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Cabinet agrees to set up lending body to promote self-employment

By Nurul Kabir

The government yesterday approved in principle a Finance Ministry proposal for setting up a financing institution to help the 'poor people' interested in self-employment.

The approval came at the weekly Cabinet meeting held yesterday with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair, meeting sources said. The proposed institution will be created with a paid-up capital of Taka one hundred crore. As decided in the last budget session of the Jatiya Sangsad, the fund will come from ADP (Annual Development Plan) allocation.

The Cabinet will, however, give final approval for setting up the institution after having a thorough discussion on the proposed project, a Cabinet member said. 'The Premier has

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DSE index drops below 700 pts

By M Shamsur Rahman

The Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) All Share Price Index went below the 700-point mark yesterday.

This is for the second time in less than 30 trading days the price index has gone below the 700-point mark.

Lack of confidence, caused by delay in 'taking decisions', has been attributed by market operators as the main factor for the fall.

'Delays in withdrawing the circuit breaker and changing the settlement system are among the elements that the causing investors to lose confidence in the market,' a top stockbroker said.

All involved in the capital market should come forward and work together for salvaging this ailing market, DSE chairman Md Rakibur Rahman said.

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Land acquisition to develop Ctg airport completed

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Feb 23: The authorities today completed the land acquisition work for developing Chittagong airport into an international one, officials said.

The acquired land covering over 160 acres was handed over to the Civil Aviation Authority today for the purpose.

Meanwhile, preparations are underway to initiate the work for developing Chittagong airport into an international one at a cost of over Tk 540 crore.

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Annan signs deal with Baghdad

BAGHDAD, Feb 23: UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan won a written commitment from Iraq today, securing unrestricted weapons inspections in a deal that could avert a US military strike, reports AP.

Annan withheld details of the deal until he could return and present it to the UN Security Council tomorrow. The United States, proceeding with its military buildup, withheld judgment on the success of Annan's emergency mission.

The agreement I have reached with the government of Iraq, I consider balanced and in conformity with Security Council resolutions," Annan told reporters. "Therefore, I hope it will be acceptable to all the members of the Security Council," including the United States.

Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, who signed the agreement for his government, said Iraq's commitment came from Annan's diplomacy—not from the threat of a US strike.

"It was diplomacy. Wise, balanced, United Nations world diplomacy that enabled us to reach this agreement. Not saber rattling," Aziz said. "This is an agreement of reason."

Cable News Network quoted Annan as saying that the agreement covers not only the eight presidential sites—which are at the core of the dispute—but all sites where Iraq is suspected to be holding banned weapons.

At his news conference, Annan said,

"She did not have some questions, which I addressed, and I think we will be talking further when I get back to New York."

Annan left Baghdad at 2:15 pm (11:15 GMT) today for Paris en route to New York, where he will seek the Security Council's endorsement for the agreement. A crucial vote will be that of the United States.

An endorsement would save Iraq from a punishing US air attack, and save Washington from strong international opposition to such a strike. It would also be a triumph for Annan—if the Iraqis hold to the bargain.

Asked if he gave an ultimatum to Iraq, Annan said: "I did not come here with ultimatums. The secretary-general does not speak in those terms."

"I am hopeful and perhaps even confident that this agreement will take us beyond the crisis," he said.

Annan's deal-making meeting with Saddam took place at the eleventh hour at the Republican Palace, one of eight presidential sites that Iraq had declared off-limits.

AFP adds: President Bill Clinton conferred today with world leaders on the deal signed by Iraq.

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Iraqi President Saddam Hussein (right) meets UN Secretary General Kofi Annan on Sunday in Baghdad. Annan reached an agreement aimed at peacefully resolving the crisis over UN arms inspections during talks with Iraqi leaders. —AP/UNB photo

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Annan said, "We will try to do our work in a reasonable period," he added.

When a reporter asked Aziz about UN inspectors entering presidential palaces, which Iraq had designated off-limits on grounds of national sovereignty, the deputy prime minister interjected firmly: "First of all, you don't know what we have agreed upon. So don't rush to conclusions."

Annan said he consulted with all five permanent members of the Security Council during his three-day negotiations here. Asked about US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's reaction, Annan said,

Commentary

This is politics gone mad

By Mahfuz Anam

A spectre is haunting our future—the spectre of hatred. It is taking over our politics as it had never done before. This hatred is engulfing our political life to the extent that nothing else appears to matter. National interest, peoples' welfare, principles, ethics, rule of law, election promises or personal sense of responsibility have all been surrendered to the overriding need to hurt the other side. This has resulted in a politics that can at best be termed *politics gone mad*. Otherwise how can one even begin to explain the unprecedented insult inflicted on the memory of the martyrs of our language movement?

I have no doubt in my mind that the desecration was the work of BNP and JCD cadres. But I have also no doubt in my mind that it was NOT deliberate. And that is why we feel as worried as we are. An unthinking person is devoid of all logic, totally unpredictable and as such capable of doing anything including such self-defeating

acts as the one we saw last Saturday.

