

Inside Today

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Caretaker Revolution and King Canute's Dreams

Column: Enchiridion
by Waliur Rahman

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US trade report contains misrepresentation of facts, says Japanese minister

US dollar loses ground against most Asian currencies over the week
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DSE MARKET

DSE price index 810.82(-0.51%)
Market capital Tk 5338.62 cr
Transactions in volume 111843
Transactions in value Tk 2.70 cr

Dhaka Day by Day



Little Bookworms are Dying Species
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NEWS BRIEFS

Khaleda leaves for Ctg today

BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia leaves here this morning for Chittagong by road, party sources said. She is scheduled to address a public meeting in Chittagong on April 9. On her way to Chittagong, the BNP chairperson is expected to address public meetings at different places, including Daudkandi and Peni, reports BSS.

Tk 50 lakh property gutted in Habiganj

From Staff Correspondent
SYLHET, Apr 7: Property worth about Taka 50 lakh were gutted in a fire that broke out at Natus Bazar of Bahubal thana under Habiganj district yesterday. Five labourers also received burns. Of them, one was admitted to the hospital in critical condition. Official sources said an electrical short circuit sparked off the fire at about 4:30 pm yesterday. It soon spread to a godown and three houses.

Urs of Shahjalal begins today

From Staff Correspondent
SYLHET, Apr 7: The annual urs of Hazrat Shahjalal (RA) begins here tomorrow. The two-day programmes will begin in the early hours through placing of *Gilaf* in the mazar. Akheri munajat will be held in the early hours of Tuesday.

15 killed in Indian truck accident

NEW DELHI, Apr 7: At least 15 people were killed and 11 others injured today when their truck overturned on a highway in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, the Press Trust of India said. Some 30 people had hitched a ride on the truck laden with sugarcane when it turned turtle in the district of Arcot, the police said, reports AFP.



Examinees at a city school centre on the first day of the SSC examinations yesterday.

— Star photo

Ministries may enjoy more financial power

By RM Titumir and Inam Ahmed

The government is planning enhancing the financial authority and matching administrative power of the ministries and agencies to expedite their development works, according to a well placed source in the Planning Ministry.

The move, as the government envisages, will enhance 'to a certain limit' the power of the ministries and autonomous bodies in procurement, independent of the cabinet procurement committee. This will also make the line ministries and bodies able to decide independently their spending style and strategy.

The capacity of autonomous bodies to purchase is likely to be enhanced from the present Taka 10 crore to Taka 20 crore. The ministries' power will also be increased from Taka 25 crore to Taka 35 crore.

Experts, however, say these would not bring the desired result, if issues like weakness in the macro management of the economy, corruption and petty party interests are not adequately addressed.

Officials of the Planning Commission remarked that the increase in financial power is necessary for quick implementation of the Annual Development Project (ADP).

The BNP government, during its five-year rule, had once enhanced the financial authority of the agencies and ministries and had also taken a number of decisions including increasing the power of Project Directors (PDs), appointing capable personnel in the projects, prioritising projects, holding regular meetings in the ministries for better performance and 'hammering' the weak line ministries.

These steps, based on the problems identified by the implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) of the Planning Ministry were taken for better implementation of the ADP.

However, these steps seem to yield little results, as the recent IMED report reflects.

The 14 reasons identified by the IMED in its recent report on slow implementation of the ADP are the same as those pointed out before questions were raised about the effectiveness and sincerity of such measures.

The typical problems identified in the recent report are insufficient disbursement of fund, delay in land acquisition, delay in tendering, delay in effecting project aid agreement, delay in appointing consultants and contractors, lack of cash.

Manzur Murder Case

Bail petitions for Ershad, 4 others rejected

Bail petitions for former president Hussain Muhammad Ershad and four others in the Manzur Murder Case were rejected yesterday, defence sources said, reports BSS.

On Saturday, counsels of Ershad and four retired army officers, in separate bail prayers moved in the court of First Additional Sessions Judge Akhlakur Rahman Chowdhury, had cited both legal and humanitarian grounds to set their clients free on any condition the judge thought right.

Public Prosecutor Abdur Razzaque Khan opposed the bail prayers by stating that there are *prima facie* cases against the accused persons. He also mentioned that there are incriminating evidences in which one accused was involved with the other.

Judge Chowdhury, while rejecting the bails, cited confessional statements of the accused persons.

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Sixth JS: None of MPs to get even a month's remuneration

Star Report

None of the members of the now dissolved sixth Jatiya Sangsad would get even a month's remuneration, according to official sources.

