

Did you know?

The Taj Mahal in Agra, India, considered to be the finest example of Mughal architecture, employed thousands of artisans and craftsmen in its construction and took over two decades to build.



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Govt to buy Makkah land

Plans to build permanent homes for 60,000 Bangladeshi hajj pilgrims

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will purchase land in Makkah to build houses with a capacity of 60,000 people in efforts to mitigate the accommodation problem Bangladeshi pilgrims face during hajj in Saudi Arabia.

State Minister for Religious Affairs Shahjahan Miah yesterday told the House, "My ministry is taking help from the foreign ministry to purchase the land for the permanent Bangladesh Hajj mission."

Replying to lawmakers' queries on a block allocation against MPs, the state minister said the government in the current fiscal year has an allocation of around Tk 4 crore for lawmakers to carry out the task of refurbishing and repairing mosques and temples across the country.

He said 300 lawmakers will get Tk 1 lakh each for refurbishing and repairing mosques and Tk 20,000 for temples in their constituencies. Tk 50,000 was allocated for mosques and Tk 15,000

for temples in each of 45 reserved seats for women, he added.

The state minister also placed a policy for disbursement of the allocated money. According to the policy, a committee comprising upazila-level government officials might be formed to monitor and evaluate the grants given to the respective upazila.

The proposed six-member committee chaired by the upazila nirbahi officer (JNO) offers only one post for local government representative who will be a senior union parishad chairman.

It, however, did not have provision for inclusion of representatives from upazila parishads and municipalities.

In response to another query, the state minister said there were around 2.50 lakh mosques in the country according to an Islamic Foundation survey conducted in 2008.

The number of temples is about 23,000 as per the information provided by district administration, he added.



This sign at Farmgate asking bus drivers "not to even think of stopping there" remains a mockery. Drivers stop buses here regularly, narrowing down Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue to a one-lane street and slowing down traffic on the already congested avenue. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

TASLIMA'S ARTICLE
2 killed in Karnataka violence

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Two persons were killed and four injured during a protest by Muslims over an article by Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasreen in a vernacular daily in Shimoga town of southern Indian state of Karnataka yesterday.

The authorities imposed dusk-to-dawn curfews in four trouble-hit localities in old Shimoga, the hometown of Chief Minister B S Yeddyurappa of BJP.

While one of the deceased SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Kuril flyover work starts this month

HELEMUL ALAM

The construction work of 3.1 km Kuril flyover will start this month to connect the capital with Purbachal New Town.

The cabinet purchase committee yesterday approved the tender proposal for constructing the flyover at a cost of around Tk 153 crore. Finance Minister AMA Muhith chaired the meeting.

"As we have the approval of the purchase committee we will issue the work order to selected two firms--Project Builders Limited and Major Bridge Eng Company JV-- soon," said an official of Rajuk.

The construction work of the flyover will start this month and is scheduled to be completed by 2012, he added.

On December 17, 2008, the foundation stone of the flyover was laid down at the meeting point of the Airport Road and Pragati Sarani to start its work in March, 2009.

The flyover will be constructed from the fund of Purbachal New Town Project of Rajuk on about 12.68 acres of land. Of the land, about 10 acres belong to Bangladesh Railway and the remaining are private lands.

Land acquisition for the flyover has already been completed, said the official.

Three local consulting firms--Development Design Consultants Limited, The Consulting House and Divine Associates Limited, assigned to conduct the feasibility study, had submitted their final report earlier.

The one-way flyover with four loops SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Amnesty for probe into army role

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amnesty International yesterday called upon the government to launch an investigation into the deaths of two indigenous people in Rangamati allegedly in army fire on February 20.

"Carry out a prompt, impartial, and independent investigation into these attacks and killings to identify individuals who set houses on fire and army personnel who may have used excessive force," urged Amnesty International in a statement. It also urged the government

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Ethnic people blame settlers

Point at some people in military uniform

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Samo Odhikar Andolon, an organisation of Bangalee settlers, with the assistance of a number of people in military uniform allegedly led the February 19-20 arsons at Adivasi villages in Baghaichhari.

The allegation was made yesterday at a press conference organised by Sajek Bhumi Raksha Committee at the Jatiya Press Club.

The homeless Adivasis identified four leaders of Samo Odhikar Andolon involved in the arson. The organisation was founded in 2002 by former BNP lawmaker Wadud Bhuiyan during the then BNP-led government.

