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PM asks officials to work sincerely

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the government officials to work with utmost sincerity for building a self-reliant nation in the shortest possible time, reports UNB.

"We have to build a poverty-free nation in the shortest possible time," she said addressing the executives of the BCS Taxation Association.

A 40-member delegation led by Association president Matur Rahman and secretary general Delwar Hossain called on the Prime Minister at her office in the afternoon and apprised the PM of their professional problems.

Responding to the demand of the association for solving their professional problems, the Prime Minister said the government would take decisions according to the rules and regulations.

She said the Law Commission, Administrative Reform Commission and Pay Commission have been formed to look

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PHILIPS

Mirpur katan needs attention to regain glory

By Meher Neegar Sultana

Only a few years ago, it was common for many affluent families in Bangladesh to travel to Calcutta for wedding shopping. Katan sari that brightens the bride on the wedding day was on the top of the shopping list. Today, that trend is changing. Many are returning to fanciful Bangladeshi Katan.

"You don't need to go to India for katan sari. Come to us, we will weave you better designed and better quality katans than Benarasis," said a confident Muhammad Sharifuddin, a weaver in one of Mirpur's some 100 katan factories. Sharifuddin joined as an apprentice in Anu Begum's factory at the age of 12. Now he is a master weaver.

The weaving factories at the tail end of Mirpur began to grow almost a quarter century ago by borrowing technology from Benaras, a handloom town in Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. Now products of Mirpur can easily match those of Benaras.

Katan saris of Mirpur have occupied shelves of all prestigious sari outlets in Dhaka and in other towns as well. Usually, the sellers tell the truth - that the saris are from Mirpur. But there are still some who would say that the saris are from Benaras.

That is also undergoing a change. Salesmen interviewed by News Network at the city's Ghousia Market are now proud of displaying Bangladeshi katan to their customers.

"We tell the customers that you have choice. This katan is from Mirpur and that is from India. The customers' interest in Bangladeshi katan is increasing," said a sari seller at

that they were deprived of government patronisation.

"We don't get any support, but we have burden of taxes anyway," said a factory owner.

Some 60 katan factory owners have formed an association - Mirpur Weaving Factory Owners' Association - to re-align their various demands.

Association vice-president Muhammad Imtiaz alleged: "Lack of working capital has seriously been impeding our growth. We do not have access to bank credit as we are not Bangladeshi."

"If we get the necessary cooperation from the government, the industry will definitely be able to play a significant role in the national economy in near future," Imtiaz said.

A Tk 21-crore project to set up and estate for sari industries on about 40 acres of land in Mirpur is yet take off for reasons unknown.

Under the proposed project, some 991 families with 4,683 looms are supposed to be rehabilitated in the estate. The project has targeted production at 2.90 lakh pieces of saris a year. The government also had a plan to look into the health problems of the weavers working in filthy and crowded environment. But the plans have been shelved.

People associated with the business said the demand for Bangladeshi Tangal, Jamdani, Katan and Benarasi saris is not confined only to the country's boundary. It has a potential export market.

A strong support from the government is what is needed most to add more colour to the colourful industry, they observe.

—News Network feature

Shahjalal Varsity incident: Probe body begins work

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Sept 23: Some 22 teachers, employees and students today submitted their statements before the enquiry committee formed to investigate the incidents that took place in and around the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology on September 12.

Some 30 persons were injured and property worth about Taka one crore damaged in the incident.

The enquiry committee headed by the Additional Divisional Commissioner began its work today.

It will sit at the Takerbar Union parishad tomorrow to take testimony while at the office of Additional Divisional Commissioner on Wednesday and at the University on September 29 again, an official source said today.

Another report says, the first year Honours class of 1996 of the Shahjalal University of Science & Technology will begin on September 28, an official said here today.

BNP protests govt plan to import electricity

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has protested the government's plan to import electricity, saying that it will destroy the country's power sector, reports UNB.

In a statement yesterday, BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan asked the government to meet the country's demand of electricity of re-activating the close power stations.

He also called for stopping wastage and reducing system loss and production cost so that electricity could be given at lesser price to the subscribers. "The price of electricity should not be raised on any pretext," he said.