Membership of the House is counted from the day an MP is administered oath. 'None of the members of the sixth JS could even complete a month,' the sources pointed out.

The first batch of 200 MPs were administered oath on March 4 and another 112 subsequently in groups. The 330-member House was dissolved on March 30, while elections in 10 constituencies were yet to be held and eight seats were given up by members elected from more than one constituency.

Two hundred members of the 330-member House will get their remuneration for 26 days while that of the others will be counted from the day they were administered oath till the dissolution of the JS.

The facilities the MPs are entitled to include remuneration of Tk 6000, constituency allowance Tk 1500, sumptuary allowance Tk 1000 and office expenses allowance Tk 1500 per month besides a maximum of Tk 400 per month as telephone charges.

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SSC, Dakhil exams

Over 675 expelled on first day

By Staff Correspondent

More than 675 examinees were expelled from different examination centres throughout the country for adopting unfair means on the first day yesterday of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and the Dakhil examinations of 1996, according to reports received from sources in the six education boards last night.

Of the expelled examinees, more than 570 were sitting for the SSC examinations under five boards and 29 were appearing at the Dakhil examinations under the Madrasah Education board.

Thirty-three examinees

were expelled under Jessore board, 49 under Comilla board, 133 under Dhaka board, 323 under Rajshahi board and 74 under Chittagong board. The number might go up as reports from many more centres were yet to be received, the sources pointed out.

A total of 5,53,000 candidates are appearing at the SSC and the Dakhil examinations. Of them, 4,78,275 are SSC examinees and about 75,000 Dakhil examinees.

Of the SSC candidates, 1,41,000 are under Dhaka board, 1,20,000 under Rajshahi board, 85,000 under Jessore board, 85,000 under Chittagong board, 85,000 under Comilla board, 85,000 under Dhaka board.

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Jolted economy

Business leaders' call for interim steps

By Staff Correspondent

Industry and business leaders at a meeting with Adviser for Industry and Trade S B Chowdhury yesterday urged the caretaker government to take some interim measures to gear up economic activities which were badly affected due to political crisis.

The Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) arranged the meeting to apprise the Adviser of the problems in trade and industry sectors.

The FBCCI put forward to the Adviser a written 'priority agenda' suggesting measures to bring the economy back on the track. The suggestions included round-the-clock running of the Chittagong port, waiving cumulative interest rates, easy term bank loans and improvement of law and order situation. The FBCCI suggestions also included a

rigorous campaign abroad to restore the country's image to get back the buyers lost during the political crisis.

Presided over by FBCCI President Salim F Rahman, the meeting was addressed by among others Maksud Khan, former President, Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industries (DCCI), M R Ali, Chairman, Shippers Council of Bangladesh (SCB), Khalilur Rahman Chowdhury, Senior Vice President of the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), Abdul Huq of the Bangladesh Reconditioned Vehicles Importers and Dealers Association, and Shahiduzzaman Dudu of the FBCCI.

S B Chowdhury told the meeting that the caretaker government would constitute an inter-ministerial body this

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Navy rescues launch with 115 aboard

Rapid action of a Navy ship saved the lives of more than 100 passengers of a launch which was drifting after being caught by turbulent waters in the river Meghna in Barguna district on Thursday, reports UNB.

The Navy ship BNS Bogra during its routine patrol at the estuary of river Meghna heard a huge hue and cry from a launch that was sinking due to engine failure.

The ship rushed the spot and towed the motor launch, ML Taltali, to Dalbhangla launch ghat with its all the 115 passengers unhurt averting a serious accident, said a release of ISPR yesterday.

Meanwhile, patrol squads of Bangladesh Navy belonging to the Khulna Naval Command recovered smuggled goods worth about Tk 50,000 in different raids in Mongla, Nala and its adjoining areas recently.

AL urges Chief Adviser to reorganise EC

Awami League leaders yesterday met with Chief Adviser Mohammad Habibur Rahman and requested him to reorganise the Election Commission and take effective steps to recover 'illegal' arms, reports UNB.

During the meeting at the Chief Adviser's office, Awami League leaders Abdus Samad Azad, Tofael Ahmed and SAMS Kibria also requested him to cancel 'political appointments' in the administration for ensuring free and fair election.

They said recovery of illegal arms and arrest of the illegal arms holders are the prerequisite for free election, according to an Awami League press release.

Assuring about cooperation for the illegal arms recovery drive, the AL leaders urged the Chief Adviser to take measures to build up radio and television as neutral media.

