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More help for farmers
Pledges govt as food policy launched
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Food Policy Plan of Action 2008-2015 was launched yesterday with the objective of ensuring food for all by 2015, specially focussing on food security of the poor and nutrition of women and children.

The present government views access to food as people's right, and will do everything necessary to establish this right, Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury said while launching the policy.

"Increasing food production and purchasing power of people are the most important tasks to ensure everybody's access to food," he said.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

The full text of the summary of the National Probe Report on the BDR mutiny is on page 14.

Formulate defence policy urgently

Army urge JS body in recommendations, want to replace all weapons in 10 years

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The army wants the government to mobilise more resources for its modernisation, formulate a defence policy without delay, and replace the decades-old weaponry with new ones over the next 10 years.

In a report submitted to the parliamentary standing committee on the defence ministry yesterday, it also seeks organograms for its temporary units.

The parliamentary body agrees on the need for having a defence policy as soon as possible, said committee members.

"In absence of a defence policy, everything is being done on an ad hoc basis," committee Chairman M Idris Ali told reporters after a meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

He said the committee has already asked the defence ministry and the Armed Forces

Division to place a draft policy for discussion at the next meeting.

The army report contains a set of suggestions on how to strengthen the force. Identifying financial constraints as the key problem, it notes that because of insufficient funding the army could not yet start replacing the outdated weaponry.

"Once the defence policy is finalised, it will be much easier to equip the forces with cutting-edge weapons and technology," observed Idris, also ruling Awami League lawmaker.

Replying to a query, he said the committee has yet to recommend increasing the budgetary allocations for the army.

Currently, the defence expenditure is around 3.9 percent of Tk 99,962 crore national budget (FY 2008-09), he added.

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TIPAI PROJECT ROW
Send expert team, not JS one
BNP asks govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP yesterday asked the government to send a technical expert team instead of an all-party parliamentary group to visit the Tipaimukh project to assess its effect on Bangladesh.

"A field trip by a parliamentary committee will yield no result, rather it will legitimise an anti-people project. A joint team of technical experts should be sent there," BNP Vice President Hafizuddin Ahmed said yesterday.

Hafiz, former water resources minister during the BNP-led four-party rule, vowed to mobilise people and wage street agitation if India

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Indigenous rights suffer for policies

Amnesty observes in its report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Indigenous people in Bangladesh suffered due to government policies while Bangla-speaking settlers continued to capture their land with the behind-the-scenes support of the government, reads Amnesty International's (AI) annual report.

Right to fair trials continued to be undermined and was further exacerbated by emergency regulations, as defendants' access to due process of law was limited, the report mentioned regarding the state of emergency enforced during the caretaker government's rule.

"Behind the scene the government continued its steady support for Bangla-speaking settlers seizing land from Jumma indigenous inhabitants of the Chittagong Hill Tracts," the report added.

Regarding indigenous communities, the report quoting three UN rapporteurs said there might be a systematic campaign to support the relocation of non-indigenous people to the Chittagong Hill Tracts in order to outnumber the local indigenous people.

The report also mentioned excessive use of police force against peaceful demonstrations on several occasions.

AI Secretary General Irene Khan unveiling the report yesterday said incidents of violations of fundamental rights have been

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Dhaka renews pledge for world peace
UN peacekeepers day today

AGENCIES

The International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers will be observed across the world today.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina renewed Bangladesh's pledge for continued support to the United Nations for promotion and protection of world peace by tackling troubles in different corners of the globe through its peacekeeping mission, reports UNB.

