

Two more trains to be placed under private sector

PARBATIPUR, June 30: Bangladesh Railway of western zone has decided to hand over two more train services to the private sector, reports UNB.

These are Up-23 and Down-24 of Uttara Express and Up-31 and Down-32 of Khulna mail on Parbatipur-Rajshahi and Parbatipur-Khulna routes.

A railway source said tenders have been invited in this regard. He hoped that the trains would be run under private management from August.

He said 12 tenders — six from Rajshahi and six from Dhaka — have been received on June 22 which are under scrutiny for selection.

Railway authorities handed over Up-21 and Down-22 Padmarag and Up-481/482 local trains of Santahar-Lalmoni route under private management in April, 1997.

Hard rock project

200 tonnes of stones being extracted daily

State Minister for Energy Prof Rafiqul Islam told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday that on an average 200 tonnes of stones are being extracted daily from the Dinajpur Madhyapara Hard Rock Project, reports BSS.

Replying to a question from Farooq Khan (AL-Gopalganj), he said commercial extraction of rocks has not yet started.

Prof Rafiq said commercial extraction of rocks from the project would begin in July, 2001 at a cost of 10.77 US dollar per tonne while the sale price would be 23 US dollar.

Prof Rafiq said that at present, per tonne of stones is being sold at 17 US dollar as a promotional price.

He also said that at present, 12 square kilometres have been earmarked as the mining area under the project in which the stock of rocks is estimated at 174 million tonnes.

He said a large stock could be extracted from here for more than 70 years.

Mohila Dal protests police action on women

By Staff Correspondent

Jatiyatabadi Mohila Dal has strongly protested the incident in which police have assaulted three women at Panchagarh, and urged the people to build a strong resistance against repression of women in the country.

In a joint statement yesterday, central and Dhaka city unit convenors of Mohila Dal Begum Kursid Jahan Haq MP and Selina Rahman respectively expressed grave concern at such incidents of repression and assault on women.

They alleged that the Awami League terrorists and police were frequently resorting to repression of women across the country.

Referring to the Panchagarh incident, the Mohila Dal leaders said police assaulted nine women in broad daylight at Talma Adarsa Village under sardar thana.

They alleged that currently there is no chain of command and discipline in the police department as the Awami League government was using the police force in the party interests and in harassing leaders and activists of BNP.

Terrorist

From Page 1

owner alleged that the members of Azad's gang owed Tk 22 thousand to him as they never paid for taking food in his hotel in the last three months.

A businessman in Kachukhet area said they used to pay huge amount of money as toll to Azad's babbins every month. "Many business people had to suffer torture when they failed to pay," he added.

The gang used to collect huge 'donations' from local garments factory owners and forced them to sell 'cut pieces' to the gang members at nominal prices.

Several garments workers were also violated by terrorists of Azad and Jahangir groups, said an elderly man residing at Ibrahimpur.

Another man said any one starting construction work in the area had to pay money to the two gangs. They also forced people to have their construction work done by them and buy materials from them.

Obituary

Achla Begum, mother of Abdus Sattar Mazi, the Private Secretary to the State Minister for Jute A K Faezul Huq, died of old-age complications yesterday. She was 73, reports BSS.

She left behind two sons, two daughters and a large number of relatives to mourn his death.

She was buried at her family graveyard.

Gulhwani of Achla Begum will be held at her Jangalpur village home of Chaudhram thana under Comilla district on July 2.

Gulhwani

Gulhwani of S J A Akhtar Hussain, retired Superintendent of T and T, will be held at his Mirpur residence after the Maghreb prayers tomorrow, reports UNB.

He died of throat cancer at the age of 78 Monday morning. He was buried in his ancestral home in the village of Gerda in Faridpur.

Family members have requested friends and relations to attend his Gulhwani to be held at his residence, House No-11, Road 15, Bloc B, Section 10, Mirpur.



Gerardo Manuel Biritos, the newly appointed envoy of Argentina, presented his credentials to President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday.

— PID photo

11 get British scholarship

Eleven students have been selected by the British High Commission in Dhaka for scholarships to study in the United Kingdom (UK) in academic year 1999-2000, reports UNB.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair recently announced the start of a worldwide campaign to increase by 75,000 the number of overseas students in the United Kingdom by 2005.

