

Opposition calls
dawn-to-dusk
hartal today

By Staff Correspondent

Hundreds of opposition activists brought out torch processions in the city yesterday evening in support of today's nationwide dawn-to-dusk hartal called to protest various issues, including the national budget for 1999-2000 fiscal.

The hartal has been called by the BNP-led opposition alliance, also to protest price hike of essentials, alleged conspiracy to export gas and provide corridor to India, electricity-gas-water crisis, deterioration of law and order, and tampering of voters' ID card and voters' list.

The opposition alliance had also enforced a full-day nationwide hartal on June 13 immediately after the national budget.

See Page 12 Col 4

Kibria blasts
opposition
for hartal

Finance Minister Shah Kibria yesterday blasted the country's main opposition parties for calling a general strike over the new national budget, saying they were taking a suicidal course, report agencies.

"I am puzzled why the opposition has called this strike as most of their demands have been met, with all the interested groups satisfied," Kibria told Dhaka's foreign press corps.

"This is not a fair protest ... This is a sort of foisting on the people."

His comments came a day before a planned nationwide daylong general strike by the opposition against the budget, which they call "anti-people."

The opposition yesterday staged pro-strike demonstrations in Dhaka and other cities to drum up support for their demand to scrap the budget.

Kibria said the business community and all other professional groups have welcomed the 6.86 billion dollar budget for the year to June 2000, which was adopted by parliament on June 30, sacrificing 25 million dollars in much-needed revenue.

The government had also addressed the concerns of most of those who had objections to some of the budgetary measures, he said, adding only the transport sector still remained unhappy because of some tax

See page 11 Col 4

STAR MAGAZINE



Many young girls are pressurized into getting married at an age when something as important as marriage seems like child's play. Unknowingly these children — they may be as young as ten — enter into a life of hardship and often trauma. Read this Friday's cover story in Star Weekend Magazine on the painful realities of child marriages.

Inside Today

Article

Export of Gas:
Yes or No

Column: Window on
Asia
by Shahed Latif

Page 4

Focus

Liberation and
Beyond

By JN Dixit

Page 5

Prayer Timings

July 8

	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-10	4-15
Johr	12-50	1-25
Asr	4-55	5-05
Maghrib	7-00	7-05
Esha	7-55	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

Biman to privatise 49pc
share by June next

By Staff Correspondent

Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Engineer Mosharraf Hossain yesterday said Biman will hopefully offload 49 per cent of its share through a strategic partnership by June next.

Replies to a supplementary question from Mohammad Golam Hossain of Jatiya Party, the minister said privatisation will help the national airlines offset its losses.

"I am hopeful that we would be able to offload 49 per cent of the share of Biman on June 13 next," he added.

Mosharraf also said various

irregularities had long been dogging the national flag carrier, but claimed that during his tenure irregularities have been reduced compared to the past.

Responding to another supplementary question from Golam Mohammad Siraj of BNP, the minister said that the government had brought down substantially the volume of loss in Biman's operation on the Dhaka - New York route.

He said the loss incurred by operating Biman flight on the route has come down to Tk 37 crore a year now from Tk 52 crore during the BNP regime.

See Page 12 Col 4



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina (R) talking to British Home Secretary Jack Straw at her suite at Hotel Claridges in central London yesterday.

Jack Straw

— AFP photo

Tuku's death
Case filed against
6 including 3
policemen

A case was filed with CMM Court yesterday accusing six persons, including three policemen, of torturing and drowning Tuku in Mirbagh Jheel in the city on Saturday, reports UNB.

The father of the victim filed the case accusing SI Abu Bakar, SI Abdul Alim, SI Golam Mostafa and Monir, Emdad and Ali who work as informer of the police.

The petitioner said that the police informers were engaged in trading heroin and phenacyl in the locality with connivance of the police.

Tuku and his friends had repeatedly warned them against the heinous act of drug trading. This angered them and in a

See Page 12 Col 8

Britain urged to
open visa office
in Sylhet

LONDON, July 7: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today requested the British Home Department to set up a visa office in Sylhet to offer visa facilities to the people there, reports BSS.

She made the request to the British Secretary of State for Home Department Jack Straw, MP, when he made a courtesy call on her at the Claridges Hotel this afternoon.

She said her government would offer a land to the British High Commission to set up the visa office in Sylhet. She said this would largely help the expatriates as well as the people living in Sylhet.

The prime minister also asked him to look into the immigration problems of the Bangladeshi living in the United Kingdom. She said the immigrants are making significant contribution to the British economy.

The leader of the Liberal Democratic Party Paddy Ashdown, MP, also met the prime minister.

See Page 12 Col 7

39000 tonnes of fertiliser
unsold at NGFF

From Iqbal Siddiquee

SYLHET, July 7: About 39,000 tonnes of chemical fertiliser (urea) worth about Tk 20 crore has been stockpiled in the Natural Gas Fertilizer Factory (NGFF) at Fenchuganj due to drastic fall in sale because of high price and alleged faulty policy, factory and market sources said.

The factory authorities are now worried about storing fertiliser because lack of space in the factory.

Meanwhile, the Jalalabad Gas Transmission & Distribution Systems Limited which supplies gas to the factory has issued several notices demanding immediate payment of the

factory's command area, dealers from only the four districts of Sylhet Division were taking delivery of fertilizer from the factory.

In Sylhet region alone, the annual demand for fertilizer is between 50,000 and 55,000 metric tonnes. Previously, dealers in Kishoreganj district used to lift fertilizer from this factory, but now they take it from the Zia Fertilizer Factory at Ashuganj.

