also said that the

against a police officer.

democratic rights of the common The speakers specially referred to They also emphasised on keeping

provisions to make police speed up process of disposing off duties like recording a General Dairy, an FIR and making police verification. In this regard they also called for

making a list of public and social or financial penalty of Tk 20000 or welfare services that the people might expect from police in the draft. Additional Deputy

would discourage people from Commissioner (revenue) Zafor Alam, Advocate Muhammad Abdul As per section 144 of the draft Kuddus, CCC Ward Commissioners exempts a police officer of any type of F Kabir Chowdhury Manik and punishments for "performing duty in Monowara Begum, Women leader good faith". But, the draft did not give Noor Zahan Khan, UP Chairman Manirul Islam of Raozan Noapara, The participants feared that the Sabbir Rahman Osmani, Assistant section would create scope for a Commissioner (administration) corrupt police officer, if there is any, to serve as per whims or with vested Ziaul Haq and a good number of interest in the name of performing public representatives, lawyers, professionals and elite people were Section 145 does not allow any present at the meeting.

Ministry will Death of schoolgirl sparks

question pattern

Education ministry will organise several meetings with students, guardians and teachers on newly introduced question pattern for

Education Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman told this to the reporters yesterday after a meeting of the Bangladesh National Commission for Unesco at secretariat.

The adviser said this in the backdrop of a report published in The Daily Star where it was reported that students of class IX are still in the dark about the new question pattern because their new books are not published and 90 percent teachers did not receive proper training.

try who headed the eight-member

RTI ordinance drafting committee,

said, "We agree that there are some

critical areas that require further

improvement and, for that, we are

closely monitoring the initiatives

to gather pubic opinions on the

He said the government is

thinking about reaching people

to disclose information will have to

go to the information commission

to explain why they are not disclos-

Awami League leader

Asaduzzman Noor stressed the

need for involving politicians in

discussions as "they are the people

who will have to pass the law in

role of the NGOs and civil society in

creating mass awareness about the

implications of the act and how it

can be used as people, especially

the vulnerable groups, need the

of Workers Party, Zaglul Ahmed

Chowdhury, chief news editor of

Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha,

Shyamol Dutta, editor of Bhorer

Kagoj, former MP GM Quader,

economist Atiur Rahman, Badiul

Alam Majumder, secretary of

Chowdhury, convenor of Equity

Rashed Khan Menon, president

access to information most.

Shaheen Anam underscored the

parliament and implement it".

ing the information.

holders.

Appeal for help

eight at Safiuddin Sarkar Academy, has been suffering from liver cell cancer, says a press release.

She is now fighting for her life.

outside Dhaka through NGO networks and government stake-Former minister MK Anwar suggested instead of the informaage such a huge amount. Shahinoor Islam and his coltion seekers the officials declining

leagues have appealed to generous people to extend a helping hand to save her life.

Sonali Bank, Kurmitola Branch, Dhaka.

or 8913621 for further details.

Prof Dr KM



teacher of erstwhile Ahsanullah Engineering College, cur-Thursday last at the age of 73, says a

A doa mahfil will be held to pray

for his departed soul at the ground Dhakeswari Campus, Buet at

Exemption should be specific secretary at the information minis-FROM PAGE 1

two later, the police said.

DFID Affairs Secretary Douglas Alexander calls on Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed at his hotel suite in London or

Some sections 'not pro-people'

police perform without the interfer-

ence of any quarter and help the

separation of judiciary become more

workshop observed the draft police

act as focusing on the interest, wel-

fare and empowerment of police

force and feared that some of its

Section 138 says that if an allega-

tion against any police personnel is

proved false then the concerned

complainant would be awarded

three-month's imprisonment in jail

making any complaint against a cop.

any definition of "in good faith".

rickshawpuller Makbul injured.

Angered by the news of death,

establishments at Bottrish,

disruption to road communication

with Dhaka and Bhairab for over

stepped in to bring the situation

under control. They arrested sev-

eral people but freed all of them but

Zia Rahman, 28, and his helper

The police arrested truck driver

The violent protests caused a

Members of the joint forces

Barabazar and Battala.

'in good faith".

Hospital.

three hours.

ROAD ACCIDENT IN KISHOREGANJ

The speakers said that the section

sections might pose threat to the

section 138, 144 and 145.

However, the speakers at the

successful.

