

Jute, textile workers' programme Tough steps to tackle agitation likely

With the jute and textile workers preparing for all-out action programme from February 12, the authorities are expected to take 'tough steps' to tackle the situation, reports UNB.

Official sources said an inter-ministerial meeting will be held today at the Home Minister's chamber at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban to discuss the measures to be taken during the four-day country-wide labour agitation.

Ministers for Jute, Textiles, Home Affairs, and Labour and Manpower will attend the meeting to work out strategies to face the workers' programme, the sources added.

Workers of jute and textile mills, both in the public and private sectors, recently announced a 96-hour strike in their mills and 'road and rail barricade' from February 12 to press their demands.

The workers, campaigning in the industrial belts across the country in favour of their demands, will now put barricades on highways and rail tracks from 8 am to 2 pm every day. They revised their 96-hour non-stop programme because of Ranaudan.

The four-day programme was announced as a follow-up of the violent January 22-24 'road and rail barricade' and strike programme that left three people dead.

Trade union sources said they might go for a non-stop programme before Eid if the authorities resort to 'any violent course of action'.

When contacted, Jute Minister A S M Hannan Shah told UNB yesterday that the three-day labour strikes in January had reduced production in the state-run jute sector which made profit during September-December, 1994 after quite a long period.

"But the January strike may push the sector back to loss again... production in January was much less than that of December," he said.

The minister viewed that the objective of the jute and textile workers' programme was to create chaos. "This is the other face of dirty politics," he said alleging that the workers were being used by the opposition political parties.

Hannan Shah said the government is yet to take any decision on its course of action to tackle the workers' agitation programmes. He, however, hinted at tough actions if the normal life of the general public was disrupted by the programmes.

"Workers should limit their programmes in mill areas only...they have no right to make the common man a hostage," he said, accusing the workers of fulfilling designs of the country's competitors in the jute sector.

On the other hand, leaders of the Patkal Sramik Karmachari Sangram Parishad

alleged that the government accord with the World Bank to restructure the jute sector was designed to hand over the Bangladesh export market to a neighbouring country.

Shah Alam, joint convenor of the Parishad, said currently Bangladesh exports six lakh tons of jute and jute goods while under the agreement with the World Bank, the government has been reducing the production capacity to 1.80 lakh tons from 7.50 lakh tons.

But, he cited, India is set to raise its production capacity to 19 lakh tons by 1996 from the present 11 lakh tons of jute and jute goods.

"While the demand for jute and jute goods is increasing in the world market, due to 'green movement', the government in Bangladesh is reducing the production capacity," said Alam. "This is an international conspiracy against our jute industry," he alleged.

The trade union leader said they will continue their agitation until the authorities meet their demands which include implementation of the latest Wages Commission Awards in the private sector jute and textile mills, granting 30 per cent dearness allowance, halting privatisation and scrapping the 'bond of slavery' with the World Bank.

AL resents repression of jute workers

By Staff Correspondent

Acting President of the Awami League (AL) Abdul Mannan and General Secretary Zillur Rahman yesterday expressed deep resentment at the killing and repression of workers at the jute spinning and textile mills.

