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## Discharge duties with more devotion, PM asks health workers

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon the health workers to discharge their duties with a deep sense of service to the people of the country, reports UNB.

The government has laid special emphasis on ensuring health for all by the year 2000, she said, addressing the leaders of Bangladesh Health Field Workers Association at the International Conference Centre (ICC).

Hasina said every citizen should be brought under healthcare services to utilise their potential, talent and intellect for the interest of the nation.

On various problems of the health sector, she said introduction of the national health policy would help resolve the problems of this most vital sector.

"Progress in the health sector is a continuous process," the Prime Minister said adding that the government is taking both short and long term programmes for the development of the sector.

Earlier, Association secretary general M M Harunur Rashid apprised the Prime Minister of the various problems of the health workers at the field level.

Responding to various demands of the health workers, the Prime Minister said the government would look into the problems with utmost sympathy and consideration.

Association president Lutfar Rahman Khan also spoke on the occasion. Shamsur Rahman Sharif, MP, and association adviser Mohammad Monsur Ahmed were present.

## Tk 329.19 cr paid as foreign debt service, JS told

Government paid Tk 329.19 crore as foreign debt service from July 1 to December 31 last year, reports UNB.

Finance Minister Shah A MS Kibria said this in parliament during the question hour yesterday replying to Prof Panna Kaiser (women seat).

Responding to another question, he told parliament that the government had received ADB grants of Tk 1278.18 crore from July 1, 1996 to October 31, 1997.

## SC vacation: Justice Roy to hear cases

Justice Bimalendu Bikash Chowdhury will hear the cases for disposal of urgent matters before the Appellate Division during the Supreme Court vacation from January 25 to February 3, reports UNB.

Justice Roy Chowdhury will take the hearings from January 28 to February 1 at the court chamber everyday from 10.00 to 11.00 am, said an official handout yesterday.

## Govt banks

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 prices go below what fundamentals say they should be," the finance minister was quoted as saying in response to the brokers' plea.

Amir-ul-Mulk said the Banking Division would formally communicate today the Cabinet Committee clearance to 10 applicants for merchant banking to the Securities and Exchange Commission, which would do the rest.

"Those who fulfil the requirements will get licences from the SEC as early as possible," he said.

While the process of bringing in the merchant banks was hastened, the brokers' other demands such as waiving tax on dividend income and rationalising corporate tax structure were also taken into consideration.

The DSE councillors have long been asking for a 10 per cent gap between a listed and a non-listed company.

DSE sources quoted the finance minister as saying that the decisions on dividend income tax and a favourable tax for a public company would come through the next budget.

The Banking Secretary ruled out chances of these decisions announced through statutory regulatory orders (SROs).

In the wake of the DSE index falling to a 44-month low last Saturday, the meeting reviewed the stock market situation, focusing on the Dhaka bourse reforming investors' confidence.

The DSE authorities are already facing a deadline to finish automation by March. The finance minister also asked the councillors to expedite implementation of an independent management of executive business of the bourse.

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Published by the Editor from City Publishing House Ltd, 90 Kakrail, Dhaka-1000 on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd, 52 Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000. Editors & Commercial Offices: House No. 11, Road No. 3, Dhanmandi R/A, Dhaka-1205. PABX: 500092-4, Commercial: 500091, Fax No: 88-02-863035, GPO Box No: 3257, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA. Internet edition address: http://www.dailystarnews.com and Email address: dstar@bangla.net



Activists of Greenpeace and other parties perform a play in New Delhi yesterday, protesting the recent US decision to allow the US Navy and Maritime Administration to export toxic-laden ships to India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The Indian government is depicted holding the feet of the United States. The ships, to be broken at the shipbreaking yards of these countries, are seriously contaminated with asbestos, lead and polychlorinated biphenyls.

— AP/UNB photo

## Prepare for movement after Eid: Khaleda

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday reiterated her call to the people to prepare for a greater movement by her party after the Eid, reports UNB.

Addressing a pre-Eid gathering at Kalabagan playground, organised by Mohammadpur and Dhanmondi thana BNP, Begum Zia said they were preparing to announce any tough programme because of Ramadan. But after the Eid, the government will be forced to repeal the 'black accord' on CHT.

