

Dig canals for food autarky

SENBAH (Noakhali), Jan 25: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today called upon the people to participate in the canal digging programme on voluntary basis to achieve self-sufficiency in food, reports UNB.

"Prices of foodgrain will never be stable if we continue to import it," she told a huge public meeting after inaugurating the reexcavation of Daulatpur-Chhilunia canal in Senbah upazila of the district this morning.

Officials said reexcavation of the 3.87 kilometre-long canal will protect aman crops from floods and provide irrigation facilities to 1,500 acres of land benefiting about 600 people in Daulatpur, Batania, Batakandi, Manikpur and Chhilunia areas.

The Prime Minister said her government which believes in people's welfare is committed to accelerating the pace of rural development, boosting agricultural production and improving the condition of farmers.

Some 1200 canals were excavated under the canal digging programme initiated by late President Ziaur Rahman contributing to an additional crop production of 12 lakh tons, she said.

Begum Zia urged the people to increase production of rabi crops during the dry season. She also called for producing multiple crop on the limited land, emphasising on maximum utilisation of land.

AL urges removal of deadlock in non-government edn institutions

By DU Correspondent

The Awami League in a statement Saturday urged the government to remove the deadlock prevailing in the non-government educational institutions due to the indefinite strike by teachers immediately.

The statement issued by the AL Acting President and Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Abdus Samad Azad and the AL General Secretary Begum Sajeda Chowdhury MP, said that the BNP government had led the country's education system to the verge of collapse in ten months.

The guardians have become concerned about the stalemate in the education sector, the AL leaders added.

The leaders also mentioned that the government had not taken any fruitful step even after the 8th day of the non-government teachers' strike.

Meanwhile the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) President Safuddin Manik in a statement yesterday also urged the government to implement the teachers' 15-point charter of demands through a proper discussion with them.

It is our bad luck that the teachers have to move for the demands they had been struggling to implement since the days of the past autocratic regime.

'Legal tangles' on BCCI

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clude authorising the Bangladesh Bank to run the BCCI branches as a commercial bank, the Finance Ministry official noted.

The other three options under consideration are merger with commercial banks, sale to local entrepreneurs and liquidation of the three branches of the BCCI, he said, adding "We will form a new bank out of the BCCI as soon as possible".

Arrangement with the depositors would also be made to refloat the bank under any of the options, he pointed out.

About 40,000 depositors in Bangladesh had over Taka 530 crore with the three BCCI branches in Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna when it was closed by the Bangladesh Bank July 6 last year.

Agrani Bank disbursed a total of about Taka 60 crore to local BCCI depositors after the government authorised the bank to pay each depositor Taka 50,000 per account and to return all deposits of diplomats. The bank was also authorised to handle all the pending Letters of Credit (LCs) accounts of the BCCI.

State Minister for Textiles Major (Retd) Abdul Mannan, Halima Khatun, MP, Barkatullah Bhu, MP, Advocate Salahuddin Kamran, MP, and Jafar Abidin, MP, were present at the meeting.

The Prime Minister called for setting up small and medium scale industries, pisciculture and poultry farms on cooperative basis for the country's economic uplift.

She also urged the women, who make up 50 per cent of the population, to participate in nation building activities to lead the country toward self-reliance in every sector.

Referring to the compulsory primary education and mass literacy programmes, Begum Zia said the compulsory primary education programme has been introduced in 64 upazilas and suggested that the local leaders should monitor the number of drop-outs.

Biman

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the management side while the members of the steering committee of different unions of employees represented the employees to the sixth round of negotiations which lasted about two hours.

Some 5500 employees of the national flag carrier have been agitating since January 16, demanding removal of anomalies from the new pay scale.

Mentionably, the present action by the employees of the Biman came up for discussion in the Jatiya Sangsad on January 23.

Abdul Mannan, Minister of State for Civil Aviation, informed the House that the action by the employees did not affect the functioning of the organization, especially flight operations. When contacted, Moahar Hossain, President of the Biman Stramik Union, told the Daily Star "We want a separate pay scale but the management wants to revise the allowances only. So all the meetings with the management failed to yield any result." He, however, said that in settlement of the dispute, the Biman management needs an extra expenditure of about Taka five lakh only.

Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury, when contacted, told the Daily Star, "We offered what we had to offer to them. Now the ball is in their court."

Mr Chowdhury added the management has agreed to revise the allowances with effect from June 1, 1992. In so far as the pay scale is concerned, "We cannot go beyond the national standard," he said.

Referring to the outcome of yesterday's negotiations Mr Chowdhury said the employees have been requested to let the management know their position well by this morning.

Expecting a favourable response from the employees, a meeting of the board of directors has been scheduled for midday today.

However, the employees have decided to continue their agitation till their demand is met.

The Luxembourg-based BCCI, that once had more than 20 billion US dollars in assets and branches in 69 countries, collapsed last year and regulators around the world seized the bank's assets following a similar action taken by the Bank of England on July 5 last.

Agency reports said that the British court ordered the liquidation of BCCI operations there January 14, paving the way for creditors to get back some of their money.

The British court order followed a similar liquidation order by the commercial court of Luxembourg of BCCI SA, one of the two subsidiaries of BCCI through which it operated in Britain, United Arab Emirates, Germany, Netherlands, Jordan and Yemen.

A second Luxembourg-based BCCI subsidiary, BCCI Overseas, owned branches elsewhere in the world including those in Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, BCCI operations in Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Panama, Nigeria and Zambia have already been re-floated under new arrangements. Similar moves are also being undertaken by the authorities in Pakistan and Hong Kong.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia visiting a stall set by the mentally retarded at the National Institute for the Mentally Retarded in the city yesterday. — PID photo

Indemnity Repeal Bill

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Mirza Golam Hafiz, was formed in August 1991 to scrutinise the AL sponsored bill.

The then president Khader Mushtaq Ahmed promulgated the Indemnity Ordinance on September 26, 1975 giving immunity to those who killed Mujib on August 15 of the same year. The ordinance was turned into an act by Parliament in 1979 through the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution during the rule of President Ziaur Rahman.

The 15-member parliamentary committee on the Indemnity (Repeal) Bill consists of eight MPs from the ruling party, five from AL and one each from JP and Jamaat.

Originally, the House asked the committee to finalise its report within 90 days of its (committee) formation. Although the committee held seven meetings within the period, the members failed to reach consensus. Later another 70-day time was sought and the House granted it.

On January 14, when the 70-day deadline expired, the committee requested the House to allow another two weeks to finalise the report

and the House extended the deadline till January 31, 1992.

With only six days of the stipulated time left, the committee is yet to hold a meeting, sources close to the committee informed.

An influential minister and member of the committee on the bill, while talking to The Daily Star yesterday, said the chance of reaching consensus on the bill was very thin. "We shall, however, submit the report within the fresh deadline," he added.

Replying to a query he said a meeting would be held before finalising the report. When asked why a meeting was not held as the fresh deadline is only 6 days away, the minister said that the Chairman of the committee was the appropriate person to answer.

The Chairman of the committee was, however, not available for comment.

An Awami League member of the committee, when contacted, expressed his apprehension that the ruling BNP would not extend support to the passage of the Indemnity (Repeal) Bill. But the BNP will have to pay for its non-cooper-

ation, he warned.

The senior BNP leaders who had earlier agreed to co-operate on the issue have now changed their position for mysterious reasons, he added.

"We will have no alternative but to take to the street if BNP does not help pave the way for trying the killers of Bangabandhu," he asserted.

The passage of the Indemnity (Repeal) Bill will require the support of the simple majority of parliament. The combined opposition with a strength of 160 is not capable to ensure its passage.

The Parliamentary Party of Awami League will hold a meeting this afternoon to discuss the situation arising out of the possible non-cooperation of the ruling party in passing the bill, said an AL MP last night.

The final decision on the next course of action in this regard will be taken after AL chief Sheikh Hasina returns home from Singapore where she is now attending her ailing brother-in-law, the AL MP added.

