

188 youth bodies get Tk 20 lakh from PM's welfare fund

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday doled out Tk 20 lakh to 188 youth organisations aiming to involve unemployed youths in self-employment activities, reports UNB.

The hands of every worker should be engaged in productive activities to face the formidable challenge of the Twenty First century she said giving away the money from the Welfare Trust Fund of the Youth and Sports Ministry at a simple ceremony at the International Conference Centre.

The great challenge of the 21st century is confronting us. The youth community can play the key role in facing the challenge," the Prime Minister said. She hoped the youths would play the role as guide in the nation building activities.

She said the budgetary allocation for the youth sector was Tk 6.93 crore in the 1989-90 fiscal while it surged up to Tk 205 crore in the current financial year. The current allocation is 30 times as high as that of 1989-90 fiscal.

Not only the budgetary allocation, Begum Zia said, all the undertaken youth development programmes of her

government had already achieved tremendous success.

So far, 3.15 lakh youths and women have been provided training. Of them, she told the function, 60 per cent have already undertaken self-employment activities.

She said the Welfare Trust Fund of the Ministry of Youth and Sports was providing grants to those youths who are preparing development-oriented projects to alleviate poverty and trying for self-reliance, making arrangement for self-employment for the youths.

The Prime Minister said last year 67 organisations were given Tk 10 lakh as grants, and the amount was doubled this year. Gradually, the youth organisations are getting government grants.

"We know that this grant is not sufficient to meet the requirements. Yet I hope that this little amount will help the youths on their way to self-reliance."

Congratulating the recipients of the money, Begum Zia hoped that the organisations would contribute to the national uplift endeavours through proper utilisation of public wealth.

Thousands move to high land to escape US flood

NEW YORK, Jan 21: Thousands of people were moved to high ground for much of Saturday in Pennsylvania and hundreds more were urged to get out of communities on the Delaware and Ohio rivers to escape devastating flooding, reports AP.

"We are bracing for a very dangerous weekend," said John Conner, spokesman for the Pennsylvania Emergency

Management Agency. At least 30 deaths were blamed on the combination of cold, blizzard conditions and flooding since midweek from the plains to the East Coast. Four people were missing.

Hundreds of roads and bridges were closed by high water, along with some water and sewage plants. Barges and pleasure boats broke from their moorings and drifted on the Ohio River and its upper tributaries.

Plan to expand

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ject to apprise its effectiveness.

After appraisal, these activities may be duplicated elsewhere.

Under this project, low income people are provided with medicine, blood and treatment free of cost.

On the other hand, the Ministry's Rural Social Welfare Service (RSS) programme providing credit to eight lakh members of 51,000 groups in the country will also be expanded in view of its 96 per cent loan recovery rate, said the source.

"Some of the programmes under the Ministry need expansion and evaluation," said Shah Abdul Hannan, Additional Secretary in charge of the Ministry. "We are giving great importance to consolidating these programmes and making them more effective for poverty alleviation."

Hannan added that the expansion of the welfare programmes will be made with minimum increase in administrative cost.

Justice Sarker

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He was buried at the Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard in Mirpur.

Justice Sarker was born at Haldibari in Cooch Behar, West Bengal, on January 2, 1932.

He took active part in the Historic Language Movement in 1952 and was decorated with a medal by late President Ziaur Rahman on February 24, 1981.

Justice Sarker was elevated as a judge to the high court division on December 30, 1983 and the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court on June 8, 1995.

He left behind his wife, four sons and one daughter.

Condolences

BSS adds: President Abdur Rahman Biswas yesterday expressed his profound grief and sorrow at the sudden death of Justice Ismailuddin Sarker, a justice of the Appellate Division of the Bangladesh Supreme Court.

On hearing his death news, President Biswas went to his residence to pay respect to the late justice and offered munajat for the salvation of the departed soul. He talked to the members of the bereaved family and consoled them to bear the loss with fortitude.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has expressed her profound grief at the death of Justice Ismailuddin Sarker.

In a condolence message yesterday, the Prime Minister said Justice Sarker was an eminent jurist and he made significant contribution to uphold the rule of law in the country. His death is a big loss to the country's judiciary, she observed.

