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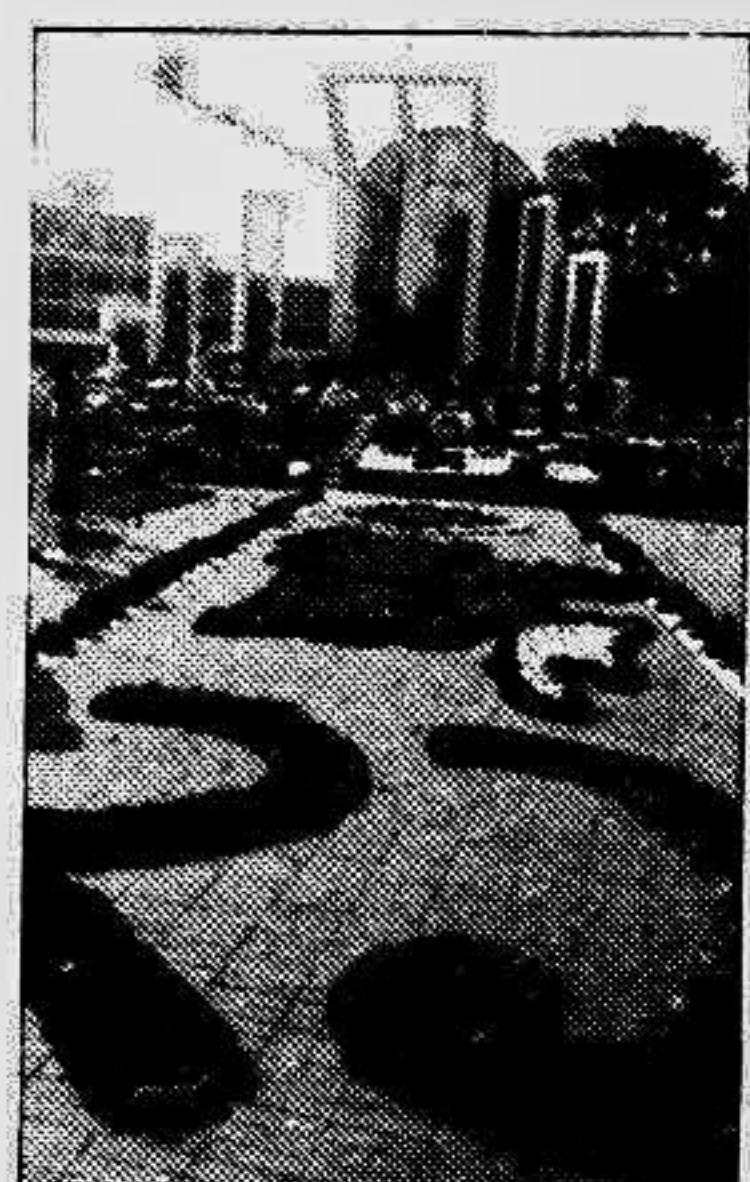
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DHAKA TUESDAY FEBRUARY 16, 1999

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Discussion on Bangla literature today

By DU Correspondent

Dhaka Theatre yesterday staged "Tobatec Sing" in National Auditorium of the Dhaka University as part of the Ekushey Natya Mela.

Organised by DU Theatre and Music Department, the eight-day long drama festival began on Sunday in observance of the Ekushey. Today, Uru Vhangam will be staged.

Meanwhile, a discussion meeting on contemporary poems was at the Bangla Academy yesterday with Prof. Mohammad Maniruzzaman in the chair.

Prof. Zulfiqar Ali presented the keynote speech while Asad Chowdhury, Mohammed Nurul Huda, Mizanur Rahman Khan, Lutfar Rahman Ritan took part in the discussion.

Today's topic of discussion is "Bangla Literature: Achievement of 20th Century".

PM leaves for Jordan today

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina leaves for Jordan this morning on a two-day official visit to pay tributes to the late King Hussein, reports UNB.

During her stay in Amman, the Prime Minister will meet new monarch Abdullah Bin El-Hussein, Crown Prince Hamzah Bin Al-Hussein, Queen Noor and Jordanian Prime Minister Dr. Fayed Tarawneh, officials said in the city yesterday.

She will convey them condolences on behalf of the government and the people of Bangladesh on the death of King Hussein.

Hasina will also offer Jatreh at the tomb of the King.

She will also hold talks with King Abdullah on bilateral, regional and international issues of common concern.