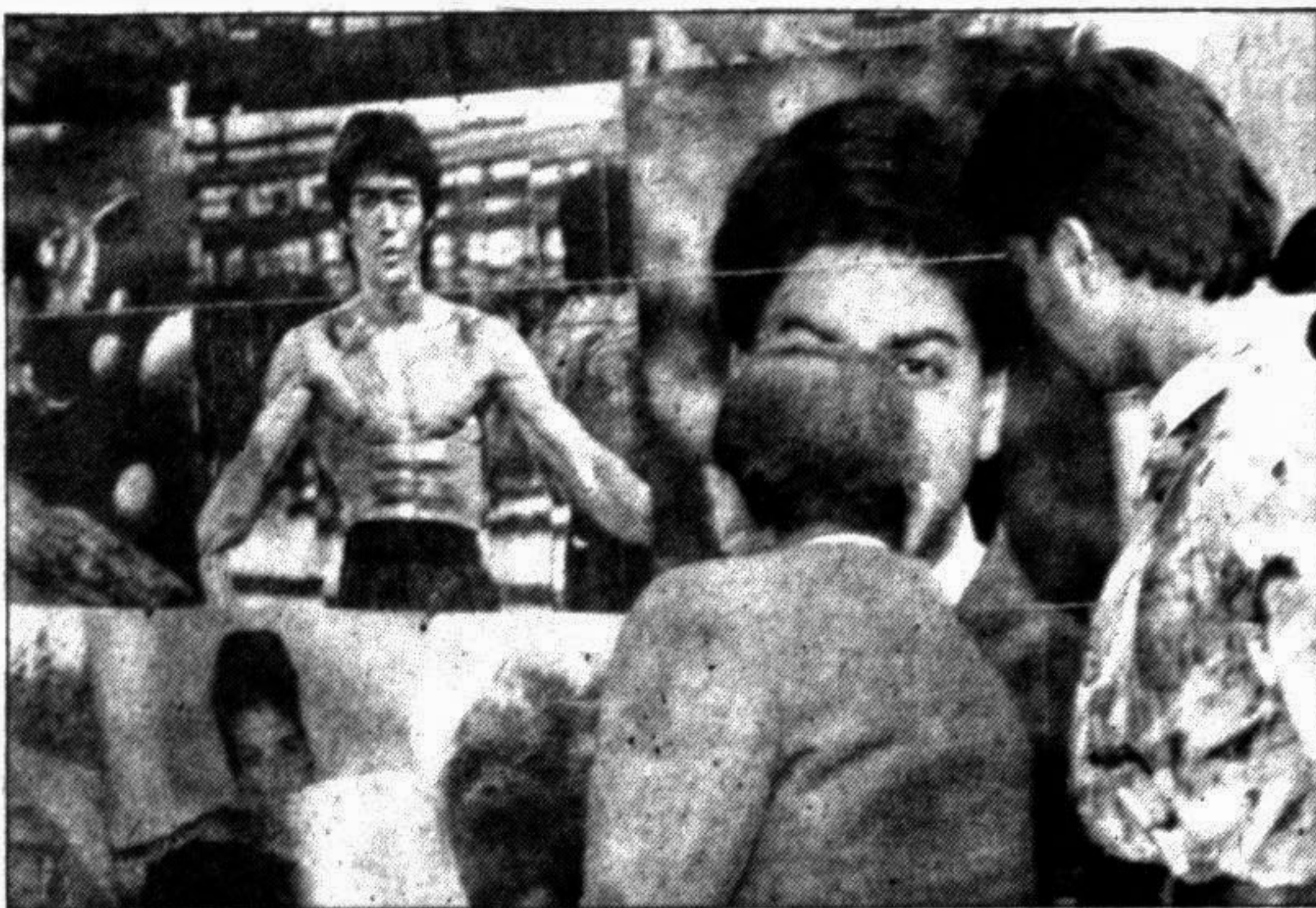
They said "the government had signed agreements with the workers on their various demands but it neither implemented the decisions nor reopened the closed mills."

In a statement the AL leaders alleged that some 5000 mills and industries had been shut down in the last three years and profit-making industries were sold to the private sector at throw-away prices.

"The mills are incurring losses of crores of taka due to the inefficiency and wrong policies of the government," Abdul Mannan and Zillur Rahman said.

They also criticised the government for "bringing false allegations against the workers" and urged the government to accept the demands of the workers.

Meanwhile, the Left Democratic Front yesterday brought out a procession in the city to express solidarity with the demands of the workers of the jute spinning and textiles sector.



Director General of Bangla Academy Harun ur Rashid pulling down banned posters from a stall at the Ekushey Book Fair in the academy premises yesterday. — Star photo

JS body report on women ministry submitted

From Page 1 Col 4

The first report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs was placed before the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday, reports BSS.

Begum Sarwari Rahmap, State Minister for Women and Children Affairs, in her report gave a detailed account of the various matters discussed and decisions adopted by the committee.

