



PRAN
Natural Mineral Water
100% Germfree

The Daily Star

BUY NOW - PAY LATER



Whirlpool
HOME APPLIANCES
USA
Gas Cooker
Transcom Electronics Limited
Authorized distributor in Bangladesh for Whirlpool Appliances, USA

VOL. VIII NO. 336 REGD. NO. DA 781 INTERNET: <http://www.dailystarnews.com>

POUSH 17 1405 BS DHAKA THURSDAY DECEMBER 31, 1998 RAMADAN 11, 1419 HIJRI

16 PAGES PLUS RISING STARS: PRICE TAKA 10.00

Talks between govt, port users fail

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 30: A meeting between the government and port users over a dispute on implementation of incentive scheme, ended inconclusively today, meeting sources said.

State Minister for Shipping Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya attended the meeting held at Chittagong Port office to resolve the dispute. Port officials said.

In the meeting, port users urged for allowing one month time before implementation of the scheme, but the minister turned down their request, meeting sources said.

The minister also threatened not to allow renewal of licences of those stevedores who would not abide by the decision to implement incentive scheme at Chittagong port from January 1.

See Page 12 Col 5

BNP, allies to demonstrate today

The BNP-led 7-party alliance will demonstrate across the country today protesting price hike of essentials, including rice, pulses, onion and edible oil, reports UNB.

As part of the programme, the city BNP will bring out a procession from Muktangan at 2:30 pm.

BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan has urged the thana and district level leaders and workers of BNP and its front organisations to make today's programme a success.

Jamaat will hold a protest meeting at Purana Paltan-crossing after Zohr prayers.

Announcement

From today we launch a special weekly page dedicated to our young entrepreneurs and professionals (YEP). Through this page we hope to promote the cause of the young people so that they can truly help Bangladesh move into the 21st Century with confidence. We invite all young professionals to join the YEP forum and help the country move forward.

Read our special page and help our effort.

Inside Today

Article

Political Turncoats:

Tales of Hopes and Pathos
Column : Currents and Crosscurrents
by M M Rezaul Karim
Page 4

Focus

1996 share scam

Supreme Court judgement on merit of the cases
Page 5

Shetri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Dec	Shetri	Iftar
11	31	-	5-26
12	Jan 1	5-16	5-27
13	Jan 2	5-17	5-27

Prayer Timings

December-31		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-15	5-20
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-23	5-27
Esha	7-00	7-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

Check For Your Copy Of

The Rising Stars Today

(Pickpocket About Pinching His Own Pocket)



(Your Dad Might Pinch It Before You Do...
You Never Know...
People Are Even
Pinching MPs Nowadays)

Rising Stars
You Bet, You Can't Stay Bored!

JP expels Manju

By Special Correspondent

Jatiya Party has fired from the party its lone representative in the government, communications minister Anwar Hossain Manju.

"Anwar Hossain Manju has been relieved of his posts of Presidium member and vice-chairman and primary membership of the party, for violating party discipline and coming up with audacious statement," a

terse JP press release said yesterday without giving details.

"Yes, I am aware of the development. It does not affect my status as a member of parliament," Manju told The Daily Star without elaborating.

Asked if he would form a separate group of JP, he declined to say anything.

Gulam Faruq Ovi, a JP MP from Barisal region and known

to be close to Manju, said his party MPs did not like the decision. "We are going to assess the situation soon."

Manju met the prime minister yesterday evening, one source said.

