

The Daily Star

BUY NOW — PAY LATER



Whirlpool
HOME APPLIANCES USA
Refrigerator
Transcom Electronics Limited
Authorized distributor in Bangladesh for Whirlpool Appliances, USA

LEASE FINANCING
Are You Looking For Financial Assistance In

- Capital Machinery
- Heavy Construction Equipment
- Medical Equipment
- Marine Transport
- Generator & Boiler
- Vehicle like Luxury Buses, Microbuses, Trucks, Tractors
- Cargo Carriers, Pick-Up, Cars
- Lifts/Elevators
- Air Conditioning Plants

PHOENIX LEASING COMPANY LTD.
Shadinata Bhaban (1st fl.) 88, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka
Phone: 9569007 (Auto Hunting) Fax: 9567787
Agrabad Branch, R.M. House, 31 Agrabad C/A, Ctg. Ph: 710089, Fax: 710086

BOI staff go on 'mass leave' today after leader's arrest

By Staff Correspondent

BOI officials and employees demanding the executive chairman's removal from office will abstain from work today after arrest of their leader yesterday.

Executive Chairman M Mokammel Haque, who enjoys the rank and status of a Cabinet minister, came to his office allegedly flanked by *mastans* and police yesterday, the third day of non-cooperation by the staff demanding Haque's removal.

Soon after his departure at 3:30 pm, police arrested Mahmudul Hasan Mia, convener of BOI Officers and Employees Welfare Council (OEW) on charges of "disrupting work of government". Mia had alleged that Haque was accompanied by "mastans and outsiders".

Talking to a Daily Star correspondent at 12:00 noon, Haque denied the allegations of having been accompanied by any "mastans" or "outsiders".

The correspondent saw at least two plainclothesmen carrying guns when Mia was being arrested.

Police said the BOI secretary filed a case against eight employees.

To protest Mia's arrest, the employees said they would go on "mass leave" today.

See Page 12 Col 4

Hasina fails to find Khaleda on phone



Sheikh Hasina

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a rather dramatic move phoned Opposition leader Khaleda Zia thrice yesterday to invite her to talks in a bid to end the political standoff, report agencies.

However, Khaleda could not be reached even on her red telephone, the prime minister said at a press briefing arranged by the Overseas Correspondents' Association, Bangladesh (OCA) at Sonargaon Hotel yesterday morning.

"I'm expecting her to call me back. She could have rung me over her red telephone," Hasina told newsmen.

The prime ministerial move came within 24 hours after the Opposition leader at a OCA press briefing on Saturday had said she was ready to sit with the government if there be any

See page 11 col 7

Hartal today Arrest of Jamaat leader sparks violence at Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 26: Arrest of a city Jamaat leader today sparked violence in Chittagong city in which over 100 vehicles were damaged, police and witnesses said.

Shamsul Islam, General Secretary of the city Jamaat, was arrested this morning from Boropool area under Double-mooring thana when he was returning home after attending an anti-election rally of the opposition alliance there.

Police said he was arrested in connection with some cases and his alleged involvement in anti-polls activities.

The Jamaat leader was taken to Double-mooring thana. Meanwhile, opposition alliance of Chittagong unit has called a dawn-to-dusk hartal in the port city tomorrow protesting arrest of Shamsul Islam.

City BNP president Mir Md Nasiruddin told The Daily Star that the daylong hartal would be enforced in the city tomorrow protesting the arrest of Jamaat leader and demanding his immediate release.

As the news of his arrest spread in the city Jamaat and Chhatra Shibir activists went on the rampage in different ar-

See page 11 col 7



Anxious guardians wait outside the Government Laboratory High School as their wards appear at admission test yesterday.

First day of the annual ordeal

By Reaz Ahmad and Mustak Hossain

It was an ordeal for thousands of guardians waiting in front of different government schools in the city yesterday as their tiny tots appeared at their first academic test in life.

Admission tests in eight "A" category government schools began yesterday. These are Government Laboratory School, Mirpur Government High School, Motijheel Government High School, Khilgaon Government High School, Nawabpur Government High School, New Government Girls High School, Islamia High School and Mohammadpur Government High School.

All the 24 government high schools in the city have been divided into three categories for admission of students in class 1 to IX.

Schools enrol students mainly in class 1. Students also sit for tests for admission to upper classes, but the number of vacant seats is few.

