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VOL. VIII NO. 73 REGD. NO. DA 781 INTERNET: <http://www.dailystarnews.com> CHAITRA 19, 1404 BS DHAKA THURSDAY APRIL 2, 1998 ZILHAJ 4, 1418 HIJRI 12 PAGES PLUS RISING STARS: PRICE TAKA 3.00

Dual citizenship Cancellation of JS membership of 3 AL MPs demanded

By Staff Correspondent
A BNP lawmaker yesterday demanded in the Jatiya Sangsad that membership of three ruling party MPs including a state minister be cancelled for holding dual citizenship.

In a call attention notice, A K M Hafizur Rahman informed the House that State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Choudhury obtained British citizenship on July 18, 1995. His British passport number is 701185593.

Two more Awami League lawmakers — Dr Mohammad Selim and Syed Ashraf Islam — have dual citizenship, he said but did not name the foreign countries from where they obtained citizenship.

Hafizur Rahman said Article 66 (2) (c) of the Constitution restricts a foreign citizen to become member of the Jatiya Sangsad. Abul Hasan Choudhury, he said, is a dual citizen.

Belgian Ambassador to Bangladesh Ms Cristina Funes Noppen is learnt to have conveyed to Bangladesh government recently the decision to close down Belgian's Dhaka mission or to downgrade it because of budgetary constraints. Noppen, her country's envoy to Thailand, is concurrently accredited to Bangladesh.

The foreign ministry has suggested a visit at the Foreign Secretary level to examine the

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A new Dhaka Stock Exchange leadership — which sailed through in what was more a mock polling than anything after a lot of wheeling and dealing by top power brokers — launched frantic efforts to revive the market. Will they be able to repair the lost confidence? Read SWM's Cover Story this week on Dhaka's dying stock market

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Non-stop unplanned urbanisation City growing by 4.5 sq km a year

By Morshed Ali Khan

The city fringes in all directions are witnessing rapid unplanned urbanisation with townships growing without proper road, sewerage and other civic amenities.

Sources in Rajuk, DCC and other agencies attributed this to factors ranging from lack of awareness, corruption in Rajuk in approving building plans and Rajuk's failure to offer a plan for land use in the city.

Experts said if the authorities fail to check this haphazard growth immediately, these new urban areas will pose enormous problems. The city is growing at a rate of about 4.5 square km a year, they pointed out.

The worst affected area, according to some experts, is the eastern fringe of the city. Despite a World Bank (WB) aided multi-million taka project for planned development within the Flood Protection Embankment, this vast city suburb is

becoming concrete jungles like many other inner city areas.

The Tk 16-core Dhaka Metropolitan Development Planning (DMDP), completed in 1996, devised the Dhaka Master Plan and the Structure Plan. It defaulted in one of the most important components — Detailed Area Planning (DAP) of 26 areas of Dhaka, Narayanganj and Demra (DND).

DMDP officials claimed they had completed planning of two areas and were working on the rest which might take up to 12 years to complete.

The whole stretch of the eastern fringe — from Tongi bridge to Demra — by the river Balu has been left to unplanned urbanisation. And people are constructing on the assumption that the area is protected by an embankment, said an official.

"But if there is a severe flood as in 1988, the area will be submerged because no em-

bankment was built there under the Flood Action Plan", he said.

The unplanned growth of townships has caused land price plunge. House owners in those areas complained that due to lack of civic amenities, house rent in those areas is much less than in planned areas.

Senior police officials said crime rate in those areas is 'hundred times' that in inner city areas. "These are the new breeding grounds for crimes, being added to those in the city at an alarming rate", said one official.

At Badda, about 100 feet from the Swadhinata Swarani, a residential area with rows of houses has come into being in the last 10 years. The road through it is hardly 10 feet wide at the entrance, then it narrowed down to hardly five feet and even less.

At Amin Bazar, across Mir-

pur bridge, the lanes in the 'residential areas' are so narrow that two persons cannot walk side by side. "We even have difficulty in carrying a dead body from here," said a resident.

At Char Kamrang, across the river Buriganga, a township has grown in the last 15 years, without even a proper entrance. The entrance is so narrow that a car finds it difficult to pass. The whole area is almost devoid of any civic amenities.

Rajuk planners said the situation is almost out of control due to a rising population pressure on Dhaka. "People have to come here even for minor jobs," one planner noted.

Other Rajuk sources pointed out that over the years, most of its top officials have been bureaucrats. "Time has come to put professional technocrats at the top for improving the situation," said an official, request-

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Biman to be withdrawn from domestic routes

By Special Correspondent

Bangladesh Biman will be withdrawn from the domestic routes, leaving those to private airlines.

"Domestic routes will be totally given to the private sector. We will concentrate on regional and international routes", Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Mosharrar Hossain told newsmen yesterday.

The minister said this after he visited two Bombardier Dehavilland Dash-8-100 aircraft, which are going to ferry 37 passengers each for the country's third private airline, GMG Airlines, from next week.

But the minister could not give any specific time schedule for phasing out the national carrier from domestic routes.

He said the Biman is going to raise its domestic fare from May 1 but stopped short of disclosing the rate of enhancement.

