

Business frustrated

From Page 1

The business community and the people in general are panicked by hartals and the threat of future hartals, the executive committee (EC) of the 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 Bangladesh 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 leading to 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 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 Shahabuddin. "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 Minto for making their plans public. One group, obviously partisan to Awami League, blamed the opposition for the current state 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, artists' works are now being seen and appreciated by thousands. This in itself 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 of the artist was admirable. He said, furthermore, that it is easy to win acclaim but to keep 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 Jalil.

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 release of those kidnapped by the tribal terrorists, reports UNB.

Three Chakma villagers were kidnapped from Kutubehari 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 Majibhandar 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.

Sale of 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 Feringhe 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.

Muggers snatch Tk 82 thousand

By Staff Correspondent

Muggers snatched Tk 82 thousand from a sales representative of a trading house from inside a bank at Sonargaon road in the city yesterday morning.

The victim was identified as Ziauddin, a sales representative of SM Trading at 318 Free School Street.

The incident took place when Ziauddin went to draw money from Sonali Bank, Sonargaon Branch at about 11 am. A group of muggers snatched the money from his pocket.

The victim alleged that he immediately informed the incident to the Ramna police. But they came at least two hours after the incident.

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

When contacted Ramna police the duty officer said one Shaheen was arrested from the spot and the money could not be recovered by the police.

JCD demands release of its leaders, workers

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), student wing of main opposition BNP, yesterday demanded immediate release of its jailed leaders and workers including general secretary Nasir Uddin Pintu, reports UNB.

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.

Presided over by JCD President Habibunnabi Sohel, the rally was addressed, among others, by Munshi Bazul Basil Anju, Monjur-e-Elahi, Mojafar Hossain Jakir, Helen Zerin Khan, ABM Mosharraf Hossain, SM Nuruzzaman, Monir Hossain and Mostafizul Islam Mamun.



Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) brought out a procession demanding the release of its leaders and trial of Sajal's killers on the Dhaka University campus yesterday. —Star photo

\$5m project to check impact on human health Air pollution causes 15,000 premature deaths in city

World Bank environmentalists said in the city yesterday that proper inspection and availability of lead-free and pure fuel oil are among the prerequisites to control vehicular air pollution and its hazardous impact on human health, reports UNB.

As one of the 21 implementing agencies of the UNDP-sponsored environmental programmes, World Bank has initiated a project aiming at reducing vehicular air pollution and associated health hazards in Dhaka city in a cost-effective manner. Bank executives told a press briefing at its office in the city.

The main objective of the 5 million US dollar project dubbed Air Quality Management Project (AQMP) is to reduce human exposure to vehicular air pollution that causes an estimated 15,000 premature deaths and several million cases of sickness every year in Dhaka city.

World Bank's senior environmental economist Carter Brandon identified two-stroke three-wheeler, autorickshaws popularly known as baby-taxis, as the major culprit for polluting the city air.

"We can't ban baby-taxis overnight unless innovating another economical, social alternative — perhaps a better 'Mishuk' he said, stressing the need for cleaning up the existing fleet, estimated between 30,000 and 50,000 baby-taxis.

Improved lubricants and lubricant delivery systems can help clean up the automobiles, he said. Besides, you must have cleaner and unleaded fuels."

Carter, senior environmental economist of the World Bank's South Asia Environment Unit, said there would be no progress in reducing air pollution without a better vehicle inspection system.

"Inspection system must not be corrupt," he said, hinting at the experiences in Delhi and Mexico cities.

Carter felt the need for disseminating adequate information about air pollution, its reasons and laws to raise awareness among the public.

"We don't exactly know how much of it (air pollution) comes from baby-taxis, how much from industries and domestic households," he said, calling for pushing the government to give better information.

City's air pollution will be largely reduced if the World Bank's project succeeds in regulating baby-taxis in Dhaka during the next three years, Carter hoped.

Environmental specialists of the Bank's Dhaka office Paul Martin put emphasis on better monitoring of fuel delivery system, mainly the petrol pumps, many of which, he said, quoting a survey, mixed kerosene or some other low-cost oil with vehicular fuel.

He also pointed to the industrial air pollution and felt the urgency of feeding the factory owners with adequate information relating to environmental hazards caused by industries.

"You really need an environment management system within the factories," he said. Like ISO-14000, environment management certificates may become an imperative for export in Western countries in future, Martin hinted.

He felt the need for building up an information network involving trade bodies like Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) to raise consciousness among the factory owners.