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Cooperation as Progress for All Concerned

Column: Lest We Forget...

by Qazi Khaliquzzaman

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Prayer Timings

February 16

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:25	5:29
Zohr	12:15	1:15
Asr	4:10	4:20
Maghrib	5:58	6:02
Esha	7:10	7:20

Source: Islamic Foundation

Business frustrated as plans for presidential gambit fall apart

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi

A business bid to use "the good offices of the President" to broker a deal between conflicting political camps failed after the Bangabhaban had cancelled an appointment with a national chamber delegation, which was scheduled to see President Shahabuddin Ahmed yesterday morning.

Bangabhaban sources hinted that the postponement came in the wake of suggestions that the courtesy meeting would be used to request the President to intervene in the current political crisis that has forced a number of countrywide shutdowns and threaten more in the next few days.

The sources indicated that the meeting could take place sometime after the planned February 22-25 general strikes. The opposition parties have yet to announce the 96-hour countrywide shutdown, designed to resist the municipal polls

scheduled for February 23-25. Frustrated FBCCI leaders said they were "panicked" by the political developments and that it would be "useless" to try to do something after losing the four days. "Since the Eid-ul-Fitr, we haven't done much of work due to holidays ... then hartals and the tension and uncertainty that have come with it," a top FBCCI leader told The Daily Star yesterday.

The cancellation came at the last moment. FBCCI sources said the Military Secretary to the President phoned the chamber chief late Sunday night to inform of the postponement of the meeting the following morning. "The President wants to defer the meeting by a few days," Major General A M Seraj was quoted to have told the FBCCI president.

The country's business leaders under the aegis of FBCCI had made their intentions pub-

lic, preparing the ground through talks with top leaders from both sides. FBCCI chief Abdul Awal Mintoo met the prime minister and BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan to discuss the business community's plan to involve the President.

Their move also coincided with calls from the donor community and potential foreign investors that the presidential move could be a good option. The visiting team of US-Bangladesh Business Council told the President Sunday that he should intervene, saying peace was an essential precondition to economic development.

While Ambassador Frank Wisner, the leader of the team, stopped short of threatening that current crisis had potential to scare off US investors, local business leaders said they were

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Donor agency warns Unrest due to hartal may divert FDI

By Staff Correspondent

A donor agency has cautioned that hartal will cause 'social unrest' and may divert foreign investment from Bangladesh.

There should be a common platform for expressing views rather than using various means to rock the society and damage the economy," said Bo Goransson, director general of Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

"In a free society, people have the right to demonstrate but basic democratic rules should be followed," he said at a press conference at the Swedish Embassy in Dhaka yesterday on conclusion of a five-day visit.

Swedish Ambassador Anders Johnson was also present.

Responding to a question

about the ongoing political unrest in the country, particularly recent hartal programme of the major opposition parties, official said "Hartal will cause social unrest, create problems in the economy and foreign investors may go anywhere else for safe investment."

He urged the rival political parties to strengthen democratic culture and earn confidence of the development partners.

"Democracy needs understanding among the majority and minority groups and parliament should be the centre of confrontation, rather than the street," he said.

Goransson also gave a brief review of various development projects in Bangladesh assisted

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Hartal activities

Showcause on AL, BNP

By SC Correspondent

The High Court Division yesterday issued a *suo moto* rule directing the ruling Awami League, opposition BNP and the government to showcause as to why the "activities for pro-hartal and anti-hartal should not be declared as cognizable offence."

In the rule, the court asked the general secretaries of AL, BNP, the secretaries of Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs and Home Ministry to explain why police should not be directed to take action accordingly.

The rule issued under Section 56/A of the Code of Criminal Procedure further directed them to showcase as to why such other or further order or orders as the HC deems fit and proper should not be passed.

The division bench of the HC comprised Justice Mohammad Golam Rabbani and Justice

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Heated debate in JS: BNP stages walkout

By Staff Correspondent

Opposition BNP lawmakers staged a brief walkout yesterday during a heated debate in the House on the on-going street agitation, especially hartal.

The unscheduled debate was mainly confined between two influential members from the two Benches. In their war of words, the two -- industries minister Tofail Ahmed and MK Anwar of BNP -- also came down heavily on each other with charges of corruption. But both of them swore upon Allah while denying the charges.

The debate started during the question-answer session but dragged into other businesses of the day, frequently generating heat in the House.

It all started when AL lawmaker Kamal Ahmed Majumdar wanted to know from the industries minister if any law would be enacted to ban hartal which, he said, was causing colossal damage to the national economy.

In reply, the minister made a lengthy statement, bitterly criticising BNP and other opposition parties for sponsoring har-

tals "without any logical issue".

He told the House that frequent hartals were resulting in a declining growth rate and pushing the country towards destruction. "The government cannot be ousted through hartals called without any issue. Nor can they (BNP) return to power by virtue of such hartals. People will definitely resist such illogical hartals."