The minister said Biman is incurring Taka 22 crore losses

annually to operate the domestic service, which is being subsidised from its international operations.

Aviation sources said Biman's fare is going to rise by 15 per cent, ten per cent less than what was proposed by the airline.

GMG Airlines brought two turboprops from Bombardier Aerospace of Canada recently.

It expects to operate six flights daily in Dhaka-Chittagong, Dhaka-Sylhet and Dhaka-Jessore routes next week, Shahab Sattar, Managing Director of the airline told The Daily Star.

Plans are there to add another Dash-8-100 next month and a 54-seater Dash-8-300 later to expand services to all the routes currently served by Biman, he said.

The minister said with the entry of GMG, there will be ten flights a day between Dhaka

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17 rescued children return home

By Special Correspondent

Seventeen children, aged between two and eight and five women, rescued by Indian police from traffickers, were brought back Dhaka last night.

The children were being taken to the Gulf states to be used as camel jockeys and the women as 'sex slaves'.

There were eleven men among the group. They will be handed over to Bangladesh immigration authorities by Indian authorities at Bengalpet today.

They were brought back by a Bangladesh Biman flight from Calcutta.

They will be temporarily sheltered at the office of the Bangladesh Jatiya Mahila Ainjibi Sangstha (BJMAS).

BJMAS runs a project to shelter such children and women and pays for their repa-

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BDR-BSF meet ends

Pledge to maintain peace in border areas

The three-day high-level border coordination conference between Bangladesh Rifles and Border Security Force of India ended at Rajshahi yesterday with a firm pledge to maintain peace and discipline in frontier areas, reports UNB.

Deputy Director General of BDR led the Bangladesh side while BSF Inspector General led Indian delegation at the conference, said a BDR press release.

The conference discussed different issues of bordering areas, including prevention of smuggling, gunfire, killing, dacoity, arms and narcotics smuggling, children and women trafficking and land dispute.

SC Bar polls

Habibul Islam, Abdul Awal new president, secy

By SC Correspondent

Advocate Habibul Islam Bhuiyan and Advocate Abdul Awal have been elected President and Secretary respectively of the Supreme Court Bar Association for the year of 1998-99.

Both of them were backed by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

The election was held on Tuesday.

Habibul Islam got 702 votes which his Awami League backed rival Amir-ul Islam second 571 votes.

Abdul Awal secured 704 votes. His rival, AL backed Nurul Islam Sujon got 339 votes.

Advocate Kazi Shahabuddin Ahmed and Syed A B Mahmudul Islam were elected Vice-Presidents.

Advocate Shahrabuddin Faiz was elected Treasurer and A B M Bayezid and Md Firoz Shah were elected Assistant Secretaries.

The newly elected members of the Executive Committee are Advocates Fazilatun Nessa, Farida Begum, Zainul Abedin Tuhin, Rashidul Hasan, Shah-naz Haque, Md Golam Hossain (Sarwar) and Abu Hasan Mohammad Mushfiqur Rahman Tuhin.

BARI clarification

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) has issued a clarification in response to a report published in the March 21 issue of The Daily Star under the headline, "Mismanagement, internal politics hampering BARI activities."

Giving some examples, the clarification said, "... on promotion as DG BARI in May, 1995, the present DG is trying to place appropriate person in proper place."

It further said, "there is no scope of single handed decision by the DG himself. The decisions are taken on the recommendations and proposition of the three directors and divisional heads."

The clarification said, "there is no knowledge of circulation of 'green paper' by a section of employees of the institute. In fact, there exists a congenial atmosphere in the institute and everything is going on smoothly and as per the present

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A portion of the playground at Mohammadpur being turned into a shopping complex by the DCC. — Star photo

DCC building shopping complex on playground

By Staff Correspondent

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has taken over nearly half of a playground in Mohammadpur area to build a shopping complex with a mosque on the first floor.

The playground near the Mohammadpur Town Hall is known as Shaheed Park. It is used by hundreds of people of the congested Mohammadpur area.

Construction of the Tk 2.53 crore 114-shop complex is going on. A huge tin-shed mosque has also been built on the western corner, further encroaching whatever remained of the field.

Some people coming out of the mosque yesterday said eventually the tin-shed structures would be turned into a Madrasah hostel and the mosque would be moved to the first floor of the Shopping

Complex.

The DCC's decision has angered residents in the locality who termed it a 'mindless conspiracy' to 'deprive the people of the minimum civic amenity available in the area.'

"This project was initiated in the name of an illegally constructed mosque on the edge of the field about fifteen years ago," alleged Syed Motalab Hossain, an elderly resident of the adjacent Sher Shah Suri Road.

A group of elderly people who gathered at the spot expressed their dismay and alleged that the DCC was "desperately trying to earn quick money in the name of a mosque".

"Mohammadpur is a highly crime prone zone without playground or any recreational fa-

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2 more girls allege Obaidul raped us several months back

By Staff Correspondent

Two more girls have told police that they were raped by Obaidul Matabbar alias Mora who is now in jail in connection with the Tania rape case, reports UNB.