"On behalf of the government and the people of Bangladesh, I pledge our continued support to the United Nations for promotion and protection of world peace," she said in a message

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Two top Indian criminals held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

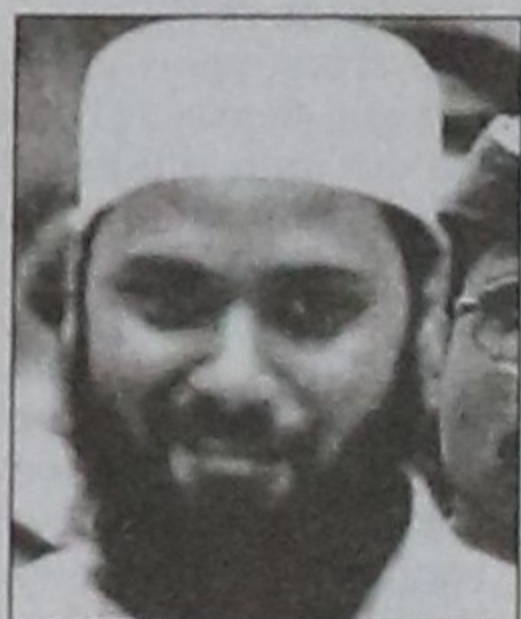
Police arrested two Indian criminals including a suspected associate of underworld don Daud Ibrahim in Brahmanbaria where he had been hiding in guise of a Bangladeshi citizen for the last one month.

Arrestees are Abdul Rauf Daud Merchant, 37, and Mohammad Zahid. Abdul Rauf is the convicted killer of music baron Gulshan Kumar.

A joint team of local and Detective Branch of police from Dhaka rounded up Abdul Rauf and Zahid at around 12:30am when they went to a tea stall at South Mourail in B'Baria town. Police also arrested Kamal Mian who provided shelter to Rauf.

Rauf also managed a Bangladesh passport from a broker where his name was mentioned as Shomir Patel. The police

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Abdul Rauf Daud Merchant

MP privilege may lead to graft
Roundtable told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Deputy Speaker Shawkat Ali yesterday said there is no need to have special parliamentary privileges and immunities for lawmakers since these privileges provide them with opportunities to get involved in corruption.

"I do not think there should be any parliamentary privilege for the members of parliament. If there are parliamentary privileges, they will become corrupt because of such special privileges," he said at a roundtable titled "Parliamentary privileges, power and immunities of parliament and members of parliament".

"Immunity is applicable only when lawmakers are inside parliament. If they are found involved in any offence outside parliament, law enforcement agencies of the government can arrest them," he said at the discussion organised by SHUJAN at the Jatiya Press Club.

MPs cannot stay beyond

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Two women cook a meal amidst the ruins of their house flattened by cyclone Aila at Tripura village under Ashasholi upazila in Satkhira yesterday.

16 killed in road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

A head-on smash between a passenger bus and a truck killed 16 people and wounded 20 others on Dhaka-Bogra highway at Panchilia Bazar in the district yesterday.

The accident occurred at around 5:30pm. The bus, which was going to Natore from Sirajganj town, fell into a roadside ditch and the truck went into a slide on impact. Thirteen persons died on the spot.

The three others died on the way to hospital. Of the injured, condition of two was critical, said hospital sources.

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Lanka ducks war crimes probe

UN's Human Rights Council adopts resolution praising war outcome

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka celebrated a major diplomatic victory yesterday after managing to torpedo Western demands for a probe into alleged war crimes committed during the offensive against Tamil Tiger rebels.

A little more than a week after government troops defeated the separatist army, the island's diplomats managed to lobby Asian support and commandeer a special session of the UN's Human Rights Council in Geneva.

The Council session, called because of alarm over the high number of civilian casualties as well as the island's treatment of displaced Tamil civilians, ended Wednesday with a resolution praising the outcome of the war.

"This is a strong endorsement of our president's efforts to rout terrorism, and the successful handling of the world's biggest hostage crisis," Sri Lanka's Human Rights Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe said.

Although the Tamil Tigers were accused of holding tens of thousands of Tamil civilians as human shields, government

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Online Poll

Do you think formation of a cell at the Home Ministry to expedite efforts in combating extortion through telephone calls will be effective?

Yes (42.67%)
No (55.10%)
No Comments (2.23%)

Total votes: 539

TODAY'S POLL

Are you satisfied with the national probe report on the carnage at BDR headquarters?

Please cast your vote at www.thedailystar.net

Prayer Timing

May 29		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-05	4-40
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-43	6-47
Esha	8-05	8-35

Source: Islamic Foundation

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