"It is the duty of all of us to protect the soil and the people of the country," she said, adding "this accord is a deep conspiracy against the country, the people and the army."

The opposition leader said the main task of the ruling Awami League is to 'hatch conspiracy against the country and its people'.

In this regard, she mentioned the Ganges water-sharing treaty with India and the 'so-called' peace agreement on the Chittagong Hill Tracts, which are 'against national interests'.

The BNP Chairperson criticised the government for the dismal state of economy, trade and business, deterioration of law and order, and price-hike of essentials.

"Nobody is happy under the rule of the present government. After assuming power, this government could not do anything remarkable for the people's welfare."

## Pilferage at DMCH

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 members of a gang. "Harassment obstructs normal activity in the hospital. Doctors and nurses faced trouble. When I asked relevant officials to look into the matter, it was noted that 'outsiders' had been disturbing the faculty members."

"Security is a must. But unfortunately, we lack security here."

Munir said, "I lodged numerous complaints with police but got no response yet."

Showing a file containing copies of letters sent to police, Munir said, "I wrote a letter to the DMP Commissioner complaining frequent harassment by the invaders, but so far nothing visible has been done to improve the situation."

He said, "A few weeks back, some gangsters blasted a bomb at the corridor of the emergency department while patients were being treated. May be it was to warn and frighten the staff."

He also said that some toll collectors recently demanded toll from the contractors constructing the new OT complex.

"The contractors were threatened when they refused to pay toll. They approached me for help. I could do nothing except expressing my sympathy."

The hospital director also mentioned that an organised gang of thieves operate in the hospital from the adjacent slum area, mostly inhabited by class four and class three employees of the hospital. "Some of the gang leaders guide their followers from the hideouts located in the slum," he said.

Giving an estimate the director said, "In the last six months, goods worth about Tk 20 lakh were stolen from the hospital."

He said, "I requested the detective branch police last year to nab the invaders. But so far I did not get any response from the authorities."

"I also wrote to the Officer-in-Charge of Ramna thana giving a list of 21 persons who regularly commit crime but till

fare."

She alleged that the government had thrown the farmers into a deep crisis by increasing the prices of fertiliser, fuel and agricultural inputs.

"It has destroyed the future of the owners and workers of local industries by opening the border to allow the Indian goods to enter into the country freely," Begum Zia said.

She said the entire production system of the country was badly affected by loadshedding and smuggling.

Chaired by Lt Gen (ret'd) Mir Shawkat Ali, the meeting was attended, among others, by central leaders Maj Gen (ret'd) Mazedur Haq, Khandaker Mahabub Uddin Ahmed, Brig (ret'd) Hannan Shah, Farida Rahman, Mirza Abbas, Sadeq Hossain, Khoka MP, Goyeshwar Chandra Roy and a large number of local party activists.

Meanwhile, Begum Zia attended an iftar party hosted by Jatiya Party (Zafar-Moazzem) at a restaurant in the city yesterday.

Party co-chairman Kazi Zafar Ahmed and secretary general Shamim Al Mamun received the guests at the iftar party followed by dinner.

Among the politicians Moudud Ahmed, K M Obaidur Rahman, Abdul Kader Mollah and Jamir Ali were present.

Indonesian Ambassador to Bangladesh and Charge d'Affaires of Malaysia and Afghanistan attended the iftar, said a press release.

## JS body decides Local MPs to oversee implementation of WDB project

A meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Water Resources Ministry was held yesterday at Sangsad Bhaban with committee president Abdul Mannan in the chair, reports UNB.

The meeting unanimously took decision that, from now on, the local MPs would be informed well ahead before undertaking the various projects under Water Development Board, including Food for Work Programme.

Thana Nirbahi Officers will take advice from the local MPs. The ministry has been asked to take necessary measures in this regard.

The meeting further took decision that local MPs would be associated with the project formulation and implementation process and they will oversee the implementation work.

Besides, the authorities have been directed to investigate the alleged irregularities in formulating project committees.

Special trains for Eid from Jan 27

Bangladesh Railway has arranged special trains on different routes from January 27-29 for home-bound passengers ahead of the Eid-ul-Fitr, reports UNB.