Sheikh Ansar Ali, the Jamaat member of the committee told this correspondent

Handicapped

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She said ten per cent of the government jobs had been allocated as reserved quota for all categories of handicapped including the orphans and added that the government was encouraging various non-government organisations including SCMRB, basically a parents' organisation as well as its project NIMR opened today.

The national conference, presided over by SCMRB President Alamgir M A Kabir, was also addressed by Minister for Social Welfare Tariqul Islam.

A key note paper on 'The role of the government for welfare of the mentally retarded of Bangladesh' was presented by A K M Quamruzzaman MP and a former Vice President, SCMRB. First Vice President Ashraf-ud-Dowla, Secretary General M A Matin and second Vice President Wajedul Islam spoke on the occasion.

Third Vice President M Matru Rahman read out a message sent by the President of Bangladesh Abdur Rahman Biswas.

The Midnight File

Accord among G-7 unlikely

GARDEN CITY (NY), Jan 25: Finance officials from the world's seven richest democracies brainstormed Saturday on ways to spark the sluggish world economy, now spluttering along at its lowest growth rate in almost a decade. But broad agreement was unlikely among the Group of Seven, or G-7, whose top finance officials meet two or three times a year. "In some sense, it's every country for itself," said David Jones, chief economist of Aubrey G Lanston and Co, a government securities dealer, adding "We're all in different phases of economic cycles," reports AP.

Ramiz Alia sees 'insecurity'

TIRANA, Jan 25: President Ramiz Alia was quoted Saturday as saying his country's police and justice systems are inefficient, resulting in increasing public concern over crime. "The order is not functioning properly," the state ATA news agency quoted Alia as saying at a meeting with officials. "There is a general insecurity." Noting that criminals often are not caught, Alia said there was an impression that "one can act against the law and not be punished," reports AP.

Blast kills 2 in Turkey

ISTANBUL, Jan 25: A bomb blew up in Istanbul's famed Covered Bazaar on Saturday, killing two people and wounding three, police said. Another bomb exploded at the fashionable Galleria shopping mall 15 minutes later, slightly injuring four people, authorities said, reports AP.

11705 firearms examined

By Staff Correspondent

A total of 11,705 licensed firearms were examined by the District Commissioner's office in Dhaka till Saturday, the last day for depositing arms.

Out of the total, 11,371 were returned to its holders immediately after examination while a total of 334 deposited with the DC's office as the papers were found unsatisfactory, official sources said.

The programme of examining firearms began all over the country January 2. Of the total firearms returned to its holders, 11,537 were revolvers, 1,159 pistols, 1,884 rifles, 3,137 double-barrel guns, 3,558 single-barrel guns, 54 double-barrel shot guns and 42 single-barrel shot guns.

Of the total 334 firearms deposited with the DC's office, 56 were revolvers, 46 pistols, 40 rifles, 70 double-barrel guns and 122 single-barrel guns.

Teacher selection: DU IFA management asked to show cause

By Staff Correspondent

A High Court bench has asked the management of the Institute of Fine Arts under the Dhaka University to show cause by January 30 why the selection of Enamul Huq Enam, a candidate for the post of a lecturer at the institute, would not be declared as illegal.

The two-member bench comprising Justice Fazle Hussain Mohammad Habibur Rahman and Justice K M Hasan issued the notice upon a writ petition of another candidate Mrs Lala Rukh Selim who claimed that Enam did not fulfil the requirement mentioned in the circular.

The selection board chose him at a meeting on January 9, a press release issued by Advocate Subrata Chowdhury said.

Meanwhile, Chowdhury said that a meeting of the board of governors of the institute held Friday dropped the issue of approval of the selection of Enamul Huq from the agenda as the matter is now under consideration of the court.

Environment

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transport, housing and urbanization, population, public awareness, education and research, legal framework and institutional arrangements.

The failure to approve the policy has already delayed the publication of a status paper entitled 'The state of the environment'. The first in a series of this report was planned for publication before December 31 last year.

Ministry sources say if the plan is not approved immediately disbursement of the aid money for many of the development projects will be delayed. Donors are attaching importance to the policy, sources add.

When contacted, Abdullah Al Noman, Minister for Environment and Forests told The Daily Star that the policy would be approved by the cabinet very soon. There would be some changes in the policy before it was again sent for cabinet approval, he added.