The "artificial and motivated" loadshedding must be stopped, Bhuiyan said and accused the government of deliberately creating a deep and far-reaching crisis in the power sector.

JCD workers clash with police in Khulna: 20 hurt

From Our Correspondent

KHULNA, Sept 23: At least 20 people were injured in a clash between JCD activists and police today evening at Phulbari Gate area under Khanjahan Ali thana.

All transport services on Khulna-Jessore highway remained suspended for over two hours during the clash.

Police and witnesses said that the clash began when police intercepted a JCD procession brought out this evening demanding removal of the OC of Khanjahan Ali thana. At one stage of the clash, processionists attacked the Awami League office at Phulbari Gate, causing extensive damage to furniture and other valuables.

Road accidents in Bangladesh 'Fatality rate 58 persons per 1000 vehicles'

By Staff Correspondent

Communications Minister Anwar Hossain Manju has said the fatality rate in Bangladesh is 58 persons per 1000 vehicles, 25 times that in most developed countries. Inaugurating a day-long seminar on "Role of NGOs in Traffic Safety," at a city hotel, yesterday, he emphasised well-coordinated and well-planned programmes to reduce road accidents and suggested formulation of a "National Road Safety Action Plan for a safer journey."

Organised by the Bangladesh Road and Transport Authority (BRTA) and chaired by its Chairman AN Hussain, the inaugural session was also addressed by, among others, Mayor of Dhaka Mohammad Hanif, Communications Secretary Walid Islam, acting Resident Representative of the World Bank Owise Saadat.

Termining road accident a "complex problem, the minister said the government had formed a National Road Safety Council to effectively plan, coordinate and implement safety measures.

Pointing out some safety problems he said, the country's road networks at the regional and municipal levels were far from adequate. "Travel within districts, municipalities and even villages often involves national highways."

They also stressed the need

for properly designed roads, fit vehicles and trained drivers for better and safer journeys.

Mayor Hanif said the population of the city has increased substantially over the years while its road network did not. He said only government efforts were not enough to meet the road and transport requirements in the capital and in the country.

Citing statistics, the Mayor said, road traffic in the city has doubled in the last 10 years. "During 1984-85, the city experienced 436 million passenger kilometre traffic while it increased to 883 million passenger kilometre in 1994-95.

"We also need resolving the problems of hawkers, new rickshawpullers and bus drivers," he said adding pedestrians should also have knowledge of traffic rules.

There are adequate footbridges for the pedestrians and the existing ones are also not properly used, Hanif pointed out.

Owise Saadat said since 1989, the World Bank has been involved in more than 200 projects with road safety components.

JCD leader stabbed at DU

By DU Correspondent

An activist of the Jatiyatadabi Chhatra Dal (JCD) was stabbed by some unidentified youths in front of the IBA building of Dhaka University yesterday evening.

The victim, Harunur Rashid Shisir, an MA final year student of Philosophy is a member of the JCD central executive committee and the joint secretary of the Mohsin Hall unit.

He was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital immediately after the incident.

Sources said, the incident might be a sequel to the rivalry between the Damney group and the Mamun group of JCD. Shisir is reported by a supporter of the Mamun group.

Khaleda: AL out to adopting various repressive measures against my party

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refused to act under Indian dictates.

"We shall definitely hail the Awami League if it can succeed in ensuring our due share of water," she said adding, "But the government has to remember that we want 44 thousand cusec of water, and that not at the cost of transit route. She sought media cooperation in protecting national interests."

Dhaka-Hanoi trade accord to be signed today

HANOI, Sept 23: Tofael Ahmed, the Minister for Commerce and Industries, now visiting Vietnam as the head of a nine-member Bangladesh delegation, today held meeting with a Vietnamese trade team led by Trade Minister Le Van Triet here, reports BSS.

Welcoming the Bangladesh minister, Triet said that his government deeply appreciated the highest level visit ever from Bangladesh to Vietnam. He expressed the hope that the visit would lay firm ground for further expansion of trade between the two countries.

The Vietnamese minister recalled that both the countries established diplomatic relations in 1973 and had supported each other during their wars of liberation. He said that trade agreement to be signed tomorrow would help promote bilateral relations between them.