The special trains will run between Dhaka and Noakhali, Chittagong and Chandpur, Dhaka and Bahadurabad, and Dhaka and Sylhet, said a Railway press release yesterday.

It said all inter-city trains will ply on weekly holidays from January 22-29 and from February 1-10. There will be no inter-city trains on the Eid day.

'Tk300cr HB loan earmarked for low income group'

The government has earmarked Tk 300 crore for providing house building loans to the low income group, Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria told the parliament during question hour yesterday, reports UNB.

Replying to a supplementary question from Kazi Sekandar Ali, he said that from now onwards, the house-building loans will be given only to the low income group.

Draft report of nat'l edn policy to be placed in JS in May: Sadique

Education Minister ASHK Sadique yesterday said the draft report of national education policy would be placed before parliament in May next, reports BSS.

The draft report has already been submitted before the cabinet for its opinion.

Sadique said although the Ministry of Education had a plan to place the report before Parliament in March, but now it would be delayed as the authorities had to assess public opinion on the report.

The minister was speaking as chief guest at a round-table conference on "National Education Policy" organised by Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP) at its office in the city.

17th BCS

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 fore noon.

Failing to join on the day would have been considered as unwillingness of the candidates to join the services and the appointments would be cancelled.

The candidates have been requested to contact the Ministry of Establishment over telephone if they do not get the letters by February 12. The telephone numbers are 864696, 863645-09/3584.

Deep resentment

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 duty to take action against the disruptive elements. But police remained silent spectators.

The clause 57 of the Bank Company Act, 1991, prescribes two years' imprisonment and Tk 20,000 fine for processions, rallies or any other activities that disrupt works in the bank.

## Shafiullah tells trial court I expressed allegiance to Mushtaque govt to avert bloodshed

The only reason behind army's allegiance to the post-August 15 government, according to their chief, was to avert bloodshed through a few officers, violating discipline, killed the President Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, reports UNB.

"I expressed my allegiance as I didn't want bloodshed," said the then Chief of Army Staff Major General (Rtd) K M Shafiullah, the 45th prosecution witness in the Bangabandhu Murder Case, during the cross examination by defence lawyers yesterday.

A ruling party MP, Shafiullah claimed he had the support of the entire army, excepting the violators of discipline, and said, "I would have been the President had I desired the post, but I never thought about it."

"I built up the Bangladesh Army. I didn't want the army to be destroyed in front of my eyes," he said.

Replying to a query on army in the country's politics, the retired General said there was no such involvement during his period. "My successors, Zia and Ershad, had become President," he admitted, saying once again that he didn't want the post.

Shafiullah also told the trial court that he didn't see the then 46 Brigade Commander Col Shafaat Jamil carry out his order to tame the August 15 incident.

"I didn't ask him about the matter as I didn't get any scope," said the witness who became

sick at one stage of his cross-examination that suspended the day's proceedings for about one hour.

Responding to a query, the then Chief of Army Staff said that the oath-taking ceremony of the President took place before Jumma prayers on August 15 while that of the cabinet in the afternoon.

"Earlier, at the radio station in the morning, Khandaker Mushtaque Ahmed told me that his oath-taking ceremony will be held before the Jumma prayers and he wanted to see all of his chiefs in the ceremony," he said.

The PW-45 told the court that there was not a good gathering of civil and military officials in the oath-taking ceremony, rather it was a small one. Shafiullah further said he saw the pictures of the function in the newspapers on the following day.

"I saw Major General Abul Manzur (then a Lieutenant Colonel) at Bangabhaban in the afternoon on that day. He was the Military Advisor at Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi at that time," he said replying to a defence lawyer.

The former Army Chief, who claimed that in fact he was confined at Bangabhaban for three days after the August 15 bloody incident, also informed that he saw the American Ambassador, the Indian High Commissioner and the Libyan Ambassador

meeting Khandaker Mushtaque.

"Yes, I was a victim of circumstances," Shafiullah said responding to a defence counsel suggestion and added that Taheruddin Thakur can speak about himself whether his condition was the same or not.

