

We do our Piece so you can have your peace

Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.
Licensee of Federal Express CorporationFor more information call-Dhaka, Tel : 9656114,
9883927, 9130647, 894213, 808803 DEPZ 9338931
Chittagong, Tel : (031) 712127, CEPZ (031) 740106
Khulna, Tel : (041) 725006, NGan, Tel : 971436Backed by
Guarantee

Let's make things better.

PHILIPS

Please visit Transcom Pavilion No.1 at DITF

Ideal gift for any occasion.

Instalment facility available

only for purchases above Tk. 7,500

Transcom Electronics Limited

Official licensee of Philips Electronics N.V. for lighting products, radio and TV sets.

Dhaka: 815307-10 Ctg: 716353, 723578 Khulna: 720304 Bogra: 6215

Visit your nearest Philips Display Centre today



Centenary celebration of Edward College begins

PABNA, Mar 6: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today inaugurated the five-day centenary celebration of Pabna Edward College, report agencies.

Addressing the function, the Prime Minister said that her government would not tolerate terrorism on the campus.

She said terrorists belong to no particular party. A terrorist is always a terrorist. So, they should not be given shelter in any circumstances.

The Prime Minister asked the college authorities to take steps for ensuring congenial academic atmosphere on the campus.

Gopal Chandra Lahiri, an eminent social worker of Pabna, established the college in 1898. Initially it started functioning in a small building and later shifted to the present site.

The Prime Minister announced that a science and technology university would be set up on the Edward College premises.

She assured the teachers and students of introducing more honours and masters courses in the college and construction of dormitories for teachers and female students.

Emir dead

From Page 1

Sheikh Hamad has been heavily involved in day-to-day running of the country. The Cabinet met within hours of Sheikh Isa's death and recognized Sheikh Hamad as Emir. Hamad, a graduate of the Sandhurst Military Academy in Britain, has been commander in chief of the Bahraini defense forces.

Cohen and his entourage originally had intended to cancel a short hop to Saudi Arabia, but later said the trip would go ahead as planned later today.

Bahrain is home to the biggest US naval base in the region. Sheikh Isa offered facilities to the US Navy, discreetly at first because of likely popular resentment against a foreign military presence, then openly during and after the 1990-91 Gulf crisis.

He also allowed use of Bahraini airfields by British and American warplanes. After the Gulf War, he traveled to Washington to sign a security pact with the United States.

Sheikh Isa is the first monarch to die in the Gulf region in 17 years, since Saudi King Khalid in 1982.

Earlier, the United States took the final step needed to sell advanced air-to-air missiles to Bahrain. Defense Secretary William Cohen said.

Under the agreement, Bahrain will buy Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles. Or AMRAAMs, built by Raytheon and Hughes.

The number of missiles to be sold was not disclosed but is likely to be modest. The 3.6-meter-long missiles carry a price tag of drs 386,000 each, but in past arms sales to Bahrain, the United States has sold surplus weapons at reduced prices.

IU strike

From Page 1

position BNPs called the strike in protest against dropping out of the name of late President Ziaur Rahman as founder of IU from the university's 1999 pocket diary published by the authorities.

The JCD activists earlier ransacked the office of public relation officer of the university and gheraoed the office of vice-chancellor on February 1.

After that they called for 72-hour strike from today in support of their demand.

BNP expressed solidarity with the strike call and urged the vice-chancellor to meet the demand immediately.

Dry spell

From Page 1

go up to 7,000 feet, there are chances that the grip of dry weather would be loosened", he said.

He said the normal weather pattern would be restored if this happens.

The trouble in the weather was noticed when the westerly low pressure that brings rain "old during the winter did not come up to Bangladesh.

The pressure simply went towards the Himalays from central and north-western India.

Sources in the agriculture ministry said they are monitoring the situation. There was a high level meeting on March 1 to review the situation.

The long-range weather forecast issued on March 3 noted that there would be one or two norwesters at the end of the month.

The day temperature would rise gradually and there would be a touch of cold at night in the northern region, the forecast said.



Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) brought out a procession in the city yesterday marking its 50th founding anniversary. —Star photo

'People have defied call for polls boycott'

Opposition should better come to JS, settle demands: PM

PABNA, Mar 6: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today said the opposition political parties should now raise and settle their demands in Parliament as "their boycott of the municipal election proved a total failure," report agencies.