Several thousand forms were sold to admission seekers from the 24 government high schools this year against a few hundred vacant seats in class 1, according to sources.

Admission tests in category

See page 11 col 3

Police swoop on UPDF, PCP men, at Ctg: 15 hurt, 42 arrested

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 26: At least 15 activists of United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) and Pahari Chhatra Parishad opposing peace accord received injuries when police resorted to baton charge at Lalghighi Maidan (ground) here this morning.

Police arrested 44 activists of UPDF and PCP who thronged Lalghighi maidan at 10 am to attend the discussion meeting organised in observance of the first anniversary of UPDF.

UPDF sources alleged that police swooped on its activists without any provocation and foiled the meeting.

They also dismantled the dais, UPDF leaders alleged.

Police sources said that UPDF was holding the meeting at Lalghighi maidan without taking permission from the authorities concerned.

Witnesses said most of the activists and supporters of UPDF ran away from the maidan during police action. Later, they tried to hold a rally at central Shaheed Minar at 11 am, but police chased them.

Police cordoned off the maidan after the UPDF supporters left.

BNP's reply to Speaker Meet pre-conditions, create atmosphere for dialogue

By Staff Correspondent

BNP, in response to the Speaker's letter, yesterday urged him to take steps to create a conducive atmosphere for its return to parliament by fulfilling its five pre-conditions and the four-point agreement signed with the ruling party earlier.

The pre-conditions are: Apology by the Prime Minister for her indecent remarks about Leader of the Opposition in parliament Khaleda Zia, expunging the vulgar remarks from parliament proceedings, an assurance that the Prime Minister would never make such remarks about Khaleda Zia or any opposition member in future, the Speaker's neutrality and transparency in running the House.

The 4-point agreement, signed between the ruling and the opposition parties include withdrawal of "false" cases against BNP MPs, impartial coverage of JS proceedings by the state-run media, neutrality of the Speaker and proportionate representation of parties in JS bodies.

The 2-page reply, signed by Chief Whip of the Opposition Khandaker Delwar Hossain on behalf of Khaleda Zia, was handed over to the PA of the

See page 11 col 4

Clinton's letter to PM

US President Bill Clinton who will be visiting Bangladesh early next year is expected to have "productive" discussions with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, reports UNB.

In a letter to the Prime Minister, Clinton said Bangladesh has enormous potential for the future and confirmed that he was looking forward to visiting Dhaka early next year, an official press release from the Foreign Office said in the city yesterday.

He hoped for productive discussions with Sheikh Hasina on "excellent" bilateral relations between the United States and Bangladesh.

The dates for the US President's much awaited visit were not stated in the letter. Clinton only said: "I look forward to seeing you and your country soon."

Clinton's visit to South Asian countries was delayed twice because of Indo-Pak nuclear explosions and Kargil conflict in Kashmir.

Vandalism at Siddique's convention Most AL leaders are angry, others faintly deny link

By Nazmul Ashraf

Most ruling party leaders are enraged and embarrassed by Friday's armed attack on Kader Siddique's convention, allegedly by some pro-Awami League student activists.

Some of the perpetrators even claimed Saturday that they deserved credit for the "heroic act" of vandalising the venue of the former party leader's convention, and regretted that the media failed to highlight the "achievement". They were all members of Awami League's student wing Bangladesh Chhatra League.

But these leaders, claiming that they had no prior knowledge of the "pre-planned" at-

tack, are angry that such an incident only "honoured" the expelled leader who was only crawling to stage a comeback by launching a new party.

They termed the attack, allegedly masterminded by a section of the party leadership, an "act of sabotage" and said it had damaged the party's image greatly.

"We're completely taken by surprise. It's outrageous," said one presidium member, who refused to be identified or even "talk about the dirty episode".

"The blackships in the party are responsible for this incident," said a top adviser to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

However, influential presid-

Siddique to hold public meet at Paltan Dec 30

By Staff Correspondent

Kader Siddique will hold a public meeting at Paltan Maidan in the city on December 30.

The meeting will be held to protest vandalism at his convention at the Institution of Engineers Bangladesh from where he announced formation of Bangladesh Krishak Samik Janata League (BKSJL) on Friday.

Siddique who was expelled from the Awami League and resigned as its MP in August blamed the ruling party for the attack on the convention.

Siddique is planning to meet President Shahabuddin Ahmed to inform him of the ordeal he underwent while launching the BKSJL, party sources said. The date and time for the planned meeting is yet to be finalised, the source added.