It is interesting to note that since the draft of the policy was approved all ministers holding the portfolio of the ministry while making public statements on any occasion assured that the policy would be approved in two months' time.

Environmentalists believe the policy will be approved before the World Summit on Environment to be held in Brazil in June as the Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is expected to lead the 14-member Bangladesh team there.

New FIS leader detained

ALGIERS, Jan 25: The new leader of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), Othmane Aissani, has been arrested, a fundamentalist mosque official said today, reports AFP.

The news could not immediately be confirmed by police.

Aissani had been appointed acting FIS leader only on Friday night to replace Abdelkader Hachani, who was arrested on Wednesday. Most of the FIS leadership is behind bars.

Aissani's arrest was announced by an official at the fundamentalist mosque of El Sunna at Bab El Oued, one of the FIS strongholds.

Power workers

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the demands of the power employees.

He said that the press note, which he termed 'motivated', had attempted to undermine the union rights of the employees.

Meanwhile, organisers of the strike in the capital Saturday brought out processions and held rallies in favour of the strike.

At a rally at the Bidyut Bhaban Saturday, leaders of the labour unions said they would continue their proposed strike till realisation of their demands.

Separate meetings were also organised at the WAPDA building to drum up support for the proposed strike.

Normal power supply would continue during the strike hours, organisers said.

But in cases of power failure or suspension, the workers would not extend services, they said.

Newspaper office, hospitals and water supply will not come under the purview of the strike, the organisers added.

BJP march

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The BJP says Joshi's 15,000 km (9,000 mile) "ekta yatra", or unity march, is aimed at countering the Muslim insurgency in Kashmir and a decade-long revolt by Sikhs in the state of Punjab.

Opponents of the BJP, which has surged in just over two years from a fringe party to opposition status, allege the march panders to Hindu fundamentalists at the expense of the Muslim, Sikh and other minorities among India's 850 million people.

Indian news agencies reported that 60 Sikh activists had been arrested when they tried to march through Kashmir in protest against the BJP motorcade today.

Sikh politician Simranjit Singh Mann was arrested when he tried to enter Kashmir to hold a rally countering a Hindu nationalist journey, press reports said today.

Mann, leader of a faction of the Akali Dal party in Punjab state, was held with 56 followers Friday at Lakhnau, the gateway to Kashmir, domestic news agencies said.

In Delhi Indian police rounded up 150 people on the eve of the country's republic day as security in the capital was boosted for fear of terrorists attacks, police officials said today.

Police said the 150 detained were suspected of having links with Sikh militants from Punjab or Muslim groups fighting for the secession of the northern state of Kashmir.

Some 15,000 paramilitary troops from the Border Security Forces and Central Reserve Police Force and ordinary police personnel were deployed along the 10-kilometre (six mile) route of a parade planned for Sunday.

The parade usually includes displays by dancers and children along with exhibitions of Indian weapons.

Voting postponed in 40 UP poll centres

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ferent districts.

The Police Control Room said that it had received reports from 12 districts and that polling was suspended in different centres of six districts only.

According to the Control Room, the centres where voting was postponed due to untoward incidents were: 10 in Shariatpur, three in Brahmanbaria, four in Munshiganj, and one each in Chittagong, Rajshahi and Barisal.

It said that a police constable was hurt when a mob attacked the north Muradpur Government Primary School of Nawabganj upazila under Dinajpur district. However, balloting at the centre continued undisturbed.

The Control Room official declined to mention details of the incidents that led to the postponement of polling in the six districts.

An Election Commission source in Dhaka said that the authorities withheld polling in two centres at Homna upazila under Comilla district due to disturbances.

Our Staff Correspondent from Chittagong reports: Authorities postponed polling in at least 12 centres in 23 unions under two upazilas following violence, clashes and snatching of ballot boxes.

Police said that 35 persons were injured in the incidents and another five arrested in this connection.

They said that the number of such centres might rise after proper investigation.

According to police, polling in eight centres of 13 in 15 unions in Raozan upazila and voting at four centres of 10 in 11 unions in Rangunia upazila were withheld as violence spread.

