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Jatiya Kabita Parishad brought out a colourful procession in the city yesterday marking the opening of the two-day national poetry festival.

Ekushey programmes

From Page 1 across the country and five guest poets from West Bengal of India joined the festival on the first day...

After the procession the poets placed wreaths at the mazar of National Poet Kazi

HR abuse

From Page 1 Muhammad Nurul Huda, Jahid Haider and Biswajit Ghosh.

In the afternoon a poetry recitation session will be held with Fayez Ahmed in the chair. A new committee of the Jatiya Kabita Parishad for 1997-1999 will be declared in the evening...

This year's report pays special attention to violence against women and children. Noting that such violence was still widespread in the country, a growing awareness of the problem is fostered by the government, media and by women's rights groups, it said.

The report cited the enactment of laws, prohibiting certain forms of discrimination against women. However, enforcement of these laws was weak, especially in rural areas, the report noted.

It also underlined the programmes undertaken by the government in the areas of primary education, health and nutrition. It made particular mention of the government initiative, introducing incentives for female children between the ages 12 and 16 to remain in school.

The progress made by Bangladesh in promoting children's rights was also mentioned by the newly-appointed Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright. Introducing the report, Albright specifically mentioned Bangladesh in this area.

"The report of this year brings to light evidence of violations of these rights, as well as evidence that progress is being made — in Bangladesh, for example — as part of the United States' and this administration's high level of commitment to children," Albright said.

Some vessels carrying fertiliser are now waiting at the port for unloading, the minister added.

He said sufficient quantities of fertiliser were in the stock area. The report of this year brings to light evidence of violations of these rights, as well as evidence that progress is being made — in Bangladesh, for example — as part of the United States' and this administration's high level of commitment to children," Albright said.

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9 killed, 125 hurt in road accidents

By Staff Correspondent

At least nine people were killed and 125 others injured in separate road accidents, across the country yesterday.

Of them, four died in Faridpur, two in Mymensingh, one in Comilla and two in the capital city.

Our Faridpur correspondent reports: Four persons were killed and 85 others injured in a road accident at Majkandi, 30 kilometres off the town, at around 2 pm yesterday.

According to hospital sources, the accident took place when a Khulna-bound coach from Dhaka and a local Faridpur-bound passenger bus from Boalmari collided head on at the Majkandi turning killing the driver, Dabiruddin, on the spot.

The injured were admitted to the Faridpur Medical College Hospital and the General Hospital where Kulsum Begum, 52, Madhu Biswas, 40, and Sujit Kundu, 40, succumbed to their injuries.

Condition of the seriously injured passengers are stated to be critical.

UNB adds: Two people were killed and 30 others injured in a road accident at Belerghat Bazar in Trishal thana on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway yesterday.

Police said the accident occurred at about 1:30 pm when a Sherpur-bound bus skidded off the road and plunged into a ditch.

The dead were identified as Mahmudul Huq, 25, and Bakul Mia, 30. One of them died on the spot and the other on way to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH).

BSS says: In Comilla one person was killed and ten others were injured in a road accident on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway near Beltoli under Kotwali thana yesterday, police said.

The accident occurred when a Faridganj-bound bus overturned and fell into a roadside ditch. An unidentified passenger aged about 70 died on the spot and ten other passengers were seriously injured.

In Dhaka city, two persons were killed in two separate road accidents yesterday, hospital sources said.

Hiron Howlader, 25, son of Rashid Howlader of Thakurpara, was hit by a bus at Kawran Bazar area in the morning. He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he died.

In another incident, Abdur Razzak, 60, was injured when a bus hit him while he was crossing the road at Amin Bazar, Gabtali in the afternoon. He was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

3 more bus fire victims die

COMILLA, Feb 1: Three more victims of Friday's fire incident in a minibus near Chandina here died in hospital today raising the death toll to 11, reports UNB.

A Comilla-bound minibus carrying 22 passengers from Narayanganj caught fire at Noutala village of Chandina thana on Dhaka-Chittagong highway on Friday leaving eight people dead and 14 injured, police said.

Three of the injured, who died this morning in Comilla Sadar Hospital are: Bina Chowdhury, 22, Gopal, 6, and Jotindra Dey. Eleven others were being treated at the hospital.

BNP drive

From Page 1 well as increasing the registered members of the organisation.

The BNP secretary general, however, admitted that taking up such programme every year could not be possible for various reasons.