According to the report, the committee held 28 meetings during which it was found that 39 thana mahila sangstha committees have already been formed in 28 districts to facilitate overall activities on women affairs. The sangsthas has so far formed committees in all the districts and in 145 thanas.

Karens kill 60 Myanmar troops

From Page 1 Col 4

BANGKOK, Feb 8: At least 60 Myanmar government troops were killed today after two attacks against Karen rebel forces entrenched in their Kawmoora base, according to aid officials on the border with Thailand, reports AFP.

(Earlier story on Page 5)

The first assault was launched early today after extensive artillery bombardments overnight, during which shells rained on some 800 rebels in the base at a rate of about two-a-minute, the officials said.

The second attack came in the afternoon following a similar bombardment, a Karen National Union (KNU) official said in Mae Sot.

DSE's plans alarm

From Page 1 Col 4

foreign investors, as happened in Mexico.

Although the "Mexico crash" has had very little impact on the Dhaka bourse, Khan said, the regulations were necessary because nobody can say such things won't be repeated here.

DSE Chairman Khurshid Alam said the move was taken at a time when the country requires large-scale foreign investments to keep up the vibrancy of the emerging market.

"If the plan is implemented without knowing the market position and discussion with the concerned players, it would be very harmful for the bourse," he said.

The DSE Chairman also said, the foreign investors contributed greatly to developing the market.

If they are driven away by such restrictive measures, it would be disastrous for the market at this emerging stage, he said, adding that he received several phone calls from the foreign investors after publication of the news in Wednesday's newspapers.

The foreign investors expressed their concern over the restrictions and became apprehensive about the consistency of the government's policies, Khurshid Alam said.

He also suggested that a well-thought-out government policy regarding the stock market be formulated soon to protect the bourse from such uneven interferences.

Former DSE Chairman Hameed Uddin Ahmed said the situation arising out of the disclosure of the move to restrict portfolio investment was extremely bad as the foreign investors have already expressed

suspicion about the consistency of the government policies.

Some foreign players of the market phoned him and informed him of their concern about the regulations, said the former DSE chief, who is also one of the major dealers of foreign investments.

The foreign fund managers are keenly watching the situation in the Bangladesh capital market and any step that may drive them away should not be taken at this nascent stage of the market, he said.

Discussion on Bibhutibhusan

By Staff Correspondent

On the eighth day of the book fair at the Bangla Academy yesterday, a discussion was held on writer Bibhutibhusan Bandhopadhyaya.

The speakers at the discussion meeting with Prof Sanjida Khatun in the chair highlighted the efforts of Bibhutibhusan to uphold the cultural heritage of the country against the alien western influences.

Biswajit Ghosh presented an essay on the classic writer, Dr Safiuddin Ahmed and Dr Mahub Sadik also spoke on the occasion.

The discussants said, Bibhutibhusan collected his themes and characters of his writings from society as they were during 1830 to 1943.

This evening, a discussion will be held on Kazi Abdul Wadud. Prof Abul Kashem Fazlul Haq will present the main essay on the occasion. It will be participated by Prof Khondker Sirajul Haq and Rafikullah Khan. Prof Sirajul Islam Chowdhury will preside.

Patal slates Hasina for meeting Babu

By Staff Correspondent

State Minister for Social Welfare Fazlur Rahman Patal yesterday accused Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina of giving shelter to absconding party MP Akteruzzaman Chowdhury Babu.

"She gave sanctuary to the alleged killers of Humayun Zahir and Dr Milon," Patal told the Jatiya Sangsad adding, "The enemies of the Liberation War and democracy have now joined hands with her."

Quoting from reports published in some dailies of Dhaka on Monday, the state minister said, Babu, the main accused in the Humayun Zahir murder case, had confessed that he stayed for a week at the residence of the AL chief before his departure for the US. He took the floor after the question-answer session when Deputy Speaker Humayun Khan Panni was in the chair.

