



The World On Time

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Fiendish florists

By Special Correspondent

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has allotted a piece of land in front of Dhaka Club and Diabetic Hospital to a person in the name of an office for 'Bangladesh Phool Sarboraha Samity' (Flower Suppliers Association).

The land is along the footpath of busy Maulana Bhashani Avenue.

So long, there had been a nursery at the place. Now, the new occupiers have raised a high enclosure with CI sheets in a move to construct a concrete structure for the office of the hitherto unknown association.

Earlier on December 16, some people built a structure there with bamboo and CI sheets for 'Jubo League Park Avenue Shakha Office'. They called it Jubo League Ward No 56 unit office.

When asked, an official at DCC's Estate Department said the land has been allotted to one Jahangir for raising a nursery.

But he failed to say anything when asked why the high enclo-

sure was raised while a nursery needed open space. He also could not say whether there was any plan to construct a market at that place.

When The Daily Star journalists went to the spot yesterday to see what was going on inside the high enclosure, some people grabbed the photo-journalist by the collar of his shirt, threatening him not to take snaps.

"If you venture further, we will teach you a lesson that you will never forget in life," one of them told the journalists, ordering them off the area.

Jahangir could not be contacted. There was no address in the signboard that was hung in the name of his association.

Earlier, the DCC had to stop construction of a 'flower market' beside the Shishu Park on the other side of the Maulana Bhashani Avenue following newspaper reports.

The Prime Minister ordered in April last year that no market could be built in the city's open spaces and parks.



Nursery it was supposed to be, but the piece of land adjacent to the Dhaka Club is occupied by the so-called Bangladesh Flower Suppliers' Association. The motive again is vulgar commercialisation of public land.

—Star photo: Amran Hossain

Defiant IFIC
Accused in criminal cases promoted

By Rafiq Hasan

The International Finance and Investment Corporation (IFIC) Bank has made an accused in at least two criminal cases its executive vice-president, ignoring an order from the Prime Minister's Office.

A recent Bangladesh Bank (BB) investigation revealed that Mujibur Rahman, executive vice-president of the bank, is also facing charges for illegally sending foreign currency abroad.

The probe found that Rahman was promoted to the post of executive vice-president and charged with Law and Recovery Department of the bank despite an order from the Prime Minister's Office not to promote him as he is facing charges in a case under trial.

The report said he was elevated to the post "concealing" the order and that the promotion took place on the basis of recommendation made by the law adviser of the bank.

A two-member BB team visited the head office of the IFIC Bank and its branches at Motijheel, Moulavi Bazar (in Dhaka) and Narayanganj and submitted a report to the central bank governor.

The central bank launched the investigation after a shareholder of the bank filed a petition to the BB governor.

The report found Rahman to be involved in financial corruption while he was manager at Narayanganj and Moulavi Bazar branches. The bank in-

'Biogas Safety
Guidelines'
approved

The National Scientific and Technological Council at a meeting yesterday unanimously approved the 'Biogas Safety Guidelines' which would be helpful for research on genetic engineering, reports BSS.

The meeting was held at the Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR) with Minister for Science and Technology Lt Gen (retd) Mohammad Noor Uddin Khan in the chair.

Executive Director of Bangladesh Computer Council Prof Abdus Sobhan briefed the meeting about the latest situation of Y2K problem and its compliance in the sectors concerned including the health sector.

Prof Sobhan recently visited different hospitals, including Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University and BIRDEM to see for himself the Y2K situation.

"Necessary steps have already been taken against possible Y2K problems in these institutions," he said. "There will be no problem from Y2K in the country's health sector."

Millennium
toll!

By Abul Kalam Azad

A number of 'terrorist groups' of Dhaka University have been collecting funds from traders and businessmen of different markets and shops around the campus to celebrate the advent of the new millennium.

Sources at the university said that the groups belonging to the ruling party-backed student organisation, Bangladesh Chhatra League, have chalked out elaborate programmes to welcome the millennium in a joyous manner.

Sources said that the programmes would include rich dishes, cocktail parties and night-long singing and dancing at the residential halls, notwithstanding the Holy Ramadan.

A total of seven groups led by various armed cadres of BCL and another one of Dhaka College are collecting thousands of taka as toll per day from markets and shops situated in the vicinity of their campus, sources said.

Insiders said that the group leaders themselves and their 'collectors' are collecting money and 'other things' to celebrate the last 31st December tonight in a 'grand way'.

Hijack talks 'go well',
without headway

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan, Dec 30: Negotiations to free more than 150 people held captive on an Indian Airlines jet for one week "went well" today but no breakthrough was made, the foreign minister of Afghanistan's ruling Taliban said, reports Reuters.

"Today was a busy day for both sides, a promising day. The talks went well but due to some considerations I cannot disclose details of developments," Abdul Wakil Muttawakil told a news conference.

"Our main difficulty as before is what will happen, supposedly if India releases the prisoners. What will happen to the prisoners and hijackers," he said.

He said the Taliban government was consulting on the matter with the United Nations, other diplomats and Indian officials.

"As far as the stay of the hijackers in Afghanistan is concerned, we have said no from the very beginning," he said.

Muttawakil was speaking as the hostages, thought to number

either 154 or 155, prepared to spend their seventh night in captivity aboard the Airbus A300 that was commanded to a short flight from Nepal to New Delhi on December 24.

In New Delhi, the government denied reports that the hijackers had set another deadline for their demands to be met.

The hijackers had earlier said there would be no deadline, and there is no deadline from the hijackers," External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh told reporters after a cabinet meeting.

"Negotiations are extremely delicately poised," he said. The talks are being conducted over two-way radios.

India finally denied news reports that it had agreed to free a limited number of the 36 Moslem activists the gunmen want freed in exchange for the handover of hostages.

"There is no such agreement," Foreign Ministry spokesman Raminder Singh told Reuters in New Delhi as reports of a limited prisoner re-

lease circulated among international news agencies.

An Indian negotiator who declined to be identified firmly denied that the two sides were discussing how many militants should be freed.

"We are not talking about numbers. We are still talking about general issues," he said.

One ailing passenger was allowed off the plane for treatment for a stomach problem, but the man, an Indian national identified as Samon Barara, was returned to the aircraft a short time later, witnesses said. No other details were available.

The five or six hijackers, suspected to be Kashmiri militants, freed 27 passengers at the weekend in the United Arab Emirates before forcing the pilot to fly to Afghanistan. A diabetic who was allowed off in Kandahar on Sunday was expected to return to New Delhi later on Thursday.

The hijackers have refused to let anyone else, including women and children, leave the plane.

Skinny health ministry
Crucial posts lie vacant as new leaders take charge

By Naimul Haq

With a series of hectic changes in the crucially important positions, including that of the Minister-in-charge, the health ministry is apparently heading for a period of non-too-impressive performance.

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