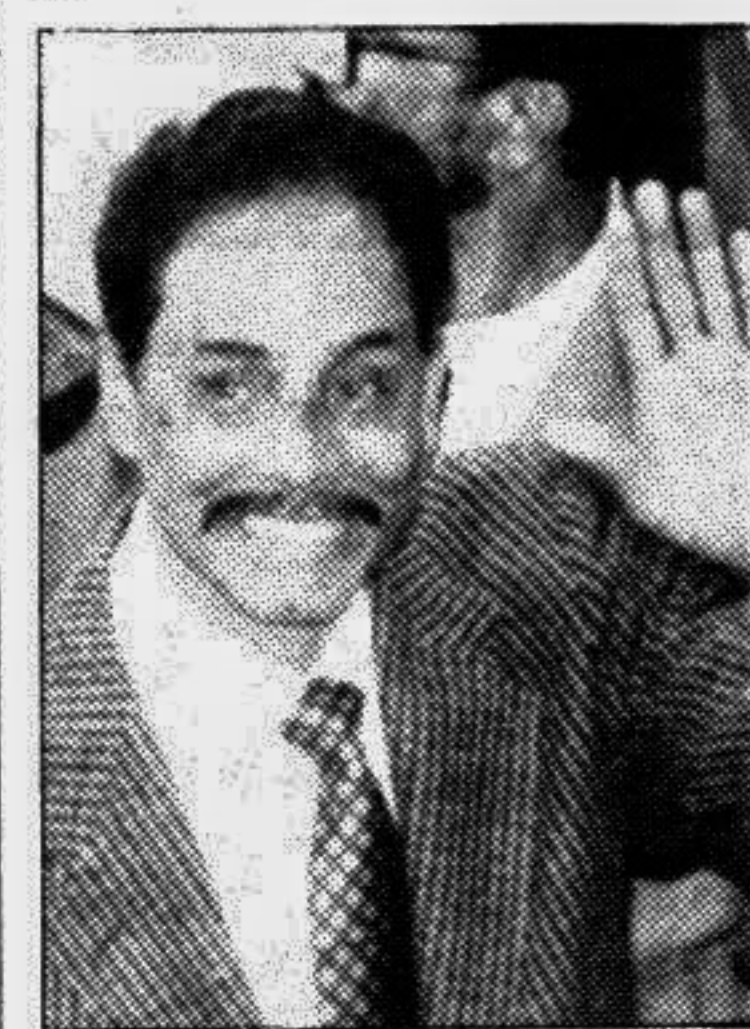
The unfolding drama in JP reached its climax on Tuesday when Manju blasted JP chairman HM Ershad for his overtures to join the opposition agitation including hartals, during the reunion of the party and its rebel faction led by Kazi Zafar Ahmed in the city on Monday.

Manju's remarks came at a rally addressed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Sirajganj where she said Ershad should choose between the 'street or the red brick home' (prison).

The development brought to surface differences between Ershad and the former JP secretary general, who played a key role in helping Awami League gain majority in parliament to form the government after the June 12, 1996 general elections.

He is also widely believed to have played behind-the-scenes role to secure bail for the former president in a number of corruption cases filed after his

See Page 12 Col 8



H M Ershad



Anwar Hossain Manju

CEC must resign, demands Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday reiterated her demand for resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Muhammad Abu Hena 'to pave the way for free and fair elections in future.'

She said the present CEC and the Election Commission miserably failed to ensure free and fair election in the past and directly or indirectly helped the ruling party in rigging.

"There is no possibility of fair election under the incumbent CEC. Please show respect to the Chair and quit immediately," Begum Zia said.

Addressing the new comers to the BNP at her official residence, the Leader of the Opposition said the EC should also be reconstituted as there are people in it who were involved in various misdeeds in the past elections. It has to be done by taking unanimous opinion of the parties represented in the Parliament, she added.

BNP claimed that more than 500 leaders and activists from Jatiya Party, Awami League

and Jamaat from Bakshiganj and Dewanganj thanas of Jamalpur district led by former Upazila chairman and JP leader Abdul Rouf Talukder joined BNP yesterday expressing their allegiance to the party and its leadership.

Begum Zia expressed the confidence that the ruling Awami League will never come to power again if the election is held in a free and fair manner.

Besides, she said, the BNP will put forward some pre-conditions before the next elections. She, however, didn't elaborate.