"Our movement to resist the polls has failed. Instead of agitating on the streets, better come to Parliament to discuss and resolve issues," she told the opposition while addressing a huge public meeting at the local Police Parade ground in the afternoon.

This was the first public meeting of the Prime Minister after the Pabna-2 by-election, which triggered the opposition demand for resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner and subsequent boycott of the municipal elections.

"They (opposition) had called for boycotting the Pabna polls, but some 80-85 per cent people cast their votes in the election," she said.

The Prime Minister alleged that the opposition did not want development of the Purbashava. That's why they called for shunning the Purbashava polls. But people de-

fied their call."

Sheikh Hasina pointed out that many local level opposition leaders had defied their party directives and joined polls. Some 20-22 candidates belonging to BNP, five of Jatiya Party, three of Jamaat and one each of Workers' Party and JSD who contested in the election had successfully returned.

"What will be their (the opposition) reply to the people now?" she asked.

In a rebuttal to the opposition leader's allegation that they were not allowed to speak in the Jatiya Sangsads, the Prime Minister said how could she take the floor when she did not come to the House.

She mentioned that the 7th Jatiya Sangsads sat for 224 days during which the leader of Opposition remained absent for some 200 days. "Please join us in the House and speak as much as you want," Hasina said lamenting that Begum Zia never attended any meeting of the Parliamentary Advisory Committee.

The Prime Minister also blamed the previous BNP regime for having denied the opposition any coverage in the

state radio and television when they had been in power.

But the electronic media these days have been broadcasting all the proceedings of the Jatiya Sangsads, including the speeches of the opposition MPs, she claimed.

She condemned recent attacks on the residence of the Chief Election Commissioner and blamed the opposition BNP for assaulting some poor rickshaw pullers during their recent hartals.

Hasina listed various development and welfare programme taken up by her government across the country, including Pabna district.

At the public meeting, she also announced that private Medical College would be set up in the district and plans were underway to build railways between Pabna and Nagarbari.

Earlier, President of Pabna Chamber of Commerce and Industry M A Kasir presented a crest of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, made of 20 tolas of gold, to the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister also blamed the previous BNP regime for having denied the opposition any coverage in the

Meeting on Kafco

From Page 1

and other effects due to mechanical defaults with the plants.

Kafco failed to meet repayment obligations to its various lenders on February 1, including over US\$ 9 million due to Eximbank. The company has also defaulted its payments against gas bills, amounting to US\$ 13 million in principal amount till February 27, due to state-owned Bakhrabad Gas Systems Ltd.

"If there is obstacle to be authorised by the government of Bangladesh, please explain to us what you are talking to the government of Bangladesh that is one of the shareholders of Kafco," said Eximbank, which declined an invitation to attend the meeting to represent the lenders.

"And if the commercial settlement should be difficult to be executed, you have to show us another possible solution. Our only and greatest concern is what you are doing to cure this default," Eximbank said in his letter dated March 4, the last working day before today's meeting. The letter arrived when the Kafco chairman and industries secretary K M Ejazul Hug was in Japan to attend a seminar in Kyoto.

Eximbank has only reinforced the threat coming from the Japanese aid agency, Overseas Economic Co-operation Fund (OEFCF).

A junior OEFCF official had earlier written to the industries minister to lobby for the commercial settlement, implying the government's approval of the deal was linked to continued Japanese assistance for Bangladesh.

Eximbank has also written to the Ministry of Finance, reminding it of government obligations as guarantor of the Kafco loans.

A senior finance ministry official said Eximbank has made it clear that the threat is aimed to bring more pressure in favour of the commercial settlement on behalf of Marubeni and Chiyoda. The Japanese bank marked its letters to the two companies, which the official described as unusual. "How could they be so blatant?" the official asked.

Implications of the plant acceptance are far reaching, one of them being the two off-take agreements. If plant acceptance is given now, says a Kafco in-

sider, then the two off-take agreements for the sale of Kafco's products (ammonia and urea) which have been operating since the plant started production, would be given a three-year extension of its PSC for these two blocks.

The government had signed PSC with Rexwood-Oklan joint venture in January 1997. At that time, Rexwood-Oklan got the two blocks without submitting several documents, the sources claimed.

Later, the joint venture merged into Okland. But again, this was not officially informed to Petrobangla.

Due to financial constraints, Okland started conducting seismic survey in the two blocks slowly. Its PSC had the most flexible terms compared to all other PSCs signed by Bangladesh with foreign oil companies.