Members of Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB), Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies Fellow Dr Moinul Islam Sharif and World Bank executive Dr Subrata S Dhar were present.

BCL observes 'Democracy Killing Day'

By DU Correspondent

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the student wing of ruling Awami League brought out a procession and held a rally on the Dhaka University campus yesterday to observe "Democracy Killing Day."

On this day in 1996, the then ruling BNP held a general election disregarding opposition parties demand to hold the election under a non-party caretaker government.

To press home their demands, the then opposition Awami League, Jatiya Party, Jamaat and other political parties boycotted the parliamentary election of February 15.

The then government of BNP rejected opposition demands. But in the wake of movement the constitution to pave the way for holding the general election under a neutral and caretaker government.

Since then, different political parties have been observing February 15 as the "Democracy Killing Day."

Addressing the rally at the Aparajeya Bangla, the BCL leaders accused the opposition parties of hatching conspiracy to destroy the democracy of the country.

The BCL leaders also urged their leaders and workers to be united to foil such conspiracies to uphold the democracy.

Rally of NGOs Thousands protest against social evils

RAJSHAH, Feb 15: Thousands of workers of grassroot-level NGOs at a rally here today raised their voices against communalism, fundamentalism, terrorism and all sorts of repression and exploitation, reports UNB.

Over 50,000 people joined the rally organised by Rajshahi chapter of Trinamul Janasangathan, a conglomerate of NGOs.

Poor and landless people from Rajshahi, Pabna, Natore and Chapainawabganj districts took part in the rally.

General Secretary of Rajshahi Awami League City unit Khairuzaman Liton, District CPB General Secretary Enamul Haq, Masud Kamal of Workers Party, ADAB chairperson Kazi Faruque Ahmed and local leaders of Trinamul organisations addressed the rally at the Government Madrasa maidan.

Workshop on reporting on crime begins today

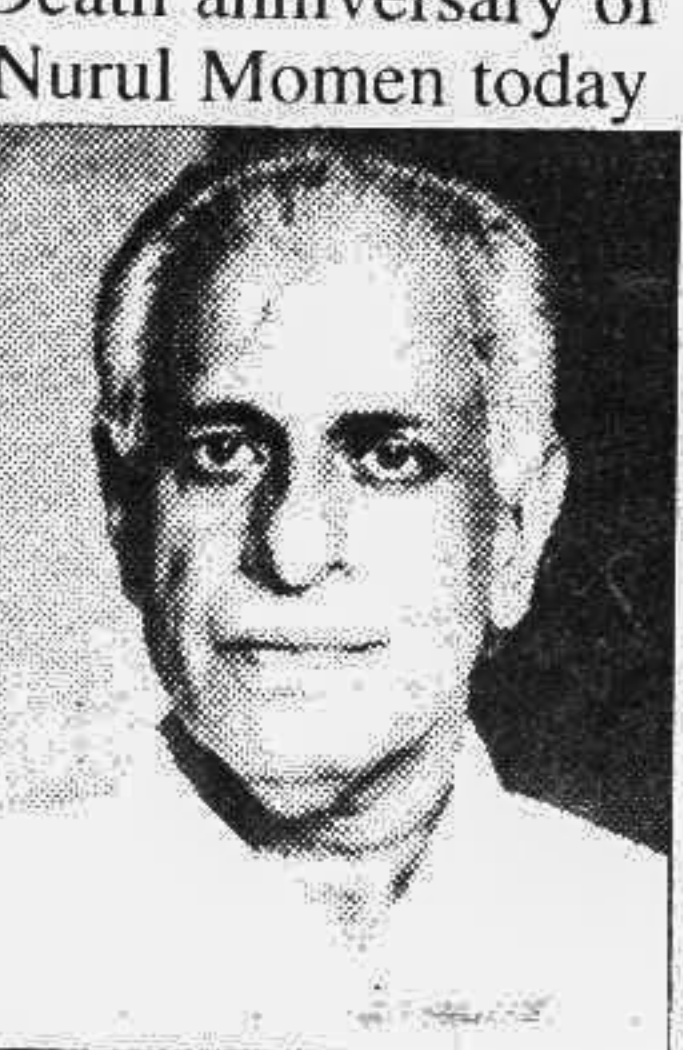
A 10-day workshop on 'Specialist Reporting on Crime' for journalists of the country's print media began yesterday, reports APB.

Sponsored by the British Council in Dhaka and the Thomson Foundation of the United Kingdom, the course has been organised to develop skills of the reporters as well as other newsmen working in the dailies and weeklies.

