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SSC exams deferred for SA Games

Start on Feb 11

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Secondary School Certificate examinations will begin on February 11 rather than February 1 to accommodate the upcoming South Asian Games in Bangladesh.

The decision to defer the exams was made during an emergency meeting at the secretariat yesterday.

Education Secretary Syed Ataur Rahman chaired the meeting and the chairmen of all the education boards were present.

Meeting sources said that the chairmen were asked to take all necessary steps to arrange for the change of date.

Detailed exam schedules are due to be advertised shortly.

The 10-day South Asian Games will begin on January 29 and will be held at 23 venues across the country, under the management of the Bangladesh Olympic Association.

The extra burden on traffic during this time may cause difficulties for students travelling to exam centres and the students would also be unable to watch the sporting action.

On January 3 Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid announced that the nationwide SSC exams would start from February 1.

About 12,02,864 students

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AUG 21 PROBE

CID seeks to quiz former OC Rafiq

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Criminal Investigation Department yesterday sought permission from a Dhaka court to quiz detained former officer-in-charge of Motijheel Police Station Mohammad Rafiqul Islam at the jail gate in connection with the August 21, 2004 grenade attack cases.

CID's Senior Additional Superintendent of Police Abdul Kahar Akond, also the investigation officer of the grenade attack cases, submitted a petition seeking permission to interrogate OC Rafiqul about the attacks on an Awami League rally on Bangabandhu Avenue.

The court will pass order today on the petition.

Suspended OC Rafiqul, also an accused in the killing of college student Kamrul Islam Momin, was sent to jail after he surrendered and

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Hasina stresses sharing of water of Teesta and other common rivers ensuring guaranteed flow for Bangladesh

India allows 47 more Bangladeshi products under duty-free export facility dropping them from negative list

Agreement allows power purchase from India, strengthening fight against cross-border crime

Dhaka, Delhi sign 3 agreements

Hasina-Manmohan talks focus on terrorism, security, connectivity, trade, investment

OUR CORRESPONDENT, NEW DELHI

Bangladesh and India yesterday signed four deals on exchange of electricity, and fight against terrorism, organised crime and drug trafficking, capping two-hour talks between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh.

Hasina and Singh, leading their countries at the delegation-level talks at the Hyderabad House from 5:30pm to 7:30pm, had a detailed discussion covering the entire gamut of bilateral issues with particular focus on terrorism, security, connectivity, trade and investment, border concerns and sharing of water and power resources.

Hasina, whose four-day state visit began yesterday, met Indian President Pratibha Patil, Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee, External Affairs Minister SM Krishna, UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Sushma Swaraj before the talks with Singh.

The two sides inked a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in power sector for import and export of electricity to the tune of over 900 million units per annum, depending on availability, need and price.

Under the deal, the Power Development Board will buy electricity from India at a price to be agreed upon by the two parties, said official sources.

The other three agreements signed are Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, Transfer of Sentenced Persons and Combating International Terrorism, Organised Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking.

The one on transfer of sentenced persons would allow those convicted of criminal offences to serve their sentences in their own country if they want.

Someone sentenced to death however would not get this opportunity.

The draft agreement mentions that if such deals existed with a third country, Bangladesh and India would provide transit

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Visiting Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh wave during a ceremonial reception accorded to her at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Hasina wants deal on Teesta water

Bangladesh must get guaranteed water flow of all common rivers, she tells banquet

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called for treaties on sharing waters of the Teesta and other common rivers to ensure a guaranteed flow for Bangladesh every year, and sought India's support for this.

Addressing a key demand of Bangladesh, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh assured Hasina that India would allow duty-free access to more products from Bangladesh, and remove tariff and non-tariff barriers.

The two premiers were speaking at a banquet hosted by Singh in honour of Hasina at Hyderabad House in the Indian capital on the first day of her official visit.

Describing Singh's assurance as a "laudable start", Hasina said what is required now is activation of institutional mechanisms for removal of avoidable hindrances to promoting two-way trade and for settling disputes that might arise from differences on specific trade-

related issues.

Cooperation in trade would lead to socio-economic development of the two countries, "thereby alleviating poverty which undermines peace," she said.

On India's security concern, Hasina said, "Bangladesh will not allow its territory to be used for launching terrorist activities against any country in the neighbourhood or around the world."

Hasina raised the issue of water-sharing of common rivers and said, "A vital factor for economic development is normal flow of water. Bangladesh, an agricultural country, needs a guaranteed flow of water throughout the year."

"To ensure such a regular flow of the Ganges water, our two countries concluded the historic 30-year Ganges Water Treaty in 1996 which symbolised the true spirit of what our two countries can do."

"With the same spirit, we need to conclude

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

India for rail link with Agartala

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India will offer to construct the rail link between Akhaura and Agartala, capital of north eastern Indian state of Tripura, when Railway Minister Mamata Banerjee meets visiting Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina here today.

