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PHILIPS



Police lobbed tear gas shells to disperse JCD activists demonstrating near BTV Bhaban at Rampura in the city yesterday. — Star photo

3 burnt alive

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fighters and local people frantically tried to control the flame from engulfing the whole locality.

Thirteen fire fighting units from four stations and the fire brigade headquarters took about three and a half hours to douse the fire.

A 'twin vehicle' of the Mohammadpur fire brigade station which was carrying pumps and hose pipes was damaged as some 'over enthusiastic' local people pushed it close to the fire thinking that it would be helpful in extinguishing it, a fire brigade official said.

As the fire broke out, the slum dwellers started running helter skelter through the narrow lanes that connected the slum with the main road in Rayer Bazaar. This caused minor injuries to about 30 people, local people said.

Fire brigade personnel or police could not ascertain the cause of the fire that broke out at about 1:15 pm at the southern portion of the slum known as Bot Tola.

"We don't know from where the fire began. I went out of the house leaving all the household goods as neighbours started shouting fire," said Rina who could manage to rescue her three children.

Most of the dwellers suspected that the fire originated from an earthen oven or electric short circuit. When this correspondent visited the slum, some dwellers alleged that a number of houses in and around the slum had unauthorised power and gas lines. However, it could not be confirmed from the authorities concerned.

The slum, clustered with single-room shanties, were built on makeshift platforms of bamboo structures on a low lying land near the town protection embankment. Most of the slum dwellers were garment workers, rickshawpullers and labourers.

A five-storey building and some tin-shed houses adjacent to the slum were also affected in the fire.

The fire engulfed the slum as the fire fighting units found it difficult to reach the spot through narrow roads in Rayer Bazaar area, fire fighters said.

Mohammadpur police said they have no information about missing of any person other than the death of three persons. But they continued search in the debris till filling of this report last night. Police force were reinforced in the area following the incident.

Meanwhile, the three bodies were brought to Mohammadpur thana last night. Police said they were preparing to file an unnatural death case in connection with the incident.

BNP may opt to join JS

From page 1

demands unrealised." He said: "Parliament is not the personal abode of Sheikh Hasina. We'll go back to the House with our right as elected representatives."

About various preconditions put by BNP for its return to Parliament, he said, "We're not a trade union, it is futile to just raise these five-point or 10-point demands and sit back home."

"We must realise our demand in parliament putting continuous pressure on the government. It's all non-sense to stay outside the House and crying in wilderness," said Barrister Khan, son of former Chief Minister Ataur Rahman Khan.

He said "more than a majority of the party MPs gave opinion at the BNP parliamentary meeting in mid-January to join the current session of Parliament. It's really a mystery how that decision was changed and I don't know who had done that."

About Dr Alauddin Khan and Swapan's defection, Khan said it must be examined what factors had prompted the two BNP MPs to join the government. He indirectly blamed the in-

Politics of defection is not healthy: Saifur

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Feb 25: BNP central leader M Saifur Rahman today said Awami League government's 'picking up' of Opposition MPs is against political norms and ideology and a clear disregard to the constitution.

Politics of defection is not a healthy politics and it should not be encouraged in any way, he said.

Strongly criticising the ruling party's 'heinous' acts in this regard, the former finance minister said, such practice will positively hamper parliamentary democracy which is yet to be firmly rooted in the country.

Besides, it will widen the gap between the ruling party and the Opposition, Saifur said while talking to a group of newsmen.

When asked to comment on a news item published in today's issue of a Bangla daily which said Saifur wants to become finance minister, the BNP stalwart said, "There is not an iota of truth in this news".

Price hike of essentials

Review meeting ends without any decision

In the wake of price hike of essentials, the Commerce Ministry held a meeting in the city yesterday to review the latest price situation, but it ended without any decision, reports UNB.

Chaired by Commerce Secretary Syed Alamgir Farouk Chowdhury, the meeting was attended by the officials of TCB, Food Directorate and other concerned agencies, and representatives of the trade bodies and the Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB).

The Commerce Secretary reportedly told the meeting that at the present age of free-market economy, the government has nothing to do to control the prices of consumer commodities.

"The government can take necessary steps if the supply of goods is hampered," he was quoted as saying by the CAB representative who attended the meeting.

According to a CAB press release, its representative Emdad Hossain Malek said at the meeting that the government can at least ensure adequate supply of the daily necessities like rice and pulses, if it is unable to control the prices.

In this regard, he referred to

a 1956 law on the essential commodities. The representative of merchants dealing in pulses claimed at the meeting that at present, the highest price of 'Masur Dal' in the wholesale market is Tk 28 per kg.