The first district level office

See page 11 col 8

Fire in Keraniganj kills 6



Smoke billows from the blaze at a Keraniganj slum yesterday.

By Staff Correspondent

At least six people including four sisters were burnt alive in a devastating fire at a slum in Keraniganj on the outskirts of the capital yesterday, police and fire brigade officials said.

One-and-a-half-year-old Moni and her three sisters -- Rozina, 13, Razia, 8 and Shahnaz, 5 -- died in the blaze that gutted about 70 shanties, 25 shops and a latrine machine factory at Char Mirshabagh at about 11:30 am yesterday.

The four daughters of Noor Mian, a day labourer, were trapped inside their house during the fire, police said, adding people belonging to the low-income group live in the area.

Other victims of the four-hour blaze are Khalil, 38 and Baby Begum, police added. Two others with severe burn injuries were admitted to the Mitford Hospital, the Fire Brigade officials said.

The fire originated from an earthen oven of a shanty at the slum, fire officials said quoting their initial findings of a probe into the incident. The fire fighters doused the inferno at about 2 pm.

Some 100 families were passing the night under open sky without any security last night, witnesses said quoting the victims. Relief materials did not reach the area till late last night.

— Star photo

Delhi considering options for hostages' release Hijackers came by PIA flight: Indian FM

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: India is examining the demands of the hijackers holding an Indian Airlines aircraft with 160 people on board in Afghanistan, and will "exercise every option" for their release, the foreign minister said today, reports AP.

But Jaswant Singh did not say if the government would accept the hijacker's main demand for release of a Pakistani religious leader, Maulana Masood Azhar, who is in an Indian Jail. Azhar is reportedly the brother of one of the hijackers.

"It's not a yes-and-no answer to which I can address myself," Singh told reporters. "I will exercise all options toward the aim of ensuring the well-being of passengers."

Nearly a dozen relatives of hostages stormed into Singh's press conference. Women broke down and others shouted slogans against the government.

Singh's comments contrasted with a statement Saturday by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee that India would not bow to terrorism.

Indian officials said the five hijackers reached Katmandu on a Pakistan International Air-

lines flight from Islamabad, the Pakistani capital.

"These five arrived by a PIA flight. We have already set in motion an investigation in this regard," Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh told reporters.

The foreign minister said he hoped the Taliban authorities in Afghanistan would help persuade the hijackers to release the widow of Rippan Katyal, the Indian newlywed who was returning from his honeymoon in Katmandu.

Katyal was knifed to death by the hijackers aboard the plane. He was cremated today in Gurgaon town near New Delhi at a ceremony attended by hundreds of grieving relatives. Katyal's widow Rachna is still on the plane.

"All we want is that they should release our daughter-in-

See Page 12 Col 3

Foreign diplomats asked to avoid statements on Bangladesh's internal affairs

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday urged the members of the diplomatic community to avoid statements and activities which amount to interference in the internal affairs of Bangladesh, reports BSS.

When attention to a recent statement by British High Commissioner David Walker that diplomats, particularly from the donor countries and development partners have legitimate interest in the politi-

See page 11 col 6

Inside Today

Article

The Triumphant Return of a Rebel

Column: Perspectives by Brig (Rtd) M Abdul Hafiz Page 4

Focus

Need for ensuring safe drinking water at municipalities Page 5

Business

SEC calls on DSE to grant ample power to its CEO

Post-crisis Asia to fight China for investment pie

DSE, CSE price quotations Pages 6, 7 & 8

Blood banks almost dry

By Naimul Haq

Hospitals are rescheduling surgeries and blood banks are scrambling this month due to a dramatic drop in the number of voluntary blood donors.

Islamic law prohibits blood donation during fasting.

According to sources in Dhaka Medical College Hospital, their blood banks are almost dry, while the Red Crescent has only collected 25 units of blood this month, just 2 per cent of its average monthly contribution.

"We are facing an acute problem supplying blood to hospitals," said Badrul Islam, a Red Crescent medical officer. "Most of the patients from hospitals come to us for blood before surgery or in an emergency, but we have to refuse most of them since our freezers are almost empty."

"We expected blood donation after *iftar* would prevent such a dramatic shortage, but that hasn't happened."

