

Business frustrated

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simply "panicked". The business community and the people in general are panicked by hartals and the threat of future hartals," the executive committee (EC) of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry said in an emergency meeting.

The FBCCI EC members came to know of the cancellation of the Bangabhaban meeting only after they had arrived at the chamber headquarters in the morning.

While the business leaders were disappointed, the President had his own reasons for his decision to postpone today's meeting.

The President, according to sources close to him, has been put off by the responses he has so far received from political parties. None of his initiatives or advice has been met with a respectable gesture from either of the camps, the sources pointed out.

Only recently, the main opposition BNP refused to accept a presidential proposal for a dialogue to find a solution to the crisis surrounding the municipal polls.

The sources say there has not been any reason for the President to expect a "sincere" response from ruling Awami League either. AL insiders say the party has not been happy with the President for his candid remarks about the state of politics on many occasions when the ruling party was not spared the presidential whip. Many AL leaders also fear a president-mediated dialogue can go against the ruling party as the former chief justice is far from likely to show any partisanship.

Another major point for the President to feel uncomfortable with the current political situation is that the Jatiya Party, a major opposition player, is vehemently opposed to him. General Ershad, the party chief, has been known to harbour a fervent dislike for the former Caretaker President Shabuddin. "Ershad can't stand him," a source said.

There are also reports that the ruling party is divided over the FBCCI move to approach the President. The FBCCI chief is known to have had close links with Awami League.

Meanwhile, the business leaders are deeply divided along political lines. At yesterday's meeting, some FBCCI EC members criticised Mintoo for making their plans public. One group, obviously partisan to Awami League, blamed the opposition for the current spate of political unrest while the other found faults with the ruling party.

However, there was unanimity on one point. They all opposed hartal.

But prospects for a negotiated settlement were still visible.

Shamsul Alam's solo exhibition begins

By Staff Correspondent

The solo painting exhibition of Shamsul Alam Azad called "Journey Through Nature" opened at Gallery 21 yesterday. It comprised 31 paintings, which included oil on canvas, mixed-media and acrylic on paper.

Speaking on the occasion, Professor Aminul Islam said that it was heartening that exhibitions are now being held almost every week in Dhaka, and that there are now numerous galleries, art-lovers and many connoisseurs. As a result, he said our artists' works are now being seen and appreciated by thousands. This in eventually expressed the sentiments of crores of people in Bangladesh, he stressed. He pointed out that after the invention of the camera, it was imperative for our artists to move towards abstraction, which was the style of Shamsul, the artist. He added that the thought content, style and soul pitch of the artist was admirable. He said, furthermore, that it is easy to win acclaim but to keep up that fame is difficult.

Professor Mahmudul Haque, Director, Institute of Fine Arts, DU, the special guest, said that paintings should speak for themselves and that Shamsul's dwelling on nature was laudable.

Shamsul, 31, born at Pirojpur, also speaking at the function, explained that the purpose of the exhibit was to stress the necessity of the preservation of nature, and to create something constructive out of his childhood emotions and experiences.

Shamsul won a Best Painting award from the Fine Arts Institute in DU in '91, and has participated in 22 joint ventures in Dhaka.

The exhibition will remain open till February 23.

ble in a key opposition leaders' statement. "I don't believe that we've reached a point of no return. Chances are still there for a settlement if the government side means it," BNP secretary general Bhuiyan told The Daily Star Sunday. "We'll consider a proposal for negotiation if comes from the presidential house."

An AL leader spoke in the same vein. "We believe in peace and stability and hence we're ready to respond positively to any move for a negotiated settlement. Let there be an invitation for a President-mediated dialogue, we'll definitely participate in it," said joint general secretary Abdul Jallal.

The JP's position was however markedly different. "We're not ready to talk with business leaders," said Kazi Firoz Rashid, a presidium member. "The country's economy suffers more from the bank loan defaulters than from hartals."

