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Govt bows to major demands Doctors call off strike

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) has called off the indefinite strike at the country's hospitals yesterday — the tenth day of the strike — following 'specific documented decisions' by the government.

At a press conference in the city last night, the BMA leaders announced their decision withdrawing all strikes for the next three months.

The leaders said, the government had already issued two official orders and agreed to issue seven more within January 29 towards implementation of some of the major demands of the doctors.

The press conference, addressed by its Secretary General Gazfi Abdul Haq, was also attended by BMA central leaders including Dr Moshtaq Hossain, Dr Moinul Hasan, Dr Fakhruul Islam Chowdhury, Dr MA Selim, Dr Rafi Ahmed and others.

The BMA decision ending the strike came after a final round of negotiation between the Health Minister and the BMA liaison committee headed by Dr AB Bhuiyan yesterday afternoon.

Dr MA Majed, President of the BMA, and Health Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, in the presence of BMA central leaders and high officials of the Health Ministry, signed an agreement in the evening.

According to the deal, the government promised to increase budgetary allocation for the health sector from the next fiscal.

To ensure health for all by 2,000, the government has agreed to appoint a graduate doctor at the 2664 unions of the country by December 1996.

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Euro-Parliament asks Owen to quit as mediator

By Staff Correspondent

PARIS, Jan 20: Frustrated by unsuccessful efforts to halt the war in Bosnia, the European Parliament on Thursday called for the dismissal of Lord David Owen, the European Union's mediator to the Yugoslav peace process, reports AP.

In a 160 to 90 vote with 13 abstentions, the European Union's 518-member assembly said Owen has not fulfilled his task to bring peace to the war-torn region.

The European Parliament has little power regarding foreign affairs and can only urge European governments to take action. But its political statements are seen as a general reflection of European thought.

In Geneva, peace talks spokesman John Mills said Owen has no plans to resign.

"Lord Owen remains committed to mediating between the parties and ending the war in Bosnia," Mills said.

EU Foreign Affairs chief Hans Van den Broek said it was unfair to criticise Owen, who carries out instructions from EU governments.

In its resolution, the parliament called on governments to "designate another EU mediator, endowed with an appropriate mandate and a new strategy for exercising it."

Deputies criticised "the mandate and the strategy of EU and UN mediators, who have arrived at no result and who persist in wanting to cut

\$ 3.6m Japanese grant for Rohingya refugees

By Staff Correspondent

Japan yesterday announced a decision to contribute 3.6 million US dollars to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) repatriation programme for the Rohingya refugees.

According to a Japanese embassy statement, the government of Japan decided on January 14 to contribute the amount to the UNHCR's repatriation programme for the refugees from Myanmar.

The Japanese response comes following a UNHCR international appeal for a donation of 34 million dollars for the ongoing repatriation programme. The appeal was made after the UN agency

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Inter-regional confce suggests 29-pt plan for accountability

A five-day ASEAN-SAARC conference on administrative and financial accountability ended here yesterday with the adoption of a 29-point set of recommendations for making the administration accountable to the people, reports UNB.

The conference defined accountability as 'answerability to the people through the politico-legal systems introduced by their representatives' and pointed out the lack of focus in the interface between the political and bureaucratic administration.

It suggested that the ambiguous role of the politicians be minimised by providing a predictable interface with the administration, and effective conduct rules be observed by both politicians and bureaucrats.

The Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) and the Asia-Pacific Development Centre (APDC) jointly organised the conference at a local hotel.

Some 52 senior government officials from 12 member countries of the two regional bodies, the ASEAN and the SAARC, took part in the conference, which was inaugurated by State Minister for Establishment, Barrister Aminul Huq on Sunday.

The conference suggested the Rules of Business be strictly observed by the bureaucrats. The bureaucratic administration should agitate wherever there is any deviation from these rules, it said.

There has been a proliferation of agencies, laws and rules regarding discipline, corruption, malpractices and accountability, and it is strongly felt that this trend should be halted. The conference suggested these agencies and laws be consolidated to minimise

their exploitative role.