DRAFT POLICE ACT 2007

Speakers tell workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Speakers at a workshop in the port

city yesterday underscored the need

for an act that would help policemen

discharge their duty with further

accountability and become a public-

friendly force ensuring democratic

shop they observed some sections of

the recently prepared draft police act

are 'not pro-people' and urged the

authorities concerned to either drop

ised the divisional community con-

sultation workshop on Draft Police

Act 2007 at Chittagong Circuit House

Police, Chittagong range AKM

Shahidul Haque was the key discus-

Super Kamrul Ahsan in the chair.

sant with Chittagong district Police

act aimed at creating an environ-

ment to help police work independ-

ently and building up police as a

force able to discharge duty properly

ensuring best service and welfare to

as a force performing pre-judicial

workwhile investigating a case.

In this regard he observed police

As such, the DIG called for letting

violent protests

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kishoreganj

Death of a schoolgirl in a road

accident triggered violent protests

Agitating people went berserk

and damaged some 10 vehicles and

several business establishments

after Jannatul Ferdaous Lina, 14, a

student of class nine at the

Vocational Institute, was crushed

to death under the wheels of a

police constable, were injured

mate Nourin were going to their

school by a rickshaw when a rice-

wheelers, leaving Lina dead on the

spot and Nourin and

laden truck rammed the three-

Some 15 people, including a

Sources said Lina and her class-

speeding truck in Bottrish area.

in the town yesterday.

during the melee.

DIG Shahidul said that the draft

Divisional Inspector General of

Chittagong district police organ-

or change them.

conference room.

the people.

Exchanging views at the work-

rights and best service to the people.

public offices, any company, corporation, trust, firm, society, cooperative society, NGOs, private organisations, associations and organisations registered under any law of the land.

Manusher Jonno Foundation organised the roundtable at Brac Centre Inn. Its Executive Director Shaheen Anam moderated the programme.

ment for realising people's rights, Habibullah said the concept of RTI stemmed from bringing transparency and accountability in the working of every pubic authority.

information. And after enactment of the RTI law, it has become like a paradigm shift," he said on the practices in public offices in India. "Open the lid," he said, asking to

available for the people. Exemption is overridden for public interest, he said, pointing

out that article 10 of the draft contradicts section "jha" of article 8 that says there shall be no obligation to disclosure of information "that would be contrary to public According to article 10, "Not-

withstanding the provisions of this ordinance or any law of Bangladesh to the contrary, the government/authority shall disclose any information of public "Since the law is about disclo-

sure and since in certain cases you can't disclose everything, details exempted from disclosure need to be worded specifically and carefully," the Indian CIC said, adding,

"Vague description is subject to misuse." Asked if defence budget is

accessible to people, he said, "Anything that can be disclosed before parliament can be open for peo-On the challenges of imple-

menting the RTI act, Habibullah said primarily the officials were not serious about it and changed their attitude when they had to pay penalty for it.

ing so that the records are kept in a manner that makes it more easily On the fees for getting informa-

can give concession to those who

He stressed the need for introduction of e-governance in all sectors for free flow of information. Kamal Uddin Ahmed, a joint took part in the discussion.

organise meet on new SSC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The injured were admitted to Kishoreganj Sadar Adhunik people and students came out onto the street and vandalised nine SSC examinations. vehicles and several business

Sadia Islam Meem, a student of class

The 13-year-old girl, daughter of Shahinoor Islam, a security supervisor of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, has undergone operation recently, but her condition did not improve.

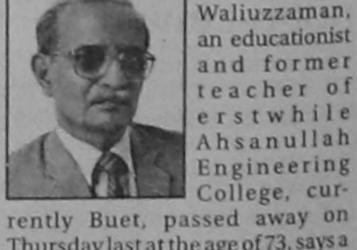
Specialist doctors have advised her parents to take her abroad for advanced treatment, which involves about Tk 50 lakh. But it is not possible for her father to man-

Contributions can be sent to Savings Account No.-34040861,

Interested persons can also call at 01199852793, 01711391942, 8914575

Obituary





press release.

Sujon, and Rezaul Karim floor of the Tower Building, and Justice Working Group, also 5:00pm on Saturday.

Jessore vesterday, Col Mihir Bhattacharya of Indian army handed over the horses -- two stallions and fore mares -- worth about \$8.5 lakh or Tk 7 crore to Col Aminul Haque of Bangladesh army at Ali Kadar Warehouse. Indian Army Chief General Deepak Kapoor presented the horses to Bangladesh Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed as a token of goodwill and friendship during his visit to India last month. Indian army officials brought the horses to Petrapole check post