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Arms, ammo being purchased to strengthen jail security

KAILASH SARKAR

The jail directorate will purchase about 6,500 Chinese rifles with 10,000 rounds of bullet while the Bangladesh Army will provide the jail guards with 550,000 bullets of .303 rifles for free.

The jail directorate decided to purchase the firearms and ammunition as part of its initiative to modernise the antiquated jail security system.

Of the 6,500 Chinese rifles, 5,500 will be procured through the Bangladesh Army while the rest through the police, sources said.

Inspector General of Prisons (IG-Prisons) Brig Gen Zakir Hassan on Thursday told The Daily Star that the Army would provide the jail guards with 550,000 bullets of

.303 rifle for free for using those for training purposes.

This will enable the jail guards to have firing practice during training, a facility that had not been provided to them earlier.

Sources said 1,000 rifles along with other firearms had been imported from China through the police for jail guards during the rule of BNP-led coalition government. But the cost of the firearms was very high.

Later, the jail authorities decided to buy the Chinese rifles through the Army in a bid to get the firearms at a lower price, sources said.

The IG-Prisons said most of the Chinese rifles to be procured through the Bangladesh Army would be brand new.

"The Bangladesh Army can assemble Chinese rifles at the Gazipur Arms factory. They will import necessary materials from China and assemble the firearms at the factory for jail guards," Brig Gen Zakir Hassan said adding that a Chinese rifle can be used for over 100 years.

Of the 1,000 rifles to be purchased through the police, they have already received 300 Chinese rifles, he said adding that they are expecting to receive 400 more rifles from the Army in a month.

The rest of the Chinese rifles would be purchased in phases, he added.

Additional Inspector General of Police (Prisons) Col Md Ashrafur Islam Khan said modern equipment is required to increase effi-

ciency of the jail guards.

"The government has already allocated the required money for purchasing the firearms," he added.

The Chinese rifles they had received from the police have already been handed out to different jails. Deputy Inspector General of Prisons (DIG-Prisons) Maj Shamsul Haider Siddique said adding that there are about 6,500 jail guards in 67 prisons across the country.

Sources close to the home ministry and the jail directorate said, the police had purchased each Chinese rifle at a cost of about Tk 100,000 during the rule of the four-party alliance government while it would cost about Tk 3,000 to 4,000

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2 school girls 'abducted', 2 youths held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two students of the city's Viharunisa Noon School and College were allegedly abducted while returning home Thursday afternoon.

Ramna police yesterday morning arrested two youths for suspected links to the missing of the 13-year-old girls, class seven students.

The arrestees—Shariful Islam Mollah and Monir Hossain—were taken on a three-day remand each. Both are aged 20.

The girls feared kidnapped are Nusrat Zahana Nimo of Narayanganj and Sadia Islam Urm of Nurjahan Road in the city's Mohammadpur area.

Nimo's father Ismat Hasem filed a case under the Women and Children Repression Prevention

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Nepal Maoists give king 4 weeks to step down

PTI, AFP, Kathmandu

Atop Maoist leader in Nepal, who is tipped to be the country's next prime minister, has given an ultimatum of four weeks to the embattled King to step down and leave the Narayanhiti royal palace.

Speaking at a function in the capital, CPN-Maoist second-in-command Baburam Bhattarai issued an ultimatum of four weeks to King Gyanendra to leave the royal palace, the Kantipur online said.

Bhattarai, who is in line to head the CPN-Maoist-led government after the former rebels maintained a strong lead in the count from last Thursday's vote, said the end of the monarchy will be on top of his priorities.

The Maoist leader, however, said a "respectful living" will be ensured for Gyanendra if he was ready to live as a common citizen.

Nepal's Maoist leader Prachanda said yesterday he will meet the country's embattled king to try to persuade him to step down before the monarchy is abolished following a Maoist election win.

The ultra-leftists are ahead in last week's crucial polls for a body that will abolish the monarchy and rewrite the constitution.

"I will take the initiative to talk to the king in person," Prachanda said in an interview on state-run television.

"He should understand and respect the people's verdict and what the people want and leave the palace voluntarily."

The polls are the climax of the 2006 peace deal between the Maoists and mainstream political parties, and the former rebels have confounded analysts and diplomats who predicted they would come third at best.

They have said their first act will be to sack King Gyanendra and abolish his 240-year-old monarchy.

"The king has the historic opportunity to show his love for the country and his respect of the verdict of the people by leaving the palace himself," said the leader whose nom-de-guerre means "the fierce one."

"Nepalese people will forgive him no matter what he has done in the past," the Maoist leader said in the 30-minute interview, his first

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Food prices to hit Bangladesh anti-poverty drive: ADB chief

AFP, Manila

Soaring food prices have hampered Asia's fight against poverty and some countries may need foreign aid to feed their hungry millions, the Asian Development Bank president said Friday.

"The current food price inflation has already affected the pace of poverty reduction in some countries," Haruhiko Kuroda said.

"Poverty reduction has been very rapid in many Asian economies but the current high food price inflation has really affected poor people in the region, particularly in low income countries like Bangladesh."

Bangladesh could potentially require outside help and the Manila-based ADB was ready to assist it and other low-income Asian countries that may have to

spend more to help their poorest citizens, Kuroda said.

Kuroda said inflation was the most immediate threat to developing Asia's economic growth and that it was impacting heavily on the more than 600 million Asians still living on a dollar a day or less.

Vietnam, Cambodia and the former Soviet republics in central Asia now have double-digit inflation. Some economies would do well to allow their currencies to rise to cool prices, he said. A stronger currency helps to make food imports cheaper.