Johura, 12, and Tahera, 11 — two sisters — yesterday made separate statements to Criminal Investigation Department accusing Obaidul of violating them several months back.

They told the investigators that Obaidul raped them at the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court premises. Obaidul had been fined Tk 300 for raping Tahera, officials said.

The CID police picked up Johura from her aunt's house in Keraniganj thana of Dhaka district while Tahera was brought from her village home in Faridganj of Chandpur district.

'Half a per cent more growth only if corruption reduced slightly'

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh could generate half a per cent more growth and have four per cent of its GDP as additional investment every year only if it could cut corruption by just one level of the current scale.

This was told by John Williamson, Chief Economist of the World Bank, at the concluding session of an international conference on "Adjustment and Beyond: The Reform Experience in South Asia" here yesterday.

He said wilful loan defaulting, corruption and bad governance are the issues that the Bank now wants to address.

Williamson said wilful defaulting is bringing crisis to the financial system while corruption is thwarting development.

\$150m WB credit for pry education project

By Staff Correspondent

The World Bank will extend a credit of 150 million US dollars to Bangladesh to take up a new primary education development programme for attaining overall improvement in education at primary level, reports BSS.

An announcement regarding the interest-free credit was made on Tuesday at the bank's headquarters in Washington, said a press release yesterday.

Through this project, the bank will support the government's objectives for primary education over the next five years to boost net enrollment from 85 to 95 per cent and increase primary school completion rates from 60 to 70 per cent. It is also intended to double learning achievement so that 85 per cent of completing students attain at least grade 4 level competencies in literacy,

numeracy and life skills, the release added.

The project will also reduce drop out rates and grade repetition, allocate education resources more effectively to raise enrollment of the girls and the poor in selected urban areas and in underserved rural communities and improve education administration.

Audrey Aarons, a World Bank Education Specialist in South Asia Education Sector Unit and project task leader, said, "Bangladesh has made great strides in increasing enrollment in primary education since the early 1990s and, more recently, in secondary education, specially for girls." She, however, noted that "the quality of education and low learning achievements are still a problem."

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Economists at int'l conference S Asian nations should formulate their own development agenda

By Staff Correspondent

Some economists of international repute yesterday said the South Asian countries should formulate their own development agenda and policies best suited to their needs instead of wholly depending on reform measures suggested by foreign institutions.

They felt that if the reform measures are fully based on external policy suggestions, it might sometimes fail and backfire and the countries will have no one to blame but themselves.

Several leading economists and academicians were giving their views at the concluding session of the International

Conference on "Beyond Adjustment—Emerging Development Issues" organised by the Bangladesh Economic Association and the International Economic Association at the Sonargaon Hotel yesterday.

Prof Rehman Sobhan of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) said the reforms did not work in the region because no one owned them. He talked about domestic ownership of reforms and said reforms would not work unless the political constituency is motivated and given part of the benefit of reforms.

Dr Amiya Bagchi said structural adjustments were taken up by countries to meet foreign aid and foreign capital conditions. He said the IMF, WB and the WTO are dictating the world what to do and not to do.

He said the policymakers are too weak to formulate their own policy so that the South Asian countries can have their policy autonomy.

Bagchi also blamed the semi-feudal form of society in South Asia for hampering industrialisation.

Lord Meghnad Desai of the London School of Economics suggested integrating the South Asian economy with the global

economy. "Getting integrated with the global economy is the only hope for South Asia," he said.

Desai also talked about political correctness in the sense that political parties should form a platform to bring about drastic changes in the economy for globalisation. "Change is going to hurt the current vested groups which enjoy subsidy, but it will help the landless farmers," he pointed out.

Dr Mahubul Huq of Human Development Centre in South Asia said by prioritising social spending and cutting back on

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Embezzlement of Tk 4.2cr from Sonali Bank in city: 5 held

By Staff Correspondent

Police arrested five persons, including two bank officials, till yesterday in connection with the embezzlement of Tk 4.2 crore of House Building Finance Corporation (HBFC) from the Baitul Mukarram branch of Sonali Bank.

Motijheel police identified the arrested as Zahurul Huq Chowdhury and Azhar Hossain, principal officers of the bank. Sohrabuddin Gazi an account holder in the branch, and Maik and Abdus Salam, details about whom could not be known immediately.

They were produced before the CMM's Court yesterday afternoon. Police prayed for seven days remand for further interrogation. But the court sent them to the Dhaka Central Jail rejecting the remand prayer, police said.

The misappropriation was unveiled after Sohrabuddin

submitted a withdrawal cheque for Tk two lakh to the Sonali Bank branch Tuesday morning.

Bank officials got suspicious about Sohrabuddin's account and later they found the act of forgery of a big amount of money through his account. The cashier of the bank, Nazimuddin Ahmed, has been absconding since the incident.

According to police, loan recipients of HBFC used to repay the loans in an account of the Sonali Bank branch. The money was later supposed to be transferred to another HBFC account of the bank.

But the money repaid by the recipients in the first account was being transferred to an account of Sohrabuddin, instead of the second account of HBFC, for a period of over one year.

A case was lodged with Motijheel thana in connection with the incident Tuesday night.

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