



Bangladesh Air Express International Limited

PLEASE CONTACT:
Head Office Tel: 9565114, Logistics Office Tel: 9884851, Fax: (880-2) 9886531, E-mail: dac@aelogis.com
Chittagong Office Tel: (031) 721085, Fax: (880-31) 710106, Internet: fedcgp@sptnet.com.smp.
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PHILIPS

President tells BAF officials in Jessore Dhaka against all sorts of arms race, aggression

JESSORE, Dec 7: President Shahabuddin Ahmed yesterday said Bangladesh would continue to oppose all sorts of arms race, including nuclear arms proliferation, report agencies.

"We believe in the policy of good neighbourly and friendly relations and malice to none. We are against all sorts of aggression," the President said.

President Shahabuddin was addressing Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) officials and cadets at the passing out ceremony marking the commissioning of the 37th GD(P), first short GD(P) and 41st Ground Branch cadets at BAF Academy at Base Matur Rahman here.

The President said Bangladesh is determined to eradicate poverty and raise the living standard of the commoners. "But amid all limitations, we have created an efficient defence system to safeguard our sovereignty and protect dignity as a respected nation," he said.

He said gradual steps were taken for modernisation of the defence systems while different

pragmatic steps were taken for creating a strong and expanded air force.

The President said sophisticated equipment would be added soon to BAF and air defence system would be strengthened to boost efficiency of the air force.

The President urged the BAF personnel to be ready for supreme sacrifices in the interest of the nation. He advised them to adopt new knowledge and skills using scopes created by free flow of information across the world.

Chief of Air Staff Air Vice Marshal Jamal Uddin Ahmed and Air Officer Commanding of the BAF Base Matur Rahman, who is also the Commandant of the BAF Academy, received the President on his arrival at the parade ground in a ceremonial motorcade.

President Shahabuddin reviewed the smartly turned out parade and took the salute at the impressive marchpast. He also distributed flying badges among the flight cadets and

other awards and decorations.

Flight Cadet Under Officer Adnan Makid (GD(P)) was adjudged the best all round Flight Cadet and was awarded the coveted Sword of Honour. Flight Cadet Wing Under Officer Muhammad Mamun Rashid (GD(P)) was awarded the Osmani Gold Medal for his feat in Academic Training.

Flight Cadet Under Officer Muhammad Tajuddin (GD(P)) got the Commandant's Trophy for his outstanding performance in General Service Training in the GD(P) branch.

Flight Cadet Sergeant Muhammad Ali (GD(P)) was awarded the Best Flight Cadet trophy securing top position among the Flight Cadets in the No. 1 Short GD(P) Course and Cadet Sergeant Muhammad Asadur Rashid got the Chief of the Air Staff's trophy while he won the top position in the Ground Branch Training. No. 1 Squadron was given the BAF academy colour for their best overall performance.



BNP city unit brought out a procession in the capital yesterday as part of the 'Demonstration Day'. — Star photo

BNP, allies warn at rallies Massive protests soon to pull down govt

By Staff Correspondent

Opposition activists yesterday staged demonstrations in the city to press for a mid-term election and to protest price hike of essentials and 'government atrocities'.

Several thousands leaders and activists of BNP and its front organisations brought out a huge procession that started from BNP's city unit office at Nayabazar Yusuf Market at about 4:50 pm and paraded different city streets.

BNP-led Seven Party Alliance also held demonstrations across the country as part of the 'Demonstration Day' to protest 'price hike of essential commodities, gas price hike, imposition of Tk 300 crore additional tax, deterioration of law and order, increase of rape and murder, politicisation of administration, corruption, repression on opposition and government's failures in different sectors'.

Leaders of the Opposition in the Jatra Sangsad Khaleda Zia had announced the agitation programme at a day-long mass hunger strike in the capital on December 2. Yesterday's programme passed off peacefully.

BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, Jatiya Party (Z-M), Jagpa, Democratic League, Progressive Nationalist Party and Nationalist Democratic Alliance organised protest rallies and processions in all district and thana headquarters throughout the country.

At the rallies, the opposition leaders said they would make sure this 'autocratic and servile' government falls soon through massive street protest.

They said there is no alternative to holding mid-term election as the Awami League government has failed to run the country.

The leaders said it has become very difficult for commoners, particularly for the working class and fixed income group to live due to abnormal price increase of all essential items, including rice, onion, oil and pulse.

They called upon the people to join in the current movement to expedite the fall of the government to protect the independence and sovereignty of the country as well as save the nation and democracy.

