

Govt hopes teachers will end their strike

The government yesterday expressed its optimism that the teachers would withdraw their strike and examination boycott programme and join endeavours to resolve their demands through discussions, reports BSS.

In a Press Note issued by the Ministry of Education here last night, the government said it felt that it was the moral and professional duty of the teaching community to conduct the examinations and hoped they would do so in the greater national interest, particularly of the students.

The government also assured all concerned that the coming SSC examinations would begin on schedule and all preparations in this regard had already been taken.

Referring to some bold steps undertaken by the government for the development of non-government educational institutions and the well of their teachers, the Press Note said the government had been giving grants as salary and allowances since July 1, 1992, to over 2,50,000 teachers and employees of non-government schools at rates which were 70 per cent of the revised national pay scale.

This, the Press Note said, had raised the overall salary-allowances by 30 per cent. As a result, the government's revenue expenditure in this sector has been raised to Taka 526 crore in the revised budget of the current year from Taka 157 crore.

It said grants were given to teachers-employees of 2,562 new non-government schools during the first eight months of the current year.

The government, in response to the demands of the non-government teachers, has undertaken measures for payment of their previous month's salary-allowances within the 15th of next month and steps are being taken to deposit those directly to their bank accounts in future.

The Press Note said the government had also launched a phase-wise stipend programme for over 20 lakh girls students from Class Six to Class Ten in all secondary schools of the rural areas. It has also undertaken a massive infrastructural development plan for 11 non-government educational institutions, including eight high schools, one girls' school, one madrasah and one college in each rural thana of the country.

According to the Press Note, the welfare trust for the non-government teachers and employees had been re-launched while an index number was launched for the non-teacher employees.

The government has also directed the non-government

educational institutions to introduce provident funds for the teachers and employees, it said, adding that a good number of them had already introduced such programmes.

The Press Note also said that the government was actively considering other demands of the non-government teachers and employees.

It also referred to the formation of 10 committees comprising senior officials of the Education Department and representatives of the teachers' organisations to formulate recommendations for qualitative improvement of education as well as looking into the demands of non-government teachers.

The Press Note said some committees had, meanwhile, formulated their recommendations and a consensus was reached to finalise them at the meeting of representatives of all teachers through elaborate discussion.

But, the Press Note said, some teachers' organisations have unilaterally resorted to a strike and examination boycott, not giving any chance for discussions in this respect.

The government — despite its informal meetings with the representatives of teachers' organisations to discuss their demands in the perspective of their recent programme — has also invited them through letters and over telephone three times to a formal meeting.

The first meeting was held on April 16 with the Education Secretary in the chair the second on April 17 with the Education Minister in the chair and the third on April 25 again with the Education Minister in the chair. The third meeting was also attended by two State Ministers, the Education Secretary and other senior officials.

Leaders of the organisations, who took part in these meetings, had agreed to reach an understanding regarding their demands and also strongly expressed their opinion that they would not link their demands with their active involvement in the coming SSC examination.

But the government noted with great regret that some teachers' organisations under the banner of the Kendriya Shikkhak Sangram Liaison Committee, despite formal invitations, had abstained from attending those three meetings.

The government believed in resolving all demands of the teachers through dialogue and mutual understanding and hoped these organisations would soon take part in discussions with the government by withdrawing their strike and examination boycott programme.



The city Awami League held a post-hartal public meeting at the Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday. —Star photo

Hartal passes off

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Amir Hossain Anu, Mozaffar Hossain Paltu, Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Advocate Kamrul Islam, Kamal Chowdhury and Kamruzzaman.

Thanking the people for making yesterday's hartal a success all over the country and especially in the capital, the Mayor said, "We had no alternative but to call the hartal to protest the heinous attack of the ruling party on the Awami League and Chhatra League workers."

The Awami League leader pointed out that the successful day-long hartal once again proved Khaleda Zia had no right to stay in power.

Urging the people to remain prepared mentally for a vigorous agitation against Khaleda Zia under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina, Mohammad Hanif said, "We will have to fail the conspiracy of the government to paralyse democracy."

Reiterating the Awami League's demand for elections under a caretaker government, Hanif said: "We want to bring smiles in the faces of the destitute and build a new social order."

