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TARIQUE'S CASE SC rejects ACC plea for stay extension

UNB, Dhaka

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday refused to entertain the Anti-Corruption Commission's (ACC) appeal for clearing the way for trial of BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman in a graft case.

The seven-member full bench of the Appellate Division, headed by Chief Justice M Ruhul Amin, rejected the ACC petition in which the watchdog sought to extend the stay on a High Court (HC) order that had stalled the case proceedings against Tarique.

The Appellate Division, however, fixed April 28 to hear leave to appeal petition against the HC orders.

Earlier on October 4 last year, the apex court stalled for three weeks the HC stay order on the proceedings of the graft case following an ACC appeal to that end and directed the ACC to file a regular leave petition in the meantime.

The HC on October 1 issued a

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

MAITREE EXPRESS On-board visa checking being considered

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, Kolkata

On-board visa checking facility is among the steps India and Bangladesh are considering to make travel by Maitree Express train service between Kolkata and Dhaka easier.

Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty informed the media about this on Tuesday after a meeting with West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee.

Chakravarty said officials of the two countries are discussing how to make the train journey smoother for passengers and easing immigration and other procedures regarding the travel is on top of the agenda.

As part of these procedures, it is being considered if passengers' visa could be checked aboard the train, he added.

The diplomat's remarks came a day after the inaugural run of the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

UAE group guns for EPZ, tourism township

Seeks land in Ctg, Cox's Bazar

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

Ras Al Khaima Investment Authority (Rakia) on Tuesday sought from the Bangladesh government large chunks of land in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar to establish an economic zone and a tourism township.

Visiting Chief Executive Officer of Rakia Dr Khater Massaad in an interview with The Daily Star yesterday in a capital hotel talked about the multi-billion dollar investment proposal.

"We will set up all types of industrial components our group has to offer at the proposed Chittagong Special Economic Zone, as the country has tremendous business opportunities and a huge ready market," said Massaad, chief executive officer (CEO) of the investment arm of the government of Ras Al Khaimah (RAK), an emirate of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

About the size of the proposed



Dr Khater Massaad

investment, Massaad who is also an adviser to the crown prince of RAK, said, "Right now I don't want to mention any specific figure for the investment, but I can say, the group might pour unlimited investments into its proposed Bangladesh projects, which could reach as high as multi-billion dollars."

Rakia is eyeing to lure in Far

Eastern and European tourists to its proposed township in Cox's Bazar where it wants to establish ultra-modern tourism facilities.

"We will introduce the first ever chartered plane service to and from Cox's Bazar and Far Eastern countries, as well as Europe, to attract mostly outbound tourists of the world," Massaad said.

Rakia's development wing Rakeen plans to build in the proposed world class tourism township a luxurious five star hotel, several exclusive villas, a golf course, a large shopping mall, and a sophisticated theme park. The proposed golf course will be the first ever private golf course in the country. The group also plans to build another five star hotel in the capital.

About the timeline of the investment Massaad said, "I can assure you that the group can start its work as soon as the government will give its approval."

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



PHOTO: STAR

Farmers thresh sheaves of Boro paddy at Mugrapara in Savar yesterday.

WOMEN POLICY Review body for 'just rights' for women

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The high-powered committee for reviewing the National Women Development Policy 2008 yesterday finalised its draft recommendations on it.

In the recommendations, the committee comprising Islamic scholars has urged the government to replace the phrase 'equal rights of women on properties' in the policy with 'just rights of women,' a source present at the meeting told The Daily Star.

The draft recommendations were finalised at a six and half hours long meeting of the committee at Islamic Foundation.

Talking to the reporters after the meeting at around 4:00pm, acting Khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque Mufti Mohammad Nuruddin, also the convenor of the committee, denied

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

TECHNICAL GLITCHES GMG flight delayed for 72hrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 470 passengers remained stranded in different city hotels as the flight of GMG airlines scheduled to fly them to Dubai on Monday was delayed for about 72 hours due to technical glitches.

The Dubai-bound airbus (flight no Z5-091), which was scheduled to take off at 4:30pm on Monday, is expected to leave for its destination at 4:30pm today, a GMG official told The Daily Star last night.

Earlier, the airbus had to return to the Zia International Airport due to technical problems about an hour after it took off on Monday.

However, a GMG high official on Tuesday said the airbus had already left for Dubai after the technical glitches were fixed.