A six-point demand including immediate arrest and punishment of the responsible persons was also made at the conference. SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Khagrachhari unit brigade commander changed

Section 144 lifted from Baghaichhari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Bangladesh Army yesterday changed its Khagrachhari unit brigade commander and Rangamati district's Baghaihat army zone's commanding officer in the wake of recent unrest in the hill districts that claimed three lives. Army sources said Brig Gen Hamidur Rahman Chowdhury has been made

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

4 POWER PLANTS PDB starts bidding process

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Power Development Board yesterday initiated the tender process for four independent power projects aiming to generate up to 820MW through publishing pre-qualification criteria for interested bidders.

A top PDB source said the projects are Bibiyana-2 gas-fired 300MW to 450MW power project, Bholu gas-fired 150MW to 220MW, Katakali 50MW furnace oil and Saidpur

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Alal made Jubo Dal president, Nirob GS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Syed Moazzem Hossain Alal has been made the president of Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal, the youth front of BNP, while Saiful Alam Nirob its general secretary, said a BNP press release.

Approved by BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia, the five-member Jubo Dal Central Executive Committee was made public through e-mail to media late last night.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Prayer Timing		
March 2		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-15	5-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-05	6-10
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

Top Swat Taliban commander killed

Pak militants blow up Nato oil tanker

AFP, ANI, Peshawar

A senior Taliban commander has been killed in a clash with security forces in Pakistan's Swat Valley, where the military claims to have quelled an Islamist uprising, officials said yesterday.

Mohammad Alam Binouri, who had a 10-million-rupee (175,000-dollar) reward on his head, was killed with another militant in the gun battle in the town of Madyan in the mountainous northwestern region late Sunday, local police officer Islam Jan said.

Army and paramilitary soldiers acting on a tip-off surrounded a house in the town, but the men resisted and Binouri was killed in an exchange of fire, a military official speaking on condition of anonymity told AFP.

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2 women commit 'suicide'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two women committed "suicide" in the city's Uttara and Gendaria yesterday.

Of the deceased Ima Akhter Moni, 24, was a housewife while the other Anika Parvin, 25, office manager of Brilliant Hira Ltd at Gazipur.

Police recovered Ima's body from her house at Dhalkanagar in Gendaria yesterday morning.

Her husband Zakirul Islam Rubel claimed that Ima hanged herself from their bedroom ceiling Sunday night

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

CHILE QUAKE

Death toll tops 700

AFP, Concepcion/ Geneva

Rescue teams searched for survivors yesterday after Chile's quake toll topped 700 and the extent of the disaster became clear in coastal areas where giant waves left behind a path of death and destruction.

The Chilean government declared a curfew in two of the worst-hit areas, the central Maule region and the second city of Concepcion and its province, where security fears rose as police fired tear-gas and water cannons to disperse gangs of looters.

Chile on Monday asked for international aid following the earthquake there, a spokeswoman for the UN's humanitarian coordination office told AFP.

President Michelle Bachelet said she expected the toll of 708 to rise further, while her government admitted it had erred by failing to warn Chileans about the tsunami risk following Saturday's 8.8-magnitude quake.

State television reported that more than 300 bodies had been found in the swamped fishing village of Constitucion alone, although this could not be immediately confirmed.

Giant waves engulfed seaside towns and villages, drowning residents, washing away entire homes and leaving desperate survivors to stare in disbelief at the seaweed clinging to what was left of their livelihoods.

"The wave came and covered everything. It was something like six meters (20 feet) high,"

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

More changes in PPA to drop past experience clause

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet yesterday okayed an amendment to the public procurement act to drop the provision requiring suppliers to have experience to compete for contracts worth up to Tk 2 crore. It gave its nod to the amendment, third of its kind, in response to objections from several ministers, said administration sources who would not be identified talking about the issue.

The latest change to the Public Procurement Act 2010 comes as the cabinet's earlier decision against requirement of experience had not been followed in its entirety.

The finance ministry had incorporated the provision for experience to give the development partners an impression that the government was leaving no room for corruption in public procurement, added the sources.

Though it relaxed the condition with regard to contracts worth Tk 50 lakh, the revised law caused resentment among some senior ministers.

At the February 23 meeting of the National Economic Council (NEC), some of the ministers criticised the finance minister for ignoring the cabinet's decision.

They urged the prime minister, who was chairing the meeting,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

OnlinePoll

Do you think the arrest of Jaish-e-Mohammad operatives in the country is an ominous sign of regrouping effort by Islamist militants?

Yes (70.3%)
No (25.5%)
No Comments (4.2%)

Total votes: 1032

TODAY'S POLL

Do you think government and tannery owners will relocate the tanneries from the capital in six months following the High Court order?

Please cast your vote at www.thedailystar.net