"To do that, the Awami League will bring in more people in its political process," he added.

The Awami League leaders blamed the government for the killings on April 7, repression on AL leaders, rigging in the Magura-2 election, price hike and failure to ensure the rule of law in the country.

Rally in city JP asks BNP govt to resign

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Our correspondent from Mymensingh says, one person received bullet injury near the Charpara crossing in the town in a clash between pro-hartal and anti-hartal groups around noon.

The victim, Akbar Ali, was admitted to the nearby Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

Our Sylhet Correspondent informs the hartal was observed peacefully.

Both the Awami League and the Jatiya Party brought out processions in the town.

UNB from Jamalpur adds: Pro-government supporters and pickets clashed in and around Jamalpur town during yesterday's countrywide hartal, leaving several injured.

At Bajrapur bazar in the town, the Awami League activists clashed with a group of BNP supporters who took to the streets with a dozen rickshaws in defiance of the general strike at about 11am.

Three Awami League supporters, including Badshah of the Chhatra League, was reported to have been wounded seriously.

Our Khulna Correspondent says, a dawn-to-dusk hartal was observed in Khulna peacefully.

Mills and factories at Khalishpur, Daulatpur, Atra and Rupsha were, however, open and functioned normally.

The Mongla port authority claimed activities in the port went on as usual.

Force govt to concede demand: Hasina

Awami League president Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the people to force the ruling BNP to concede the demand for parliamentary election under a neutral caretaker government by making all action programmes successful, reports UNB.

In a statement thanking the people for spontaneously observing yesterday's dawn-to-dusk hartal ignoring government "provocation, propaganda, intimidation and obstruction," she said they once again demonstrated their hatred and no-confidence in the "corrupt, vote-dacit and terrorist regime" of BNP.

"If the government has any respect for democratic values, it should immediately accept the popular demand," the Leader of the Opposition said.

Rally in city JP asks BNP govt to resign

Jatiya Party yesterday reiterated its demand for resignation of the BNP government to pave the way for holding of national elections under a caretaker government, reports UNB.

"People have once again demonstrated their support for a caretaker government through their spontaneous observance of hartal," Jatiya Party Secretary General Khaledur Rahman Titu told a post-hartal rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club.

Jatiya Party will stage demonstration in the capital on May 4, the opening day of the next parliamentary session, to press the demand for caretaker government. All MPs of Jatiya Party will join the demonstration.

The JP Secretary General said that the party would announce its programme for an about agitation at the May 4 demonstration if its demand is not met. He also demanded the release of former President and JP chairman Ershad.

Foreign Ministry contradicts news

The Foreign Ministry has contradicted a news item published in a section of the press, including The Daily Star, Tuesday that Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia might mediate in the Kashmir issue, reports UNB.

The item, credited by UNB, had said that the Foreign Secretary had replied in the affirmative to a question if Begum Zia, as Chairperson of the SAARC, would take any initiative to mediate on the Kashmir issue between the two neighbours.

"The Foreign Secretary has not been correctly quoted," the Ministry said in a clarification yesterday.

It said, on being asked whether the Prime Minister is likely to play a mediating role between India and Pakistan on the question of Kashmir, the Foreign Secretary had replied: "Life was full of possibilities."

"Then he went on to clarify further that whatever is possible is not necessarily probable. One needs to draw a line between possibility and probability."

Gen Joshi meets naval chief

The visiting Indian Chief of Army Staff, Gen Bipin Chandra Joshi, called on the Chief of the Naval Staff Rear Admiral Mohammad Mohaiminul Islam at the naval headquarters here yesterday, an ISPR press release said, reports BSS.

He stayed with the Chief of the Naval Staff for some time and discussed matters on mutual interest.

The Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, K Raghunath, was present on the occasion.

Gen Joshi later visited Chittagong and Kaptai where he was received by Chittagong Area Commander, Major Gen Muhammad Azizur Rahman Bir Uttam.

Japanese cabinet

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The confederation supports both the SDP and the smaller Democratic Socialist Party (DSP), two of the seven partners in the outgoing government.

The sudden move by the DSP to set up a new parliamentary alliance with four other groups Monday triggered the SDP's withdrawal from the eight-month-old coalition.

"The solid relations between the SDP and the DSP have been broken."