The state minister also alleged that the AL chief held an exclusive meeting with the alleged murderer at a hotel in Washington. Sheikh Hasina is currently on a visit to the US where she took part in the Breakfast Prayer.

Writs in High Court

From Page 1 Col 4

As regards the Speaker's role in the matter, Moudud said the Speaker had violated the Constitution by delaying his decision over the resignation letters.

The Constitution does not give any scope to the Speaker for scrutiny, checking or rechecking of the resignation letters or signatures of the MPs, he added.

Barrister Moudud also submitted that the petitioner was not an aggrieved person in the resignation issue; only a member of Parliament could be an aggrieved person to challenge the issue.

Barrister KS Nabi, lawyer for Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina, also concluded his submission on Tuesday. Barrister Abdur Razzak, counsel for Jamaat leader Moulana Matur Rahman Nizami, will begin his submissions today.

Meanwhile, former judge of the High Court Maksudul Hakim told UNB that he would appear on behalf of the government, a respondent in the case. Earlier, Additional Attorney General Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan filed the affidavit in opposition on behalf of the government.

ODA policy

From Page 1 Col 5

Canada has also set out three main objectives to guide its foreign policy for promoting prosperity and employment. These objectives match Ottawa's overall priority to advance sustainable economic growth and focus on jobs, security and values, the High Commission statement pointed out.

The guidelines have been set out according to the recommendations of the Canadian joint parliamentary committee which reviewed the country's foreign policy.

Canada maintains its largest bilateral aid programme in Bangladesh and since 1972 had disbursed over two billion dollars in grant assistance.

Currently Canada is funding several projects involving 75 million dollars in the rural electrification sector. In bilateral trade, Bangladesh enjoys a surplus with Canada with exports in 1993 of 57.69 million dollars and imports of 24.83 million dollars.

ID cards

From Page 1 Col 8

puter and issuance of laminated ID cards with stamp-size photograph of the voters.

Following the decision of Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Mirza Golan Hafiz not to table a bill for withholding the provision of ID cards, the EC is under legal compulsion to issue ID cards before the general elections.

If the government orders, the EC has to issue ID cards and go for electoral database management system, though completion of the system might not be possible hurriedly, said an EC official requesting anonymity.

About the problems of introduction of the database system, the official said absence of proper statistics regarding the population was a major obstacle.

"We do not know how many voters are aged or disabled in a particular area so that we can take alternative measures to enable them to exercise their rights," he said. What is needed is a complete registration of the population, he added.

The EC will open a contact office at every thana headquarters where government officials will be put on deputation to complete data collection. Besides local elite, political activists and social workers will be engaged in the process.

The Midnight File

Delhi to extend federal rule in Kashmir

NEW DELHI, Feb 8: The government Wednesday decided to extend the federal rule in strife-torn Jammu-Kashmir state until July in view of continuing insurgency there. A resolution, approved by Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao's cabinet, will be put to vote in Parliament next week. A parliamentary approval is required every six months, reports AP.

Israel, PLO fail to devise formula for Palestinian polls

CAIRO, Feb 8: In two days of talks that ended Wednesday, Israel and the PLO failed to devise a formula for Palestinian elections, a key step in broadening Palestinian self-rule. The talks ended a day before a summit between Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO leader Yasser Arafat. Saeb Erakat, the chief PLO delegate, said he had nothing to give Arafat before the meeting, which will take place at a border crossing in Gaza, reports AP.

Crooks abusing JMBA

From Page 1 Col 4

district administration's alleged erroneous listing of affected persons and compensating them for structures set up with ulterior motive. Moreover, some dishonest district administration officials have reportedly connived to inflate the value of such structures.

This correspondent, while visiting the site on both banks of the Jamuna recently, found unplanned and indiscriminate erection of houses on charlands (shoals) adjoining the areas the JMB authorities have taken over.

These homesteads have apparently been set up only to exact compensation in case new areas are taken over for the JMB project.