It called for making the procedures simple and understandable and accessible for the common consumers of information to promote objectivity and transparency.

Participants at the conference pointed out the absence of 'political will' to fight corruption. The answer is to be found out at the appropriate levels.

Calling for administrative credibility of the bureaucracy, the conference said the reputation of the bureaucrats is the only insurance they can rely upon in trying circumstances.

The participants stressed the need for encouraging modern management practices, with particular reference to personal relationship with the staff, to create an atmosphere of commitment to the leadership.

They also laid emphasis on 'sunshine laws', honest dissent within the organisation, minimising exploitative tendencies of the media, establishment of formal representative local government system and providing moral education to stop the erosion of moral values.

The conference pointed out that efficiency, which is not linked with effectiveness, is

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Interview series with RCC mayoral candidates I have unfinished tasks to complete: Minu

From Asiuzzaman

RAJSHAHI, Jan 20: Ruling party mayoral candidate in the Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) polls Mizanur Rahman Minu wants to complete his 'unfinished task' if elected mayor in the January 30 election.

"I started massive development works in the city which I would like to complete if I win the mayoral election," Minu said in an interview with The Daily Star.

Giving a long list of development works, Minu said, the RCC got the highest allocation of money during his two-and-a-half-year tenure. The BNP candidate said he resigned from the mayoralty as a mark of respect for the existing rules. A direct election will be more honourable for a mayor than being nominated by the government, he added.

He said, the century-old Rajshahi city is beset with many problems. The city has no drainage system, sewerage line and adequate water supply network. There is even no standard newspaper. Most of the previous governments neglected this northern city, he

complained.

Minu said, the present government of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is committed to developing this city and providing all amenities to the citizens of Rajshahi.

In reply to a question if the government pledges for different projects ahead of the election would influence the people to vote for him, the BNP leader said "The projects are part of the government's normal development activities."

Answering another question whether the Jamaat has nominated a weak candidate on the basis of any understanding with the ruling party, he said "the Jamaat considers me its arch-rival."

"I was the junior-most freedom fighter during the Liberation War in 1971," the 36-year old leader said, adding, "I took a firm stand against the Jamaat and Shibir following the February 6 bloody incidents in Rajshahi University."

In reply to a question, he ruled out any rivalry in the Rajshahi BNP leadership. He said BNP leader Enamul Huq was an aspirant for the nomination but "the Party High

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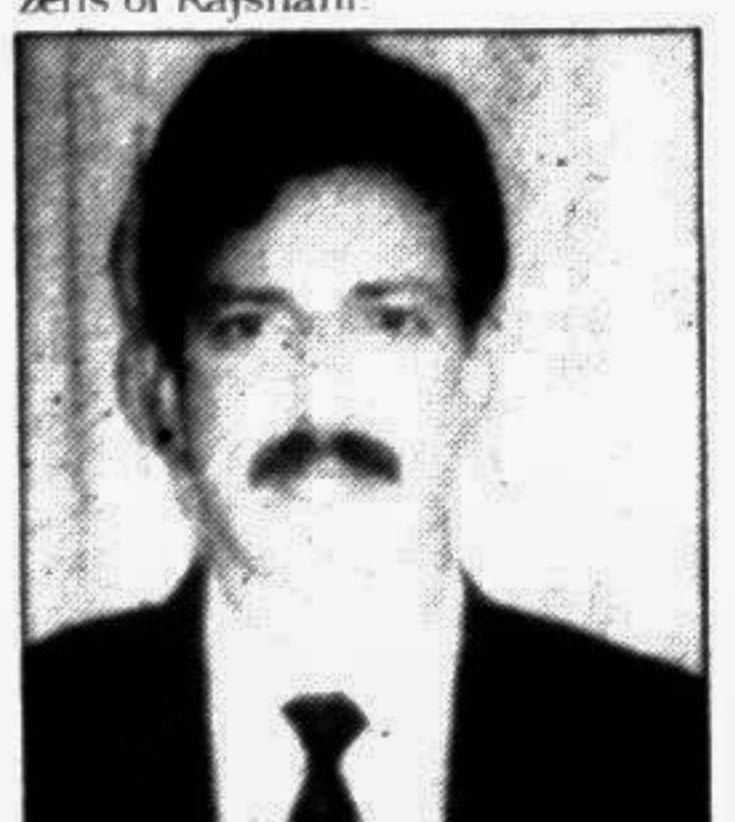
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Mizanur Rahman Minu