Launching the campaign at The London School of Economics (LSE) in London, Blair also said they would expand their flagship Chevening scholarship scheme by up to 1,000 extra scholarships a year through government and private funding.

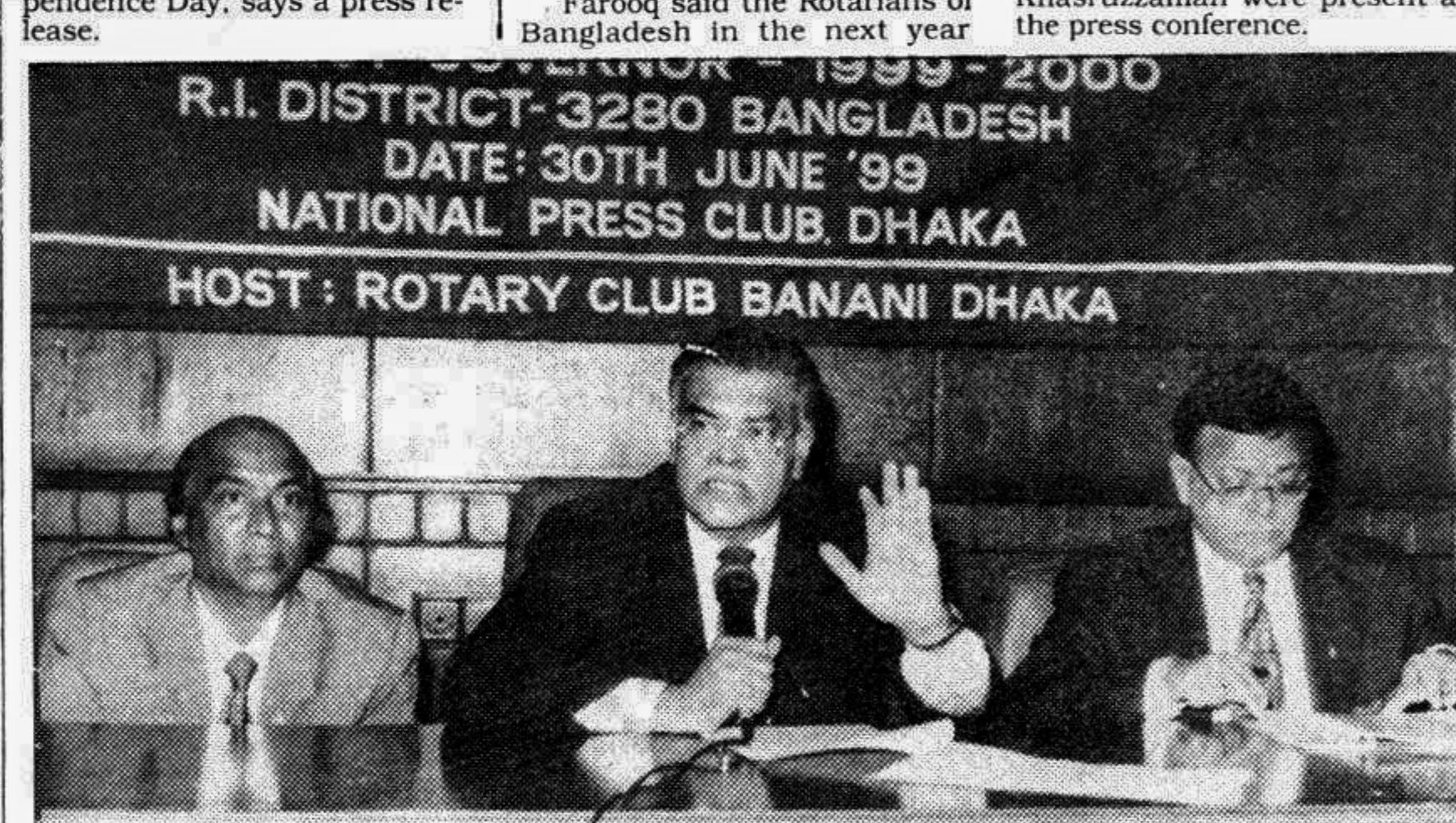
The British Chevening Scholarships, funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), are offered in more than 150 countries, including Bangladesh, to enable talented graduates and young professionals to gain skills, which will benefit their countries.

A package of changes has been agreed in Britain to remove delay in international students applying for study in Britain.