The training programme will cover various aspects of crime reporting, including court reporting, criminal trials, investigation, going undercover and ethics of crime reporting.

David Harrison and Jan Mather — two consultants of the Thomson Foundation of UK — are conducting the training workshop attended by the newsmen from major English and Bengali newspapers, said a press release.

Death anniversary of Nurul Momen today



The ninth anniversary of death of the pioneer of drama and satire in this country Natyaguru Prof Nurul Momen will be observed today, says a press release.

A discussion meeting on the life and works of Prof. Momen and a cultural programme will be held today by the Shilpakala Academy at 5:00 pm in its gallery building.

Milad mahfil will also be held at the residence of his youngest son journalist Dr Faisal Mahmud Nurul Momen in Uttara Model Town.

JUTA elections today

By JU Correspondent

Election of the Jahangirnagar University Teachers' Association (JUTA) will be held today with a new polarisation of teachers.

The battle takes place between the two pro-BNP teachers' groups as they float two panels after a split in the former pro-BNP teachers' group. Pro-Awami League teachers group refrained from offering any panel supporting the breakaway faction of the pro-BNP teachers.

The radical pro-BNP panel "Jatiyatabadi Ganotantrik Shikkhak Parishad (JGSP)" is led by incumbent president of Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers' Association (FBUTA) Prof. Jasimuddin Ahmed while the breakaway pro-BNP teachers' panel "Liberal Progressive (LP)" is led by former FBUTA president Prof. Khondakar Mustahidur Rahman.

LP candidates for general secretary and treasurer Dr Sayed Kamrul Ahasan and Prof. Nurul Alam Khan respectively were elected to the posts uncontested as there was no other contenders. Both the teachers are widely known as pro-BNP men in the campus.

LP panel leader Prof. Mustahidur Rahman who joined hands with the pro-BNP teachers group recently had contested for the post of Vice Chancellor (VC) last year.

A total of eight of the 15 candidates from the LP panel including already elected GS and treasurer, are from the pro-BNP breakaway faction while the other seven are from pro-AL group backed by the VC Prof. Alauddin Ahmed.

JGSP teachers for the 13 posts are Prof. Abu Sayeed Khan for president, Prof. Kazi Abdus Samad for vice president, Abdur Rab for joint secretary and Prof. AFM Ubaidur Rahman, Prof. Ameen Muhammad Ali, Prof. ABM Enayet Hossain, Prof. M. Imamuddin, Tareq Chowdhury, Prof. Dildar Hossain, Prof. Mojibar Rahman, Dr. Rafiquzzaman, Prof. Salimullah Khan and Prof. Shaikh Monjurul Haq of the posts of 10 members.

LPP candidates are Prof. Ismail Hossain for president, Prof. Nurul Alam for vice president, Farid Ahmed for joint secretary and Prof. AK Azizul Haq Bhuiyan, Prof. Khondoker Mustahidur Rahman, Dr. Abdul Mannan Chowdhury, Prof. Abdul Akand, Prof. Enamul Haq Khan, Naimul Islam, Prof. Nasiruddin, Mojibar Rahman and Dr. Sadia Ahmed for members.

Voting will take place at the university club from 9 am to 1 pm. Some 260 teachers are expected to cast their votes in the polls.

Sangsad snippets

From Page 1

who is a confirmed bachelor. The opposition lawmaker was not discouraged by the Chair's comment. "We should promise to love each other to build up a world of love," he said before raising his question for Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed.

Before answering the question, a smiling Tofail told Pramank. "Who knows better than Pramank Shaheb about what love is. He was desperate for love but could not find his match. He is romantic but has failed to choose his partner. Perhaps, he has found too many to offer his love to."

Mosharraf Hossain Mongu of BNP ridiculed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's idea of a "government of consensus" while speaking about his sufferings, caused by power failure, at the MP Hostel in the hot summer days last year.

"My wife and I discovered a 'consensus formula' to get rid of the heat while staying at the MP Hostel last Chaitra," said

Mongu. Upon being asked by the Chair if it was his wife or his son's wife that he reached the consensus with, the opposition MP confirmed that it was indeed the former.

"During power load shedding at night, we used a hand fan to cool ourselves. The consensus was that each of us would operate the hand fan in alternating shifts of four hours," he continued amidst a wave of laughter.

Mongu then wanted to know from State Minister for Power Prof. Rafiqul Islam if his sufferings would be the same in the coming summer.