Turning to Pabna-2 by-election, Begum Zia said there is no self-satisfaction within the ruling party as it snatched away the victory of BNP through massive rigging, vote dacoity and capture of polling centres. "The government realised that it has lost public support."

The former prime minister said the government in its two and a half-year rule completely destroyed the national economy.

See Page 12 Col 5

Legal action to be taken against corrupt civil surgeons

The parliamentary standing committee on Health Ministry at a meeting yesterday decided to take legal action against corrupt civil surgeons, reports UNB.

The meeting took the decision after reviewing the investigation report of a sub-committee formed to probe the alleged corruption by the civil surgeons and other officials concerned.

The meeting, held at Jatiya Sangsad with committee Chairman Dr Kazi Abu Yusuf in the chair, directed the authorities concerned to take necessary steps in this regard.

The committee also decided to collect the files and documents on development activities of the ministry from the Committee on Estimates for taking next steps in this regard.

The Human Organ Transplant Act '98 also came up at the meeting for discussion, said an official handout.

Allow gas export, foreign cos seek assurance

By Sharier Khan

Foreign oil companies, which received Letters of Intent (LoI) from the government under the Second Round Block Bidding, are now seeking assurance before signing any Production Sharing Contract (PSC) that they would be allowed to export gas in future.

Unless they get such assurance, the companies are likely to resort to a "go-slow" regarding investment in the energy sector, sources said.

Due to recession in the global economy and drastic fall in oil prices in international market, the oil companies are now not so keen to sign PSCs with the government unlike they were a few months back.

The government issued LoIs to Enron for blocks 3 and 6, Shell-Cairn Block 5, Unocal-Trell Block 7 and Pangaea for Block 8. The companies were invited to start PSC negotiations on December 21. But all of them, excepting Pangaea, have not yet started the negotiations because of the Christmas.

Sources said, one or two of the companies may not even show up to finish the on-going negotiations.

Shell Oil, which was once offered blocks 5 and 10 but was given LoI for one block, now says it is not interested in PSC negotiations unless it is given Block 10. In a letter to Petrobangla recently, Shell said it prefers Block 10 to Block 5.

"Shell clearly indicated that it was not interested in PSC negotiation unless it is given Block 10 alongside Block 5," said one source.

Besides, Pangaea, a small American company having little exploration experience, may not continue negotiations for Block 8 as it lacks necessary investment funds and bank guarantee. It had earlier brought in an investment partner—OMV—as per the government's suggestion. But OMV later walked off saying it would not invest unless it is given at least two blocks.

The negotiations may resume late January. But the oil companies are now increasingly putting pressure on the government to allow gas export.

"The idea of gas export had long been pursued by the World Bank and the oil companies even before the Second Round Bidding began in mid '97. But now they have increased the pressure in view of the global economic recession," said another source.

Enron and Unocal have already signed joint Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with two Indian companies to explore possibility of gas export from Bangladesh to India.

Other than Block 7, Unocal has been assured of a controversial unsolicited deal—the Western Region Integrated Project (WRIP). Sources said that while negotiations under the Second Round Bidding were not proceeding, the government was pressing for signing of the WRIP agreement as soon as possible.

Protest by an enraged teacher

By DU Correspondent

"I am enraged. I feel insulted. I want an education-friendly university free from all ills, abuses and malpractice -- a seat of learning that holds pursuit of knowledge above everything."

Professor Muzaffar Ahmed, a respected teacher of the Dhaka University's reputed business school, came up spoke for with a placard that gave the expression of his anguished soul as a thousand of his colleagues cast their votes to elect their new leaders yesterday.

Many students and teachers came to express their solidarity with his protest, unique in its form as the professor sat in a chair with the placard for four hours from 9:30 in the morning in front of the main entrance to the University Club where the voting took place.

"Sir, we need teachers like you," was how members of Students - Protesting Sexual Harassment, the group campaigning against alleged sexual assaults by teachers, greeted the professor.