At least 25 persons were injured in the Raozan centres in clashes between the rival groups. Police fired blank shots while miscreants were snatching ballot boxes and ballot papers. They also picked up five persons from the scene.

In the four centres of Rangunia, clashes between groups left 10 persons injured. The on-duty police and BDR fired in the air to disperse a mob trying to snatch polling materials. No arrest was made there.

The centres in Raozan upazila where polling was postponed were: Munshiganj, Fatepur, Audulia, Nirapara, Nowajshpur, Sanidar Koang, Kuli-

para and Idalpur. The troubled centre in Rangunia could not be known.

Our Correspondent from Narayanganj adds: Five persons were injured when police resorted to baton charges and used rifle butts on an unruly voters at Murapara Pilot High School centre of Murapara Union. Police also detained 13 persons including two women on charges of false voting at the centre. The injured persons were identified as: Ramsuddin, Mujibur Rahman, Nasir, Momen and a minor boy. They all were given first aid. However, polling at the centre continued without any break.

Elections to other union parishes of Rupganj upazila of the district were held peacefully. Out of nine unions in the upazila, polling was held in seven. The tenures of the remaining two UPs have not yet expired.

The unions where polls were held on the day were: Kanchan, Bholabo, Doudpur, Kaedpur, Murapara, Bholta and Gokakandi.

An estimated 65 per cent of the 1,14,230 voters in the seven unions cast votes at 47 centres. 26 persons are contesting for seven posts of chairman while 182 for 27 posts of member.

Our Staff Correspondent from Khulna said: Elections in three unions of Rupsha upazila and six unions of Terakhada upazila were held peacefully.

Polling was conducted under special arrangement at 11 out of 16 centres in the two upazilas as police feared trouble there. However, no reports of disturbances in any of the centres were received.

The youths, normally known as trouble mongers served the voters by taking them from different areas to the polling centres on motorbikes, witnesses said.

The local election commission officials said, none of the incumbent chairmen and members of the unions under Dighalia and fultola upazilas, where polls were held on January 22, was elected.

According to our Munshiganj Correspondent: Two persons were injured in polls violence which led to postponement of voting at Three centres in Srinagar upazila.

Police fired three shots to bring the situation under control.

The two persons whose identities could be known were hospitalised after they were seriously injured in bomb

explosions. The bombs were exploded during a clash between rival groups of people at the three centres - Barakhal High School, West Barakhal High School and Kharrha Primary School of the upazila.

Polling at all the three centres was suspended as the situation went out of the control of the authorities following the domination of the centres by the rival groups.

Elections were held in 14 unions of Srinagar upazila on the third day of the country-wide Union Parishad elections.

UNB report from Pabna says: Election to the Dashuna Union of Isurdi upazila of the district will be held on February 24. Election Commission announced Saturday.

The election was postponed after the death of chairman candidate Md Abdur Rouf on Jan 12. He was sitting chairman of the union.

According to the new election schedule the last dates for submission of nomination paper, scrutiny and withdrawal of nomination paper are January 1, January 2 and January 8 respectively.

Also Saturday the elections to the three unions of Isurdi and four unions of Athgharia were held peacefully.

A report from Brahmanbaria says: Authorities Saturday postponed polling in four centres of four unions in Nabiganj upazila of the district due to alleged violence and hijacking of ballot boxes.

Police said polling was postponed in Kaitola High School centre in Kaitola Union, Kagotora Primary School centre in Ratanpur Union, Moheshpur Primary School centre in Bidghar Union and Amtali Primary School in Birgoa Union.

They fired two rounds of blank shots after two rival groups clashed in Kaitola centre from where three ballot boxes were hijacked.

Two ballot paper books were allegedly snatched away from Moheshpur centre.

Miscreants also exploded crackers in Kaitola and Moheshpur centres.

Another report from Shariatpur says: An army sepoy on leave was arrested Saturday on charge of forcing into a polling centre and assaulting a police constable.

Police also fired a warning shot as Nuruzzaman allegedly entered the Chikandi Government Primary School voting centre in the sadar upazila at

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