Urs of Shahjalal from May 1

From Our Correspondent
SYLHET, Apr 26: The 674th 'Urs Mubarak' of Hazrat Shahjalal (RA) will begin May 1 at the holy shrine of the great saint here. The 3-day 'Urs' will end on May 3 morning through offering on Akheri Munajat.

The Midnight File

Arafat accuses Israel of delaying peace process

BUCHAREST, Apr 26: PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat has accused the Israeli government of attempting to delay the Middle East peace process. In an interview with the 'Curierul National' newspaper in Romania recently, Arafat warned that the delaying policy of the Israeli government has endangered the peace process, reports Xinhua.

Ghali warns of bombing on Serbs

UNITED NATIONS, Apr 26: Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali warned Bosnian Serbs the United Nations will not shy away from ordering bombing if they do not meet an early Wednesday deadline for withdrawing from the Bosnian town of Gorazde. "If they will not withdraw from the 20 kms (12.5 miles) then we will use airstrikes against them without any hesitation," Boutros-Ghali said at a news conference in Bridgetown, Barbados, reports AP.

Biman's airbuses

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companies whose tenders were rejected are: Airbus Company, Aero-Lease Group of Companies and Aerospace Finance Ltd. The Airbus Company intended to supply the aircraft in 1996 while the Aerolease Group submitted just a letter. Aerospace Finance Ltd did not provide any ownership certificate with the tender documents but the British company faxed an affidavit claiming the ownership of two aircraft — Si No 446 and 481.

The US company Air Resources Leasing and the UK-based Velos Air Lease Ltd also claimed the ownership of the aircraft Si No 481. Velos offered three different pairs of aircraft. All six were manufactured in 1988.

Biman sources said the offer made by Partners, France was quite sound. The serial numbers of the aircraft it offered are 539 and 542, both manufactured in 1990, and are now being operated by the American company Delta Airlines.

The Singapore-based Japan Fleet Service offered two Air Newguinea operated aircraft — one manufactured in 1985 and the other in 1990. The Aircraft Leasing and Management Company offered a pair of 1991 and 1992-manufactured airbuses now being operated by Oasis International, an American carrier.

But except for Partners' offer, most of the eight bids now being examined by the technical committee are learned to be 'faulty'. The committee report is likely to be placed before Biman's Board of Directors early next month.

Biman sources said under the circumstances, Biman had no alternative but to choose the offer of one company and in such a case Biman will have to pay higher prices since there is no second choice.

The financial offers of the eight companies would, however, be opened after the

technical evaluation is complete.

Another Biman source said that whichever proposal the national carrier accepted, the price must be higher than the previous biddings rejected by the Board of Directors at the very last moment early this year.

The lowest bidder during the last tender had offered a price of 96 million dollars for a pair of aircraft, followed by 110 million, 130 million and 136 million dollars.

A brand new Airbus 310-300 costs about 65 million to 70 million dollars.

Biman's chief spokesman Raisuddin Ahmed told The Daily Star that a technical committee is examining eight offers and an evaluation report would be placed before the board meeting on May 2.

"I don't know the details. It is difficult to comment before the technical evaluation reports is completed," Ahmed said, refuting press reports that only one offer was valid.

He said, "hopefully, Biman would procure two airbuses this time."

Malaysia: Rice

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for 'Bangladesh since the Malaysian rice market has for long been dominated by Thailand.

"This is only the beginning — we hope to export more to Malaysia, since LPN liked the quality of our rice," the official said.

Malaysia will be the fifth country after the USA, Britain, Saudi Arabia and the Netherlands to import Bangladesh rice. Dhaka started rice exports in December 1992 and so far about 350 tonnes of essentially fine rice have been exported.

To boost rice exports, the government has established a special cell at the Food Ministry, which has been negotiating with 34 countries, including Japan.

Taiwanese

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moved to a gymnasium at the base.

"Except for the wing and engines, the aircraft seems to have been totally destroyed," a local television reporter on the scene said.

The crash was the second worst in Japanese aviation history. The worst single-plane accident in any country occurred Aug 12, 1985, when a Japan Airlines Boeing 747 crashed into a mountain on a domestic flight, killing 520 people.

An airport police official said the plane's voice recorder has been recovered, which will help investigators discover the cause of the accident.

