

Accord to resolve FFs' Trust office issue thru' talks

By Staff Correspondent

Representatives of the Bangladesh Mukti Joddha Kalyan Trust and the Kendrio 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 Kendrio Sangram Parishad at the Swadhinata Bhaban at Motijheel in the city yesterday evening.

Some 200 disabled freedom fighters and members of 'shahid' 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, convenor of the Kendrio Sangram Parishad, told The Daily Star that their ongoing agitation would continue until the offices of the Trust at the Defence Ministry, 6/1 Ghuznavi Road, Mohammadpur and 257, Tejgaon Industrial Area were not shifted to the Swadhinata Bhaban.

"We have told them that we are ready for further talks with the representatives of the Trust provided none of the six attackers is there in the delegation," said Jewel, who was sacked from his job in the Trust last March.

He held six officials of the Trust, namely Afzal Rahman Jawadul Karim, Arshad Ali Mongal, Abdul Latif, Abdullah Al-Mamun and Anwarul Karim, responsible for attacks on disabled freedom fighters on December 16 and January 1.

Some armed men of the Trust raided the Swadhinata Bhaban in the early hours Sunday and exploded bombs, he alleged. But when asked why they had not lodged any police case, Jewel said the police refused to accept any case.

Meanwhile, the Trust authorities on December 29 constituted a five-member committee to take immediate steps to shift the headquarters of the trust back to the Swadhinata Bhaban, where it was until April last year.

The authorities had shifted the office with a view to renting the premises, thereby hoping to cover some of the losses incurred by different industrial units of the Trust over the past couple of years. But, in the face of strong resistance from the freedom fighters, the authorities have been forced to change their original plans.

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.

Bank, shops in Savar looted: 15 arrested

SAVAR, Jan 2: Dacoits looted cash and valuables worth Tk five 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, 860 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.

Grozny

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Chechen fighters were encountered in the building, he said.

Firelights 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 Mordok, headquarters for the Russian invasion, journalists there said. Mordok 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, Shahbagh 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 Samik Federation.

Opposition activists brought out processions to the Gulistan, Paltan, Topkhana Road, Motijheel, Shahbagh, 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.

Banks 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, Gulistan, Farmgate and Agragan 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.



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

AL rally in city

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Chaired by the senior vice-president of the AL city unit, Reazuddin Ahmed, the rally was also addressed by Abdul Jalil, Obaidul Kader, Siddiqur Rouf Khan, Mukul Bose, Shahjahan Khan, Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Akhterul Alam, Mirza Azam and Advocate Quamrul Islam.

Addressing the rally, Abdul Jalil alleged that the government was trying to mislead the people in many ways and the PM's call for reconsidering the resignations of the MPs was another attempt to mislead the people.

Obaidul Kader termed the PM's speech contradictory. Explaining, he said, she had called on the Opposition MPs to withdraw their resignations on the one hand and threatened them on the other.

"We are ready to court imprisonment. Don't warn us of action," he said.

Shahjahan Khan, who resigned from Parliament last week, alleged that police as-

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 a strong possibility that the use of the injection could increase among the injectable drug users due to its cheaper price.

Business leaders urged to attend FBCCI confce

By Staff Correspondent

President of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) Abdur Rob Chowdhury, in a statement Monday, urged all chamber and association leaders to attend the FBCCI conference to adopt an action plan in the context of present political situation.

"We cannot remain silent spectators for long. Now we shall have to decide our own fate," Chowdhury said, appreciating the move to hold a conference of businessmen on January 10.

Expressing grave concern over the present political crisis and its ultimate effect on the national economy, the DCCI chief said that action programmes of the political parties like hartals and strikes have a wide adverse impact on trade, commerce and industry.

"During such programmes the losses incurred by the business community are enormous," he said and apprehended that prices of essentials would go up during the holy Ramadan if such activities continue.

Bangladeshi UN soldier hurt in Mogadishu

MOGADISHU, Jan 2: Eleven people have been killed and 217 others wounded in three straight days of fierce factional fighting in the Somali capital, hospitals reported today, reports AFP.

A Bangladeshi UN soldier was wounded when he was hit by a stray bullet as fighting raged around the seaport. He was rushed to hospital where his condition was described as 'stable'.

Siad Barre dead

LAGOS, Jan 2: Sonalla's ousted president, Mohammed Siad Barre, exiled in Nigeria since 1992, died in the early hours today, one of his children said.

