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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 countrywide 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.

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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

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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.

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By JN Dixit
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Prayer Timings

July 8		
Fajr	Azhan	Jamaat
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.

Replying 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 by June 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.

Mosharraf said the government is trying to rearrange the Dhaka - New York route via Manchester instead of London to carry more passengers as well as to reduce the amount of loss. Measures have also been taken to further bring down the loss.

Replying to a written question from Awami League member Haji Mohammad Selim that was raised by Joyntal Abedin Hazari, the minister informed that 25 travel agencies owed Bangladesh Biman Tk 3.42 crore. Of the amount, Tk 1.30 crore was due from the BNP regime.

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

— 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 Mirbag 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 phenyl 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

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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 Bangladeshis 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

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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

outstanding gas bill, amounting to Tk 24 crore. It also warned the NGFF authorities of disconnecting the supply line any time.

During the last fiscal (1998-99), the factory achieved its production target of 80,000 metric tonnes by May 23. The production steadily rose to 88,650 tonnes. In the previous fiscal, the NGFF also exceeded its production target of 80,000 metric tonnes.

But the number of dealers fell to 70 from 100 during the last few months following a decision from the ministry, sources said.

Due to refixation of the fac-

tory'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

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Bombs hurled, constable killed Policemen stage protest, damage vehicles

By Staff Correspondent

Hundreds of policemen from the Riot Police barracks at Mirpur in the city came out on the streets and damaged motor vehicles after a policeman was killed when a bomb was hurled at a team of riot police near Zero Point yesterday evening.

The dead was identified as Farhad, 25, a constable of riot police division, police and hospital sources said. Three other people were also hurt in the incident.

Police said the incident occurred at about 8 pm when a team of riot police personnel were about to leave the spot after a procession of Jubo Dal activists from Tanti Bazar terminated at Golap Shah Mazar.

According to witnesses, at least three bombs were hurled at them when the policemen were walking towards their vehicle at

Zero Point to return to their barracks.

Neither police nor the witnesses could confirm from where the bombs were thrown.

The injured policemen were identified as Naik Delwar and constable Shamim, Selim, Wazed Ali, Lufar, Abdul Matin, Kayem and Sri Hari. The injured pedestrians were identified as Ripon, 15, Anis, 22, and Shamim, 22.

All the victims were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, the sources said. Naik Delwar and constables Sri Hari and Abdul Matin were later shifted to the CMH, as their injuries were serious, hospital sources added.

As soon as the word got out at the barracks that Farhad was killed, hundreds of policemen came out on the nearby roads. They brought out processions

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Nasir faction enforces hartal at Chittagong

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, July 7: Normal life was disrupted in the port city today due to a dawn-to-dusk hartal protesting the arrest of Awami League city unit leader AJM Nasir.

Nasir was arrested from a hotel in Dhaka Monday night.

Supporters of BCL belonging to Nasir faction enforced the hartal though Awami League leaders here denied the party's involvement with the programme.

However, the hartal was marked by cocktail blasts, gunshots, road barricades, picketing and rallies, police and witnesses said. Over 100 rickshaws were damaged by the pickets at different places of the city during hartal hours. But no major incidents of violence were reported.

A large number of police were deployed at all importance places of the city to foil any attempt of violence.

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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 CIRDP 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 Panchayat (local government) how they were being paid and how many ghost workers were on pay bills.

Ultimately, it turned into a countrywide demand for the

right to information. Goa and Tamil Nadu enacted laws, and nationally, a draft of a bill is being prepared, Roy said.

She narrated how the poor realised the right to information through sit-in programmes and demonstrations, weathering violence by goons and police action.

A number of issues were raised by the NGO representatives and other participants who included Barrister Amir-ul-Islam, Vice-chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council.

Islam stressed on 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 Magurchhara 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 concerns 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.

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Alleged mugger beaten to death

By Staff Correspondent

An alleged mugger was beaten to death in the city's Tikatuli 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.

