



Hundreds of anxious guardians wait outside the Motijheel Ideal high School as their wards sit for admission test yesterday.

'BNP, JP trying to create issue for movement'

BHOLA, Jan 8: Commerce and Industries Minister Tofal Ahmed today accused BNP and Jatiya Party of hatching a conspiracy to "create an issue" for movement, reports UNB.

They don't have any issue for people's welfare as massive development programmes are being implemented under efficient management of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina," he told a public meeting at Dhali Gouranagar in Lalmon thana. He said BNP Chief Begum Khaleida Zia had failed to make an issue out of the Ganges water sharing treaty. CHT peace accord, shifting of the pontoon bridge from the lake near Chandrima Udyan and ban on public meetings on the streets.

The minister claimed that Bangladesh is getting due share of the Ganges water and peace has been restored in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. People also have clear understanding about the justification of shifting the pontoon bridge from the lake and government decision to impose a ban on street meetings, he added.

Tofal alleged that both Begum Zia and Ershad are out to create an unstable situation in the country.

Referring to the demand for resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner, he said the present CEC was appointed in 1996 by the caretaker government in consultation with all political parties.

The minister also addressed two public rallies at Devir Char of Lalmon thana and Uttar Digaldhi under Sadar thana. The meetings were addressed, among others, by party leaders Moteleb Mia, Principal A K M Nazrul Islam, Gias Uddin Ahmed, Enayet Kabir, Kanchan Mia Hawlader.

Housewife stabbed to death

COX'S BAZAR, Jan 8: A housewife of Pollankata area in the town, who received stab wounds last night, succumbed to her injuries today, reports UNB.

The victim was identified as Saleha Begum, wife of an expatriate Abdus Sukkur. Police said about five miscreants forcibly entered into the house of Saleha Thursday night and stabbed her indiscriminately following her refusal to give money as demanded by them.

She was admitted to Cox's Bazar General Hospital and succumbed to her injuries on way to Chittagong Medical College Hospital at about 10 am.

The body was sent to CMCH for autopsy and a case was filed with the police in this connection.

Cox's Bazar without power

COX'S BAZAR, Jan 8: Power supply in the district went off from this noon due to technical fault at 33 kv sub-station at Jhlongja here, reports UNB.

The supply could not be restored till 9 tonight. PDB sources said power could not pass through the cables at Jhlongja Power House from noon due to heavy rust in one of its equipment.

Assistant Engineer (Supply) Jafar Ahmed said power supply might be restored partially in the district by midnight tonight.

But he said it is uncertain when it would be restored fully.

Designer's Den celebrates 1st anniversary

Designer's Den, a fashion house, celebrated its first anniversary on Thursday. Popularly known as DD, the boutique has distinguished itself by carrying the product lines of the most talented designers of Bangladesh and the sub-continent, says a press release.

Speaking on the occasion, Rizwan Bin Faruq, the founder chairman of the fashion house, said "DD's extraordinary success in the fashion circles of the country is largely due to the originality of its products and the unparalleled service given to its customers." With able support from his co-director and wife Ina Faruq and from his Chief Executive Shoma Zahid, Faruq has succeeded in establishing DD as an exclusive source of classic and contemporary designer wear in Bangladesh.

In collaboration with Axiom Technologies Ltd, DD plans to market its products through a virtual shop on the World Wide Web using a high-end German software. Setting up a fashion technology-training institute in Dhaka is another exciting undertaking of Designer's Den. The proposed institute will be set up with the technical assistance from a major fashion-technology institute of the region.

Pirates swoop on trawler carrying salt

BHOLA, Jan 8: Two people were seriously injured as pirates swooped on a salt-carrying trawler near Bheuluarhar in Ramgati thana of Laxmipur district Thursday evening, reports APB.

The injured — Abul Hossain, 38, and Ali Hossain, 24, — were admitted to Daulatkhana Thana Health Complex in critical condition.

Local body polls will be free and fair: Zillur

LGRD Minister Zillur Rahman yesterday assured that upcoming municipal, city corporation and upazila elections would be free, fair and impartial, reports UNB.