Posters of all parties and candidates for the Jan 30 DCC polls hang over the narrow B K Das Road in Sutrapur in the older part of the city, blocking the sunlight, even at midday yesterday. — Star photo

DCC polls diary

By Staff Correspondent

Door-to-door campaigning has picked up, but the city-dwellers have also devised a new way to evade the persistent candidates.

Apparently to get rid of unwanted campaigners, some voters in the Motijheel area of the city have pasted messages on their doors like "No voters live here" or "We plan to go for an outing on the polls day."

"How long can you entertain an unending stream of campaigners with broad smiles, particularly when they turn up at unlikely hours," commented one anguished voter.

The wastepaper or rag pickers and decorators are doing brisk business.

The DCC polls have opened up a great opportunity for them with maunds of waste posters and leaflets to collect from the streets and from the houses.

Folding chairs, loudspeakers and materials for shamianas have become scarce with candidates already booking those weeks in advance.

A ward commissioner candidate said he wanted to pay double the rent for some fold-

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Private jute mills worried over CBA demands

By Staff Correspondent

Agitation by labour unions in some private sector jute mills demanding implementation of the new Wages Commission — meant only for the public sector workers — may lead to the closure of those units, cautioned the Bangladesh Jute Mills Association (BJMA) yesterday.

In a statement the association noted with concern that workers, led by their respective collective bargaining agents (CBAs), of four private jute mills — Ajax, Mohseni, Sonali and Nowapara Jute Mills in the Khulna and Jessore areas — threatened the management earlier this month demanding implementation of the Wages Commission of 1993.

"Under the circumstances the local managements were compelled to sign some agreements under duress and unlawful confinement," it pointed out that the new Wages Commission is only applicable for the public sector enterprises as per the government announcement.

It also added that a jute advisory committee meeting held in November last and chaired by the Jute Minister decided that the new Wages Commission award is applicable for the public sector jute mills only and "under no circumstances shall it be applicable for the private

sector jute mills and no precedence be created in this regard".

The BJMA statement then goes on to state: "Since the above-mentioned agreements were obtained under duress and wrongful confinement, the concerned mills had no alternative but to repudiate the so-called agreements and take other legal measures."

Moreover the private mills cannot even contemplate increasing their operating costs through wage enhancements at this point, it said, if they are to be made viable under the planned World Bank-funded Jute Sector Restructuring Project, by containing their huge losses currently being incurred and reducing their costs significantly.

"The activities of the workers' unions may, in fact, lead to the closure of the jute mills, which will not be in the best interest of the country nor of the workers themselves," the BJMA cautioned.

Such activities, it added, would put the government's privatisation policy and the restructuring project at serious risk, not to mention its effect in discouraging new industrial investments, both local and foreign, in Bangladesh.

PM visits Mir Hazaribagh fire victims

DEMRA, Jan 20: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today expressed her deep shock at the death of a minor girl and injuries to 10 more people due to the devastating fire that broke out at Mir Hazaribagh under Demra thana last night, reports BSS.

The 12-year-old girl Liza was burnt alive while 40 thatched and tin-shed structures were gutted in the fire.

Police recovered the charred body of the girl late Wednesday night from the debris.

The fire broke out at around 9:30 pm from a workshop and immediately gutted a flour mills. Firemen brought the flame under control after a two-hour battle.

While visiting the affected area this afternoon, Begum Zia expressed her grief at the accident and loss of life and property. She assured the affected people that her government would provide all possible cooperation and help to overcome the losses.

