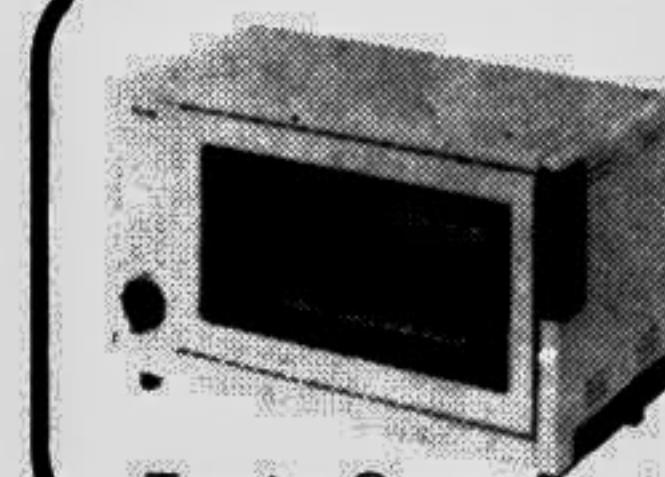


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PHILIPS

Tokais' trip to wonderland

Thousands throng computer fair

By Special Correspondent

It was like a dream come true for the five 'tokais', or children urchins when they got inside the massive tower of Islamic Development Bank at Agargaon hosting the annual computer show yesterday.

The 'tokais' had since Dec 10 only watched thousands of people entering the building after the show was opened by Bangladesh Computer Samity (BCS).

The boys had no way to enter the well-guarded show, one of the most crowded but disciplined fairs held so far in the city, until yesterday.

Daily Star photographer Sheikh Enamul Huq responded to their plea and took them inside the building to reveal a whole new world - the world of information technology - to them leaving them truly astonished.

Little Ashraf, the youngest of the 'tokais' was left stunned when he saw perhaps for the first time what he thought was a 'TV', in reality a multi-media computer showing Video Compact Disc images at one of the 240 stalls.

"We have never seen a good man like you sir," they told Enamul as they left the show with big smiles on their faces.

The show drew thousands of people of all ages over the weekend. On Friday 30,000 people visited the fair and BCS expected more than 60,000 to visit the show yesterday. The computer sellers also reported good business.

A Red Islam, president of the BCS told reporters that on the first two days they made sales worth Tk one crore. He is expecting over a Tk 20 crore turnover by the time the show ends after a 2-day extension on Dec 14.

The extension came because of the hartaal today. Earlier the BCS had requested the main opposition party BNP to postpone the hartaal. Most people booked their wares in advance at the fair. Anticipating good business the computer companies and dealers are offering special prices, leading to a fierce price war between them.

Aslamuddin, a systems engineer told The Daily Star that prices have been lowered to attract more customers.

Series of quakes shake Kabul: 8 killed

KABUL, Dec 12: Eight people were killed when a dilapidated hotel collapsed early today after a series of earthquakes struck the Afghan capital in recent days, residents and aid workers said, reports AFP.

They said rescuers dug two survivors from the wreckage after an intense tremor in Kabul at about 1:00 am today.

A Red Cross official said the latest quake seemed stronger than previous ones.

PM: Barisal rally

From Page 1
not like the vote thieves."

Pointing to the comment of Begum Zia that Awami League would have to leave the country like in 1971 for their rigging in Pabna by-polls, Hasina said in 1971 people left the country and took refuge in India in fear of Pakistani occupation army.

"And now Begum Zia is echoing the voice of Pakistani occupation army," Hasina said.

Now it is clear why the BNP Chairperson supported the killers of Bangabandhu and called hartaal in support of the killers, why BNP tried to create unrest on the day of pronouncing the historic verdict in the Bangabandhu Murder Case."

She said BNP tried to mislead the people as they did not believe in independence of the country, as they had no faith in the spirit of the Liberation War.

The Prime Minister said her party has restored the voting right of the people through a long struggle and established the spirit of the War of Liberation after returning to power after 21 years.

She said trial of the killers of Bangabandhu was held and those of other political killings, including the jail killing, are in the process.

Arriving to the local demand, the Prime Minister assured that steps will be taken to build the institutions and infrastructure needed for a divisional headquarters.

A separate Education Board will be set up in Barisal, she said announcing that Barisal Paurashava will be upgraded to City Corporation soon and a science and technology university set up in Barisal.

