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Pass mark for each subject should be 40, president tells PSC chairman

President Shahabuddin Ahmed has said steps should be taken to evaluate the general standard of education of the BCS examinees so that meritorious candidates can be recruited in the government services, reports UNB.

His remarks came while receiving the annual report '97 of the Public Service Commission (PSC) at Bangabhaban yesterday.

A PSC delegation, led by its Chairman Prof S M A Faiz, submitted the report.

President Shahabuddin told the PSC Chairman that pass mark for every subject should be at least 40 and special attention be given to compulsory subjects like Bengali, English and general knowledge.

The President expressed his

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Minister tells JS Proposed Ctg int'l airport to be named after Hannan

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad resumed its sitting yesterday after a nine-day recess as the ruling Awami League and opposition BNP continued negotiations to end the six-month long parliamentary stand-off.

The BNP has been boycotting parliament sessions since August 30 last to press home some demands.

The general discussion on the address delivered by President Shahabuddin Ahmed on the opening day of the current session dominated yesterday's proceedings of the Sangsad.

AL legislators thanked the President as his speech 'covered all the development works' of the government headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The Jatiya Party was critical of the speech because it was 'nothing but the hymns' of the government.

The House took up its business at 11:00 am, an hour behind the schedule.

Civil Aviation Minister Mosharrar Hossain told the House that the government would start development work at Chittagong airport soon to make it an international airport.

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Justice Kemal Uddin new LC Chairman

Justice Kemal Uddin Hossain has been appointed as Chairman of the Law Commission, reports UNB.

The post remained vacant for the last two months following resignation of former Chief Justice F K M A Munim, said an official handout yesterday.

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AL-BNP dialogue continues Ban on street rallies now 'last barrier'

By Nazmul Ashraf

The Awami League-BNP dialogue has hit a snag on the question of withdrawal of the ban on public rallies on certain streets in the capital.

On the third consecutive day's negotiations yesterday, the BNP leaders gave up their 'rigidity' on the demand for re-installation of the pontoon bridge over the Crescent Lake in the city but were firm on their demand for withdrawal of the ban on public rallies on at least one or two city streets, sources close to the negotiators on both sides told The Daily Star.

Speaker Humayun Rashid Choudhury, who is mediating the dialogue said there was 'pro-

crastination' but declined to admit any 'stagnation' in the talks.

"Nothing happened today... The state of the dialogue today is as the same as it was yesterday. We're still on the threshold of a breakthrough," he told newsmen after the talks that began at his chamber at 10.45 and was adjourned at 1.30 pm. The talks will resume at 7 this evening.

The Speaker however reiterated his optimism about a solution to the long-standing parliamentary stand-off due to BNP's abstention from the Jatiya Sangsad session.

The sources said the ruling

party insisted on a fresh agreement covering 'total implementation' of the previously-signed four-point agreement between the two parties and assurances to meet two other BNP demands regarding the pontoon bridge and street rallies.

But the BNP demanded an announcement from the government withdrawing the ban on holding public rallies on the Topkhana Road, the Manik Mia Avenue or the Panthapath.

In the meeting, the AL negotiators explained the problems in making 'instant announcement' regarding withdrawal of ban on street rallies while the

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ONLY-THREE SPANS LEFT: The bridge on the Jamuna is fast nearing completion. It is scheduled to be opened to traffic on June 23 this year. The billion-dollar bridge is 4.8 km long and the longest in the country.

Star photo by A K M Mohsin

Once destitute, they now know how to lead a better life

By Staff Correspondent

"It gives me a sense of pride and dignity that I can talk about women's emancipation in the society. If all could take the path that I came through, none would have remained poor in Bangladesh," said Monwara Begum of Singra thana in Natore.

A spirited Monwara, who has been working as a "crew member" of Rural Maintenance Programme (RMP) of CARE-Bangladesh for one decade, joined 72 others like her at a function in the city yesterday.

CARE-Bangladesh, which operates in cooperation with the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) to maintain rural earthen roads in the country under RMP employing over 60,000 destitute women, hosted a reception to 73 RMP "crew" members who con-

tested the recently held Union Parishad (UP) polls. Thirty-seven out of these 73 RMP crew members won the election held in December last year.