"All of them are relatively small countries and that means controlling inflation is very difficult," he told a news conference in Manila.

"Governments are well advised to refrain from using trade measures or price control measures to address this food price inflation

issue," he said.

"The best way is to provide targeted income support for the needy poor, particularly in South Asia and in some parts of Southeast Asia" where the poorest spend more than half their income on food, he added.

Kuroda said some countries in the region suffered from large fiscal deficits "and may need some help from ADB."

He said the lender was ready to provide loans as budgetary support for "targeted assistance to the poor," although he said no ADB member country had yet sought aid from the bank.

Many Asian nations had lost out from the rising cost of food imports and countries such as Bangladesh "may" eventually seek budgetary support, Kuroda said.

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Women leaders vow to establish gender-equality

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around a thousand women yesterday vowed to resist those running a violent street campaign against the national women development policy.

They made the vow at the second national convocation organised by The Hunger Project, a non-government organisation working to end poverty and hunger.

Addressing the gathering at the Gonoshasthya Kendra auditorium, women leaders said they would press forward defying the obstacles put up by religious extremists and establish a gender-equal society.

They said women are yet to have their fundamental rights even after 37 years since independence.

Speaking as the chief guest, noted economist Muzaffer Ahmad said no-one can deny women's contribution to the welfare of family, society and nation.

Dr Badiul Alam Mazumder, country director of Hunger Project, said people irrespective of their gender identity will have to unite in opposition to those who are out to curb women's rights.

Mahfuza Khanam, general secretary of Asiatic Society, said women must take on a more proactive role in nation-building.

Dr Jafarullah Chowdhury of Gono Shasthya Kendra, and women leaders Dilara Zaman, Rehana Siddique, Laila Rahman Kabir, Latifa Akanda and Nasima Akhtar Jolly, among others, spoke on the occasion.

Tripura minister resigns over alleged link with Bangladeshi

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Sahid Chowdhury, Food and Supplies Minister in the CPI(M)-led government in India's Tripura state, resigned on Thursday in the wake of an inquiry into his alleged link with a Bangladeshi illegal.

A press statement issued by the Tripura state committee of CPI (M), quoting Chowdhury, said that following the arrest of Mamun Mia, stated to be a Bangladeshi national on March 28, there were media reports about his nexus with the latter.

"So, I have decided to resign from the ministry to uphold high moral values and for the sake of an independent investigation", Chowdhury was quoted as saying by the statement.

An inquiry was ordered by Tripura police chief K T D Singh recently into how a Bangladeshi national, now under arrest, could procure a certificate of permanent residence in Tripura and whether he was helped by an influential person like Chowdhury.

The inquiry was instituted after Tripura's leader of the opposition Ratan Lal Nath, in a letter to Chief Minister Manik Sarkar on April 7, levelled the allegation that a minister had aided Mamun. Nath demanded the minister's removal.

Mamun alias Suman Majumdar was arrested by a joint team of Tripura and West Bengal police during a raid on a house at Ramnagar in Agartala on March 28 on charges of anti-India activities

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A schoolboy's 'adventure'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A police constable was stabbed while resisting an attempt to snatch his rifle by an SSC examinee in the city's Kafrul area last night.

Police said Masud Rana, a popular espionage thriller series, prompted the schoolboy, Hasan Nayeem, to take the daredevil risk.

Hailing from Savar, he is son of a late official of Radio Bangladesh.

Sub-Inspector Akheruzzaman of Kafrul Police Station said Nayeem's snatching bid fell flat as locals came to the rescue of Khairul Hassan, the policeman under attack, and caught him [Nayeem].

He said the boy tried to take away the rifle pointing a toy pistol

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Prayer Timing

April 19

	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



Snake charmer Asmaul Miah, 18, used to earn his bread with two snakes and a mongoose. But all of a sudden Asmaul became helpless yesterday when he found that the mongoose had attacked and killed both his snakes. The youth now does not know what to do as he has no other means to earn his meal in this city of millions.

Special tribunal without judge for three months

Trial of cases hampered in Sylhet division

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The Sylhet Divisional Special Tribunal has been without a judge for almost three months, which has greatly hampered trials of 26 sensational cases, including one for the grenade attack on the British high commissioner.

Judge Dipyoman Sarker of the tribunal was transferred to Jamalpur District Court on January 27 without any replacement.

The absence of a judge has caused sufferings to the litigants as days have been passing without any activity at the tribunal. Law enforcers, however, have to bring the detained accused to the court on trial dates as it is mandatory.

District and Sessions Judge Md Abdul Gafur has been in charge of the tribunal as an additional responsibility since the transfer of Judge Sarker.

Judge Gafur is just deferring the trial dates since a district judge cannot run trials at special tribunals unless he is given the responsibility through a gazette notification.

On February 25, the date for deposition in the case for grenade attack on British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury was deferred until March 2, court sources said.

The date has been deferred on six occasions since the transfer of Judge Sarker.

The trial would be delayed further and the fate of the case has become uncertain at a stage when examination of 53 of the 57 prosecution witnesses has been completed, the sources added.

The authorities also had to bring the chief and other operatives of Harkatul Jihad to the tribunal from Dhaka on trial dates despite knowing that there would be no activity.

Special Public Prosecutor of the tribunal Advocate Fokhor Uddin Ahmed acknowledged to The Daily Star yesterday that the fates of the 26 cases have become uncertain.

"Although these selected and highly sensational cases were transferred to the court for quicker

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Rickshaw-pullers lock their three-wheelers at Palashi intersection in the capital and queue up to buy rice sold under Open Market Sale (OMS) yesterday.