Prior to the procession, BNP city convenor Sadek Hossain Khoka briefly addressed the gathering where he warned of launching a mass movement if

the government tries to rig the December 10 by-elections in Pabna-2 constituency.

He said this government has completely failed to run the country, so it has no moral right to stay in power anymore.

Jamaat also brought out a big procession from the party's city office at 5 pm which paraded different city streets. Party leaders Kamaruzzaman, A T M Azharul Islam and Advocate Jashimuddin Sarker addressed a rally prior to the procession.

Besides, JP (Z-M), Jagpa, Democratic League, PNP and NDA brought out separate processions in the city.

Jail Killing Case Hearing of bail prayers on

The hearing of the bail prayers of Obaidur Rahman MP, Shah Moazzem Hossain and Nurul Islam Manjur, accused in the Jail Killing Case, continued for the fourth day yesterday before a High Court division bench, reports APB.

Deputy Attorney General M Farooq argued that the accused are likely to destroy the evidence of the case if granted bail.

Farooq said, besides, they might leave the country and the trial of the case will be hampered.

He claimed that medical certificates submitted by the accused are fabricated. The accused are influential persons and may disturb the process of justice. The bail should, therefore, not be granted. DAG argued.

In reply, the counsel for the accused Khander Mahbub Uddin Ahmed said investigation of the case started in August 1996, but the accused never attempted during the last two years to destroy the evidences of the case.

He said they also never tried to leave the country. They are of old age, about sixty and needed treatment as they are suffering from various ailments. He pleaded for granting them bail on these counts.

Hearing will resume today when Attorney General Mahmodul Islam will place his submission.

72-hr transport strike Dec 12

Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation (BRTWF) has called a 72-hour country-wide transport strike beginning on December 12 to press home its 11-point demand, reports UNB.

To make the programme a success, a joint meeting of the regional committees of BRTWF was held in the city yesterday, said a press release.

Speakers at the meeting urged the transport workers to take steps to enforce the strike.

They criticised the government for not implementing the earlier agreements signed thrice with the ministers concerned and the political leaders of the present government.

The speakers also demanded direct intervention of the Prime Minister to solve the problems.

Barisal BNP leader assaulted

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Dec 7: Ebaydul Haq Chand, Secretary, Barisal district committee of BNP was assaulted and some shops in the Avruchi Cinema Hall premises in the town were damaged due to indiscriminate brickbats by the rival political activists at about 4:30 pm this afternoon.

Earlier, following the call of BNP's countrywide agitation programme, BNP and its front organisations in Barisal brought out a procession and paraded some streets of the town this afternoon. But when they came near their party office at Sadar Road they were attacked by their rivals.

Police have been deployed to avert further incident.

Jute, textile workers call off strike

Leaders of Jute, Yarn and Textile Mills workers have called off their planned 48-hour strike scheduled to begin today, reports UNB.

The leaders announced it after a meeting with Labour and Employment Minister M A Mannan at his office yesterday, said an official handout.

State Minister for Jute A K Faezul Haq and State Minister for Textiles A K M Jahangir Hossain were present at the meeting.

Labour leaders Abul Bashar, Abdus Salam Khan, Ahsan Ullah Master MP, Rehan Uddin Rehan, Habibur Rahman Siraj and M S Quamruzzaman Chunu, among others, attended the meeting.

Regional seminar opens Find ecologically sound energy system: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has sought ecologically sound energy system and policies to reduce wasteful energy consumption, reports UNB.

"What we need now is environmentally and ecologically sound energy system and policies," she said while inaugurating a regional seminar on Earth Observation for Tropical Ecosystem Management at ICC yesterday afternoon.

The objective of the seminar is to contribute to solutions of the global environmental problems and application of earth observation for sustainable ecological management.

UNESCAP, NASDA of Japan and SPARRSO jointly have organised the five-day regional seminar participated by 72 scientists and officials, including 32 from abroad.

Scientists from Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, DPR, Malaysia, the Maldives, Myanmar, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, Japan and France are taking part in parleys on the global issue of securing a safe human habitat on the planet.

Chair Professor of the Asian Institute of Technology Shunji Mura, Representative of UN-ESCAP Dr Virgilio Santos, Executive Director of NASDA Japan Dr Kazuyoshi Yoshimura, Defence Secretary Syed

Hasina said Bangladesh is located in a disaster-prone zone. Advance warning helps us prepare against impending danger, which can minimise losses, she added.

Growing use of fossil fuels and increase on other greenhouse gases have resulted in a global increase of carbon dioxide, she told the meet. The depletion of the ozone layer and increasing air pollution pose a great threat to human life, she added.