The reception was held at the auditorium of the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS).

Though she lost the polls, Monwara said, "Working with CARE, I learnt how to take care of other destitute and less fortunate women in the neighbourhood. I can help them lead a better life and be more conscious about politics, environment and the world at large."

Bharati Bala Adhikari was elected a member of Gowla union parishad under Mollahat thana in Bagerhat district. Bharati, whose husband died in the Liberation War, burst into tears recalling the days of

pangs and agony in raising her two orphan children amid unbearable economic hardship. "The road maintenance work came as a blessing in disguise in my life. I want the Canada government, particularly the CIDA, continue the RMP for the sake of thousands of distressed women," said Bharati.

The RMP, which ensures cost effective maintenance of some 80,000 kilometres of economically important rural earthen roads in Bangladesh, is jointly funded by the CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency), Bangladesh government and union parishads. The CIDA bears 65 per cent of the cost, government 25 per cent and union parishads 10 per cent.

Khadija Khatun, who was

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Indian polls: Vote counting today

NEW DELHI, Mar 1: Election officials today carried sealed ballot boxes to heavily guarded locations across the nation to prepare for the counting of votes, the last phase of a staggered election for India's next government, reports AP.

Counting begins at 8:00 am (0230 GMT) tomorrow for most

constituencies in the presence of representatives of candidates.

More than 300 million of

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India's 600 million voters have cast ballots in the election. On Saturday, eight people were

killed in election-related violence, bringing the death toll to at least 76.

Saturday's voting completed the election for all but six of the 543 contested seats in Parliament. Vote counting begins before the final districts go to the polls on March 7 and a few snow-bound areas that are to vote in June.

Although the first results are not expected until late tomorrow, trends from the counting will start trickling in from most of the 543 contested seats by late afternoon.

No single party is expected to win an outright majority in Lok Sabha. And that is likely to lead to uncertainty, days of political wrangling between parties, before a coalition government is installed.

JP won't go for alliance with BNP: Ershad

Jatiya Party Chairman Hossain Mohammad Ershad has said his party may go for anti-government movement to protest the price hike of essentials, reports UNB.

Without a strong issue, "we will not take to the street. We do not believe in politics of agitation," Ershad told reporters at the Zia International Airport on his return from Saudi Arabia yesterday morning.

"Now there is only one issue that is price hike including high price of rice, pulses and

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Cases against Litu Injunction on Al-Baraka vacated

By Staff Correspondent

The High Court yesterday vacated an injunction on Al-Baraka Bank to criminally prosecute Abul Khair Litu, an industrialist and chairman of Bengal Group.

Al-Baraka Bank filed six cases against Abul Khair for realising defaulting loans totalling Tk 137 crore in loan and interest. Later, a compromise was made in the Fourth Artha Rin Adalat that if he paid his principal amount of Tk 34 crore by January 15, 1997, or by an extended time of another three months, his loan will be deemed fully repaid.

If he fails to pay, the bank would execute decree for the total amount of Tk 137 crore. Simultaneously, the bank may also commence criminal proceedings against Abul Khair if the cheques bounce.

Accordingly, post dated cheques were paid by Litu at the

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3 released on bail CID investigating alleged torture in Dhanmondi thana custody

By Staff Correspondent

Three persons, including two young men who were allegedly tortured in Dhanmondi thana custody last month, were released on bail from the Dhaka Central Jail yesterday afternoon, jail sources said.

Sujon, Kawsar and a private car driver, Ramzan Ali, were arrested by police on January 20 on charges of assaulting four persons including a minister's son on Elephant Road.

The three were placed on one-day remand and later sent to jail on 30 days detention. But the authorities concerned cancelled the detention order about ten days ago.

Meanwhile, a two-member CID team investigating the reported torture in custody was likely to submit its report to the higher authorities in a few days, CID sources said.

CID investigators interrogated the three, the policemen

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Onion sells at Tk 50 per kg, salt price doubles

Star Report

Onion was selling at Tk 50 per kg yesterday while salt price doubled last night.

The price of onion shot up to Tk 45 to 50 per kg against Tk 15 to 18 only a month ago.