On the other hand, the TCB Chairman told the meeting that they have enough stock of 'Masur Dal' with a price tag of Tk 30 per kg, but there are no buyers.

However, the CAB press release said that the retail price of 'Masur Dal' is now Tk 36 to 38 per kg.

The representative of Badamtali Rice Traders Association informed the meeting that rice price has fallen in the last three days by Tk 30 to 40 per maund.

He said the price of coarse rice is Tk 13.12 to 14.73 per kg in wholesale market and Tk 16 to 17 per kg in the retail markets.

The official of Food Directorate told the meeting that there is no reason for the price hike of rice.

"Some 1.63 lakh metric tons of rice were imported only from India last month and import of another one lakh tons is under process," he was quoted as saying.

He mentioned Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim's press statement that all the demands of BNP, including withdrawal of cases excepting those related to murder and fire arms, have been met.

Col Oil said, "If his (Nasim's) statement is true, then this'll certainly improve the situation and lead to a better understanding between the two parties."

To a question, he said, "We're in constant touch with Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia."

Talking to UNB, another senior BNP leader MK Anwar, said the defection of the two MPs will not restrain them from taking a decision on the question of joining the parliament.

But he hastened to add that a condition should be created "so that our joining the Parliament is meaningful."

Anwar, however, said the party's policy-makers will take the final decision on this crucial point on Saturday.

The BNP mid-level leaders blamed the top leadership for playing the role of on-lookers, abandoning both parliament and the street.

JCD procession

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behind a barbed wire barricade, mounted on wooden frames. As soon as the marchers touched the barricades shouting slogans, few stones landed on the policemen. The police immediately retaliated with lathi charge and tear gas.

The JCD processionists vanished from the main road and sheltered in the narrow lanes. Policemen removed the barricade and charged at the dispersing crowd. Some tear gas shells landed at houses nearby where several protesters were trying to hide.

After about 15 minutes policemen retreated to their previous position. Soon the JCD activists emerged from their hideouts and regrouped under the assurance of a police officer that they would not be chased any more if they stopped picking at the police.

The JCD activists, mostly young men and women, sat down on the road while their leaders delivered heated speeches condemning the government and the BTV for its role.

At one point several leaders led by Shahiduddin Chowdhury Annie, President of JCD, approached the police officers and asked them to allow four representatives to go to the BTV Bhaban and hand over a memorandum.

A police officer, after discussing the matter on his walkie talkie, rejected the request and said, "you can give the memorandum to us, we will deliver it to the BTV."

Annie later told the reporters that at least two shots were fired from shot guns during the melee. "Several of our boys and girls received injuries from splinters," he said.

UNB adds, BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan condemned the police attack on 'peaceful' procession of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal near the Television Bhaban at Rampura yesterday.

Toxic waste

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In addition to liquid waste, plastic, rubber and engineering plants at the zone are also emitting toxic gas, dust, black fumes and strong stench, polluting the atmosphere, the report said.

The BSCIC industrial zone, set up in 1987 over an area of 44.94 acres, produces 370 cubic meters of liquid waste every day. Since its very inception the industrial zone had no plan for waste disposal.

The DOE chemists and experts who tested the water of the wetlands and the surrounding areas of the zone found the Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) of the water at 450 mg per litre. Acceptable level of BOD should be 50 mg per litre. The level of Suspended Solid was 425 mg per litre against the acceptable level of 150 mg per litre. The Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD) was found to be 720 mg per liter against the acceptable level of 200 mg per liter of water.

The report recommended that there must be a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the BSCIC industrial zone. It may not be possible to set up waste treatment plants for every unit but this can be done through four centralised treatment plants for the four zones, it said.

Or, there can be a central treatment plant, cost of which could be realised from the owners of the industries.

School teacher

From page 1

fled from the scene after opening fire on him. Police informed that the attack on the headmaster was a sequel to internal feud in the school managing committee and local rivalry centring the recent union parishad election.

A case was started with Lohagara thana accusing eight persons including former local UP chairman for killing. However, none was arrested in this connection so far, police said.

21,264 pethidine ampoules seized from Albert David

By Staff Correspondent

The Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) recovered 21,264 ampoules of 'illegally produced' pethidine injection and some raw materials used for manufacturing the drug from the godown of Albert David (Bangladesh) Ltd at Tejgaon on Tuesday night.

Two persons — Salahuddin Chowdhury, 60, and Mahbubur Rahman, 50 — were also arrested during the raid at the godown of the pharmaceutical company, said a DNC press release yesterday.

The seized raw materials include 10 kilograms of pethidine hydrochloride.

