

Accord to resolve FFs' Trust office issue thru' talks

By Staff Correspondent

Representatives of the Bangladesh Mukti Joddha Sangram Parishad, a forum of disabled freedom fighters, agreed yesterday to resolve the problems relating to the Trust Office premises through discussions.

A three-member delegation of the Trust, headed by its general manager (procurement) Khandaker Fazul Haq, held talks with representatives of the Kendro Sangram Parishad at the 'Swadhinata Bhaban' at Moujheel in the city yesterday evening.

Some 200 disabled freedom fighters and members of 'sheheed' families who began a hunger strike on December 10 protesting transfer of the Trust Office from the Swadhinata Bhaban called off the strike on December 16 at the request of Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina. Since then, they have been observing a sit-in beside the Swadhinata Bhaban.

Talking to this correspondent, Khandaker Fazul Haq said they would submit a paper to the Mukti Joddha Trust authorities recommending high-level talks with the freedom fighters.

When asked, Haq would neither admit nor deny charges of attacks, allegedly by some Trust staff, on some disabled freedom fighters.

Mahmud Parvez Jewel, convener of the Kendro Sangram Parishad, told The Daily Star that their ongoing agitation would continue until the offices of the Trust at the Defence

Hurd due in city today

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Hurd, who holds the number two position in the cabinet of Prime Minister John Major, is a Conservative MP from Witney, Oxfordshire. He has been Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Secretary since 1989.

His current trip to the region also includes visits to India and Pakistan.

Two important agreements, one in the power sector and the other in the bridge building sector, are expected to be signed by Secretary Hurd and Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman. Under one agreement, Britain would provide Bangladesh through its Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) programme, 18 million pound sterling for investment and technical assistance towards the bridge development and maintenance project. Phase Two while the other agreement would make available to Dhaka 15 million pounds for investment and technical support for the gas infrastructure development project.

British assistance to Bangladesh has been around 650 million pound sterling in the last twenty years. In fiscal 1993-94, Bangladesh became the second highest recipient of British aid after India, receiving nearly 55 million pound sterling (around Tk 330 crores). London has also set up its aid monitoring office in Dhaka recently.

British assistance has mainly been in the areas of communications, including building of bridges, energy, health, education projects providing scope for empowerment of women and good government.

Hurd's programme includes a visit to British-assisted development projects at Parbatipur in Dinajpur tomorrow. There, he will see the progress of the Northwest Fisheries Extension Project, and a fisheries programme mainly run by women, under ODA financing.

Hurd, whose entourage includes nearly 15 members, is also being accompanied by the Permanent Secretary of the ODA.

An overall review of the progress of British ODA-aided projects will be made during Hurd's trip. Britain is learnt to be the only OECD country which has increased the quantum of aid globally in real terms.

Douglas Hurd, who was posted in Beijing from 1954 to '56 and in the UK Permanent Mission to the UN from 1956 till 1960, and served in the British diplomatic service from 1952 to 1966, will also make a first hand review of the investment opportunities being provided by Bangladesh.

Britain is keen to take advantage of the new trade liberalisation regulations and business advantages currently being offered to foreign investors.

Presently, 40 British companies operating in Bangladesh

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The city Awami League brought out a torch procession yesterday evening from Bangabandhu Avenue in support of the hartals today and tomorrow. — Star photo

Bank, shops in Savar looted: 15 arrested

SAVAR, Jan 2: Dacoits looted cash and valuables worth Tk 5 lakh from a bank and seven shops at Shimulia Bazar early today, reports UNB.

Police said a gang of armed dacoits broke into a Agrani Bank branch at the bazar and looted cash Tk 97 thousand, Tk 460 prize bonds, one thousand lottery tickets of Red Crescent Society, a double barrel gun and 21 round of bullets from its strong room.

There was no guard in the bank during the dacoity.

The dacoits also snatched 40 tolas of gold from two shops of goldsmiths, and Tk 3.80 lakh along with goods from five other shops.

Police arrested 15 people for their alleged involvement in the dacoity but failed to recover the looted goods till today.

In another dacoity the same night, Tk 20 thousand and valuables worth Tk 50 thousand were looted from a shop at Savar bus stand.