BNP did not plan to desecrate the Shaheed Minar, or the memory of the martyrs. Yet it happened, and that also in the presence of no other person than the chief herself. It was possible because poisonous passion was allowed to hold sway that clouded rational judgment. In an outburst of over enthusiasm in expressing their hatred for Awami League, Chhatra League and the government of Sheikh Hasina, they thought nothing of desecrating the most revered symbol of our nationhood, the Shaheed Minar. A madness overtook Khaleda Zia's supporters temporarily during which nothing mattered except denigrating the 'enemy' even if it meant hurting the feelings of millions for whom Shaheed Minar has become the ultimate symbol of all our struggles for self assertion.

As in the case of the parliament which BNP has confused

as belonging to the government or the ruling party and not to the people; so also in the case of Shaheed Day, and the Minar itself, BNP's unthinking cadres have mixed it up with an official occasion and a government function. Shaheed Day has nothing to do with the government. If ever there was one Day or occasion that transcended all party and sectarian viewpoints, this is it. This is one place where the nation unites and finds a proud self expression that washes away all our sorrows and disappointments.

The perpetrators of this sacrilege totally forgot that ever since '52, and over the last four decades Ekushey has made a unique and unrivaled place for itself in the hearts and minds of every citizen of Bangladesh, of all ages, creeds and political hues. There is absolutely nothing that even comes near it in terms of the sacred stature that this occasion commands.

BNP's reaction, as is typical

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Task force report on NCBs submitted

Political patronage blamed for unlawful activities by TUs

By Inam Ahmed

Political patronage plays a major role in protecting unlawful activities of Trade Union (TU) leaders of Nationalised Commercial Banks, a task force report on TU activities in the NCBs has said.

The managements of the NCBs feel weak and demoralised in taking action against illegal activities of the TUs because of their political links with high ups.

The report, submitted to the finance minister Thursday, also said the main problem in curbing TU activities is a lack of environment and power of the banks, rather than any legal lacuna.

The taskforce left that the lawlessness now prevailing in the banks cannot be improved much just by changing laws or by introducing new laws. What is needed more is to revitalise the power of the banks to act against illegal activities of the TUs.

The task force was set up on July 29 last year under the chairmanship of Khandker Ibrahim Khaled, Deputy Governor of Bangladesh Bank (BB). Other members of the task force are KM Badrus Salam, General Manager (GM) of Agrani Bank; Mohammad Hossain, GM of Janata Bank; SM Moniam Hossain, GM of Rupali Bank and Md Shamsuddin, GM of the BB.

The bank managements have expressed their helplessness to the task force because of the trade union leaders' links with high ups in the government. They said action could not be taken against these leaders for this reason. For example, TU leader Abdul Huq had broken the door of the Krishi Bank Managing Director's office in 1987 and misbehaved with him. The MD went to meet the then president H M Ershad about the incident and found that the same leader, holding the post of clerk, is having exclusive discussion with the president. Naturally, nothing could be done against the TU leader.

The report also said rehabilitation of punished TU leaders at different times had a demoralising effect on the bank managements. The TU leaders who had been sacked in 1981 for going on illegal strike, were rehabilitated by the next government and this encouraged them to break the law further.

The report mentioned the incident of a TU leader being sacked for physically hurting the MD and GM of a bank. But the next government had reinstated him in service. Not only that, the then president, at a public meeting, had given the leader a seat beside him and publicly called him his younger brother.

These incidents prevent the bank managements from taking action against TU leaders.

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Rowdyism

BNP won't go for legal action

By Nazmul Ashraf

BNP will not go for legal action against those responsible for the vandalism that took place when its chief Begum Khaleda Zia placed wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar on Saturday.

The main opposition party is blaming the ruling party for the incident.

"We won't file any case against the attackers. We're not *mamlabaz* as they (the ruling party) are," BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan MP told The Daily Star last night.

Earlier, talking to newsmen on Sunday on the Shaheed Minar,

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Rowdyism at Shaheed Minar condemned

By Staff Correspondent

Different political and socio-cultural organizations continued to issue statements and hold rallies yesterday condemning the act of vandalism at the Central Shaheed Minar on Saturday and demanding exemplary punishment to the persons responsible for this.

Samimilito Sangshkritik Jote held a rally at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday protesting the incident and also the assault on its president Ramendu Majumder near the Dhaka University Central Mosque on the day. The Jote will hold another protest rally at 4 pm today (Tuesday) on the premises of the Teachers' Union.

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Shaheed Minar incident: None arrested yet

By Staff Correspondent

None was arrested till last night in connection with the incident at the Central Shaheed Minar, Ramna police said.

The Registrar of the Dhaka University Sunday filed a case with the Ramna thana alleging that some BNP activists were behind the incident at the Central Shaheed Minar in presence of BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia on Shaheed Dibosh.