Replying to another question, he said that the membership renewal-and-collection drive in other cities, districts and thanas would take place soon under the supervision of the party leaders of the respective areas.

Micro-credit

From Page 1 The Bangladesh Bank Governor, however, noted that there had been some economic mismanagement still prevailing and needed to be addressed to stop capital flight when the currency would be fully convertible in capital account.

He also informed that the government was continuing discussion about the issue of capital account convertibility with International Monetary Fund (IMF), the donor agency which gives advice on fiscal and monetary issues.

The Bangladesh government recently has opened a dialogue with the IMF for a 600 million-dollar loan under the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) as a measure to build a comfortable forex reserve.

According to official figures, the country's foreign exchange reserve now stands at around 1900 million dollars which is equal to import bills for three months. But the government plans to build a bigger reserve.

Bangladesh attained convertibility in current account in early 1994 under which Taka is freely usable for buying other currencies for settlement of all current external transactions like trade, travel and services payments and transfers.

A full convertibility in capital account means a currency usable freely to buy foreign currencies for all settlements and transactions, including transfer of capital.

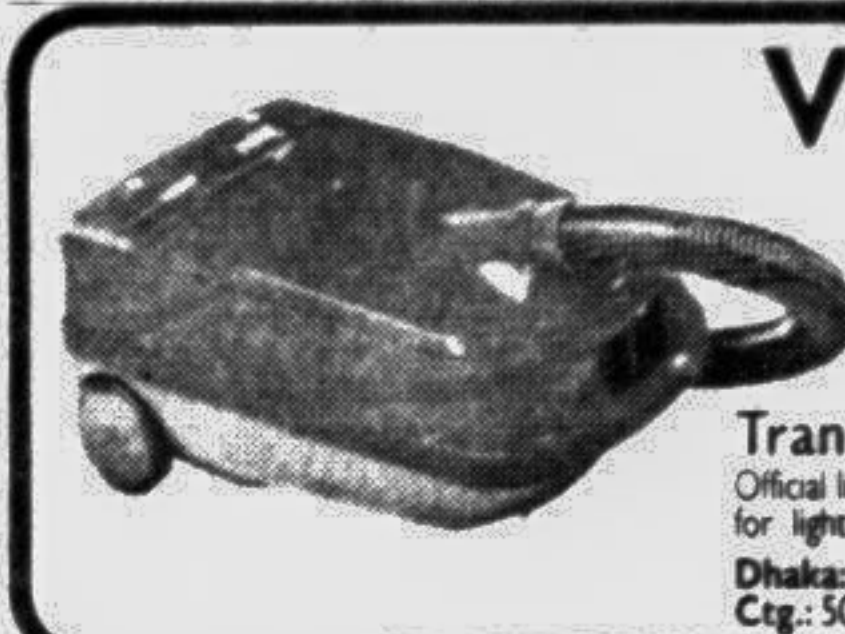
As the Taka is yet to be convertible in capital account, the export proceeds and other earnings abroad by residents must still be repatriated, goods must still be brought in against import payments sent and resident-owned capital cannot freely be transferred abroad.

The capital account is, however, already open to the extent that inflows and outflows of non-resident investments are practically restriction-free, according to a central bank official.

Lutfar Rahman Sarker said the current account convertibility was going on well despite the fact that the country is yet to develop expertise for the operation of the convertibility. "The performance of current account convertibility is still satisfactory," he said.

The current account convertibility of Taka has already resulted in rapid expansion of the external sector of economy. Both imports and exports have grown fast and now accounted for over 30 per cent of the GDP, up from 20 per cent in 1989-90.

Later, M A M Kazemi, a general manager of the Bangladesh Bank presented a paper on "Taka Convertibility — Its Impact on the Economy in the technical session."



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One dies, another shot in city

By DMC Correspondent

A person died when a bamboo of an under construction building suddenly fell on him at Fakirpool in the city yesterday afternoon.

The victim, aged about 35, was immediately sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared him dead.

Or they can opt for former cricket star Imran Khan, who has campaigned against corruption, but whose untied party pollsters say will win few, if any, seats in the national assembly.

Pak elections

From Page 1 Pakistanis go to the polls on Monday to choose between two former prime ministers, Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto, who have both seen their governments sacked on corruption charges.

Some will give their votes to religious, regional or ethnic parties such as the Karachi-based Mohajir National Movement (MQM), target of a fierce crackdown under Benazir's government.