Hasina said the dumping of hazardous wastes presented a similar threat to the Oceans while tropical forests were being destroyed, plants and animals of different species virtually getting extinct or on the edge of extinction.

"All this poses a potential threat to our natural ecosystem," she said observing that as a low-lying delta, Bangladesh stands to be affected very adversely. "A large part of Bangladesh is under threat of being submerged due to sea level rise because of global warming."

Hasina said the colossal losses caused by natural disaster make the country's economic development suffer serious setbacks.

Over a period of ten years, the country has witnessed two most devastating floods — the latest one hitting this year with a magnitude unprecedented in history, lasting for more than two months and covering about two-thirds of the country.

During the last forty years, she further pointed out, on an average Bangladesh has been visited by one severe tropical cyclone every year.

The Prime Minister said Bangladesh has the single expanse of largest mangrove forest in the world. "The Sundarbans is unique because of its size and significance in balancing the local ecosystem."

But, she said, it is threatened with extinction because of severe top dying of Sundari trees, from which the forest derives its name.

Its real cause is yet to be ascertained, she said urging help from the scientists in this respect.

Runa

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everything we had for his treatment and now we are homeless," she said. The poor couple has another child, a three-year-old boy.

Showing the damaged hands of Runa, the anxious mother said the damage would now be another burden for me. Who will feed her when she is unable to do anything? Who will marry her?

The doctor on duty was not available for information on the latest condition of the girl despite repeated efforts to find him out at the hospital yesterday evening.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Public Administration Reform Commission

Cabinet Division

Jiban Bima Bhaban (Front Block, 5th floor)

10, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka-1000

NOTICE

Public Administration Reform Commission seeks opinion on administrative reform from all strata of the general public. Meanwhile some questions & information on administrative reform have been placed on the commission's website (<http://www.BangladeshOnline.com/PARC/>). The general public may use that website and send their opinion to the commission. Besides, the general public may send their opinion to the commission's e-mail address (asayeed@bol-online.com; parcasec@bol-online.com; parjhr@bol-online.com; parchar@bol-online.com) or commission's Fax Number (880-2-9667905) or commission's address by post addressing the Member-Secretary of the commission. By using the commission's said website the general public may keep themselves informed of the commission in detail from time to time.

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Abu Sayeed Chowdhury

Senior Assistant Secretary

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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'Hartal violation of individual rights'

The US Ambassador in Dhaka has termed hartal as a clear violation of individual rights, most importantly the right to earn a living for oneself and one's family, and destructive of the economy, reports UNB.

John C Holzman felt the business community should forcefully articulate the need for a resolution of this issue since 'hartals are imposed for narrow partisan purposes and are clear abuse of individual rights'.

Speaking on "Human Rights and the Business Community" at the December Luncheon Meeting of American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh (AmCham) at Hotel Sheraton yesterday he appeared critical of hartal both in the past and at present.

The US envoy pointed out that both private investment and foreign assistance disbursements declined due to frequent and lengthy hartals during 1994-96 period, hurting economic growth and development.

He appreciated that the ruling Awami League party recently renounced hartal unconditionally. But, he noted, "the opposition claims hartals are a necessary evil, since its workers are harassed and it often has no other means of political expression."

Holzman, however, acknowledged the opposition's right to express its views "freely and openly" and said it should be taken into account in any effort to rid this country of the scourge of shutdowns.

He observed that the rule of law and respect for individual rights are in the best interest of business because they form the necessary bedrock for long-term economic growth.

Underlining the need for an independent judiciary, Holzman said, "Independent judiciary is the most important mean of assuring that government power is not used for partisan ends."

The proposed independent human rights commission, if established, could serve as an impartial third party in resolving the inevitable disputes between the government and the opposition, he said.

Protection of human rights and a climate for doing business go together, the envoy said. "No nation that disregards rule of law and ignores individual rights can prosper in the long run."

Quoting the World Development Report 1997, Holzman said entrepreneurs believe the higher a government's credibility with the private sector, the more will be private investment

and economic growth.

Referring to a survey mentioned in the report, he said judicial unpredictability was a major problem in developing countries, where 40 per cent of the respondents said they had to pay bribes to get things done.

Turning to Bangladesh's scenario of police and courts, he cited another recent survey by Transparency International that revealed that more than two-thirds of respondents said they had to bribe police to register FIR and another two-thirds said they had to bribe court officials.

"These assertions relate directly to the rule of law in Bangladesh and to your costs of doing business."

The US envoy also pointed to toll raised by police from truck drivers, as reported in The Daily Star, and said such "rent-seeking" raises business costs directly and makes Bangladesh less competitive in a world economy.