Habib-Un-Nabi Shohel, general secretary of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), along with other JCD leaders threatened to kill some university teachers and destroyed the control room at the Shaheed Minar, the FIR stated.

In the FIR, the Registrar prayed that the miscreants who destroyed the programmes of Ekushey and dishonoured the Shaheed Minar should be punished.

Meanwhile, the accused persons in the case were seen participating in the procession and rally organised by the JCD on the Dhaka University campus.

Ex-BCL leader shot dead in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Feb 23: One person was shot dead during a clash between two rival factions of Chhatra League at Nizampur College under Mirsharai thana this afternoon, police said.

The victim, Shahadat Hossain (25), was identified as a former leader of BCL Nizampur College unit.

Shahadat was bullet-hit when he tried to intervene in the clash. He succumbed to his injuries at the local health complex.

The trouble started when a BCL activist opened fire on his rivals after an altercation. None was arrested so far in this connection, police said.

Sad end of a dashing cricketer



The coffin of former Indian Test star Raman Lamba (inset) being carried to the Abahani Club by players and officials yesterday. —Star photo

By Hasan Masood

Former Indian Test cricketer Raman Lamba died in the intensive care unit of PG hospital in the city yesterday afternoon after being in coma for nearly 48 hours. The right-handed Delhi batsman was 39.

Lamba sustained a massive brain confusion with malignant oedema on Friday following the blow he took on his head while fielding at short leg for Abahani against Mohammedans during a Premier Super league match at the Dhaka Stadium. He was not wearing a helmet when a full-blooded pull shot of Mehrab Hossain struck the left side of his forehead (temporal).

He walked from the field to the pavilion. Soon afterwards, when his condition deteriorated, he was rushed to a local clinic. After about 24 hours, when his condition further worsened, he was transferred to the PG hospital on Saturday afternoon. Since then he was in coma and was supported by an artificial respiratory system. On Sunday afternoon, Lamba

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Court restores Kalyan Singh govt in UP

NEW DELHI, Feb 23: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Kalyan Singh returned to the office of the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister this evening after a Division Bench of the Allahabad High Court stayed the Governor's February 21 order dismissing his government, reports BSS.

Singh told newsmen soon after the court's order today that he was the chief minister on February 21 and assuming the charge since the High Court had maintained the *status quo ante*.

The Division Bench comprising Justice DK Seth and Justice Virendra Dixit in its order directed reinstatement of government in Uttar Pradesh and said governor Romesh Bhandari is at liberty to summon the State Assembly and to direct Kalyan Singh to prove his majority on the floor of the House.

The court further said that if Kalyan Singh failed to prove his majority or secure confidence of the House, the governor

may take appropriate action.

Loktantrik Congress (LC) leader, Jagdambika Pal, who was sworn in as the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh following the dismissal of the Kalyan Singh Government by the governor on Saturday night, said today that he was going to file a special leave petition in the Supreme Court challenging the judgement of the Allahabad High Court.

The petition is being drafted and would be filed soon, said another LC leader Pramod Tiwari in Lucknow.

Jagdambika Pal, who was divedest of his chief minister-ship by the Allahabad High Court order, has termed his removal as murder of democracy.

"It must be the only incident of its kind in which a chief minister who was duly administered oath, was removed in such a manner," he was quoted as saying.

Giving his reaction to the court verdict, BJP leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee said "what a

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Our heartiest congratulation for conferring the Best Exporters Award to renowned industrialist and Honourable Chairman of Best Group of Industries Mr. Kamal Ahmed Mojumder, M. P., (Dhaka-11, Mirpur-Pallabi) from the Prime Minister of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh and Daughter of Democracy Sheikh Hasina.

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FIQC certificate needed to export frozen fish

Star Report

Frozen fish exporters will need to obtain compliance certificate from the Fish Inspection and Quality Control (FIQC) wing of the Fisheries Department to export their products to the European Union.

According to the Official Journal of the European Communities, six Bangladeshi enterprises have been approved to export fishery and aquaculture products.

These enterprises are: Apex Foods, SAR and Co Ltd, Meenhar Sea Foods Ltd, Lockpur Fish Processing Co Ltd, Asian Sea Food Ltd, and Sigma Sea Foods Ltd.

The European Union had recently conducted health checks on the fish packaging plants and imposed a ban for non-compliance with European standards.

Later, these six enterprises got the green signal from the EU for export.

These establishments will need to meet the condition that each consignment must be accompanied by a numbered original health certificate, duly completed, signed and dated.

The health certificates must be drawn up in at least one official language of the member state of EC where the checks are carried out.

All packages, except in the case of frozen fishery products in bulk and intended for the manufacturer of preserved foods, must bear the world 'Bangladesh' and the approval number of the establishment of origin in indelible letters.

The EU states will allow only those fisheries products prepared and packed after December 31, 1997, according to the journal.

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