Thousands of tin-shed houses have been constructed at Char Pathaikandi and Nalchhya Char of Bhuaipur thana under Tangail district during the last three months. These houses, including some incomplete ones, have been set up in such manner that those are hardly habitable. The newly-built structures have left no space open.

Barring a few where simple living arrangements have been made for people guarding the structures, all such houses were found empty — lacking residents and household items. Some even didn't have doors or windows and, in many cases, no fencing at all.

While going through the areas, this correspondent could hardly find anybody to talk to. The so-called villages established on farming lands, usually submerged in the rainy season, turn into ghost areas with the setting of the sun.

After a desperate search, this correspondent met two youths gossiping at a tea-stall close to several thousand such 'houses' at Char Pathaikandi.

Saiful Islam, a student of Bhuaipur Ibrahim Khan University College, admitted that most of the houses there were erected for commercial purpose. There were people who own 25 to 30 houses, he said, adding that they include owners and those who have rented the lands.

Explaining, his friend Emdadul Haq, said: "Suppose you have money to invest in the business and I have a piece of land which is likely to be acquired. Then we agree on a fifty-fifty share of the compensation to be realised for the house/houses to be set up at your cost." Besides, he continued, "You may also hire my land for a period of upto the acquisition of the land."

A 70-year-old man, Fayez Mia, has taken shelter in a house he has built on a rented land in the area. He received Taka 93,000 as compensation for his one bigha of land acquired by the JMB authorities. He did not buy fresh land, rather rented a piece of land to live on, he said. Asked if his decision to live on the rented land was for getting fresh compensation, he replied in the negative. Visibly embarrassed, Fayez left the place quickly on the plea of offering his prayers.

In the same area, a tin shed structure of Sharifabad Primary

Ctg accidents

From Page 1 Col 7

immediately. Our Staff Correspondent from Sylhet reports: A pedestrian was killed in an accident on Sylhet Osmani Airport Road this afternoon.

Delhi, Kathmandu

From Page 1 Col 5
Congress Party of being far too close to India.

"In the elections also, we have been sober and balanced in putting forth our position," Nepal said, describing the treaty signed in 1950 as obsolete.

He said the collapse of the Cold War, the rise of non-aligned countries and a regional South Asian group had changed the security scenario.

Programmes to observe Makhan's death anniversary

The 'Jatiya Bir Abdul Kuddus Makhan Smriti Parishad' has taken a two-day programme to observe the first death anniversary of the national hero beginning today, reports BSS.

According to a press release yesterday, a discussion on the life and political career of Abdul Kuddus Makhan, a great freedom fighter and one of the four prominent student leaders of the Liberation War, will be held at the Engineers Institute auditorium at 3 pm today.

Begum Sufia Kamal will be the chief guest while Awami League general secretary Zillur Rahman, Presidium members Amir Hossain Amu and Abdur Razzak, Juba League President Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim and Mrs Hasmat Jahan Makhan will take part in the discussion. Dr Mazharul Islam will preside.

A special milad mahfil will be held at 5:30 pm to seek blessings of the Almighty Allah for the peace of the departed soul of the great son of the soil.

The Smriti Parishad will place wreaths at the mazar of late Abdul Kuddus Makhan at the Mirpur national graveyard for the freedom fighters at 10 am tomorrow. A special milad mahfil will also be held at Mirpur Mazar mosque after the Asr prayers.

Holding tax won't be raised in 5 years : DCC

By Staff Correspondent

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has reiterated its decision not to increase the holding tax during the next five years.

The amount of tax for some of the new and expanded holdings is being re-evaluated under the relevant laws and the revenue department has been directed to charge the tax under the existing rate, a DCC press release said yesterday.

Sunset rule

From Page 1 Col 4

the Rokeya the Shamsun Nahar and the Bangladesh Kuwait-Moitree Halls, of the university.

The protesting students are also demanding removal of the rule requiring prior permission from the hall provost for staying outside beyond the scheduled time.

Earlier in the morning, the female students brought out a procession in the Arts Faculty premises and held a protest rally in front of the DUCSU building.