The DNC filed a case with Tejgaon thana against four persons including the owner of the company under the Narcotics Control Act of 1990.

Jamuna Bridge

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He said, "Out of a total of 59 segments, only three are yet to be completed and these are expected to be in place by the end of March. We hope to open the bridge by the first week of June but we cannot specify the date as it depends on the decision of the Prime Minister."

Referring to some recent newspaper on 'cracks' in certain structures of the bridge, the minister said, "There are some misconceptions about the fundamental principle of construction of the bridge."

Quoting views of a panel of experts he said, "The 'hairline cracks' in such a structure are very natural. Such cracks, measured to be about 0.25mm, are common. However, the cracks do not pose any threat to durability of the bridge."

BGMEA

From page 1

A Razzak Sattar, Sakawat Hossain of Dhaka region and AF Chowdhury (Ferdous) and Abu Taiyeb of Chittagong region.

In today's election, some 1421 voters cast their ballots to elect nine members of BGMEA for one year.

Sammilita Parishad leader Mostafa Golam Quddus and Forum leader Anisul Huq led their respective panels in the election.

Out of total 1526 voters of Dhaka and Chittagong, 1421 voters — 1122 from Dhaka and 299 from Chittagong — cast their ballots.

Quddus needed seven members for his re-election out of the contesting nine.

Our Staff Correspondent adds: "I am happy. I will be more devoted now to boost garment exports and exceed the targets." Quddus said in his initial reaction at midnight.

"I need support from the finance ministry," he said promising "to bring the government and the opposition together for the growth of the Bangladesh economy, especially in the garments sector".

He attributed his panel's victory to the voters' desire to ensure continuity of his "unfinished tasks".

Ban TUs in banks

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(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 BB.

In the alternative recommendations, the report said that TU activities in the banking sector have to be suspended for theoretically not more than two registered TUs can exist in one bank. But in reality some banks have as many as six TUs and none of the banks have less than three TUs which is a violation of clause 7(2) of the Industrial Ordinance of 1969. As such, the Task Force has recommended that the registrations of the disqualified TUs as per 10(kha) and 10(chai) clauses of the same ordinance be cancelled.

Before allowing TU activities after completion of three years' suspension, a code of conduct has to be formulated for the TU members violation of which will be punishable.

During the suspension period, the banks will recover the office spaces used by the TUs. After the reintroduction of TUs, these will relocate their offices outside bank premises as CBA office. They cannot have any office in any branch, regional office or head office of the banks.

The TUs cannot work as front organisations of any political parties or its associated organisations. TUs will also not use any political slogans and will refrain from giving any political statement.

The TUs will only have central committees and cannot form any regional or branch committees. If they try to form any such committees, administrative actions will be taken against the TUs.

The Task Force also recommended that a clause to the effect that processions, rallies, slogans inside the branch or head office of banks will be

PM urges diploma engrs

Work for development of human resources

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon the diploma engineers to apply their intellect and planning for human resources development for achieving economic freedom of the people, reports UNB.

Addressing the National Convention of Diploma Engineers at the Institute of Diploma Engineers at Kakrail in the city, Hasina said the example of generation of self-employment process set by the diploma engineers should be followed by unemployed youths.

Technical education can play a vital role in creating self-employment for a better life and better profession, the Prime Minister said calling upon them to work for the expansion of self-employment process.

The theme of the three-day convention is "Human resources development for national economic emancipation."

Hasina said the government has decided to set up 12 Science and Technology universities in 12 districts with introduction of all necessary advanced courses of science and technology.

She said the government has also taken steps to establish 16

new polytechnic institutes, including three for female students, in the current fiscal year.

In the Fifth Five Year Plan, the government incorporated a programme to establish one polytechnic institute at every district headquarters, she added.

The Prime Minister said the engineers are a vital organ of the society, they are directly involved in the public welfare activities, and industrial production. She urged them to work with honesty and dedication for the welfare of the people.

Responding to various demands of the diploma engineers, Hasina said the government will cordially consider the professional demands. "An inter-ministerial committee has been formed to solve your professional hazards," she informed.

"We'll consider your legitimate demands," the Prime Minister said adding that the government will consider the IDEB proposal for extending cooperation for construction of the IDEB Bhaban.

Presided over by IDEB President Rafiqul Islam Bhuiyan, the inaugural session was also addressed by its General Secretary AKMA Hamid, Abdur Rafiq and M Mozammel Huq.

Card phone being abused

From page 1

240 for each 100 and 200 unit phone card respectively. Because of the crisis, users are compelled to purchase phone cards from the unauthorised traders at higher rates, they alleged.