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Owners of 2 N'ganj brothels earn Tk 1.25 cr a month

From Ehsanul Haque

NARAYANGANJ, July 7: Seventeen owners of 21 buildings at Tanbazar and Nimali brothels in the town earn as much as Tk 1.25 crore every month, according to a confidential report prepared by a government agency.

The report said there are as many as 3,425 sex workers in the two brothels. Tanbazar, the biggest brothel in the country, alone houses 2,800 sex workers. There are 625 sex workers in Nimali brothel.

Some 100 'mistresses' control the Tanbazar brothel with the help of about 300 pimps and 150 former sex workers, now aged above 60. The Nimali brothel is run by 15 'mistresses' and 50 pimps.

The report said eleven owners collect Tk 1.07 crore every month from the sex workers housed in 15 buildings in Tanbazar. They charge Tk 300-400 per day for a one hundred square feet room.

Six house owners at Nimali

brothel collect Tk 18 lakh every month from the sex workers. Their average income ranges between Tk 1 lakh and Tk 3 lakh.

Maynuddin, the most influential house owner at Tanbazar brothel earns as much as Tk 35 lakh every month from three buildings. He gives shelter to around 800 sex workers, the report said.

The report noted that a big chunk of the earnings by the sex

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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, Shyamkur.	9112632
3.	District Election Officer-3, Dhaka. 10/10, Iqbal Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka.	Ramna, Dhanmondi, Mohammadpur, Tejgaon, Cantonment, Gulshan, Uttara, Hazaribagh, Kafur, 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 Officers	Address of Offices and Phone Number
1	Uttara	Mr Md Mokhlesur Rahman	6/1, Sir Sayed Road, Mohammadpur. Phone: 815148
2	Pallabi	Mr Syed Amirul Islam	803/1, West Kazipara, Mirpur, Dhaka. Phone: 9000575
3	Mirpur	Mr Syed Amirul Islam	803/1, West Kazipara, Mirpur, Dhaka. Phone: 9003488
4	Gulshan	Mr Md Yusuf	6/1, Sir Sayed Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka. Phone: 815148, 842289.
5	Mohammadpur	Mr. Md Rezaul Haq	6/1, Sir Sayed Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka. Phone: 9117916
6	Dhanmondi	Mr Md Kamal Uddin Khan	6/1, Sir Sayed Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka. Phone: 9115649
7	Ramna	Mr. Md Sirajul Islam	6/1, Sir Sayed Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka. Phone: 9114279
8	Cantonment	Mr Md Mokhlesur Rahman	6/1, Sir Sayed Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka. Phone: 815148
9	Tejgaon	Mr Md Nazrul Islam	127, Tejgunipara. Phone: 325084
10	Demra	Mr Monoz Kumar Roy	82/12, North Jatrabari, Demra. Phone: 842289
11	Sutrapur	Mr Md Hamidul Haque	Laxmibazar City Corporation Market. Phone: 842289
12	Kotwali	Mr Md Hamidul Haque	Laxmibazar City Corporation Market. Phone: 842289
13	Lalbagh	Mr Azizul Haque	36, Pilkhana Road, Azimpur. Phone: 507414
14	Motijheel	Md Jamal Uddin	60/2, West Malibagh, Dhaka. Phone: 833010
15	Sabujbagh	Md Jamal Uddin	60/2, West Malibagh, Dhaka. Phone: 833010

Similarly, the addresses of offices and phone numbers of the concerned officers in different districts outside Dhaka are being publicised locally. Besides, concerned official in the head office of the project may also contact regarding the ID cards.

1. Project Director - Phone: 813830
2. Additional Project Director - Phone: 817910
3. Deputy-Project Director (ID) - Phone: 815602
4. Deputy-Election Commissioner, Dhaka. Phone: 842289.

The Election Commission desires kind cooperation of honourable persons from all walks of life in the procedure of preparation of voters' ID cards and its distribution.

Md Helal Uddin Khan

Additional Secretary

&

Project Director

DFP-14838-4/7
G-1267