Frequent hartals by the Opposition have raised questions at home and abroad," Tofail said adding that a US business delegation warned during its recent visit to Dhaka that the country would lose US business in case of frequent hartals.

The minister suggested that the Opposition could use the Parliament to ventilate its grievances, if any. "Discussing a problem on the floor of the House can be more effective than enforcing 10 hartals for it."

Justifying the series of hartals AL enforced while in the opposition, Tofail said those were for free and fair elections

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JS snippets

By Nazmul Ashraf

"Valentine's Day" has finally found its place on the floor of the Jatiya Sangsads.

In fact, yesterday's debate of the House started with lively remarks about the occasion also known as 'Lovers' Day'.

No sooner had Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid commenced the question-answer session, BNP lawmaker Shamsul Alam Pramanik started reciting a famous Tagore's song as the first item on the day's agenda.

"Bhalobesheye Shokhi Nibritye Jotoney Amar Naanti Likho Tomar Monero Mondrey...."

The Deputy Speaker who gave the floor to Pramanik to place his star-marked printed question wondered about the meaning of the BNP lawmaker's actions.

"You know, honourable Speaker, yesterday was Valentine's Day," responded a cheering BNP MP, sparkling off laughter across the benches.

"But you can't make love," a witty Hamid told Pramanik

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Petition for CBA polls in AJM rejected

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Feb 15: A Division Bench of the High Court today rejected a government petition for postponement of the CBA election in Adamjee Jute Mills (AJM) for three months, ordering that the polls be held on February 17 as scheduled.

The petition was filed by the government showing ground of volatile law and order situation in the AJM area. The petition said that law and order may deteriorate sharply in the area if the election is held on schedule. Referring to different intelligence agencies' reports, the petition said the rescheduling was a must to avoid probable killings and bloodshed in connection with the election, sources at the Attorney General's office said.

Earlier, following a prayer

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Changes in local govt ordn '83 okayed

The Cabinet yesterday approved the draft amendment to the Local Government (Union Parishad) Ordinance 1983 aiming to elevate women's status at grassroots level, reports UNB.

Main objective of this amendment is to ensure the leadership and active participation of elected women members of Union Parishad in development activities at local level," said an official announcement.

Bus service

Team leaves for Delhi

By Staff Correspondent

An eight-member official delegation led by Karar Mahmudul Hasan, Joint Secretary of the communications ministry left Dhaka last night for Delhi for talks with Indian officials prior to signing of Dhaka-Calcutta direct bus service accord.

The two-day talks will be held in the Indian capital on February 16 and 17. The talks is expected to conclude with the signing of "Bangladesh-India Passenger Agreement."

Foreign ministry sources

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Trial of Jail Killing Case resumes

Hearing on framing of charges Mar 21

By Staff Correspondent

Metropolitan Sessions Court yesterday fixed March 21 for the hearing on framing of charges against the accused in the Jail Killing Case.

Judge Sheikh Rezwan Ali yesterday passed the order after hearing both the defence and the prosecution counsels when the court resumed after a month-long adjournment.

The court sat in the same building in front of Dhaka Central Jail from where the verdict of Bangabandhu Murder case was delivered on November 8, 1998.

The CID submitted the chargesheet accusing 23 persons on October 15, 1998. Of them, eight have been detained, two — Khandokar Mustaque Ahmed and Mahabubul Alam Chashi — are dead while the rest 13 are absconding.

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Displaced people in CHT in bad shape

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Towards Development Research and Policy Agency (BDRPA) was the first of its kind. The Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), a Dhaka University based organization, arranged the meet.

Other panelists at the conference sought for special attention of policy planners on so far neglected issue of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and called for incorporating causes of IDPs into policy agenda.

Finding presence of good many IDPs in Bangladesh, discussants expressed the urgency for land reforms so that the incidents of internal displacement could be minimized.

Discussants on the opening day of the conference, held at the auditorium of Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS), included Dhaka University Vice Chancellor AK Azad Chowdhury and British Council representative Simon Kay among others.

Various papers dealing with

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Liaison body meets today

By Staff Correspondent

The Central Liaison Committee of the BNP-led opposition alliance will sit today to finalise the date for calling the planned 96-hour hartal from February 22 to 25.

Committee sources said the alliance of BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Okiya Jote has already decided to call a 96-hour hartal to resist the municipal polls scheduled for February 23-25.

They will go for the hartal one day ahead of the election to prevent election officials and ballot boxes from reaching the polling centres.

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Former FS Reaz Rahman joins BNP

By Staff Correspondent

Former foreign secretary Reaz Rahman yesterday joined BNP expressing allegiance to the party and the leadership of Khaleda Zia.

Rahman, who went on retirement in 1997, met with the Leader of the