"I am against all sorts of evils," Professor Ahmed told

See Page 12 Col 8

Salimullah, Mitford hospitals run without essential drugs

By Naimul Haq

Sir Salimullah Medical College & Mitford Hospital has been providing healthcare without any essential drugs for two months.

"The hospital has not received any supply of essential drugs - about 200 - since 1 November," said a senior official of the hospital.

Patients admitted to the hospital "are asked to arrange their required drugs. Those who undergo surgery are also asked to keep essential drugs ready," he added.

A staff at the hospital emergency department said, "We don't have any stock of essential drugs, not even life-saving ones, for more than eight weeks. Patients requiring emergency drugs have to wait till their attendants procure the drugs and give those to doctors."

Patients needing painkillers and other strong painkillers also have to purchase the drugs from nearby stores.

Mid Ali Sheikh who is suffering from severe stomach pain arrived at the emergency department from Keraniganj. The emergency medical officer pre-

scribed him a pethidine injection. Ali had to wait for 11 precious minutes for the injection that was bought from a drug store nearby.

Normally, the emergency wing is supplied with painkillers like pethidine which are frequently used there.

Sources said, the hospital owes Essential Drugs Company Limited (EDCL), which supplies essential drugs to government hospitals, about Tk 74 lakh. The amount has been outstanding for last one and a half years.

The finance wing of health directorate was informed of the problem repeatedly but the issue still remains unresolved, hospital officials said.

The health directorate released about Tk 30 lakh for Mitford hospital but it was not sufficient to clear the outstanding dues, one official said.

"We offered more than Tk 40 lakh to purchase essential drugs but EDCL said we will have to clear the outstanding amount first. Otherwise, EDCL would not supply any drugs."

A senior official of EDCL

commerce division confirmed suspension of essential drugs supply to Mitford hospital. "The hospital received Tk 22 lakh from the health directorate but offered to pay us only Tk five lakh."

He denied that the company had been continuing supplying essential drugs to Dhaka Medical College Hospital despite non-payment of dues saying, "It is not true that we are continuing essential drug supply to DMCH. The hospital owes us over Tk 1.5 crore but we never stopped drug supply before. But at the beginning of this month, we stopped supply of drugs to DMCH."

When contacted, DMCH director Brigadier Badrul Munir, however, said he was not aware of such problem at the hospital.

According to rules, it is mandatory for government hospitals to procure at least 70 per cent of essential drugs from EDCL.

The company supplies essential drugs to government hospitals worth Tk 3.5 crore every month.



Mahbub Jamil elected MCCI President

Star Business Report

Mahbub Jamil has been elected president of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka (MCCI) for 1999 at its 94th annual general meeting yesterday, says a press release.

Jamil, Chairman and Managing Director of Singer Bangladesh Limited, was earlier the president of Foreign Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He is on the boards of directors of several companies.

See Page 12 Col 1

Asma likely to undergo kidney transplantation on Monday

By Staff Correspondent

Asma Begum, whose only functioning kidney was removed 'mistakenly' during an operation at DMCH likely to undergo kidney transplantation on Monday, doctors at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital said yesterday.

Asma's mother, Zahura Begum while talking to this correspondent yesterday evening said she is willing to donate one of her kidneys. "I am ready to give my kidney for my daughter's survival. I am happy to take the decision."

"I will tell Prof Harun-ur-Rashid tomorrow (Thursday) morning that I am now ready to donate my kidney," Zahura added.

See Page 12 Col 2

Tale of migrant workers Middlemen eat up lion's share of their pay

By Staff Correspondent

Many unemployed youths who went to Singapore with hopes of a better life saw their dreams shattered as middlemen ate up lion's share of their remuneration.

This was said at an exchange of view programme on the issue of migrant workers in Singapore held in the city yesterday.

Two expatriate Bangladeshi teachers while briefing on the issue sought more government intervention into the perennial problems of migrants.