Mamata Banerjee hurt in attack

CALCUTTA, Jan 2: The West Bengal Youth Congress (I) president, Mamata Banerjee, MP, was today injured when she was attacked by some people in the Garden Reach area and admitted to a city nursing home, police sources here said.

Though the police could not give further details immediately, her party sources told PTI that Mamata, who had gone to the Garden Reach area, was attacked and hit by some people.

Her car was also damaged by the attackers the sources said.

Bangladesh is being described as "The Emerging Tiger" in the brochures of an international investment conference being organised by the leading international financial journal Euromoney, published from London. Hurd's visit is expected to encourage a large number of British and Western investors to attend the conference, to be held in Dhaka from January 23 to 25.

Bangladesh enjoys a trade surplus with Britain. Also, trade between the countries increased considerably in 1993 compared with the previous years. Britain exported goods worth nearly 52 million sterling pounds in 1993, marking a rise of over 30 per cent over the previous year, while Bangladesh sent goods and commodities of over 140 million sterling pounds, in the same year, registering an increase of nearly 47 per cent over the preceding year.

Bangladesh's exports mainly comprise apparel, clothing, textile yarn, fabrics, fruits, vegetable and leather goods while Dhaka imports power generation equipment, industrial machinery and electrical and pharmaceutical products from London.

Bangladeshi goods enjoy the third largest market in Britain, after the US and Germany.

Douglas Hurd will also inaugurate the new premises of the British Council English Language Teaching Centre tomorrow at 3 pm. The British Council is reportedly planning to open three more such centres in the country in the near future.

The visiting British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs will also pay a courtesy call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia tomorrow evening. He will be the guest of honour at a dinner tonight, to be hosted by the government.

Tomorrow, Hurd will address a press conference in the afternoon. He will leave for Calcutta on Thursday morning.

Power transfer in Afghanistan Soon: Mestiri

KABUL, Jan 2: United Nations Special Envoy Mahmud Mestiri concluded his two-day peace mission here today telling journalists he hoped for an imminent transfer of power by Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, reports AFP.

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Grozny

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Chechen fighters were encircled in the building, he said.

Fireights and rocket exchanges raged around the central railway station and the northern industrial district. Fighter jets streaked overhead, but the gritty, gray haze appeared to stave off more airstrikes.

Makeshift troop transports raced through the debris-filled streets, loaded with Chechen fighters shouting 'Allah Akbar! — God is Great.'

Doctors at the city's only working hospital said they were trying to cope with a constant stream of trucks with dead and wounded, mostly Chechens.

Many Russian casualties were being flown to Mozdok, headquarters for the Russian invasion, journalists there said. Mozdok is 130 kilometers northwest.

The International Red Cross in Geneva said it had two convoys of medicine and emergency supplies for Grozny but they were unable to the city because of the heavy fighting.

50 hurt during hartal

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Police detained at least 26 people from the Farmgate, Shabagh and Tejgaon areas.

The Awami League, the Jatiya Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami have jointly called eight-hour hartals in Dhaka on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday this week as part of their agitation to force the government to quit and announce fresh polls.

Parliament members from the three parties tendered their resignations on December 28, 1994 following nearly nine months of a Sangsad boycott.

During the strike hour that started from 6 am yesterday, road communication between Dhaka and the rest of the country was snapped, coinciding with a 24-hour transport strike across the country, separately called by the Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Shramik Federation.

Opposition activists brought out processions to the Gulistan, Paltan, Topkhana Road, Motijheel, Shabagh, Mouchak, Maghbazar, Rampura, Mohakhali, Farmgate, Hatirpool, Sukrabad and Mirpur areas.

They also held rallies in these areas, halting the movement of vehicles.

Attendance in private and government offices was poor while educational institutions, including the Dhaka University, were closed.

Bank and other financial institutions operated behind shutters.

Movement of trains to and from Kamalapur station and motor launches at Sadarghat terminal remained normal.

Officials at Zia International Airport said, all airlines operated normally except one Indian Airlines flight from

Calcutta which was rescheduled at 4pm.

The Awami League's student wing, Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), held a meeting in front of the Jatiya Press Club at noon.