Addressing a public rally at Mirpur ground in Narshingdi, he alleged that BNP, being failed to create any issue of movement against the elected government, has ganged up with 'rajakar and autocrat' to fish in troubled waters.

Zillur said the government has established the voting rights and ensured transparency in the election process. He said union council elections and all parliament by-elections under this government were free and fair, which was praised by election observers at home and abroad.

The minister termed the statements of BNP and its new allies against the Election Commission and the coming local body polls as 'misleading'.

Business leaders

From the 1 omly recuperating from the onslaught of the recent devastating floods.

He said at a time when people are getting their fundamental rights back, no political party has the right to curb it by calling hartals. As the political parties have the right to call hartals, the people have also the right not to observe it as hartal brings suffering to them, he added.

Referring to the Opposition demands announced on Thursday the FBCCI chief said the government should respond to those positively. It (government) should come out with clear public statements as to what extent the demands could be accepted or if not — why, to dispel any confusion among the people. It is the general people who become the first victim of negative political agitations, he said.

Mintoo said the FBCCI has already communicated its unequivocal stand against any hartal to the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament in a recent meeting with her. I will seek the help of President Shahabuddin Ahmed and cooperation of other Opposition leaders soon to avert any hartal in the coming days, the FBCCI president said.

BGMEA president Mostafa Golam Quddus, expressing grave concern over the Opposition threat to go for continuous hartals, said the existence of the country's garment sector — will be at stake if political instability prevails in the coming months.

He said despite the catastrophic floods the sector has almost reached the export tar-

Asian waterfowl census begins today

The opening count of the 13th Asian Waterfowl Census (AWC-1999) will begin at 10 am today in the lakes of Dhaka Zoo under the joint auspices of the World Conservation Union -IUCN Bangladesh and Nature Conservation Management (NACOM), reports BSS.

The country office of the IUCN yesterday invited all bird watchers, including children to watch and identify migratory birds in the lake of the National Zoological Gardens at Mirpur this morning.

IUCN officials said anyone interested in migratory birds is welcome to watch, identify and count the birds near the Utshov Island in Mirpur Zoo.

They said their volunteers would help guests in the use of equipment including telescopes and binoculars for the purpose.

The AWC, an activity of monitoring and creating awareness about water birds and wetlands, was launched in 1987 amid destruction and degradation of wetlands in the region. The AWC now covers 32 Asian countries.

The dates for AWC count in Bangladesh have been fixed from January 9 to 24. The selected sites for AWC count include lakes of the National Zoological Garden, key wetlands of hooz basins, confluence area of the rivers Padma and Jamuna and Jatiya and Nijhum Islands in the Bay of Bengal and adjoining areas.

Govt urged to check price hike of essentials

By Staff Correspondent

Speakers at a rally in the city yesterday demanded of the government to take steps immediately to check price hike of essentials.

Addressing the rally at Mukattam, they said people of low-income group are the worst sufferers as prices are spiralling during the month of Ramadan.

Organised by Bangladesh Garments Workers Unity Council (BGWUC), the meeting was addressed, among others, by Salahuddin Swapon, Mojibur Rahman, Abul Hossain and Tawhidur Rahman. The council leader Mohammad Khurshid Alam presided.

The speakers observed that a section of businessmen had long been engaged in hoarding essential commodities for profiteering.

They demanded that the government arrange supply of essentials including rice, pulse, edible oil and onion in the big cities at subsidised price for the low-income group.

Earlier, leaders and activists of the BGWUC brought out procession in the city.

Deer breeding centre to be completed soon

COX'S BAZAR, Jan 8: The development work of the country's lone Deer Breeding Centre here will be completed in the current fiscal year at a cost of Tk one crore, reports UNB.

This was stated by Forest and Environment Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury while visiting the centre at Dulahazra here today.

Referring to the 5-year ban on all sorts of hunting, she said the government has undertaken afforestation programmes alongside preserving the nearly extinct animals to maintain ecological balance.

The minister directed the forest officials to take necessary steps to protect the animals, including deer, in the country's sanctuaries. There are 50 deer of various species in the 105-acre reserved forest.