Onion was selling at Tk 32 to 36 per kg four days earlier. Its price was Tk 26 to 30 per kg last week, Tk 22 to 26 in the week before that and Tk 15 to 18 in the first week of last month.

While visiting a major wholesale market in the city — Kauran Bazar — this correspondent found that a good number of traders were sitting idle without having any stock for sale.

One of the wholesalers said that the crisis might persist for another 15 days until the harvest of onion begins. They were selling onion at Tk 160 to 200

for each five kg. They said onion harvest may be poor due to unfavourable weather this season. Besides, harvest in India, from where a huge quantity of onion is imported, was also poor, they pointed out.

"Import from India has been stopped," said Alim Uddin, a wholesaler. He also said it was highly unlikely that Bangladesh onion was going to India. "We have huge demand for the item. Why should we sell to India?"

He also noted out the chances of hoarding. "Wholesalers never hoard," he said adding that onion is perishable item.

Only two out of 12 retailers were selling this essential item at Kauran Bazar retail market, near the wholesale market.

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The government yesterday decided to extend all facilities to the traders for importing onion on an emergency basis, said an official handout last night.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Commerce Ministry which reviewed prices of essential commodities.

The meeting expressed the hope that the onion price will come down shortly with supplies from Faridpur and Pabna.

According to another handout, the stock of salt in the country is adequate.

Besides, TCB has already taken steps to import a huge quantity of salt to increase its stock, it said, adding a consignment of salt has already reached the port and is waiting for unloading.

Prime Minister urges people Force Opposition to join parliament

By Staff Correspondent

NAOGAON, Mar 1: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today accused the opposition BNP of undermining the Parliament as well as the voters by continuously boycotting the House, reports agencies.

The government has taken all possible steps to make the parliament effective and meaningful, she said, renewing her appeal to the Opposition to return to parliament.

Addressing a huge public meeting at the KD High School ground, Hasina said the opposition members should remain accountable to their voters. People have voted them to tell their problems in parliament, but they are not going to the parliament.

She urged the people to force the opposition MPs to go to the House to speak about the developmental needs of their respective areas.

"You (voters) should ask them (opposition) why they

have boycotted the parliament, why they're not going to Parliament."

The Prime Minister said the present government is determined to protect the rights of the people. "We are trying to ensure the basic rights of the people by improving their standard."

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Jatra pandal, 5 houses set ablaze in Maheshkhali

From Our Correspondent

COXS BAZAR, Mar 1: At least 16 people were injured, three of them seriously, when a mob raided and set ablaze a jatra pandal at a village fair and five houses in a nearby village in Maheshkhali island in the district today.

The jatra pandal at village Adinath was raided and set

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Nari Samaj to organise 'human chain' in city March 8

By Staff Correspondent

Sammilita Nari Samaj, a conglomerate of women's organisations, will organise a human chain in the city on March 8 in observance of the International Women's Day.

The human chain will be organised at Shahbagh from 2 pm to 3 pm and it will be followed by a procession towards the Central Shaheed Minar, says a press release.

Later, Nari Samaj will hold a meeting and a cultural function at the Shaheed Minar at 4 pm.

Through its programmes on the Day this year, Nari Samaj will focus on various demands of working women.

It has requested employers and managements and authorities of mills, factories, industries, banks and other offices to grant leave to women employees and workers on March 8 to enable them to join the Day's programmes.

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বিশেষ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

ঢাকা আন্তর্জাতিক বাণিজ্য মেলা '৯৮ বিগত ২২শে ফেব্রুয়ারি '৯৮ তারিখ হতে শুরু হয়েছে। আগামী ২১শে মার্চ পর্যন্ত এ মেলা চলবে। প্রতিদিন সকাল ৯টা থেকে রাত ৯টা পর্যন্ত এ মেলা খোলা থাকবে। একইভাবে ছুটির দিন রাত ১০টা পর্যন্ত চলে। মেলায় ১৯টি দেশ অংশগ্রহণ করেছে এবং বিদেশী বিভিন্ন সামগ্রী প্রদর্শিত ও বিক্রি হচ্ছে। সাথে সাথে দেশীয় রপ্তানিযোগ্য পণ্যের বিপুল সমারোহ।

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