UNB adds: Bangladesh Leader of the Opposition and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina expressed her deep shock at the death of 250 people in the plane crash in Japan.

PM: Hartals

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various demands, including construction of roads and bridges.

Begum Zia assured that a bridge would be constructed at Kheyaghat and work on the Barisal-Bhola-Laxmipur road should be completed rapidly.

She said government has undertaken a development plan for the district at a cost of Tk 161 crore for the current financial year.

She said Bhola sadar hospital will be upgraded to a 100-bed one from the present 50-bed capacity and an ambulance and an X-ray machine will be provided for the Dawlat Khan thana health complex. Government will also provide financial support for buying equipment for the Bhola diabetic hospital.

The Prime Minister also assured the students that Honours courses would be introduced in Bhola government college soon.

Earlier, Begum Zia visited a natural gas exploration site at Shahbazpur.

Bhola power grid

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resources.

The Prime Minister unveiled a plaque and switched on the line as some ministers, MPs, experts and the local elite cheered.

The inauguration of the 33 KV line thus fulfilled a pledge made on October 24, 1992 by Begum Zia to connect Bhola with the national power grid.

"Today is a happy day for the people of Bhola. Regular and adequate power supply was a long-standing demand of the inhabitants here... I am happy to have fulfilled my commitment," the Prime Minister said at the ceremony at the Bhola power sub-station.

Power supply to this beautiful island from the national grid would help meet the islanders' demand for electricity and contribute to agriculture, irrigation, fish cultivation, trade and commerce in the area.

Until now power was produced in Bhola locally with the help of imported fuel.

The Prime Minister expressed her gratitude to Almighty Allah for the successful implementation of this project despite problems and obstacles.

She thanks the officers and employees of the Power Development Board (PDB) for completing the project ahead of schedule and the local people for their help in its implementations.

The Prime Minister said the establishment of democracy in the country had created an opportunity for building the nation.

Continuous efforts and peaceful atmosphere are necessary to build the nation, and any sort of indiscipline would multiply the sufferings of the people.

Activities which oppose production and development, Begum Zia said, would incur the wrath of the people on the



An elderly man enters a polling station as others wait their turn to cast their votes yesterday at a youth centre in Tokoza — a black township east of Johannesburg. On the first day of South Africa's first all-race elections, polling stations were open only for those who are sick, disabled, elderly or pregnant. —AFP photo

16 wedding guests set alight in India

NEW DELHI, Apr 26: Sixteen people were killed when a man set wedding guests alight in an attack on a marriage procession in the western state of Gujarat on Monday night, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported today, says AFP.

The agency quoted police as saying that Devji Patel poured kerosene on the wedding guests and then threw burning torches on them when the procession was passing his house in Baladia village in Kutch district bordering Pakistan.

Eight women and as many children were burnt to death while 11 other revellers were seriously injured.

Among the victims was Patel's daughter who was married to the bridegroom's elder brother.

RMC student commits suicide

From Our Correspondent
RAJSHAH, Apr 26: A fourth year student of the Rajshahi Medical College, Nazrul Islam, committed suicide at noon today. He was found hanging from the ceiling in his room, according to police sources.

South African polls

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tions were open, including at the embassy in Ottawa.

"I have butterflies in my stomach. It is very exciting," said Jackie Masebelanga, 30, an ANC worker in London. She remembered picketing the South African embassy when she was eight.

Her husband Baisaka Masebelanga, a 31-year-old law student, confessed to mixed emotions.

"I feel angry that I have had to wait so long to vote. Today is a culmination of blood, sweat and tears. I feel angry about the people who are not here today to vote. This is the beginning of the reconciliation," Masebelanga said.

Voters at a union hall in Dublin, Ireland had their fingers inked to prevent fraud after they marked their ballots.

About 1,500 South Africans were expected to vote in Holland at the Dutch Congress Building in The Hague.

In Wellington, New Zealand, Mandela's niece, Nomaza Painitin, shouted the African National Congress cry of 'amandla', which means 'power', after she cast her ballot.

In Australia, about 60,000 South Africans eligible to vote at 19 polling stations set up in major cities. Heather Thompson told the Australian Broadcasting Corp she voted for