Dr Habib Khandakar and Dr Meheraj Jahang, teachers of Sociology at National University of Singapore, came up with their suggestions yesterday at the programme organised by Ain-O-Salish Kendra (ASK), a local human rights organisation having special interests on migration issue.

Talking to The Daily Star on the sideline of the meeting, Dr Habib said many Bangladeshi youths were selling their labour at a much lower price than they were promised before going to Singapore.

"Because of unholy alliance among a section of unscrupulous manpower agents and employees in Singapore and their agents here, Bangladeshi workers find their dream shattered when they are offered much lower salary than they were promised," said Dr Habib who had talked to some of the unfortunate youths.

Dr Meheraj supplemented him saying that when a Malaysian worker gets 30 Singapore dollars per day and a Thai 22 dollars, a Bangladeshi doing the same job under the same employer often receive only 13 to 14 dollars.

"Until recently there was none to address the issue officially at our mission in Singapore. Now having a labour attaché posted there, we hope the issue of lower wage for Bangladeshi workers would be addressed properly," she said.

Roughly 4,000 Bangladeshi work in Singapore. Some 170 Bangladeshi went to Singapore during the

See Page 12 Col 2

Violence flares at Feni again

FENI, Dec 30: Violence flared up again in the town today as the activists of BNP and its front organisations went on a rampage, firing shots and putting up barricade on Dhaka-Chittagong highway, reports UNB.

Road communication between Dhaka and the port city of Chittagong was disrupted for an hour due to the trouble.

Police said the activists of Jubo Dal and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal created a reign of terror in the town for two hours after police detained their two leaders from West Ukil Para in the afternoon.

All shops and commercial establishments at Islampur, Pachhagachia and Taki roads and southern part of Dhaka-Chittagong Trunk Road were

closed during the incident. Gunshots and cracker explosions rocked the town.

The unruly JCD activists damaged at least 20 vehicles, including trucks and buses, on Dhaka-Chittagong highway, police said.

They said the BNP men also set ablaze a Parshuram-bound bus from Dhaka at Pachhagachia road at 4 pm.

Thirteen people, including three women, were injured as the angry workers allegedly swooped on them.

Besides, a stationery shop was set on fire at Sonagaj bus terminal. Activists of pro-Awami League Chhatra League and Chhatra Dal traded gunshots at Doctor Para crossing, leaving four passers-by injured.

See Page 12 Col 2

'Power system in Delhi may fail in 6 months'

NEW DELHI, Dec 30: New Delhi's power system could collapse within six months, sparking widespread rioting in the Indian capital, AFP quoting power minister R Kumaramangalam said.

The minister told reporters late Tuesday that Delhi's power demand would reach a peak of 2,700 megawatts in June, overloading a system which has a capacity of only 2,000 megawatts.

"Unless a capital infusion of 10 billion rupees is made immediately to improve the system, it will collapse and there could be power riots," Kumaramangalam said.

Describing the Delhi power system as 'pathetic', Kumaramangalam pointed out that 40 per cent of the supply to the capital was streamed off by illegal users.

JCD leader Pintu held

A special team of the detective branch of police arrested Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu, general secretary of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), from an Iftar party in the city yesterday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said he was arrested at about 5:20 pm from the Iftar party organised by Chhatra Dal at Ward No 62 (Labagh). Pintu was arrested several times during the present regime.

Corruption cases against 10 food inspectors in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, Dec 30: Ten sub-inspectors of local Food Department have been sued for misappropriation of foodgrains worth about Tk 38 lakh, reports UNB.

The Bureau of Anti-Corruption has filed the cases with Pahartali thana against them for allegedly misappropriating 435.41 tonnes of rice and wheat from a godown at Halishahar in the city.

The accused inspectors are: Purnanga Chakma, Abdur Rahman, Kawsarul Alam, Moyeen Mia, Hedayetul Islam, Kabiruzzaman, Muftizul Islam, Ibrahim (dismissed), Amalendu Chowdhury and Abdus Sobhan.