Sharisabari college closed sine die as JCD, BCL clash

JAMALPUR, Sept 23: The Sharisabari Reazuddin Talukdar College was closed sine die today following a clash between the activists of the Jatiyatadabi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), reports UNB.

JCD leaders - college students union VP Shahidul Islam, GS Mohammad Rabul and AGS Jahangir Alam received injuries during the clash. Rabul was admitted to Sharisabari Thana Health Complex with critical condition.

Witnesses said the clash between the rival groups erupted after the pro-Awami League activists had assaulted three JCD leaders while they were in a meeting on the college campus at about 1:30 pm.

Hearing the attack on their leaders, the JCD activists came to the college campus and locked in a clash with the BCL workers which later spread to the thana headquarters.

The office of the college principal and some classrooms were ransacked and at least 20 homemade bombs blasted during the clash.

Police arrested four JCD activists and two BCL men from the college area during the clash.

Murtaza's killing a conspiracy: Benazir

KARACHI, Sept 23: Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said the shooting death of her estranged brother was a "conspiracy" to destabilise her government, national newspapers reported today, say agencies.

The killing of Mir Murtaza Bhutto was clearly a conspiracy to plunge the nation into crisis," Benazir told party workers and reporters who had come to her family home in rural Sindh to offer their condolences.

Three days later the details surrounding the shooting still are sketchy and often contradictory.

Benazir said she believed her brother was targeted, but she didn't say by whom.

Murtaza's death was not the result of cross fire, but of a definite target shooting," The Dawn newspaper quoted her as saying. "The way he was shot was a clear case of intentional killing."

Benazir, flanked by her sobbing mother Nurat and younger sister Sanam, said three Bhutto men had been killed in the past two decades and that "today Murtaza's enemies are still involved in conspiring against the rest of the family."

The Prime Minister, in an emotionally-choked voice said the "real truth" about the killing would not remain hidden.

She asked the hundreds of mourners present to help uncover the conspiracy and called on people to contact police if they had any information about the case.

"Our paths were different but our blood was the same," she said. "Our destiny was one - Islam, Pakistan, democracy and equality."

Murtaza was killed in a shootout with police late Friday in which five of his supporters and a bystander also died.

He was buried Saturday in his family graveyard near his hometown Larkana some 310 kms north of Karachi.

Benazir's other brother Shahnawaz died under mysterious circumstances in Cannes in 1985.

Indian actress 'Silk' Smitha commits suicide

MADRAS, India, Sept 23: A southern Indian movie actress famous for glamorous roles as a dancer in some 300 films was found dead in the southern city of Madras, hanging from a ceiling fan with a sari around her neck, police said today, reports Reuter.

Police suspected "Silk" Smitha, who became famous all over India for gyrating dances in scanty costumes, had committed suicide on the basis of a note in the local Telugu language they found near the body of the actress, who was 36.

"I have no desire to live any more," they quoted the note as saying. The Press Trust of India (PTI) said the suspected suicide was believed to be linked to financial difficulties she faced after producing three movies which were flops.

"Silk" Smitha, whose real name was Vijayalakshmi, became famous in her assumed name after first movie, in which she was nicknamed "Silk". She acted in movies in Tamil, Telugu and Hindi languages.

Two killed in road accidents

COMILLA, Sept 23: One woman and a minor girl were killed in separate road accidents on Dhaka-Chittagong highway today, police sources said, reports BSS.

According to police sources, Bashana Rani, 25, died on the spot when a speeding truck knocked her down near Chandina Bazar in the morning.

The other victim - Halima, 6, was ran over by a Dhaka-bound passenger bus at Ilhotganj Bazar under Daudkandi thana.

Police seized both the vehicles.

Justice Amin made Law Commission member

Justice Aminur Rahman Khan, a retired judge of the High Court, has been appointed of Law Commission, reports UNB.

The government gave the appointment for a three-year term from the date of his joining under the Article 5(2) of Law Commission law 1996, said an official handout last night.

Another report says, Joint Secretary Abdur Rashid Khan was appointed Director of Anti-corruption Bureau.

Ahmed Shahriar Chowdhury who was serving at the Bangladesh Embassy in Thailand, was promoted to Joint Secretary and appointed acting-official at the establishment ministry.

Private investment

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desh.

He said, "I think may Bangladesh government officials are suspicious of foreign investment."