During the meeting, a bomb went off near the Foreign Office which left one person injured.

Besides, several crackers were set off in the Paltan, Farmgate and Agargaon areas.

Dhaka University students clashed with police at 8:45 am after police beat up a Social Welfare Department student Shahidul Islam.

The Jatiya Jubo Sanghati also held a rally in front of the Press Club in the afternoon.

Prize witness

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But police said today the Bengali words used by Hasina in the interview were confusing. They could not pin down whether one or three girls were involved in the attack and whether this attack had led to Amina's death.

We are interviewing this child in very difficult circumstances and we cannot at this stage say what the girl meant," a police spokesman told reporters.

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A Chechen volunteer holds the national flag climbs atop a Russian armoured vehicle captured in Grozny during the battle for the control of the capital of the breakaway republic of Chechnya yesterday. — AFP photo

AL rally in city

From Page 1 Col 8

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Chaired him and snatched his wristwatch at the Farmgate during yesterday's hartal in the city. It's a criminal act committed by the police who were supposed to check such incidents," said an angry Khan who blasted the police for their alleged excesses.

Mirza Azam, another AL MP who resigned on December 28, told the rally there was no possibility of the Opposition MPs returning to the present parliament.

The solution of the present problem lies in the dissolution of Parliament and announcement of general elections under a caretaker administration," he said.

Mofazzal Hossain Choudhury Mayar pledged to continue the current agitation to force the Khaleda Zia government to step down. Protesting police action on the pickets yesterday, Maya warned the government of the consequences of police excesses.

The rally was followed by a torch procession that proceeded up to Sadarghat. The family has contacted Nigeria's federal military government over the death and arrangements are being made to bury Siad Barre in his largely deserted Horn of Africa nation, Dirie Barre said.

New drug entices addicts

By Masud Hasan Khan

Drug dealers have begun to smuggle in a new kind of narcotic known as TD Jessie injection and drug enforcement officials say the new stuff may replace heroin in future.

Officials said they have been seizing thousands of ampoules of TD Jessie injection smuggled from India through different land borders.

The injection, otherwise used for life saving treatment, is already being used by the injectable drug users in different districts including the capital.

Sources at the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) said, they discovered the drug being smuggled and abused last year.

In 1993, 721 ampoules of TD Jessie injection were seized from different places of the country and 12 people were prosecuted.

This year, some 5,000 ampoules of the drug were confiscated by the DNC.

The sources, who declined to be named, said 18 people addicted to the injection were admitted to the state-run Drug Addiction Treatment Centre in Dhaka.

Having the effects similar to that of Pethidine on the human body, the TD Jessie injection is being smuggled mainly through Rajshahi, Jessore and Khulna borders and the addiction is high in the northern districts.

A senior DNC official said the TD Jessie injection could be a substitute to heroin because it was a drug for treatment.

While heroin was not available in the drug stores, there was strong possibility that the use of the injection could increase among the injectable drug users due to its cheaper price.

Scientists apprehend that devastating floods may hit the region. Similarly, earthquakes may also affect the areas adjacent to the Himalayas. We can only face this situation through concerted efforts," she said.

The Prime Minister said, "We may not be able to prevent natural calamities like cyclones, tidal surges or earthquakes, but losses can be minimised through advance preparedness."

Mentioning that advancement of science and technology has ushered in newer promises for mankind, she emphasised the role of the meteorologists in this regard and said, they can play a supportive role in devising realistic regional and global levels.

The Prime Minister expressed her happiness that the SAARC Meteorological Centre is being set up in Dhaka.

Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman, Defence Secretary M Hasinur Rahman, Director of the Bangladesh Meteorological Department and SAARC Met Research Centre Dr M H Khan Chowdhury also spoke at the inaugural ceremony while SAARC Secretary General YK Silwal's message was read out by director of the SAARC Secretariat TI Bakht.

Later, the Prime Minister unveiled the inaugural plaque of the SAARC meteorological research centre at the Met office at Agargaon.

The Midnight File

Anti-tank rocket hits Sarajevo hotel

SARAJEVO, Jan 2: A new four-month truce was generally