GMG officials said they had arranged accommodation for the passengers of the Dubai-bound flight at different hotels in the capital.

A Boeing 747 of GMG airlines with 160 passengers on board had to return to the Dubai airport due to technical problems in its engine shortly after taking off on March 3.

Bangladesh to push for UN programme on food security

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will push for a special UN programme on Global Food Security at the twelfth UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) meet in Ghana next week to increase food availability around the world.

Speaking to reporters at his office yesterday, Foreign Adviser Iftekhar A Chowdhury said as the chair of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) at the UN, Bangladesh would push the UN for a thrust programme through a Global Food Security Compact.

Iftekhar said the programme would serve to find ways to meet worldwide shortages in food grain, as it would seek a New Green Revolution through greater research and development.

"LDCs are hardest hit by the food shortage", the adviser said.

He added that Bangladesh would push for a package

proposal at the meeting. The package would include greater duty-free quota for market access, improved labour mobility, and use of UNCTAD for more research, technical assistance and investments for LDCs.

Nations struggling to meet Millennium Development Goals by 2015 need additional assistance, Iftekhar said.

The UNCTAD meet takes place once every four years. LDC ministers are scheduled to meet ahead of the meet next week to find ways to address "opportunities and challenges of globalisation for development."

The foreign adviser said that Bangladesh could benefit from the Enhanced Integrated Framework, which would help infrastructural projects as deep-sea ports, the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway and development of the Mongla Port.

He also stressed on the importance of 'aid for trade' programmes.

Aid agencies feel the heat of food prices

AFP, Geneva

Soaring food prices are causing logistical headaches for aid agencies committed to fighting hunger, not least the World Food Programme -- known to many as the granary of the United Nations.

"We distribute four million tonnes of supplies each year, so the 55 percent rise in food prices since June 2007 has an enormous impact on our operations," WFP spokeswoman Christiane Berthiaume told AFP.

Two million tonnes are bought by the WFP in regional markets while the rest is funded by donor countries.

Basic foodstuff prices have all risen sharply in recent months, sparking violent protests in many countries, including Egypt, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Ethiopia, Madagascar, the Philippines and Indonesia.

The WFP feeds 73 million people in 78 different countries but has found it harder to procure supplies amid rising costs and government intervention in food exports.

"It has become very difficult to find food," said Nicole Menage, head of the WFP's food purchasing

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

44 children drown in India bus crash

AFP, Bamroli

At least 44 people, nearly all children heading to school for final exams, drowned yesterday when their bus plunged off a bridge into a canal in western India, police said.

Distraught parents rushed to the scene of the disaster in Gujarat state as rescue workers struggled to find survivors in the water and a huge crane was used to haul the smashed vehicle out of the Narmada canal.

The accident in Bodeli, 170 kilometres (105 miles) from Ahmedabad, the state's main commercial city, was Gujarat's worst-ever road accident, local media reports said, as police said the death toll could rise.

Thirty-two girls, nine boys, the driver and the bus conductor, besides an unidentified woman passenger died in the early morning accident which occurred when the

bus veered off the road and smashed through a concrete barrier.

The children -- aged 13 to 15 -- were travelling to school to take final exams, Gujarat state transport official G.M. Aloriya told NDTV news channel.

Wailing parents of 15 of the dead -- all girls from the same village of Bamroli close to the accident site -- carried their children's bodies to the cremation ground late on Wednesday for one of several mass funerals for the victims.

Parents emerged from their houses carrying their daughters on wooden biers as the funeral procession wound slowly through Bamroli village to the cremation ground and stores downed their shutters as a mark of respect.

The dead girls were dressed in red and pink saris to signify their unmarried status.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Prayer Timing		
April 17		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4:35	5:10
Zohr	12:45	1:15
Asr	4:45	5:00
Maghrib	6:24	6:28
Esha	7:45	8:15

Source: Islamic Foundation

SUNAMGANJ BLAST Mufti Hannan, brother placed on remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A Sunamganj court yesterday placed chief of the outlawed Harkat-ul Jihad Al Islami (Huji) Mufti Abdul Hannan and his brother on a two-day remand in a case for blasting bombs at an Awami League rally in Sunamganj on June 21, 2004.

The Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Md Hasanul Islam passed the order after Criminal Investigation Department CID Inspector Shafiqul Islam prayed for their seven-day remand for grilling producing the Huji chief and his brother Muhibullah before the court.

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