Before assuring him of a better power situation this year, the state minister jokingly said, "I think, the honourable member of the Opposition enjoyed the air produced by his beloved wife in the summer. Therefore, we did not want to deprive him of the pleasure. But, this year, we intend to do so a little bit as load shedding is expected to be much lower."

Nazrul's birth centenary observed in Britain

Bangladesh Youth and Cultural Shamity based in Leicester (UK), celebrated the birth centenary of Kazi Nazrul Islam with the launching of the bilingual publication of "Selected Poems of Kazi Nazrul Islam," translated by Syed Mujibul Haq, says a press release.

This is the first publication of a book on Nazrul's poems outside Bangladesh.

The launching ceremony was highlighted by the recitation of Nazrul's poems both in Bengali and English by the children of the Bengali community.

An exhibition at Leicester Museum on Nazrul's life and a memorial lecture on the poet will also be held.

A second launching of the book is being planned at Nehru centre in London. Copies of the book have been forwarded to the British Library, French National Library, US Library of Congress and reputed universities in Britain.

BBC's Radio Leicester interviewed Syed Mujibul Haq on the occasion. The event also got local coverage from the media including coverage of the book launching ceremony by the local Leicester Mercury newspaper.

Fire guts 23 shops in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, Feb 15: A devastating fire at the city's Bahaddarhat kutchha bazar early today gutted 23 shops, reports UNB.

The loss is around Tk 12 lakh, according to a local estimate.

Witnesses said the fire, which lasted for an hour, originated from a vegetable shop at 2:45 am and soon engulfed the other shops causing damage to goods and cash money.

The Fire Brigade rushed to the spot and brought the blaze under control.

Shahjalal University Admission exams on Feb 19, 20

SYLHET, Feb 15: The admission test into honours classes of unit 'Ka' and 'Kha' for 1998-99 session of Shahjalal Science and Technology University will be held on Feb 19-20, reports UNB.

Varsity sources said a total of 14,800 candidates are likely to appear for 8,300 seats, meaning that there are 18 contestants vying for one seat.

A total of 11,429 applications have been submitted for Ka unit while 3,571 for Kha unit, they said adding that the number of applicants this year was much higher than that of the previous year.

Donor agency

From Page 1

by the SIDA. He visited the projects to see the progress.

The SIDA director general said Sweden and other development partners want to see progress in various areas like governance, democracy, rule of law and reforms in the administration.

Asked whether these would be pre-conditions for their future assistance, Goransson said that those were not so at this moment but the issues would be considered in case of long term help.

He informed the newsmen that the Swedish government recently agreed to provide around 22.5 million US dollars for rehabilitation of the people affected by last year's flood. The amount will be given as a grant.

Earlier, Swedish assistance concentrated mainly on four sectors—education, rural development, health and promotion of human rights and democracy.

Goransson said the Swedish government wants to help in many other sectors like environment, water treatment and transport.



Dr Q K Ahmed spoke on issues relating to internally displaced persons in Bangladesh at BISS auditorium in the city yesterday. The two-day conference organised by Refugee and Migratory Movement Research Unit was also attended by WV Howell of UNHCR, Prof A K Azad Chowdhury, Vice-Chancellor of the Dhaka University and Simon Kay, Director, British Council.

ABC helps 264 visually impaired

Assistance for Blind Children (ABC), a charity, has helped 264 flood-hit rural visually impaired persons in 10 thanas of Gaibandha and Natore districts with Tk 1,000 each, towards rebuilding their homes, reports UNB.

A substantial amount was received from Enayetullah Khan, Chief Editor of UNB, as donation for post-flood rehabilitation of the visually impaired persons, said an ABC press release today.

The ABC also has disbursed Tk 4.20 lakh in interest-free loan among 180 blind people of Iswarganj, Gauripur, Gaffarganj, Nandail, Ghatail and Kalihati under districts Myemensingh and Tangail respectively for their socio-economic rehabilitation.

Sergeant Zahur's death anniversary observed

CHITTAGONG, Feb 15: Bangladesh Air Force today observed the 30th death anniversary of the sergeant Zahurul Haque with due solemnity, reports BSS.

On the occasion, a *milad mahfil* was held after Asr prayer at the central mosque of BAF Base Zahurul Haque here.

Prayers were offered for the eternal peace of the departed soul and also for continued peace and prosperity of the motherland.

Air Officer Commanding of the air base, Air Commodore Khusrul Alam, officers and airmen of the base attended the *milad-mahfil*.



A Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) procession marking the 'Democracy Killing Day' on the Dhaka University campus yesterday. —Star photo