Mentioning delays in judicial delivery process, Holzman said: "Experts have told me that there is a backlog of over 200,000 court cases."

The US Ambassador offered his government's readiness to support Bangladesh's efforts to improve the workings of the police and the court, and to strengthen the role of the judiciary.

Sayeedi

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polling centre under Nazipur Police Station in Pirojpur-1 constituency.

Earlier the Election Tribunal issued directive for holding fresh election only in Garghata polling centre.

The HC dismissed the appeal of Sayeedi and allowed the appeal of Sudhangshu Shekhar Halder of Awami League.

Sayeedi was declared elected in the polls held on June 12, 1996.

But Halder challenged the election of Sayeedi before the Election Tribunal, Pirojpur, alleging rigging.

Halder appealed in the HC for fresh election in Barai Bania, Bhoirampur and Charbaleswar polling centres.

BNP : observers

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The BNP secretary general said, though the Chief Election Commissioner issued statements urging all concerned to abide by the code of conduct, but unfortunately the ruling party did not pay any heed to it and continued to violate the code.

Bhuiyan said, ministers and those holding ministerial status are not only campaigning vigorously in the constituency, but have also set up 'camps' in the area. They are using the government machinery and facilities for partisan purposes, he alleged.

There are ample evidences that government officials were being influenced to work for the ruling party candidate, he claimed.

BNP leaders and activists are being arrested on false charges or under the Special Powers Act. Moreover, the government leaders are making commitments to do beneficial work in the constituency, he claimed.

He alleged that the ruling party men attacked BNP central leaders and MPs who went to the constituency to work for the BNP candidate. Even, they attacked the residence of local BNP leader Abdul Latif Master in Sujanagar, but police did not take any action against the culprits, he claimed.

"This (sending of observers) will, no doubt, help promote the democratic process to which we both are committed," Bhuiyan added.

B'baria clash

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stadium but were stopped by police near Brahmanbaria college. Being interrupted by police, they tried to hold their scheduled programme at the Brahmanbaria college ground. As their programme started, the students and teachers of the Madrasah attacked them with lethal weapons.

Police lobbed about 100 rounds of teargas shells and used rubber bullets to bring the situation under control.

Of the injured, 42 were admitted to the Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital while the injured 25 policemen were admitted to the police hospital. The injured included an ASP.

Two people, injured critically, were sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital. The anti-NGO group also set fire to a local NGO office and a motor bike during the four-hour long clash.

The teachers and students of the Madrasah at a press conference later in the evening called a dawn-to-dusk hartal today protesting what they said the partisan role of the police during the clash.

Khaleda out to thwart by-polls, says Zillur

Awami League general secretary Zillur Rahman yesterday said top ranking leaders of BNP, including its chairperson Khaleda Zia, were out to thwart the byelection in Pabna-2 constituency in a planned way, reports UNB.

DU starts probing

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He did not, however, mention the department and identity of the student "for the sake of the investigation".

The teacher however has denied the allegation. "This is absolutely absurd and fabricated," the teacher said, requesting that he not be named.

"What has happened is a family matter and regarding a marriage. It has no relation with the university or the department," he claimed.

"The woman centring whom the allegation was made is a divorcee and mother of a child," he said.

Other members of the fact-finding committee are: AFM Yusuf Haider, Kazi Afroz Jahan Ara and registrar of the university Muhammad Selim.

APB adds: Acting upon a written complaint to the DU Vice-Chancellor on November 30, the vice chancellor constituted the committee and asked to submit its findings as early as possible.

The complainant, a student of M A final year of Public Administration, said that a teacher of International Relations Department molested her in his room on November 29.

AL complaint

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Bera and Sujanagar thanas and gave life-threat to the OCS.

A general diary has been lodged with each of the police stations as such incidents are also violation of code of conduct, it said.

The Awami League alleged that another BNP MP Harun-or-Rashid Khan Munnu distributed sarees and lungis worth Tk 500,000 among voters at Talarchar in Bera thana yesterday, saying that this is a straight violation of the election code of conduct.

Besides, it said, BNP leaders Patal, Amanullah Aman MP and Rajshahi Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu 'mobilised identified terrorists' from Dhaka and other places, and assembled them in Bera and Sujanagar to disrupt law and order and the by-election.

Awami League sought appropriate actions against the BNP leaders who violated the election code of conduct.



A view of fire fighting at a market in Karachi on Sunday. Police said militants set fire to more than a dozen shops in central Lihatabad area to protest a government-run cleanup operation by security force. —AP/UNB photo