Political analysts predict a turnout possibly as low as 20 per cent, compared to 69 per cent in 1988 and 40 per cent in 1993.

Waliur Rahman

From Page 1 ing the responsibility as acting IG (Prisons).

The Ministry of Establishment had earlier suggested the government to appoint the IG (Prisons) from among prison officials qualifying for the post, according to reports.

In a recent written reply to the authorities concerned, the ministry said that as per the Jail Code and service rules, three out of the four Deputy Inspectors General of (Prisons) fulfilled the requirement to be appointed IG (Prisons), the sources said.

The Jail Reforms Commission of 1981 in its recommendations had also suggested for appointment of the IG (Prisons) from the same service to facilitate reforms in prison management, the sources said.

The post of the IG (Prisons) fell vacant in August last year when the then IG (Prisons) who had been serving on deputation from the army, was sent back after the jail break incident in the Dhaka Central Jail in July. Thirteen prisoners had escaped from the jail in the incident.

It was reported that two inquiry committees, set up following the jail break incident had also recommended for appointment of the IG (Prisons) from the same service.

Micro-credit

From Page 1 poverty. Besides, a number of heads of state or government, chiefs of different international financial institutions and other donor agencies are expected to attend the meet.

Bangladeshi community in the US capital has organised a reception this evening in honour of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The Indian side at the meeting was led by a Joint Secretary of the Home Ministry and included a representative from the External Affairs Ministry and the Indian BSF.

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Prof Yunus: Dream together

From Page 1 replicated in a growing number of countries. "To my knowledge, about 56 countries in the world now have some Grameen-type operation, some of them quite large and very successful," he said.

Today, more than four million people have received micro-credit worldwide, half of them in Bangladesh. He gave details of the Grameen operations in Bangladesh, including the new businesses his bank was exploring. Wearing a Grameen check vest and proudly displaying it to the audience, he said this fabric, produced by artisans in Bangladesh and marketed by the Bank has already been exported to countries around the world. "We have already exported 12 million dollars worth of this fabric," he said.

During the question and answer session, several people questioned the wisdom of introducing Grameen Cellular phone and Internet technology to villages in Bangladesh, where literacy rate was still very low. "Grameen borrowers are usually better educated. Their children are almost always literate. By sending the cellular phone and introducing Internet, we'll demystify the new technology and raise the social status of our members," Professor Yunus explained.

The two-hour long meeting generated great enthusiasm among international diplomats at the United Nations. Ambassador Daudi Mwakwaga, the current chairman of the Group of 77, applauded the speech as the "finest" he had heard in this building. "You bring inspiration and new confidence for our own fight against poverty," he said.

Meanwhile, Yunus's campaign for micro-credit for the poor received strong support from the White House. On Thursday, January 30, President Clinton said he would ask the US Congress to allocate one billion dollars over five years for credit assistance to micro-enterprises in the US. His announcement was made during a special White House ceremony, honouring micro-credit organisations in the US.

First Lady Hillary Clinton has also launched a separate campaign to promote the concept of micro-credit. Speaking to the press on Friday for the first time in two years, Hillary recalled her visit to Grameen projects in Bangladesh and the encouragement she received there and elsewhere in South Asia from micro-credit projects. Along with Prime Minister Hasina of Bangladesh, she will serve as co-chairperson of the micro-credit summit. "I would like to do this more and if I can get the energy and time

I'll do it on a regular basis," Hillary told reporters at the White House.

Professor Yunus, who spoke to this correspondent at the end of his speech, said Hillary's support for the summit was crucial in drawing international attention. "When we first discussed the idea of the summit, we thought it would be a small thing. Now we have thousands of people coming. Heads of state and government, parliamentarians, even multinational banks are attending. It's terrific," he said.

Professor Yunus said he knew the Clintons from as early as 1986, when Bill Clinton was Governor of Arkansas State. He liked the micro-credit idea so much that he wanted such initiatives to be launched in his State immediately, Yunus recalled.

Will this enthusiasm translate into real dollars and cents for micro-credit projects around the world? Professor Yunus pointed out the summit was not a "fund-raising" event. "We are not looking for money. Once people know what micro-credit can do for the people and the economy, money would chase us," he said. The summit, in his words, "will be a celebration of the success of ordinary people to crawl out of misery and abject poverty."

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