US embassy closed on July 4

The offices of the US Embassy, the Consular Section, the United States Information Service (USIS), USIS Student Counselling Service and USIS Information Resource Centre will be closed on July 4 on the occasion of the American Independence Day, says a press release.

M Ozair Farooq, district governor-elect of Rotary International, speaking at a press conference at the National Press Club yesterday. Advocate Shah Khosruzzaman, club president of Banani, and Mohammad-a-Awal, the incumbent governor of the club also spoke on the occasion.



— Star photo

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Money mystery

An amount of Tk one lakh mysteriously disappeared from the Dhaka University branch of Sonali Bank at the University's administrative building yesterday, bank officials said, reports UNB.

They said three employees of the office of the Examination Controller drew Tk 3,48 lakh on account of salaries of its staff in the morning.

The employees told the bank officials and university authorities that they put Tk one lakh in a leather bag and found the bag empty when they opened it to put the remaining money in it.

The university authorities formed a three-member inquiry committee headed by the Examination Controller.

RU reopens today

RAJSHAHI, June 30: The classes of Rajshahi University (RU) resumes tomorrow after 39 days of summer vacation, reports UNB.

Workshop on gas development issues ends

A reporters' workshop on Gas Development Issues ended yesterday in the city, says a press release.

Eleven journalists from leading newspapers of the country took part in the workshop organised by Bangladesh Centre for Development, Journalism and Communication (BCDJC) and the Knight International Press Fellowship Programme of the International Centre For Journalists (ICFJ) Washington DC.

Six specialists in gas exploration briefed the journalists on the latest developments in the sector.

Rotarians plan series of dev programmes

By DU Correspondent

Rotary International has taken up a series of development programmes involving 26 million US dollar to improve the living standard of distressed and down-trodden people of the country.

The programmes include vocational training for unemployed youths, providing safe drinking water, plastic surgery of acid victims, awareness programmes on drug abuse, AIDS and cancer, and providing shelter to the homeless.

M Ozair Farooq, Rotary International District 3280 Governor-elect, disclosed this while addressing a press conference in the city yesterday morning.

Under the literacy programme, Rotary International in collaboration with the government are now running some 425 schools, he said, adding that another programme named 'combat hunger project' is also being implemented.

Rotary, which is now widely regarded as the largest provider of services for human causes, will continue the programmes and take up more projects in the next Rotary 1999-2000 to face the challenge of the 21st century.

The theme of this year's Rotary International is to act with consistency, credibility and continuity.

The rotary district was leading and coordinating the programmes of all the 95 Rotary Clubs of the country.

Farooq said the Rotarians of Bangladesh in the next year

would take a programme with US dollar one lakh for vocational training to 2000 educated, half-educated and illiterate unemployed youths.

In association with the neighbouring Rotary District in West Bengal of India, the District will organise a Rotary Peace Programme to combat the arsenic problem of the country.

Besides, the District will collect 3999 bags of blood to create awareness of safe blood transfusion and undertake programme to get commitments for posthumous eye donation by at least 367 Rotarians.

The District will also host two international conference of the Rotarians — Rotary International Presidential Conference and Conference of Rotaract of South Asia namely "ROTASIA" — in Dhaka in April 2000.

Briefing the newsmen on previous activities of the Rotarians, the outgoing District governor MA Awal and the Governor elect Farooq said that they have organised Eye Camps, undertaken different programmes for the farmers and poverty alleviation, established cancer hospital in the city, cyclone shelters in coastal areas and so on for the wellbeing of the distressed humanity.

Among others, Past District Governors Azizul Haque, Iftekharul Alam, Zalal U. Ahmed and Mostafa Zaman Abbasi and President of the Rotary Club of Banani Shah Khasruzzaman were present at the press conference.

Home Minister

From Page 1

Nasim asked the opposition to stop what he called its double standards.

Declaring his firm commitment to take action against anybody involved in terrorism or nursing terrorists, he said: "None is above law. And none will be allowed to go above law."

Referring to former Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali's ruling that hands of law are long no doubt, but they are not too long to reach parliament, the home minister said terrorists are getting bail immediately after they are arrested.

Criticising opposition MPs' cry for independent judiciary, he said, "We did not forget the day when a High Court judge read out a judgement sitting by the side of a Chhatra Dal leader."

Those who protected the killers by amending the Constitution and extended state facility to them do not have the moral position to talk about us," he said.