The Prime Minister talked to the dwellers and asked them to begin their businesses again to start a normal life.

She distributed saris, lungies, blankets, rice and other goods among them.

Begum Zia also talked to the family members of the deceased Liza and assured them of all support and cooperation.

Former Mayor of Dhaka and Jubo Dal president Mirza Abbas, MP, Red Crescent Society Chairman Shahidul Haq Jamal, MP, city BNP general secretary Salahuddin Ahmed, MP, were also present.

Dist magistrates asked to dispose of cases quickly

All district magistrates have been instructed to quickly dispose of the pending cases against the accused all over the country as part of jail reform measures, reports UNB.

This was disclosed in the 16th meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on the Ministry of Home Affairs held at the Sangsad Bhawan yesterday evening with Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury in the chair.

The meeting was also informed that committees had been formed in every district to improve the quality and avoid misuse of food supplied for the prisoners.

It was also informed that all the thana jails would be used as sub-jails and the Dhaka Central Jail soon be shifted to Kashimpur in Gazipur district.

The meeting discussed elaborately issues pertaining to jail reforms in the country.

Members of the standing committee Abdur Rauf Chowdhury, Shahjahan Chowdhury, Mahbubul Alam, Wing Commander (Retd) M. Hamidullah Khan, Abu Yusuf Md Khalilur Rahman of the BNP, Md Rahmat Ali of Awami League and Md Motiur Rahman Nizami of the Jamaat-e-Islami attended the meeting. High officials of the ministry concerned, including Home Secretary Azimuddin Ahmed, were present.

Russia to supply 7 rocket engines to India

MOSCOW, Jan 20: Russia is ready to supply India with a total of seven cryogenic rocket engines, not just two as provided for in a 1991 Russian-Indian contract, the Russian space agency announced as quoted by Interfax news agency on Wednesday, reports AFP.

It said the seven engines, representing a value of 220 million dollars, were aimed at offsetting the consequences of the Russian refusal to supply India with the technology and assistance provided for in that initial contract, following US pressure on Moscow.

The United States opposed the agreement, which the Americans said violated the international agreement on non-proliferation of rocket technology — which Russia signed.

Russian Space Agency Director Yuri Koptev had said last month that four engines would be sold to India to offset the cancellation of the technological assistance.

He had said that in connection with Russian technological help with the space programme developed by the Indian space research organi-

sation, Russia was prepared to provide cryogenic engines for GSLV-type launchers (Geostationary Satellite Launch Vehicle).

Anatoly Kisselov, Managing Director of the Khronichev Industrial Centre, which builds the engines, said that two of the engines would be provided free of charge.

In addition, another contract worth 28 million dollars has been signed between India and Russia concerning construction and delivery of equipment used with the engines, particularly the liquid oxygen tanking system, said Kisselov as quoted by Interfax.

Mysterious leaflet incites opinion against Quadranis

By Staff Correspondent

A leaflet recently circulated in Dhaka on behalf of the so-called 'amra dhakabasi' (We the Dhaka-dwellers) by one Abdullah of Nayapaltan has invited people to join a procession which is scheduled to start from the Chawkbazar Jame Mosque after Jumma prayers today.

The leaflet, asking people to be armed with sticks, also called for chanting slogans like "destroy the Quadranis dens from Dhaka" and "Dhaka dwellers, take up arms and eliminate the Quadranis."

A separate procession has also been planned from the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque after Jumma prayers on January 28.

The leaflet charged the government with conspiring against the anti-Quadani campaign and harbouring the sect, commonly known as the Ahmadiyyas.

Leaders of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, Bangladesh have expressed grave concern over the deteriorating situation and called upon the government to ensure the safety and security of the community.

A December 24 congregation

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Kashmiris kill 6 Indian troops

JAMMU, Jan 20 In one of the most serious incidents this year, Muslim guerrillas ambushed a patrol of border police, killing six and wounding six others, reports AP.

The militants, fighting for an independent Kashmir, fired on a group of 25 security men Wednesday evening on a mountain highway in the Doda district.