Elahi said once the private sector realised that the government was serious in implementing its declared policy, only then the private investors, especially domestic private sector would come forward.

Professor of Economics of Dhaka University Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud spoke on the fiscal constraints and competing demands of investment in the first-day session.

He underlined the need for an overall congenial atmosphere in respect of policy and stability to attract and use private investment. He said even though the country's resources were available during the early 90s, the nation had failed to attract required amount of private investment because of absence of needed atmosphere.

He also underscored the need for foreign private investments as at present resources had been squeezed with the increase in the borrowing by government from the market, especially from the banks.

Dr Mahmud said inefficiency and loss in the public sector affected the private sector adversely.

Senior Adviser of World Bank on private sector development Hoon Mok Chung talked on principal barriers to private investment, international experience and relevance for Bangladesh while Executive Director of Samsung Corporation of Korea Yong Ho Oh spoke on private sector perspective on attracting investment.

The workshop, held as an orientation to the new World Bank project called private sector infrastructure development, would discuss the use and private sector investment as an option in the development of the power, energy, roads and

Khaleda's statement devoid of truth: Faezul Haq

State Minister for Jute and Textiles AK Faazul Haq said the statement of Begum Khaleda Zia that jute was selling below Taka 200 per maund at different places of the country was devoid of truth and unfortunate, reports BSS.

In a statement yesterday he said the government has already taken steps to preserve the interest of the farmers and ensure fair prices for their produce. The government has so far set up 180 jute purchasing centres all over the country and the process of purchase was continuing. The government has in the meantime released Taka 200 crore for the purchase of jute during the current season and paid up almost all arrear bills of the last fiscal, he added.

The state minister expressed surprise over the allegation of Begum Zia that farmers were burning their jute failing to get due price and dismissed it as a figment of imagination.

N'ganj clash

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Then clashes began and the mob barricaded the Dhaka-Sylhet highway and also damaged at least eight passenger buses, witnesses said.

Later a group of villagers contacted police and gave an undertaking saying that the two arrested persons were innocent. Accordingly, police released them.

Police arrested the two persons on Sunday on charge of different criminal cases against them.

Waterlogging

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sewerage development work RAJUK is to clear the filled up Segun Bagicha canal behind the Bangladesh Bank building.

The State Minister said that apart from using pumps to drain out stagnant water from different city points and employing cleaners to remove garbage which choked the drainage system, steps have also been taken to complete the on-going drainage and sewerage works.

CU deadlock

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demonstrations.

Meanwhile, the ICS has announced a four-day programme including barricades on the Chittagong-Rangamati road on September 25 and a half-day hartal in Chittagong on September 26, according to a ICS press release.

Tareq

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granted to these accused-petitioners, a flood-gate will open for coming directly to the High Court and none will go to or respect the Court below," KS Nabi argued.

"Since these are corruption cases and all are equal before law, the petitioners being son and brother of a political leader or themselves are former state minister cannot get any privilege from the court of law," he submitted.

Referring to former Indian premier Narasimha Rao, the AG told the Court that even a leader of his status was denied any privilege from the court.

KS Nabi handed over all relevant and confidential documents to the court to consider the gravity of the alleged offence, but the court refused to go into merit of the cases.

"As the cases are to be tried in special law by the special judge, the code of Criminal Procedure is not applicable and the Court should not grant bail under section 498 of the said Code," the AG argued.

In the case involving Tareq, Iskander and Mamoon, it was alleged that in the name of M/S Dandy Dying Ltd. they sought loan of Tk. 15 crore and 30 lakh, but the equity was fixed at Tk. one crore only instead of Tk five crore and 60 lakh and they also showed the value of the mortgaged land at Tk. 18 lakh, but the real value of the land is about Tk. one lakh and 20 thousand.

In former state minister for religious affairs MA Mannan's case, it was alleged that he allocated 200 metric tons of wheat worth about Tk. 15.50, 000 but no work was implemented under the project.

The case involving Lutfor Rahman Khan states that beyond the purview of the Ministry for Relief and Rehabilitation, Lutfor Rahman in collusion with Mamoon received Tk. 4.20 crore by purchasing 1,000 metric tons of corrugated CI sheet which was not usable.