The two off-take deals also prevent Kafco from selling its products even to Bangladesh during emergency, without permission from its off-takers.

This year, the government has bought over 100,000 tonnes of urea from Kafco and wants 25,000 tonnes more.

Last week, the company enraged the government and BCIC, which runs the state-owned urea-producing factories, by requiring it to float a tender to fix the price for Kafco urea at the insistence of urea off-taker Transammonia, which also charges a commission on sales to Bangladesh.

After the angry government response, the Kafco managing director wrote again to BCIC on the same day, on February 28, offering a fixed price instead.

Meanwhile, a nine-member committee headed by Finance Minister S A M S Kibria is looking into various aspects of the new crisis in the crisis-ridden company, especially its poor financial health and its implications on the government of Bangladesh.

It completed seismic survey in both the blocks in mid-'98. Now it has almost completed interpretation of the seismic data.

Earlier in mid-'97, Tullow had publicised in the London Stock Exchange that it had got two blocks in Bangladesh. But it was not clear then which were the blocks.

Later, it became known that Tullow's employees were working with Okland. However, Okland never admitted selling out its concerns in Bangladesh to Tullow.

But in mid-'98, when a newspaper reported that Tullow had taken over Okland, Tullow's chief in a rejoinder sent from Ireland said that the company had only a technical cooperation agreement with Okland.

"Even if there is a technical cooperation agreement, Okland should have first informed Petrobangla about its involvement as per PSC terms," a source said. "But Okland did not bother to inform Petrobangla."

Quoting banking circles, a Petrobangla source said that Tullow has been financing Okland's operations in Bangladesh for more than a year now.

But local employees of Okland were not aware of Tullow's financial involvement because the matter was kept secret, the source added.

President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed in a message on the occasion said that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, through his historic March 7 speech imbued the nation with the spirit of independence.

We earned our victory through limitless sacrifices and dedication of hundreds of thousands of lives."

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a message said that the historic speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was a milestone in our independence.

"We have communicated this to the Election Commission. It now depends on the Commission to finalise the schedule. We are ready for it," he said.

March 7

From Page 1

istan into a bloody war on the night of March 25, 1971 as the army launched history's bloodiest and barbaric crackdown on innocent civilians.

The long cherished independence was achieved on December 16, 1971 at the cost of supreme sacrifice of millions of people.

President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed in a message on the occasion said that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, through his historic March 7 speech imbued the nation with the spirit of independence.

"Even if there is a technical cooperation agreement, Okland should have first informed Petrobangla about its involvement as per PSC terms," a source said. "But Okland did not bother to inform Petrobangla."

Quoting banking circles, a Petrobangla source said that Tullow has been financing Okland's operations in Bangladesh for more than a year now.

But local employees of Okland were not aware of Tullow's financial involvement because the matter was kept secret, the source added.

President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed in a message on the occasion said that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, through his historic speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was a milestone in our independence.

"We have communicated this to the Election Commission. It now depends on the Commission to finalise the schedule. We are ready for it," he said.

1666 expelled on second day of SSC exams

Some 1,666 SSC examinees were expelled from different centres of the country for adopting unfair means on the second day of the examination yesterday, reports UNB.

Officials said 745 candidates were expelled from Dhaka Board, 201 from Jessore Board and 563 from Rajshahi Board, 58 from Comilla district and 99 in Chittagong district.

Full figure of expulsions from Chittagong and Comilla Board was not available.

In Dhaka Board, 31 examinees were expelled from Narayanganj, one from a centre in Dhaka city, 60 in Munshiganj, 27 in Manikganj, 149 in Tangail, 105 in Mymensingh, 78 in Jamalpur, 21 in Kishoreganj, 90 in Netrokona, 29 in Faridpur, 26 in Rajbari, 59 in Sharikpur and 69 in Narayanganj.

However, it was identified that some progress in women's development had taken place over the last eight years, especially in the last two years.

The participants acknowledged that the government had initiated a National Women Development Policy, which they viewed as a positive step towards development of women. They commended the creation of the policy on women's development.

The speakers felt that women, in order to be heard by the policy makers, should speak out in one voice. But such unity, they admitted, is far cry in the present day reality.

They called for coordination among all the major actors dealing with women's issues. The unanimous opinion was that much is going on in an uncoordinated and disjointed manner and that this reduces the impact and durability of the various endeavours.

However, it was identified that some progress in women's development had taken place over the