DC 10-30

From Page 1 Col 7

said certain anomalies in contract with Alitalia prompted Biman to go for alternative arrangements. A three-member probe body held Alitalia responsible for poor maintenance which also caused Biman a loss of Tk 18 crore 30 lakh over the three years period.

Alitalia maintained Biman's aircraft at a rate of 1100 US dollars per flight hour during its contract period but they reduced the rate to 900 US dollars per flight hour in their fresh offer now pending with the government purchase committee.

Non-iodised salt floods market

From Page 1 Col 7

When contacted over telephone, Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Minister for Health and Family Planning told The Daily Star that there would be an inter-ministerial meeting soon to decide steps to ensure supply of only iodised salt in the market and bring to an end sale of non-iodised salt.

He justified the need for an early inter-ministerial level meeting on the issue saying that the involvement of Commerce Ministry, Finance Ministry and also others were necessary for the solution of the problem of salt iodization.

The minister admitted that non-iodized salt was still on sale in the market but hastily added "though the law has already come into force, we are in favour of making iodization of salt compulsory gradually."

Asked whether iodization plants had already been installed at all the 265 salt mills with the assistance provided by UNICEF, the minister said the process was nearing completion. He added that UNICEF has informed the government of its desire to bear the costs of iodisation of salt in the country for the time being.

When his attention was drawn to the price-hike of iodised salt in markets, the

minister said it was a temporary phenomenon and with adequate supply of iodised salt in the markets the price would automatically come down.

Deputy Minister for Health and Family Planning Dr Sirajul Haq said iodization of salt costs only 0.15 Taka per kg. But the price of iodized salt is higher by Taka two than that of non-iodised salt.

He emphasised creating awareness among the members of the public so that they resisted such price hike.

The cost of salt iodization is approximately five US cents per person per annum, according to an estimate of UNICEF.

Salt mills owners said the government should supply them some 70,000 metric tons of crushed salt imported by the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) last year. For the sake of early attainment of the mid-decade target of universal salt iodization, the mills owners said, the government should also allow them to import two lakh metric tonnes of uncrushed salt. The country has a salt deficit of three lakh tonnes while its total annual requirement is seven lakh tonnes.

Talking to this correspondent yesterday some traders at the Mohammedpur Town Hall

market said that supply of iodized salt was still not adequate to drive non-iodized salt out of market. As a result, they said, prices of both the types of salt marked rise by Taka one to two during the last two months, iodized salt is now selling at Taka 11 to 12 per kg and non-iodized salt at Taka 10.

A total of 1.6 billion people or 30 per cent of the world's population are at risk and 655 million are suffering from goitre — swelling of the thyroid gland at the throat — which is the most obvious sign of iodine deficiency disorders (IDD), according to a joint publication of WHO, UNICEF and International Council for the Control of IDD.

Besides, 5.7 million more are suffering from cretinism and another 26 million from brain damage, it added.

According to a UNICEF report published on December 15, 1995, Bangladesh has one of the world's highest rates of IDD. It said seven out of every 10 Bangladeshi were affected by some degree of iodine deficiency.

The Health Minister also said that 10 per cent of the country's population were suffering from iodine deficiency disorders.

পত্রিকা এজেন্টদের প্রতি নোটিশ

দি ডেইলী স্টার পত্রিকার যে সমস্ত এজেন্টগণ ডিসেম্বর '৯৪ মাসের বিল এবং এর পূর্বের বকেয়া টাকা পরিশোধ করেন নাই, তাদেরকে সম্পূর্ণ বকেয়া টাকা ২৫শে ফেব্রুয়ারি, ১৯৯৫-এর মধ্যে পরিশোধ করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হচ্ছে। অন্যথায় বর্ধ এজেন্টদের এজেন্সিতে পত্রিকা সরবরাহ বন্ধ এবং বকেয়া টাকা আদায়ের জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হবে।

কর্তৃপক্ষ
দি ডেইলী স্টার
ফোন ৪৫০০৯১ (সরাসরি)
ফোন ৪৫০০৯২-৯৪ (পিএবিএক্স)