Speaker Shaikh Razzakia Ali also expressed his deep shock and sorrow at the death of Justice Mohammad Ismailuddin Sarker.

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Awami League President Sheikh Hasina addressing a public meeting at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday. — Star photo

JP warns govt of agitation from Jan 31

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The Jatiya Party yesterday called upon the government to resign before January 31, otherwise it warned that it would go for an all-out agitation to bring down the government, reports UNB.

Addressing a press conference, JP acting Chairman Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury announced a 9-day mass contact programme to motivate the candidates to withdraw nominations and election officials not to conduct the 'one-party farcical election'.

Mizan also urged the government to resign in response to the people's demand, otherwise, he warned, fresh anti-government agitation programme would be launched from January 31.

He said that the new programme, beginning today will be the second phase of movement and the third and final phase will be launched on January 31.

Moudud Ahmed blamed the government for the on-going crisis and said it was unfortunate that the party which came to power through ballot became undemocratic. He said the present crisis was the result of its obstinacy.

Begum Roushan Ershad, who also spoke press conference, said the political crisis being faced by the country for last two years was aggravated by the decision of the BNP government to hold unilateral election — ignoring Opposition's demand.

She called upon the people to get united and make the Opposition programme aimed at protecting democracy successful.

Stop polls process

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she said pointing to the 'Lalbagh killings' after DCC mayoral election.

She said the lust for power and obstinacy of an individual was depriving all political parties of joining the forthcoming polls.

"On the pretext of Constitution, BNP is trying to revert to '88, trying to snatch the voting right of the people," she said, adding "the lust for power of the Prime Minister is backpedalling the country, towards conflict and confrontation."

Hasina said running a one-party parliament, holding a unilateral election and infringing people's franchise are flagrant violation of the Constitution.

"People rejected the election of 1988, and they will again reject it in 1996," she said, adding "the Opposition leader, saying that she tried her best for a solution of the present political crisis, but the government obstructed it time and again."

She said the people were suffering from anxiety, from uncertainty. They will not go to the polling centres in the month of holy Ramadan.

Sanctity of the holy Ramadan will be disturbed if election is held in this month, Hasina said, adding election cannot be held in this month.

About the arms-recovery drive, the Awami League chief said another 'farce' has been started. In the name of arms recovery, opposition leaders were being subject to harassment.

Charging the Home Minister with distributing illegal arms among the government party terrorists, she suggested the members of armed forces to take that list

from the Home Minister, to make the drive effective.

She also suggested that arms drive be launched in the real depots of illegal arms, including the residential halls of the Dhaka University and other educational institutions. "None can carry illegal arms without the protection of the government," she observed.

"The movement for restoring people's voting rights will be continued until the resignation of the government, until the demand for neutral caretaker government can be realised," Hasina declared calling upon the people to continue the ongoing movement.

The rally was also addressed by Awami League leaders Abdus Samad Azad, Abdul Mannan, Zillur Rahman, Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, Prof. Qamruzzaman, Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzak, Tofael Ahmed, Abdul Jalil, Suranjit Sengupta, Mozaffar Hossain Paltu and Matia Chowdhury.

Later, the Awami League activists brought out a militant procession in the city.

Jyoti demands Rao's resignation

NEW DELHI, Jan 21: India's most prominent communist leader today sought the resignation of Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao and early parliamentary elections in the wake of a sweeping bribery scandal, reports AFP.

Jyoti Basu told a massive communist rally in the eastern city of Calcutta that Rao's government "had lost the moral right to continue in power" following the disclosures in the multi-million-dollar scandal.

Lawyers demand removal of N'ganj thana OC

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Jan 21: Lawyers of the town demanded removal of two police officials including the OC of Narayanganj thana while they continued boycott of the Magistrate's Court here for the second day today.

The police officials are the Officer-in-Charge (OC) Nurul Alam and Sub-Inspector Selim.

The lawyers took the decision at a meeting at the auditorium of the district Bar Association this morning with senior vice president of the association Advocate Akhter Hossain in the chair.