Ahmed Farooque, a member of the Rotary Club of Dhaka and co-ordinator of its safe blood donation campaign, said it's very difficult to motivate people to give blood during the Ramadan, even after *iftar*.

The Rotary Club, Ramkrishnamission and the Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh are organising a special blood donation drive targeting the country's non-Muslim population over the next two months.

One event is scheduled for Dec. 29 at the Red Crescent centre in Mohammadpur.

According to official statistics, patients require about 2.5 lakh units (a 450 millilitre blood bag) of blood annually. The Red Crescent and Sandhani, a leading promoter of voluntary blood donation, collect about 35,000 bags.

Professional donors supply more than two-thirds of the nation's blood supply, an alarming situation since most blood isn't screened for HIV, the virus which causes AIDS.

A gang of 50 camps at Nagar Bhaban

By Staff Correspondent

A gang of about 50 young men camped at the Nagar Bhaban yesterday ahead of the final day today for dropping bids for a Dhaka City Corporation tender worth Tk 1.84 crore for development of infrastructure in Dhaka University area.

DCC sources said they have asked police for "extra protection" as two factions of the ruling party's student wing, Chhatra League, have been clashing over bidding for the project that will ultimately involve an expenditure of over Tk 14 crore in the year 2000.

The groups are fighting to win the work for 'certain companies' in exchange of hand-some rewards. It has turned out to be a prestige fight for the two groups, the sources said.

It is believed that whoever is awarded the work, will get a 40 crore taka project within the next one year, they said.

To avoid clash, bids will be accepted by all the ten zonal offices of the DCC and the Divisional Commissioner's office, officials of Zone-5 of the city corporation said. This will prevent the gangs from obstructing one another in submitting bids.

Sources said about 20 per cent of DCC enlisted contractors belong to different student fronts of political parties. The rest work under the patronage of political or influential quarters.

রশ্মি উন্নয়ন ব্যুরো
১২২-১২৪, মতিঝিল বাণিজ্যিক এলাকা
ঢাকা-১০০০

জাতীয় পুষ্প প্রদর্শনী ২০০০ এর স্টল বরাদ্দ সংক্রান্ত বিজ্ঞপ্তি

ঢাকা আন্তর্জাতিক বাণিজ্য মেলা ২০০০ কর্তৃপক্ষের উদ্যোগে ঢাকার শেষে বাংলা নগরস্থ জাতীয় প্যারেড স্কয়ারে প্রায় ১২০-২৭৫ জনসংখ্যা ২০০০ ৫ দিন ব্যাপী জাতীয় পুষ্প প্রদর্শনী ২০০০ অনুষ্ঠিত হতে যাচ্ছে। উক্ত প্রদর্শনীতে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য অর্থহীন প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট থেকে নিম্নোক্ত শর্তে নির্ধারিত ফরমে আবেদনপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছেঃ-

- প্রদর্শনীতে স্থানীয় পুষ্প/পট প্রাক/অর্কিড/কাচফলিও/চিনুস/কালাচর প্রযুক্তি/পুষ্প সম্পর্কিত ইকুইপমেন্ট এবং সহায়ক প্রযুক্তি প্রদর্শন ও বিক্রয় করা যাবে।
- প্রদর্শনীতে স্টল বরাদ্দের আবেদনপত্রের ফর্ম নম্বর ১০০ (একপত্র) টাকা মুদ্রা এবং অন্যান্য তথ্যাদি সম্বন্ধে জানা অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে রশ্মি উন্নয়ন ব্যুরোর প্রধান কার্যালয়ের (১২২-১২৪, মতিঝিল বা/এ, ঢাকা) হিসাব শাখার সাথে যোগাযোগ করতে হবে।
- আবেদনপত্র জমা দেওয়ার সর্বশেষ সময় বিকাল ৩.০০টা ৪টা জানুয়ারি ২০০০।
- প্রতিটি স্টলের জড়া বাবদ মোট ৫০০/- (পাঁচশত) টাকা প্রদান করতে হবে।
- আবেদনপত্রের সাথে নবায়নকৃত ট্রেড লাইসেন্স অথবা সর্বশ্রেণী এসোসিয়েশন হতে সদস্য সার্টিফিকেট দাখিল করতে হবে।
- কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ ব্যতিরেকে সকল আবেদনপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।

মোহাম্মদ আব্দুল শালেক
পরিচালক (পণ্য-২)।
জিডি-১২৩৯