Sadeque wants to 'stay above controversy'

By Staff Correspondent

Justice A K M Sadeque, former Chief Election Commissioner, expressed his satisfaction that the constitutional process in the country was upheld and the outcome of the February 15 parliamentary polls had paved the way for holding elections under a caretaker government.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday the former CEC said he wanted to stay above controversy and planned to lead a retired life after his resignation from the post that kept him overworked.

He took over as the CEC on April 27 last and resigned on Saturday. Without referring to the February 15 polls, Justice Sadeque said: "Had there been any failure (on his part) it was the result of the cumulative effect coming from various directions." His contribution would be analysed in due course of time, he added.

Anwar Zahid joins BNP

By Staff Correspondent

Former information minister in the Ershad government and president of the Bangladesh National Democratic Alliance (BNDA) Anwar Zahid joined the BNP yesterday.

Anwar Zahid, along with leaders and workers of his party met BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia at her party office in the evening and expressed his confidence in her leadership.

Welcoming Zahid, Begum Zia said "This will strengthen the unity of the nationalist forces and help fulfil the aspirations of the people." Zahid said he joined the BNP at the call of its leader for unity of the nationalist forces.

BNP secretary general Alamgir Majumdar and eight other leaders of the party and BNP leaders Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Choudhury Tanvir Ahmed Siddiqi, Nazrul Islam Khan and Fazlur Rahman Patal were present on the occasion.

No SSF seen with Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

Members of the Special Security Forces (SSF) were not seen among the security personnel for former Prime Minister and BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday.

The BNP chief arrived at the Naya Paltan party central office in the evening only with security provided by Special Branch police. The metal detecting gate, used for her security until Friday, was also not seen. Begum Zia did not turn up at the BNP office Saturday.

The national flag was seen

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Jayasuriya's futile fastest fifty



Singapore Minister for Environment Teo Chee Hean (R) hands over the Singer Cup trophy to the victorious Pakistan skipper Aamir Sohail after the Pakistanis outplayed world champions Sri Lanka by 43 runs at the Padang yesterday.

SINGAPORE, Apr 7: Feisty Sri Lankan Sanath Jayasuriya blasted the world's fastest one-day half-century today but his effort lay in ruins after Sri Lanka lost to Pakistan by 43 runs in the final of the Singer Cup cricket tournament, reports AP.

It began as a dream innings for world champions Sri Lanka when Jayasuriya smashed 76 runs off just 28 balls with five sixes and eight boundaries. But in a dramatic collapse, Sri Lanka lost eight wickets for the next 76 runs.

The last three wickets fell in the 33rd over by Ataur Rehman as Sri Lanka collapsed to 172 all out in 37.5 overs. Off-spinner Saqlain Mushtaq got three wickets and speedsters Waqar Younis and Aaqib Javed got two each.

Replying to Pakistan's modest 215 all out in 48.3 overs, Sri Lanka started gloriously, scoring 69 without loss in the first five overs. At that stage, a Pakistani victory looked nearly impossible.

Jayasuriya, who set the world record for the fastest century just four days earlier — also against Pakistan — hammered every Pakistani bowler.

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Corruption to dominate Indian polls campaign

NEW DELHI, Apr 7: Corruption, an endemic Indian disease, will most likely dominate campaigning ahead of the country's general elections. But politicians admit few will be able to speak out with a clear conscience, reports AFP.

Politicians say although several issues ranging from Kashmir to five years of economic reforms will figure in the run-up to the April-May vote, corruption will be the binding thread across the country of 900 million people.

"Probity in public affairs will be a key theme during the campaign," said Jana Krishnamurthy, a vice-president of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party), the main opposition group.

India has been enveloped by a bribery scandal involving frontline politicians of almost all mainstream parties except the communists ahead of the first balloting to parliament in five years.

The scandal, involving huge bribes allegedly paid by a businessman to 115 top politicians and bureaucrats in return for favours, has dominated news-

papers for months. It has led to the resignation of seven cabinet ministers, and put a question mark on the future of several politicians, including from the opposition.

Krishnamurthy said venality, national security and Hindu revivalism would be the dominant campaign themes.

"There is no doubt people will talk about and want to hear about corruption," said Ramvir Bidhuri, who recently joined the Congress (I) Party of Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao from the opposition ranks.

"After all it affects everyone," he said. "It will be a big thing."

Congress officials say the ruling party will talk about five years of economic liberalisation and political stability provided by Rao since he became Prime Minister in June 1991 rather than corruption.

Corruption is not new to India, where greasing the palm is a way of life. But the latest scandal has taken the sheen off the political system in a manner never witnessed before.

Many voters take a cynical attitude to corruption.

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