They began boycott of First Class Magistrate's court here after police assaulted a lawyer in the courtroom and baton charged some others in the room of the OC of Narayanganj thana on Saturday.

10 BCL leaders sued for burning PM's effigy

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Jan 21: ASI Sirajul Islam of Kotwali thana has filed a case against ten leaders of Chhatra League (BCL) on charge of burning effigy of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at the Picture Palace Square Saturday evening.

The BCL activists had burnt the effigy demanded resignation of the PM.

The accused are Saiful Islam, city president of the party, Ali Akbar Tudu, Dipak, Jahangir, Jamaluddin Rumi, Labu, Ripon, Azad, Subrata and Shefarul Islam.

Resist one-party polls: Jamaat

Jamaat leader Abbas Ali Khan yesterday called upon the people to unseat the BNP government through agitation and resist the 'one-party election', reports UNB.

Addressing a rally at the northern gate of Baitul Mokarram Mosque, he alleged that the ruling party, ignoring the demand of the people, had conspired to hold a 'farcical' election to serve the interest of their masters abroad.

He announced an eight-day countryside programme to force the government to step down.

Presided over by City Jamaat Ameer A T M Azharul Islam, the rally was addressed by party's Secretary General Maulana Matu Rahman Nazim, Assistant Secretaries General Muhammad Quamruzzaman and Ali Ahshan Muhammad Mujahed and Publicity Secretary Abdul Kader Mollah.

Khan hoped that there would be a free and fair polls under a caretaker government in the country after the fall of the BNP government.

Polls symbols

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ties boycotting the elections requested the EC not to give away the symbols they had been using in past elections.

The symbols reserved for different political parties are: 1. Peoples' Democratic Movement-Aeroplane, 2. Freedom Party (Faruque) Axe, 3. Bangladesh Jatiya Sheba Dal-Bicycle, 4. Jano Dal-Date tree, 5. Krishak Jukto Front-Bullock, 6. 7-Party Alliance-Bus, 7. Bangladesh Jatiya Islami Janata Party-Camel, 8. Social Democratic Party-Candle, 9. Bangladesh Krishak Samik Mukti Andolan-Cock, 10. Jatiyabadi Ganotantrik Dal-Fish, 11. Jatiya Mukti Dal-Football, 12. Bangladesh National Congress-Horse, 13. National Awami Party (NAP) Bhasani-Pen and Inkpot, 14. Jatiya Janata Party (Sheikh Asad)-Ladder, 15. Farakkha Agrasion O Proitroth Council-Lamp, 16. Bangladesh Muslim League (Zamir Ali)-Harrican, 17. Islami Shashontantoro Andolon-Minar, 18. Progotishil Jatiyatabadi Dal-Moon, 19. Jatiya Nagorik Sanghati-Rose, 20. Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Dal-Shief of Paddy, 21. Progotishil Ganotantrik Shakti-Spade, 22. National Democratic Alliance-Star, 23. Sammiti Islami Sangram Parishad-Sword, 24. People's Solidarity Centre-Flower, 25. Bangladesh Jatiya People's Party-Kula, 26. Bangladesh Gano Adhikar Front-Umbrella, 27. Moulana Bhasani Adarsha Bastobayon Parishad-Duck, 28. Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Awami League (Moshleuddin)-Deer, 29. Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Awami League (Mostapha)-Rising Sun, 30. Jatiya Pali Dal and 17-Party Democratic Morcha-Chair, 31. 17-Party Ganotantrik Morcha (Abu Alam)-Wheel, 32. Bangladesh Bekar Shamaj-Hand Fan, 33. Bhasani Panthi Alliance-Rickshaw, 34. Bangladesh Gano Mukti Dal-Key, 35. United People's Party-Garland, 36. United Democratic Front-Wall Clock, 37. Bangladesh Islamic Party-Pitcher, 38. Bangladesh Mehenoti Party-Mathal, 39. Democratic Republican Party-Peacock, 40. Muslim People's Party-Helicopter and 41. National Democratic Party-Tiger.

The former Foreign Minister, continuing his speech, observed that the problems had taken different shapes in different times as the measures avoiding basic aspects of the situation, taken so far, did not yield positive outcome.