About dismissal of Major Shariful Haq Dalim and Major Noor from Bangladesh Army, he said there was discontent among the officers after they were dismissed on disciplinary ground.

Asked if he tried to remove the discontent among the army officers, Shafiullah replied: "I tried to convince the officers that there is no scope of indiscipline in the army."

"But my recommendation not to discharge does not mean that the decision of dismissal was incorrect. I recommended only to take back the two officers in the correct manner," he said.

About an unwanted incident which occurred between the wife of Major Dalim and son of Awami League leader Gazi Golan Mostafa at a club in Dhaka, the witness said: The issue about Dalim's wife was exaggerated.

With the completion of General Shafiullah's cross-examination, the court of District and Sessions Judge Kazi Golan Rasul was adjourned in the afternoon. It will resume at 9:30 am on January 26.

## Tk 6557 cr default-loans realised last yr, JS told

Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria yesterday informed Parliament that default loans amounting to Tk 6557.53 crore were realised from January to November last year, reports UNB.

Replying to a question of Majibur Rahman (Al-Shariatpur), he said the present government has taken certain steps to restore discipline and efficiency in the banking sector and realise the default loans.

Expressing satisfaction over the rate of loan recovery, the finance minister said that of the realised amount, about Tk 5,000 crore were realised in cash and about Tk 1.5 crore through rescheduling.

He said the percentage of classified loan has also come down to 35 per cent from 41 per cent.

The present government has, for the first time, taken steps against bank defaulters, he said, assuring the House that further actions will be taken against defaulters of commercial banks to expedite the recovery rate.

Kibria said Task Force has been constituted, headed by the Managing Director, at each commercial bank to realise the outstanding loans.

Another high-powered Task Force, led by the Governor of Bangladesh Bank, has been set up to monitor the progress of work of the task forces in the commercial banks, he said.

The finance minister said the Artha Rin Adalat Act, 1990 was amended to accelerate the recovery of default loans.

Besides, the Bank Company Act, 1991 was also amended to realise outstanding loans from bank company directors, he said, adding that the Bankruptcy Act, 1997 was framed to improve the situation in the loan realisation.

Kibria hoped that the standard of the country's banking sector will see a lot of improvement in next one or two years.

Another report says, the share market in Bangladesh may have an impact of the recent turmoil in capital markets of different Asian countries, parliament was told yesterday.

Almost all the Asian countries were affected by disaster in the capital market, Kibria said, replying to a question that stood in the name of Maulana Delwar Hossain Sayeedi (Jamaat-Projpur).

He said, "Bangladesh's share market is not an exception to it."

Kibria said the government and the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) have already taken several steps to revamp the country's share market.

The steps include reforms of capital market-related institutions, including SEC, ICB, and Dhaka and Chittagong stock exchanges, with financial assistance of ADB, amendment of laws concerning the share market, modernisation of stock exchanges and automation system to introduce screen based trading system and introduction of central depository system to remove corruption in share market.

Major violation

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 The UGC suggested that each of the government-approved private universities set up infrastructures on its own land, deposit the required reserved funds with the prescribed banks, appoint teachers and officials as per law, restrict one teacher from teaching in several universities simultaneously, maintain accounts properly and get those audited annually, get any grants approved by the chancellor, appoint at least two full-time teachers including one professor. It recommended that no fresh private university should be approved at the moment.

The 16 private universities, established during 1992 to 1996, are: North-South University, Dhaka; University of Science and Technology, Chittagong; Independent University, Bangladesh; Central Women's University, Dhaka; Darul Ihsan Bishwabidyalaya, Dhaka; International University of Business, Agriculture and Technology, Dhaka; Islamic Bishwabidyalaya, Chittagong; Ahsanullah Bigyan O Projukti Bishwabidyalaya, Dhaka; AMA International University, Bangladesh; Comilla University; Asian University of Bangladesh; East West University; University of Asian Pacific; Queens University; Gana Bishwabidyalaya and People's University of Bangladesh.

Night coach dacoity on Dhaka-Aricha highway

SAVAR, Jan 21: A band of armed robbers looted valuables worth about Tk 10 lakh from a night coach on Dhaka-Aricha highway Tuesday night, leaving six people injured, reports UNB.