The Indian railway ministry has prepared a detailed plan for the 14km meter gauge rail line between Akhaura and Agartala which can be part of India's aid to Bangladesh, ministry sources said.

The proposed Akhaura-Agartala rail link will provide faster and hassle-free connectivity between Kolkata and Agartala, as at present there is already a passenger service between Kolkata and Dhaka.

If the Akhaura-Agartala line comes through and if Bangladesh agrees to provide

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Duty-free access to India widens

47 more Bangladeshi products dropped from negative list

STAR REPORT

India dropped 47 more items from its negative list giving Bangladeshi goods duty-free access to the Indian market, a foreign ministry official told The Daily Star yesterday.

India had earlier removed 56 items from the negative list, said the official wishing anonymity.

Meanwhile, Indian Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee hinted that India might lift tariff and non-tariff barriers from many Bangladeshi goods for their entry to Indian market, reports our correspondent from New Delhi.

"We want many...many products from Bangladesh to enter Indian market without any duty," Mukherjee told journalists after holding a half-an-hour long meeting with Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the Indian capital.

He made the remark in reply to a question from a Bangladeshi journalist about tariff and non-tariff barriers to import from Bangladesh to India.

The two neighbouring countries have a yawning trade gap. Dhaka has been asking India to remove tariff and non-tariff barriers to Bangladeshi goods to narrow the gap.

"This is a historic visit by Hasina to India as we understand their concerns and they understand ours," Mukherjee said.

He said it is a "happy coincidence" that Awami League has

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Production hampered in 30 RMG units

40 hurt in worker cop clash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Production in around 30 garment factories in Ashulia halted after several thousand angry workers clashed with police for realising their three-point demand yesterday.

Clashes left at least 40 workers injured while the agitating workers put barricades on Dhaka-Tangail highway at Zamgorah around 9:00am causing a severe traffic jam for over one hour.

Witnesses said the authorities of 30 factories at Zamgorah and Narsinghapur shut down their factories fearing severe labour unrest when over 5,000 workers of Envoy Group and around 1,200 of neighbouring Design Jeans launched an agitation demanding conveyance, lunch bills and encashment of casual leaves.

Workers of three factories of Envoy Group -- Envoy Fashion, Envoy Design and Manta Apparels -- owned by Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association president Abdus Salam Murshedi, started agitation in front of the factories around 8:00am and Design Jeans workers also joined them.

Agitating workers told reporters that over the last few

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DEFAMATION CASES

New bill seeks amendment to CrPC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A bill was placed in parliament yesterday for dropping the provision from the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1989 that allows courts to issue arrest warrants against editors, publishers, reporters or writers in defamation cases.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shafique Ahmed placed the bill, according to which, courts will issue summons instead of arrest warrants in such cases.

"It will help put an end to harassment of journalists, editors, writers and publishers," the law minister said in justification of bringing the amendment to the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1989.

The bill was sent to the parliamentary standing committee on the law, justice and

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No respite from traffic mess

Congestion continues on poor enforcement of law, reckless driving

KAILASH SARKAR and MUKHLESUR RAHMAN

The government moves to give the city dwellers a respite from tailbacks went in vain due to poor enforcement of traffic rules, partial implementation of plans and reckless driving.

Traffic policemen have again started controlling vehicular movement manually ignoring the automated system at most intersections. On the other hand, the authorities did not install the required number of automated signals at over 600 points.

Almost all the busy roads and areas remain jam-packed with hundreds of stranded vehicles due to reluctance of the traffic men in taking action against lane violators, illegal parking and obstruction of vehicular movement.

Besides, the month-long special drive that was launched on December 8 resulted in nothing but allegedly a huge amount of illegal income for some unscrupulous policemen.

Sources in Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) say during last one month they collected over Tk 20 lakh in fine, filed 24,563 cases, seized 562 vehicles and 935 driving licences, and arrested 146 drivers.

The sources add as the police officials get 40 percent of the amount collected in fine, they are more interested in filing cases and collecting fine than improving the situation.

Besides, in some cases they also receive bribe instead of filing cases, depriving the government of the revenue.

The overall traffic situation marked slight improvement last month following introduction of lane system on major roads in the capital from December 8 and installation of light signals, phasing out manual control from November 22.

But over the last few days it was seen that reckless driving continued everywhere on the city roads, while drivers collected and dropped passengers at will.

The city dwellers observed poor enforcement of traffic rules and absence of traffic monitoring teams' activities, which led to horrific traffic gridlock.

During a visit to different intersections yesterday it was found that drivers were not maintaining lanes, while traffic personnel were controlling traffic movement manually.

In Moghbazar intersection it was seen no

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Vehicles moving onto Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue from Shahbagh crossing in the capital yesterday are seen violating the three-lane system.

PHOTO: SHAFIQU LALAM