"Now the problem poses a threat to the national security," he warned.

DP Barua viewed that problems, prevailing in the CHT, are related with the question of national sovereignty and independence.

He underscored the need for a peaceful solution of the 'ethnic problem' through integration and negotiation. "Separatist movement will never bring any solution."

Barua categorically stated that the people and the government of the country could neither tolerate nor allow separation of a land which is part and parcel of Bangladesh.



Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and US lawyer Mildred Troniloff sip drinks Saturday during celebrations at his residence following their wedding. Aristide, 42, and Troniloff, 30, married in a quiet religious ceremony. — AFP/UNB photo

CHT crisis poses threat to nat'l security, seminar told

Solution to the Chittagong Hill Tracts problem lies in return of the tribals from Tripura and cessation of terrorism carried out into Bangladesh territory from their camps, said former Foreign Minister Prof. M Shamsul Haque, reports UNB.

"Active cooperation from India is essential to resolve the problem," the National Professor told a seminar at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday with a note of caution that the problem now poses a threat to the national security.

Speaking as chief guest at the seminar on 'Peace Process in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)', the former Foreign Minister said India as a neighbouring country of Bangladesh and a SAARC nation could extend positive cooperation in resolving the issue — a problem rooted deep in history — which is becoming more complicated and sensitive gradually.

"The solution of the crisis

mainly depends on total cooperation from India," Shamsul Haque said.

Organised by the Chittagong Hill Tracts and National Coordination and Peace Council, the seminar was also addressed by Barrister Mainul Hossain, BSS Chief Editor DP Barua and Dr Nazmul Ahsan Kalimullah. It was presided over by Saiful Islam Deedar.

Scholar of Georgetown University KM Haque Kaiser presented the key-note speech at the seminar making an appeal to the people for initiating a united move to foil the separatist movement in the CHT.

He observed that certain evil forces were active in and outside the country to frustrate the ongoing peace process in the trouble-torn hills.

He blamed the outlawed Shantibahini, Pahari Chhatra Parishad, Gana Parishad and Hill Women Federation for perpetrating torture on innocent people.

The Midnight File

Afghan govt orders unilateral truce

ISLAMABAD, Jan 21: The embattled Afghan government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani today ordered a unilateral ceasefire in fighting against its opponents to mark the start of Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, the official Kabul Radio said, reports Reuters.

Muratovic new Bosnian PM

SARAJEVO, Jan 21: Hasan Muratovic, Minister for Relations with the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR), will be the new Bosnian Prime Minister, the state news agency BH Press said today. The announcement was made after incumbent Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic said he would not retain the post in the next government because of a new law that weakens its authority, reports AFP.

BNP expects majority in polls: Shamsul

Commerce and Information Minister M Shamsul Islam yesterday categorically said the parliamentary polls would be held on February 15 as scheduled by the Election Commission, reports UNB.

"Election is going to be held as scheduled and as per Constitution. It will be fair and transparent," Islam told a group of journalists representing foreign media at 'Padma' guest house yesterday afternoon.

The minister, who looked relaxed and smiling, parried a host of questions, curtly saying: "No comment".... "I don't know."

About the credibility of the election without the Opposition, Islam said the question of credibility does not depend on the participation of political parties but on voters.

"It will be credible, if people exercise their voting rights.... It is the duty of political parties to allow voters to cast their votes and help flourish democracy."

Islam, who negotiated from the BNP with the Opposition on the issue of interim caretaker government, said the government side had given enough concession to the Opposition to have a compromise on a caretaker government.

He mentioned the Prime Minister's offer for resignation 30 days ahead of election and formation of advisory council headed by the President, the formula he said was floated by Awami League

chief Sheikh Hasina herself on January 10 last year.

To a question, he said the advisory council under the President with all executive powers in his hand would not be unconstitutional. It could be done by ordinary legislation.

"I think it's not the duty of the government to bring the Opposition to polls," Islam said. Besides, the Election Commission also postponed the election schedule thrice to help reach consensus and allow the Opposition to join the election, he noted.