Siad Barre, believed to be at least 73, had lived in exile since he arrived in Nigeria with several members of his family on May 17, 1992. Dirie Barre, his 31-year-old son, told AFP by telephone.

The former policeman and military ruler was toppled in January 1991 by rebels who advanced on the Somali capital Mogadishu. His 21 years in power were followed by famine and anarchy and warfare which UN intervention has proved powerless to stem.

Siad Barre died a natural death, according to his son, who added: "He has been feeling sick, lately he has been diabetic and he died this morning at 5:15 local hours (0415 GMT)".

The family has contacted Nigeria's federal military government over the death and arrangements are being made to bury Siad Barre in his largely desert Horn of Africa nation, Dirie Barre said.

The Midnight File

Anti-tank rocket hits Sarajevo hotel

SARAJEVO, Jan 2: A new four-month truce was generally holding today, but one anti-tank rocket hit Sarajevo's Holiday Inn hotel, underscoring the fragility of the latest cease-fire in Bosnia. Meanwhile, Bosnian Croat leader Kresimir Zubak signed the new cease-fire in the southern town of Mostar, reports AP.

15 killed in Venezuelan prison riot

SAN CRISTOBAL, (Venezuela), Jan 2: A riot broke out at dawn at a prison in the mountains southeast of Caracas today killing at least 15 people, according to news reports. Officials at the Santa Ana facility some 650 kilometers from the capital said five inmates were killed in the unrest which was sparked by a clash with prisoners transferred from Maracaibo, reports AFP.

SAARC Met Centre

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effect, she said, because of a rise in the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, the temperature of the earth is rising and a consequent rise in the sea-level is being apprehended.

This can have a disastrous impact for sea-side countries like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Maldives, the Prime Minister said.

Begum Zia said losses due to natural disasters are constantly increasing as the global population has doubled since 1960 but during this period losses resulting from natural disasters have increased tenfold.

"Scientists apprehend that devastating floods may hit the region. Similarly, earthquakes may also jolt 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 measures at the national, 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, Deference 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 Siwal'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.

Cold wave claims 13

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Kurigram, Hashem Mian, 60, and a one-year-old baby Habibur of Shalabhan in Panchagarh district.

Besides, a child of Aditmari of Lalmonirhat was found dead inside a railway compartment at Shantahar in Bogra and an unidentified person died at a char area of the Jeesa.

The mercury dropped to 4 degrees below 5 degrees Celsius in Lalmonirhat, Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, Panchagarh, Kurigram, Rangpur, Nilphamari and Gaibandha districts today.

Greater Dinajpur and Rangpur district administrations have sent messages to higher authorities for warm clothes for the poor people of those districts.

The cold wave has paralysed normal life. Very few people could come out of their homes today because of the biting cold," an official in Thakurgaon said.

The Deputy Commissioner of Panchagarh has sent a message to Dhaka for 50 thousands pieces of blankets to save the people. The DC of Dinajpur has also asked for 60 thousand continue.

Youth knifed in city

By DMCH Correspondent

A youngman was stabbed seriously by some unidentified persons in the city's Shahjahanpur area yesterday evening.

The victim identified as Mirza Sumon, 21, is a nephew of former Dhaka City Corporation mayor Mirza Abbas MP. He was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital last night in a critical condition.

The reason behind the attack could not be known immediately. Sumon is a resident of Shahjahanpur area graduated from Shiddeswari Degree College last year.

2 Shibir leaders stabbed

From Our Correspondent

RANGPUR, Jan 2: As a sequel to Shibir-JCD clashes over the past few days here, two Shibir leaders were stabbed this afternoon.

The incident occurred in front of the office of the Superintendent of Police near the crowded local Katchery Bazar.

Victims Afzal Hossain, secretary and Bakul, member of the town Shibir committee were immediately rushed to Rangpur Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

Haji fee

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ment will be done by the Hajj Office at Mirpur in Dhaka.

The pilgrims in this category need not pay any fees to the District Medical Boards for medical check-up and for meningitis and virus hepatitis vaccines.

They will be provided with pilgrim pass, booklets on Hajj, Umrah and Jirat (offerings), wrist-belts and stickers for using on luggage free of cost.

Transport strike

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there from Narayanganj.

This incident led to the suspension of vehicular traffic to and from Narayanganj till the filing of this report at 9 pm.

No inter-district buses left either Sayedabad or Gatabali — the two main city terminals — claimed Sramik Federation sources. A large number of trucks were seen stranded at different city terminals.