"If I work neutrally and make the constitution effective, I will have to take action against those who protected the killers of Bangabandhu," he said.

Earlier, moving cut motions, opposition members said police force itself is corrupt and involved in criminal activities.

Jafur Islam Chowdhury of BNP said there is no need for making allocation for police who cannot protect people. "Rather, they kill people in custody."

Mehdhi Ahmed Rumi of BNP held the police responsible for deterioration of law and order situation. Zainal Abedin Farooq of BNP said it was the police who stripped off Moni Begum.

Shamsul Alam Pramanik said corruption is the main problem of police. Ehsanul Haq Milon said Home Ministry has been used in attacking opposition members.

Md Shahjahan said: "We can't give money to let people die in police custody and jails."

Among others who took part in discussion were Shahidul Islam, Prof Shahidul Islam, Shamsuzzaman Didi, Alamgir Haider Khan, Fazlul Azim and Gazi Mohammad Shahjahan of BNP and Golam Farooq of JP.

JS tidbits

From page 12

ride to Khulna on July 2. You are free to examine if the recovered firearms are operative, or operative or rusted," said the minister.

During discussion on grants for the home ministry, other BNP lawmakers also passed interesting comments, much of the embarrassment to the minister concerned, who did not mince any word to retort to some charges.

ANM Ehsanul Haq Milon said Nasim was the home minister for Kuchia -- the area in Chandpur from where he is elected. Is it Nasim or Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir (the state minister for planning, who hails from the same area)? Milon's funny question followed his allegation that the state minister had set the police after him.

There is only one home minister in Bangladesh and he is Mohammad Nasim. The home minister does not carry out the orders of anybody else, other than the prime minister and myself," Nasim said, claiming that there were ten home ministers during the BNP days.

Khairul Enam ridiculed the home minister for his earlier announcement that he would find out the terrorists from the beneath the soil. "Terrorists don't stay under the soil, they're very on it. Catch those on the soil first, then you can go beneath."

Shahidul Islam discovered two police stations in his Jhenaidah constituency. "One is the official and there is another unofficial which is run by ruling party people, who are using the police as their position parties," he charged and the Treasury to disprove him.

GM Fazlul Haq termed the 'dog squad' as Kutta (dog) police, which he said had to be imported due to failure of the police in maintaining law and order in the country.

Responding to the BNP outrage against Tuesday's killing around the court premises, the home minister remarked, "We'll have to investigate if the murder was preplanned as the incident took place the day before yesterday's scheduled discussion on the home ministry."

In response to the opposition lawmakers' harsh comments about the police, a witty Nasim said, "How can I save you from the wrath of policemen when you provoke them all the time. Naturally, they're angry about your comments."

Salauddin, Mohsin elected BPJA President, GS

By DU Correspondent

Mohammed Salauddin and A K M Mohsin have been elected the president and general secretary of Bangladesh Photo Journalists Association (BPJA) respectively.

This is for the third time that Salauddin and Mohsin have been elected BPJA top executives.

The biennial election of the 12-member executive body of BPJA was held at the office of the association yesterday.

Other executives of the association are Shafuddin Ahmed Pintu (vice-president), Abdur Razzak (vice-president), Kazi Borhan Uddin (joint-secretary), Ataur Rahman Babu (joint-secretary), M. Sanaul Haq (treasurer), Shahadat Ali (office secretary) and members Rafiqur Rahman, Wasey Ansari, Mahbub Hossain Khan Nabin and M Shahidul Islam Sikder.

World Bank to help contain spread of AIDS

By Staff Correspondent

It was a big surprise for some of the street sex workers of the city. World Bank's South Asia Vice President, Mieko Nishimizu, came to visit the girls at a drop-in centre in the old part of the city yesterday.

"I can't imagine that a woman holding a post in a world body could visit us from abroad, as even our prime minister, who is also a woman, never came to see us despite living in the same city," said Rabela (not real name), a street sex worker.

Mieko Nishimizu, the visiting World Bank's South Asia Vice-President yesterday went to one of the eight drop-in centres for street sex workers run by CARE, Bangladesh.

"These centres are resting places for the street-based sex workers who are very poor and do not have a proper home. After working through the nights they need some rest and care," said Monica Beg, project coordinator of CARE.

World Bank will offer assistance to Bangladesh to help contain the spread of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) among sex workers and drug users, a bank official said.