Detention of Aziz Bhai: Hearing of writ adjourned

The hearing of the writ petition filed on behalf of Aziz Mohammad Bhai against his detention adjourned yesterday for one week before a High Court division bench, reports BSS.

The bench comprising Justice K M Hasan and Justice Mohammad Abdul Quddus adjourned the hearing of the case for one week following a prayer by the government.

Gulshan police arrested Aziz Mohammad Bhai on January 6.

3rd Int'l Congress on Bengal Art begins today

The third International Congress on Bengal Art, bringing together more than one hundred scholars from home and abroad, opens today at the Rajshahi University campus, reports BSS.

Former Chief Justice and head of the caretaker government Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman is expected to inaugurate the five-day congress focusing on Bengal's history, art, archaeology and culture.

Federico Mayor, Director General of the UNESCO, has sent senior special adviser to represent him in the congress and also issued a message wishing success of the congress, an ICSBA press release said.

Finance Minister S A M S Kibria will attend the concluding ceremony as the chief guest on February 20 scheduled to be held in Dhaka.

Besides, scholars from Bangladesh, 46 world-reputed historians and archaeologists from Germany, France, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, United States of America and India have so far confirmed their participation in the concluding session, six globally selected eminent art historians will be admitted to honorary fellowships for their contribution in the field of research on Bengal art.

PCP calls hartal in Rangamati

RANGAMATI, Feb 15: The Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP) has called day-long hartal tomorrow (Tuesday) in the town demanding early rescue of those kidnapped by the tribal terrorists, reports BSS.

Three Chakma villagers were kidnapped from Kutubchahar Bazar on Sunday allegedly by those opposing the peace treaty.

Transport strike in Rangamati from Thursday

RANGAMATI, Feb 15: Local transport workers have decided to enforce strike for an indefinite period from Thursday onwards in protest against what they termed as 'police repression' on them, reports APB.

Police illegally rounded up 26 workers under arms cases though they had no connection with the weapons, the transport workers claimed.

Various transport services including bus, truck, tank lorry, taxi and river transports will simultaneously enforce the strike to register their protest.

Police reportedly arrested the workers on January 24 when they were returning from Majibhanda Mazar Sharif carrying passengers. They also recovered some 107 lethal weapons from their transports.

Police lodged cases against them with the local thana under arms act.



Visitors at the solo pottery exhibition by Prof Sayeed Talukdar at Gallery Tone in the city yesterday.

—Star photo

Sale or rice, wheat at fair price begins in Chittagong

CHITTAGONG, Feb 15: Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) in cooperation with the Food Directorate has started selling rice and wheat at fair prices among the poor people, reports BSS.

About 41 thousand poor people in 41 wards of the city will be able to buy 22 kgs rice and 22 kgs wheat at the rate of Taka 13.50 and Taka 8.50 per kg respectively per month.

City Mayor A B M Mohiuddin Chowdhury inaugurated the sale of rice and wheat at fair prices at a simple ceremony held at city's Feringhee Bazar yesterday.

A six member committee has been formed in each ward with the local ward commissioner as the convener to supervise the sale.

Speaking on the occasion Mayor Mohiuddin said sale of rice and wheat at fair prices would greatly help the people overcome their difficulties as well as stabilise prices of foodgrains in the market.

Presided over by JCD President Habibullah Sohel, the rally was addressed, among others, by Munshi Bazilul Basit Anju, Monjur-e-Elahi, Mojafar Hossain Jakir, Helen Zerin Khan, ABM Mosharaf Hossain, SM Nuruzzaman, Monir Hossain and Mostafijul Islam Maman.

The demand came from a rally held in front of the DUCSU building. Earlier, JCD brought out a procession on the Dhaka University campus in support of their demand.

Addressing the rally, the JCD leaders said they will stage a procession toward the Home Ministry on February 28 if their demand was not met by then.

Witnesses alleged that police arrested one person from the spot, two hours after the incident.

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