She said steps have been taken for improving the communication system of the region and for overall development of the area. The government has a plan to establish direct communication from Barisal to Chittagong.

B'baria incident

From Page 1

'provocative' statements in favour of the anti-liberation forces.

The leading citizens said that no case was filed despite the fundamentalist forces destroyed government property worth crores of taka and district administration also didn't take any action against them.

Chairman by National Professor Kabir Chowdhury, the meeting was attended, among others, by poet Sufia Kamal, Neelima Ibrahim, K M Sobhan, Dr Kazi Faruque Ahmed, Shamsur Rahman, Khan Sarwar Murshid, Syed Shamshul Haq, Rokeya Rahman Kabir, Syed Hasan Imam, Ily Rahman, Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Rokeya Kabir, Pijush Bandopadhyay, Afroza Banu, Dr Zariah Rahman Khan, Shamim Akhter and A B M Faruq.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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STRUCK BY STRIKES: These poor traders -- look at their faces, full of pain -- bear the brunt of the transport strike called by the Paribahan Sramik Federation as they carry goods on their heads towards Aricha from city's Gabtoli Bridge yesterday. Road communication came to a standstill in most parts of the city on the first day of the 72-hour strike.

— Star photo by Amran Hossain

Another group certifies Pabna vote

By Staff Correspondent

The computer dealers say they are trying to maximise their sale during the fair to raise their volume of business. "Normally we are not able to sell this much," Aslam said.

Besides sales, Bangladeshi companies are also displaying software, a new business world they are trying to explore.

Shamsuddoha of the Doha Net was proud to talk about his success in selling software to Hughes and other companies of USA which he said had a potential for Bangladeshi exports.

To encourage future programmers in IT, BCS has registered over 2,000 enthusiasts at the fair who will have access to its facilities in future. Nearly 60 per cent of them are students of computer science.

Two seminars were also held yesterday. Intel arranged one on 'Intel Road Map' and 'Marketing Strategy in Asia'. The second seminar dedicated to the late scientist Abdullah Al-Muti Sharuddin was organised by Computer Bichitra.

BCS like other days continued to ferry people by six buses from Motijheel, Mirpur No:1, Uttara Sector-6, Plassey and Rampura TV gate to the fair at Agargaon.

Aslamuddin, a systems engineer told The Daily Star that prices have been lowered to attract more customers.

Poisonous liquor kills 3 more

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Dec 12: Three more persons, who took poisonous liquor on Thursday night at Gornnadi, died yesterday.

They were identified as Jalal Sardar, 54, Kuddus Fakir, 38, and Haider Dewan, 30.

With three new casualties, the death toll rose to 8.

From DMC Correspondent

Intern doctors of the eight government Medical College Hospitals yesterday postponed their indefinite strike scheduled to begin today.

We have postponed the planned strike to facilitate observation of the Martyred Intellectuals Day and smooth holding of Victory Day celebrations. We also considered an assurance from the leaders of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) that they would make efforts and lobby with the government to realise the demands," Dr Hayat Mahmud Russel, General Secretary of the Young Doctors' Movement Council (YDMC) told The Daily Star last night.

YDMC leaders, however, threatened to announce next course of action if their demands were not met soon.

Earlier, the young doctors called a three-day strike from December 1 to press home their six-point demand including doubling of their remuneration.

Other demands include introduction of guideline for employment of newly-passed doctors in clinics, providing abundant supply of medicines and other goods in hospitals, appointment of more doctors in government hospitals, resolution of the accommodation problem of the intern doctors and introduction of referral system.

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BTTB books in big mess

From Page 1

Divisional Engineers DM Moudud Chowdhury, Zia Uddin and Maoudul Haque were transferred to Khulna and Barisal on March 31, 1996, January 13, 1995 and July 21, 1995 respectively "but they are still using their Maghbazar T and T Colony residences and respective telephones along with those at their new workstations", the report said.

BTTB was also burdened with Tk 19.35 lakh in bad debt as the money allocated for house building loans was not being recovered in instalments regularly for long. The Board also distributed Tk 22.36 lakh as festival bonus among officials and employees violating rules and the amount was recoverable from the recipients", the report said.

The audit report said BTTB failed to collect Tk 5.51 crore in telephone bills from 459 MPs of 3rd, 4th and 5th Parliament. The Board also violated the rules of disconnecting the lines of the defaulting subscribers as per rules since they did not pay the bills, the report said.