Earlier, the minister visited afforestation programmes at Cox's Bazar, Maheshkhali and Kutubdia coastal areas. Under the green-belt programme in the coastal areas, some 10,000 hectares of land have been brought under tree plantation programme in the district. Senior forest officials were present during the visit.

Qulkhwani held

The qulkhwani of Kamran Reza Chowdhury was held at his residence at Bara Maghbar in the city yesterday, says a press release.

Friends, relatives and admirers of late Chowdhury attended the programme and prayed for salvation of the departed soul.

Kamran Reza died in Calcutta on January 3 and was buried in Dhaka on January 5 last.

Training course on parliamentary reporting ends

A five-day training course on parliamentary reporting, sponsored by the Commonwealth Press Union concluded yesterday at the Press Institute of Bangladesh, reports UNB.

Addressing the concluding session, CPU chairman and editor of daily The Sangbad Ahmedul Kabir said parliament in itself is not the democracy, rather part of it.

UNB chairman Amanullah Khan termed parliament as a parliamentary democracy.

Course facilitator, Tony Bevin, political editor of The Express, London, said: "Democracy is like a flower. It should be protected and adorned."

Ahmedul Kabir distributed certificates among the 15 reporters from different dailies and news agencies who participated in the course. On behalf of the participants, Abu Musa Hasan spoke on the occasion.

Non-motorised vehicles blamed for traffic congestion

Absence of a specific law to control non-motorised vehicles (NMVs) is a major cause for the increase of rickshaws and other NMVs in the capital city, said officials of BRTA, DCC and traffic police, reports UNB.

Rickshaw and other NMVs, identified as the main cause of traffic accidents and congestion in the city, get their licences from Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) who say they have issued some 80,000 licences, whereas more than five lakh unlicensed ones are seen plying in the city.

A joint meeting of Army, police, BRTA and DCC at police headquarters on Thursday decided to deploy Army personnel at different entry points in the city, like Jatrabari, Mahakhali and Gabtoli, to control the chaotic traffic, sources said.

Police cannot prosecute the slow-moving NMVs, like rickshaw, rickshaw-van, pushcart, bicycle and horse drawn carriage," said the Deputy Commissioner (Traffic) of DMP.

The Motor Vehicles Ordinance 1983 regulates the motorised transport and defines motor transports as mechanised vehicles. According to the rickshaw regulation of the Dhaka City Corporation, only a magistrate can impound unauthorised rickshaws with the assistance of traffic police.

Police have already started a drive against unauthorised rickshaws are taking legal action against them. They seized several hundred rickshaws from the city last week and filed cases against them. "But there is no change in the traffic scenario," lamented a DCC official.

"Over 500,000 rickshaws are plying in the capital and their number is increasing day by day. How long is it possible to continue a drive to seize unlicensed rickshaws?" asks a magistrate of the DCC on condition of anonymity.

"Traffic police cannot take action against the growing number of unauthorised rickshaws due to lack of any legal provisions," says a traffic police official. "On what legal ground are we to prevent the unauthorised vehicles?"

Experts say the increased number of NMVs, particularly rickshaws, is the reflection of our socio-economic situation. Mere enactment of law is not enough to prevent the plying of illegal rickshaws. Alternative arrangements are needed to provide jobs to the vast number of unemployed people.

A BRTA official said reduction in the number of rickshaws is possible by restricting some specific roads for rickshaws and operating adequate number of buses as an alternative to the non-motorised three wheelers.



Dr Badruddoza Chowdhury addresses a discussion meeting organised by Doctors' Association of Bangladesh (DAB) at Eskaton Ladies' Club yesterday evening. An iftar party followed the meeting.

PDB, private operators at odds over power projects

As private power generation just initiated a breakthrough in the country's power-scarce energy sector, the state-owned PDB became busy calculating punitive compensation for delays in project implementation, reports UNB.

The Power Development Board is allegedly whipping up the private-sector power companies by issuing notices and threats to cancel the contracts for failing to complete the projects on time.

Private operators, however, redirected the blames on PDB for its "cumbersome procedures" that delayed their projects and caused financial losses.