He was asked if the government will request the Election Commission to postpone the election and resolve the crisis through fresh dialogue with the Opposition. "Why we will request the Election Commission? Election is being held as per the constitution," replied the minister.

In reply to a possible breakdown of law and order in the wake of the Opposition threat of anti-election agitation, he said the Election Commission would take adequate measures to ensure peace during the voting.

About an acceptable percentage of voter turnout, the minister evaded direct reply, saying foreign observers will be allowed to visit polling stations to see transparency and turnout of voters.

Asked if there will be a second general election this year, he said: "Let's have the first election first...."

In reply to another query, he said the government party was expecting "majority" seats in the election. He did not say which party will be the main rival of the BNP in the election.

He expressed ignorance when a correspondent asked whether the government was providing financial help to non-BNP candidates to contest the elections.

"I don't know," the minister said when the correspondent said that some non-BNP candidates were seen coming out of the house of the Home Minister.

About the Opposition's demand for calling the army back to barracks, Islam said the Election Commission had deployed the army to recover illegal firearms.

Islam said the Prime Minister would soon launch the election campaign.

Asked whether the BNP government will give transit facilities to India after the election, the minister was surprised. "It's a news to me. I don't know. It is better to ask the Foreign Minister."

50 parties

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late Division of the Supreme Court who died the day before.

The representatives of the parties gathered in front of the EC Secretariat in the afternoon and waited outside the locked collapsible gates. As time passed and none turned up from the EC to give the candidates their symbols, the angry representatives were seen exchanging words with the gatekeepers.

At one stage, they threatened to march towards the Jatiya Press Club and hold a press conference there protesting the "irresponsible behaviour of the EC".

"The meeting was scheduled to start at 10 am. It began after 11. We have been waiting in the open for more than one hour without any attention given to us. The EC is not cooperating with us. It is alleged Shafayat Ullah Patwari."

However, about an hour later, they were told that they would be given their symbols soon by the EC. One by one, the party names were called up and their representatives went into the room where CEC, the Election Commissioner and other officials of the EC verbally informed them of their respective symbols. In each case, it took merely minutes to finish the process.

No representative of the ruling BNP was there in the afternoon.

Suha Arafat

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women." Mrs Arafat told Israel television at the Ramallah, West Bank, polling station where she voted.

Arafat, head of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, faced a lone challenge for the job of executive head from Samiha Khalil, a veteran activist and grandmother of 13.

Asked whom she voted for, Suha Arafat dissolved in laughter, admitting she had picked her husband

BCL goes on rampage at DU

By DU Correspondent

Some activists of the Awami League-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) allegedly damaged two private cars and a micro bus in the TSC area of the Dhaka University yesterday evening.

The BCL activists went on rampage to protest the police attack on an Awami League procession in the city yesterday.

Police lobbed some tear gas shells to bring the situation under control.

Launch salvaged: 2 more bodies recovered

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Jan 21: The ill-fated passenger launch ML Al Madina, which sank in the Meghna river near Bangorchar of Bhola district on Tuesday night was salvaged this afternoon by the BIWTA salvage unit Hamza.

Hamza reached the spot early hours of today but could not start salvage work immediately due to thick fog.

Meanwhile, two more unidentified bodies were recovered today from the Meghna river near Daulatkhana from where 9 bodies were recovered earlier.

Arafat

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cent in the West Bank. The militant Islamic group Hamas, boycotting the vote, had warned that it would claim victory if less than 50 per cent voted.

Although observers charged Israeli police scared voters away from east Jerusalem polls and there were some irregularities, the day passed without the feared violent disruptions by Israeli extremists and Islamic militants opposed to peace.

More than 1 million Palestinians were registered to vote in the elections for a president and 88-seat legislative council.

Israel's Army Radio said Prime Minister Shimon Peres called Arafat to congratulate him on the victory.

DUTA concerned

By DU Correspondent

The Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA) yesterday expressed concern over the political situation of the country.

Dr A T M Zahurul Haque and Dr A A M S Arefin Siddique, the president and general secretary of DUTA respectively, in a statement said by-passing the demand for a neutral caretaker government the attempt to hold one-party farcical election is pushing the country towards a confrontation.