Mansur Ali, a phone card trader, when asked told this correspondent that he had to "invest" about Tk 7,000 per fortnight to remain in business. "So I am to make more profit" he added.

The dishonest BTBT employees have developed a "mechanism" with the unscrupulous traders in every town in the northern districts for making money from the card phone system. It has been alleged that the dishonest traders make distant and overseas callers at cheaper rates by using phone card channels with help from microwave rooms of telephone exchanges in this region. A section of BTBT employees keeps secret contact with those traders. Under the secret arrangement, the traders generally dial 15 or 16 to book any such call through card phone channels.

When contacted, the Assistant Engineer of BTBT, Natore denied the allegations.

Asraful Islam, a card phone user, while talking to The Daily Star, said, "It is mysterious that the card phone booths in rural areas which are comparatively less used, after remain 'out of order' or 'busy', as the computerised screen show, but the phones in towns work well always."

It has also been alleged that

some chemicals are used on the phone cards so that those are exhausted quickly. Shamim, a regular user of card phone claimed that sometime when he inserted his card in the phone set, the credit units of the card became zero very fast. Even, sometime it turns zero immediately after it is inserted in the phone set, he alleged.

When contacted, officials of BTBT, Rajshahi, could not tell anything in this connection. The phone numbers printed on the phone cards for making complaint are not attended it was also alleged.

Expansion of OMS programme

Sale of rice under open market sale (OMS) programme in the capital will be extended to 17 more markets from today, reports BSS.

Earlier, the OMS programme covered 63 markets in the city and rice was being sold through 160 dealers, said an official handout yesterday.

Chetia

From Page 1

authorities.

The appeal leave petition was filed by BHRC secretary general Md Saiful Islam Dildar on humanitarian ground following a request from ULFA Chairman Arbinda Rajkheer, said a BHRC press release.

It said Chetia had worked in favour of the people of this country during the Liberation War in 1971 and helped those who took refuge in India at that time.

One killed, 17 hurt in Jhenidah clash

JHENIDAH, Feb 25: A clash between two rival groups of people at Teltupi village in Harinakunda thana today left one person dead and 17 injured, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the clash took place as one Yagub Ali aided by his accomplices made an armed attack on his rival group at about 8 am, leaving 18 people injured.

Of them, Tanjen, 42, succumbed to his injuries at Harinakunda Thana Health Complex this noon.

Police said Yagub is an accused in the Jamaat Ali killing case. Ali was killed by some miscreants on February 12.

Clarification

Tulow Bangladesh Ltd has issued the following clarification on The Daily Star news item headlined 'Partnership with Tulow in Block 9: US, Malaysian cos asked to take decision by March 7,' published yesterday.

Aidey Heavey did not say "Tulow would get 50 per cent of equity in Block 9 while it would get Block 11 all alone."

He also did not say that the share price of Tulow in Ireland and London would shoot at least three to four times when the Block negotiations would be completed.

Design flaws

From page 1

members. Only three copies of computer printout of the report were made and those were submitted to the energy and mineral resources minister, secretary of the ministry and the chairman of Petrobangla respectively.

Disks used for computer composing were also handed over to the authorities concerned, said sources close to the committee, adding that the report was compiled under tight security inside a room at the Petrobangla office.

A communication problem among the mud logger, driller and the mud engineer was also detected, the report noted.

"Pulling out the drill stream during a gas blow-out is not acceptable even in normal drilling practice," said a source quoting the report and added "the well should have been balanced either by increasing the mud weight or by bottom circulation."

"Pulling out the drill stream released the pressure and caused the blow-out," the source noted.

The report contains 50 pages with details of the signed statements which were collected from at least 30 technical hands present at the sight during the explosion.

Drilling, mud engineering, cementation and geological programmes of the Occidental under the PSC were also enclosed with the annexure of the report.

The committee read out questions over telephone to those technical persons who were present during the incident but had gone abroad soon afterward. Their replies were heard over the loudspeaker telephone and recorded in presence of all the members.



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A Bank Draft/Pay Order equivalent to 2.5% of the quoted price (refundable) drawn in favour of 'Investment Corporation of Bangladesh' will have to be submitted along with the tender. The tender schedule having rules/conditions of the tender may be obtained from the Establishment Department, Head Office of the Corporation at 8, DIT Avenue (13th Floor), Dhaka on every working days on or before 4th March, 1998 on payment of Tk 200.00 (Taka two hundred) only cash (Non-refundable).

The Corporation reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

Md. Iftikhar-uz-Zaman

Asstt. General Manager

Establishment Department

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