After having 62 illegal vehicles and Tk 2.5 lakh spent for each of those every year, this huge expenditure is illogical. It appears from this that a huge amount of government money is spent for 'official correspondences' through fake vouchers," the report said.

BTTB has also a total of Tk 330 crore in outstanding revenue from subscribers till October 1996, which is one third of its annual revenue income. Measures were not taken to disconnect telephone lines of a

newspaper and Bangladesh Rural Telecom Authority though Tk 12 lakh and Tk 4.5 crore had been due with them since long.

Various types of machines worth Tk 75 crore were kept unused for long at different stores exposing the possibility of a huge loss of government exchequer, the report said.

The government is to suffer a Tk 1.20 crore loss as 100 sets of batteries are exposed to being damaged.

Outsiders and some employees of BTTB have been living in one thousand houses on a four-acre land owned by the Board. They are using the water and electricity at the cost of BTTB and the land runs the possibility of being illegally occupied.

At least Tk 1.37 crore was spent for "transportation of employees" in 1995, with 2600 vouchers for the purpose in a single day.

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The vouchers are fake because "at least 24 vouchers were found against each employee everyday. If the number of vouchers was correct, 25 per

cent of the employees were sent outside the office for emergency work everyday," the report said.

The state suffers a huge loss every year as some BTTB officials have been using 11 cellular telephones violating rules.

The state faces another Tk 12 crore loss as some 80,000 telephone sets have remained undistributed which were procured under the "1.3 Lakh Digital Line Project."

The audit also revealed gross financial irregularities in various BTTB projects. Under the "1.3 Lakh Digital Line Project", Tk 99.39 crore was spent in 1995-96 without authorisation, Tk 1.53 crore for buying steno sets though it was not included in the project proforma, it said.

Besides, Tk 40.54 crore was spent under the "30,000 Digital Line Project" in Chittagong without any authorisation, the report said.

The report said that subscribers were usually harassed while seeking telephone connections and 50 per cent of the connections were faulty.

The report observed that no regulations are followed in transferring the BTTB officials and employees, which bred irregularities and corruption.

"Officials are often transferred in the face of pressure from employees' unions and according to the whims of superior authorities," the report said.

The report said that sub-scribers were usually harassed while seeking telephone connections and 50 per cent of the connections were faulty.

Congress committee signals Clinton impeachment

WASHINGTON, Dec 12: The House Judiciary Committee is nearing the end of its history-making votes to remove President Bill Clinton from office, setting the stage for a dramatic impeachment confrontation before all 435 lawmakers next week. Clinton said he would accept a censure, reports AP.

Despite Democratic attacks that never let up during a grueling 12-hour day, the Republican majority pushed three articles of impeachment through the committee on Friday. Rep Lindsey Graham of South Carolina was the only Republican to vote against an article.

On Saturday, the panel planned to take up a fourth article alleging abuse of power — and a censure proposed by Democrats as an alternative to impeachment.

The abuse-of-power article could be revised by Republicans. Some Republican committee members oppose language accusing Clinton of impeachable offenses by asserting legal privileges during the investigation of his affair with Monica Lewinsky.

The censure proposal was headed for defeat in the committee.

When asked whether he would resign if the full House votes to impeach, which would set up a Senate trial that could remove him from office, Clinton turned away and walked into the White House.

Several Committee members watched Clinton on television, temporarily leaving the proceeding in the room where three impeachment articles were approved against Richard Nixon in 1974.

They saw Clinton tell the nation that should the House

members "determine that my errors of word and deed require their rebuke and ensure, I am ready to accept that."

Minutes after Clinton finished, the committee voted, allowing Republican Chairman Henry Hyde to make the simple but "dramatic" announcement that "Article One is approved."

The vote was 21-16 along strict party lines, for an article accusing the president of perjury before a grand jury.

It was only the committee's third presidential impeachment vote in US history.

Clash in & around Ctg 'Bijoy Mela': 50 injured

CHITTAGONG, Dec 12: About 50 people were injured in a clash between two rival groups in and around the on-going "Bijoy Mela" (victory fair) at the outer stadium in the port city today, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the trouble started when a group of unidentified youths attacked a meeting of BNP at Nasirin Bhaban in front of the fair at about 9.30 pm. They also exploded crackers. The injured were mostly visitors and passersby.