Police said 10 bandits boarded the Benapole-bound bus in the guise of passengers from Gabtali and took control of the bus at gun point when it reached Kalampur in Dhamrai thana.

They snatched valuables, including gold ornaments, clothes and cash, from the passengers and decamped with the booty. A case was filed.

Meanwhile, Police in an overnight operation arrested 10 inter-district dacoits from different parts of the thana on Tuesday.

## Shafiullah falls sick during cross-examination

Trial proceedings in Bangabandhu Murder Case remained suspended for about an hour yesterday as prosecution witness Major General (Rtd) K M Shafiullah fell sick while being cross-examined by a defence lawyer, reports UNB.

The former Army Chief felt chest pain as he was asked whether the pre-BKSAI government was democratic or not by advocate Khan Saifur Rahman, defence lawyer for principal accused Lt Col (dismissed) Syed Farooq Rahman.

Security men managed to hold him as he appeared to be falling down on the witness podium and took him to the room of prosecution lawyers at the special ECJ of Dhaka District and Sessions Judge Court near the central jail.

Two physicians were hurriedly called in from Dhaka Central Jail. They examined the ruling party MP and he received treatment for chest pain.

Later, the court resumed at 12:10 pm as the 45th prosecution witness in the sensational case felt better. Khan Saifur Rahman completed his examination without demanding to know the answer of his question.

Shafiullah was cross-examined by the defence lawyers for three days from Monday. His examination was completed before the court was adjourned at 3 pm for the four-day weekly break.

Indian EC bans opinion polls

NEW DELHI, Jan 21: India's Election Commission imposed restrictions on surveys today, saying opinion poll results could unfairly influence voters in upcoming parliamentary elections, reports AP.

The announcement reflects deep suspicion about opinion polls, which are relatively new in Indian politics, difficult to conduct in a large, poor country, and believed to be easily manipulated.

The Commission banned the publishing of poll results, including exit poll figures, from February 14, two days before voting begins, until February 28, the fourth of five days of voting. Only a few Indians vote on the last day, March 7.

Chief Election Commissioner Manohar Singh Gill said there would be no curbs on conducting polls.

A series of polls so far show the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party winning the most seats in Parliament, but not enough to rule on their own. Rivals fear the impression that Bharatiya Janata is a winner will have a snowball effect, prompting more support from undecided voters eager for a stable government.

Air Force

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 the aircraft, the sources said.

Biman borrowed the plane to relieve its beleaguered domestic sector, limping with only one ATP, serving four/five routes a day, but unable to haul enough baggage.

The Biman's domestic sector, operated by two F-28s and two ATPs, had been in a limbo since the December 22 crash landing of a Fokker 28 aircraft, eight-km off the Sylhet airport.

Another Fokker 28 had been grounded a day before the crash-landing of its twin. It went to Amsterdam for D-check on January 11. It is likely to be back to service sometime in February, at least one week earlier than the stipulated six weeks needed for the D-check, Biman sources said.

Earlier in June last year, one ATP aircraft skidded off the runway of Chittagong airport.

The ATP, now undergoing repair at Chittagong is expected to be ready to fly at the same time.

Biman is yet to complete negotiations with four companies to dry lease at least one Fokker 28-4000 series aircraft, similar to the one badly damaged in a crash-landing.

It has so far negotiated with three companies. Talks with the fourth will continue today, the sources said.

Offers were received from two Dutch companies, one US and the other Singapore Airlines. Biman prefers to have at least one aircraft. "If offers are favourable we will like to have another," a Biman source said.

cold wave

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 A moderate to mild cold wave is likely to sweep other areas of the country where temperature may drop to 8 degrees Celsius or below.

The cold wave is likely to persist for a couple of days.

Temperature across the country rose significantly last night. The minimum temperature was recorded at 12 degrees at Iswardi and Dinapur yesterday. In the capital it was 12.5 degrees Celsius.

Yesterday's rainfall was due to conjunction of easterly and westerly low and moisture from the Bay. The rainfall was heavy in some areas including Dhaka and Chaudanga, the Met office said.