PDB's failure to meet the country's growing power demand prompted the government in 1996 to liberalise power policy inviting private investments to spur the staggering power situation, blamed to be a major impediment to industrial growth.

A number of ventures followed government's liberal policy to feed the power-hungry National Grid. Country's power demand stands at 2300 MW while generation ranges between 2000 MW and 2050 MW currently.

As Power Development Board prioritised the barge-mounted plants for shortening installation period and facilitating urgent generation, four separate projects, each of 100-MW capacity or above, were signed up with private sector.

One of them, the Khulna Power Company Limited (KPCL), has been credited to be the first private-sector barge-mounted power plant that started adding 100 MW to National Grid in October.

The three others, one in Sirajganj and two at Haripur near the capital, are in different stages of implementation.

A PDB official said they would not allow Westmont Bangladesh Ltd to start commissioning its Tk 600 crore Baghabari plant until it paid \$1.5 million in "liquidity damages."

Westmont already brought its barge from Malaysia to Mongla port on Thursday and was hoping to start commercial production of 130 MW power from late February. The barge "Bijoyer Alo" will set sails on Sunday for the project site at Baghabari in Sirajganj. The plant will be fuelled by oil until gas connection is established over the Jamuna Bridge.

Westmont will be the second private-sector barge-mounted power plant after Khulna Power Company Limited (KPCL).

But the PDB officials said the Westmont had already been served several reminders and even termination letter as it failed to meet an extended November 10 deadline.

"Since their barge has already arrived, we're still ready to give them clearance if they compensate for the liquidity damages," a senior executive of the PDB told UNB.

Garments workers protest burning of effigy

By Staff Correspondent Garments Sramik Oikya Forum (GSOF) yesterday staged demonstration on the Dhaka University (DU) campus and held a rally in front of the National Museum at Shabbag to protest the incident in which an "effigy of garments worker" was burned on the campus recently.

Speakers at the rally called upon the DU authorities to take action against the students responsible for burning the effigy of garments worker.

The effigy was burned by some DU students under the banner of "Conscious Students" as the garments workers expressed solidarity with the movement of the SPSH (Students Protecting Sexual Harassment). The SPSH was carrying out a movement to protest that alleged sexual abuse of a student by a teacher.

At the rally, the garments workers also set fire to an effigy of the "anti-labourers."

Among others, Prof Anu (hammad) and Rehnema (ahmed) of Jahangirnagar University, Ganatantrik Biplobi Jote leader Fazlur Hakim Lala, leader of the Students Protecting Sexual Harassment at DU Rupa, general secretary of "Bharta Federation Uzzal Balo" forum leaders Sujon, Abdul (him) Swapan, Amena Akhter addressed the rally.

NSU orientation programme held

North South University (NSU) held an orientation programme for the new students of its spring semester on the NSU campus on Thursday, says a press release.

NSU Pro Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Hafiz G A Siddiqi welcomed the freshmen. Congratulating the new students for their success in the very competitive admission test, he said NSU is extremely conscious about the standard of education it provides and maintains a rigorous discipline. He called upon the students to work hard and maintain discipline to keep up with the standard.

Dr Waheeduzzaman, Director, MBA Programme, Dr A N M Meshquat, Director, BBA Programme, Dr Abul L Haque, Chairman, Computer Science Department, Dr Salahuddin Ahmed, Chairman, Economics Department, Dr Khaliquzzaman M Elias, Chairman, English Department and Zafrul Karim, the Registrar of NSU also addressed the students.



North South University Pro-VC Prof Hafiz GA Siddiqi welcomes freshmen of Spring Semester of the university at an orientation programme held at NSU premises on Thursday.



UNITED THEY BEG: Lame or disabled beggars seem to find their coalition very useful to get alms chanting Islamic lyrics in chorus -- it pays them better than what they earn on their own. Yesterday they were caught in action in our photographer's lens when they lined up in front of Baitul Mukarram mosque as people were coming out after Juma prayers.



Hawkers have eaten up almost three-fourth of the sidewalks in Bangabandhu Avenue leaving little space for the passers-by to move about. But there has so far been no permanent action to have them evicted.