At Zia Fertilizer, the price of urea is Tk 500 per ton, less than that of NGFF, the source said. The cordon system has also caused fall in the sale of NGFF. See page 11 Col 4

Network of grassroots NGOs suggested
Workshop on right to information concludes

By Special Correspondent

There should be a network among grassroots NGOs to realise the right to information to ensure accountability and transparency, needed for better functioning of participatory democracy.

The suggestion came from grassroots level NGO employees during yesterday's discussions at the concluding session of a three-day international workshop here on 'the right to information', organised by the Delhi-based Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI).

The NGO representatives discussed their problems in obtaining information from all sources -- officials, politicians, and even NGOs and Kazis (marriage registrars). The concluding session was held at the CIRDAP auditorium.

Earlier, welcoming the NGO representative, CHRI Director Ms Maja Daruwalla also

stressed the need for a network among NGOs in SAARC countries.

The participants were told how the poor in the western Indian state of Rajasthan realised the right to information. The victory had its ripples across India.

Ms Aruna Roy, who quit a comfortable life in the Indian Administrative Service to establish the Majdoor Kissan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), organised the poor in Rajasthan to realise their minimum wages. But it turned into a movement for right to information on famine relief, construction of infrastructure etc, as workers wanted to know from the Panayet (local government) how they were being paid and how many ghost workers were on pay bills.

Ultimately, it turned into a nationwide demand for the right to information, particularly at the grassroots level, where people are paid under food-for-work programme and given relief by the Union Councils. The Rajasthan experience can help us immensely, he observed.

He pointed out the lack of information on the explosion at Magurjhara where Occidental

was drilling for gas on June 14, 1997. Quoting The Daily Star, he said, now the company is set to drill another well without clearance from the Department of Environment and payment of a compensation of Tk 612 crore for the damage caused to the environment there. Occidental has also sold its concern in Bangladesh to another company, Unocal, without government permission, and no information is available regarding this also, he said.

He sought help from NGOs and others concerned in this regard.

Maja Daruwalla noted that Unocal had to pull out from Afghanistan after pressure from US women groups. The company is working in Myanmar where the government's human rights records have kept away other western companies.

See page 11 Col 8

PSC rejects proposal
'Manual tabulation to
invite unfair means'

By Staff Correspondent

The Public Service Commission (PSC) has rejected a proposal for reintroduction of manual tabulation system in BCS examination along with the existing computerised system, sources said.

The proposal, made by PSC Chairman Prof. Mostafa Chowdhury, was rejected at a meeting of the Commission on June 28.

PSC members rejected the proposal saying, it will pave the way for corruption and unwanted interference in the examination procedure.

The meeting was chaired by the PSC Chairman. Prof Chowdhury, told the

meeting that the manual system should be reintroduced along with the existing computerised tabulation system so that errors can be avoided. "There is no scope to check any mistake or error in the present computerised system of tabulation. Errors can be checked if the manual tabulation system can be introduced along with the computerised system," he had said at the meeting.

But most of the members argued that reintroduction of the manual tabulation system would only pave the way for adoption of unfair means in the examination procedure and re-

See Page 12 Col 7

Alleged mugger
beaten to death

By Staff Correspondent

An alleged mugger was beaten to death in the city's Titkati area Tuesday night.

The dead was identified as Babu, 26, a resident of North Jatrabari area, police said.

Brandishing knives, Babu and his two accomplices demanded money from one Abu Taher, who went to Rajdhani Super Market for shopping at about 9 pm. Sutrapur police said.

The muggers had a scuffle with Taher. At one stage they stabbed Taher in his hand and snatched Tk 5000 from him.

When Taher cried for help, the people in the market chased the muggers and caught Babu while the two others managed to escape.

The agitated people beat up Babu mercilessly. Later, police rescued him in a critical condition from the spot.

Babu was taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where he succumbed to his injuries soon after admission.

Young woman
gangraped
at Rampura

By Staff Correspondent

A young woman was gangraped at a slum at Rampura in the city Tuesday night.

The Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) sources said, about nine youths led by a Ziarul Huq and a Babul dragged her to their microbus at Mouchak at around 10 pm while she was returning home after meeting a friend. They took her to the slum and raped her till early hours of yesterday morning.

Election Commission Secretariat
Voters' ID Card Project
Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka

NOTICE

Several inconveniences regarding taking photographs of voters and distribution of prepared ID cards in the Dhaka Metropolitan area have drawn the attention of the Election Commission. The Election Commission believes that, in order to remove these sorts of inconveniences, the cooperation of valued voters is extremely desirable.

To take photographs of valued voters of the Dhaka Metropolitan area who could not go to their camps set up in their respective areas for taking photographs or could not take photographs, and who were not found in the addresses as mentioned in the voters' list due to change in address within the city during the distribution of prepared cards, to correct any sort of errors in information for voters in ID insert, if there exists any error in prepared ID cards or if the voters face any other problems regarding ID cards then they are earnestly requested to contact the following District and Thana Election Officers of the concerned areas. Concerned officers will take measures to solve these problems.

a) Address to contact the District Election Officer:

Serial No	District Election Officer	Thanas under control	Phone Number
1.	District Election Officer-1, Dhaka: 10/10, Iqbal Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka.	Lalbagh, Kamrangir Char	9112579
2.	District Election Officer-2, Dhaka: 10/10, Iqbal Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka.	Motijheel, Sabujbagh, Demra, Kotwali, Sutrapur, Khilgaon, Shyampur.	9112632
3.	District Election Officer-3, Dhaka: 10/10, Iqbal Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka.	Ramna, Dhanmondi, Mohammadpur, Tejgaon, Cantonment, Gulshan, Uttara, Hazaribagh, Kafrul, Badda.	9112640
4.	District Election Officer-4, Dhaka: 10/10 Iqbal Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka.	Mirpur, Pallabi	325422

b) Address to contact Thana Election Officer:

Serial No	Thana Election Officer	Names of Thana Election