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PM tells Rotary confce Democracy, peace a must for development: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said democracy, peace and stability are essential for development and reaffirmed her commitment to continue democratic process for ensuring human welfare, reports UNB. Without continuation of democratic process, economic development will not be possible, she said while addressing the Millennium Rotary District Conference at Hotel Sonargaon yesterday morning. Calling upon the Rotarians to involve themselves more in the humanitarian activities, the Prime Minister said: "We are committed to ensure a better life for the people by ensuring a democratic process."



Visitors at the 'environment fair' take a close look at the organically grown vegetables sans chemical fertilisers in the city yesterday. —Star photo

'Dhaka city a high-rise slum'

By Staff Correspondent Unplanned and indiscriminate construction of high-rises has turned Dhaka city into a veritable 'high-rise slum', experts observed at a seminar on 'urbanisation and housing' held at the BUET yesterday. The experts at the two-day long conference on environment and ground water pollution, surface water pollution and management, wetland, forests and bio-diversity, river, flood and disaster management, role of civil society in environment and many other environment-related topics. During the session on urbanisation and housing with former state minister Dr Moin Khan MP in the chair, experts alleged that authorities concerned have allowed construction of buildings in the city without thinking about the impact. Prof Rukhsana Hafiz of BUET warned that sub-standard construction materials and unplanned construction might prove devastating for Dhaka, if and when a tremor hits the city. Necessity of 'urban forestry' in Bangladesh for maintaining environment was also discussed in the session. Experts expressed deep concern over felling of trees in city areas-- as trees also filter air and reduce sound pollution. Experts also talked about severity of noise pollution in the city, and possible alternatives to mitigate the housing problem for the low-income people in the urban areas.

Shahjalal varsity opens today: Opposition hartal Jan 18-19

From Staff Correspondent Ilaft Majlish Principal Moulana Habibur Rahman. The varsity is scheduled to reopen tomorrow after Eid-ul-Fitr and other vacations. Some of the officials, employees and students have returned to Sylhet, but most of them are keeping back at home apprehending a deterioration in the situation. The semester examinations are scheduled to resume January 18. Meanwhile, the Muktiyoddha-Janatar Mancha in a statement has strongly condemned the hartal call saying none has the right to destroy to the life of the brilliant students of the only 'session-jam free' university. The ordinary students have no link with the so-called movement, the leaders said. The statement was signed by district Muktiyoddha Sangsad Commander Enam Ahmed Chowdhury, district AL secretary A N M Shalique, joint secretary Ittefak Hossain Shamim and Ganotantri Party central secretary Barrister Arshad Ali and district JSD secretary Lokman Ahmed.

BNP programme to celebrate Zia's birthday

By Staff Correspondent BNP has drawn up elaborate programmes to celebrate 64th birth anniversary of its founder chairman late president Ziaur Rahman on January 19. A joint meeting of the party yesterday chalked out a 10-day long programme beginning January 18. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury presided over the meeting, held at 29 Minto Road. Central leaders of the party and leaders of its front organisations attended, says a party press release. Earlier, a national committee was formed with A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury as convener and Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan as member secretary to celebrate the birth anniversary of late president Ziaur Rahman. The programmes include, discussion meeting at National Press Club on January 18, visit to the mazar, placing wreaths, offering feteha, holding milad mahills and discussion meetings on his life and activities on January 19. A photographic exhibition displaying president Zia's life and works will also be held at the Engineers Institution on the day. Discussion meetings, cultural functions and painting competition among the children will be organised by the front organisations in the following days. A colourful rally will be brought out from the central office of the party on January 20.

Ctg city AL's fresh programmes

CHITTAGONG, Jan 15: The extended committee meeting of Chittagong city Awami League today announced fresh programmes to face the opposition, reports UNB. The closed-door meeting of city AL was held at Rima Community Centre with vice-president Ishaq Mia in the chair. Mayor A B M Mohiuddin Ahmed presented committee report. The meeting decided to hold five public meetings in the city January 19-23 and the ward committees have been assigned to mobilise public opinion in support of their programmes. A group of city AL who had opposed the committee formed in the previous council in 1997 also joined the meeting. They are Nurul Islam, Ishaq Mia, Abu Taleb Chowdhury and Sekendar Hayat Khan. Meanwhile, city BNP at a meeting held at party office decided to reconstitute its thana and ward committees. The meeting reviewed the organisational activities taking into account views of some of the party leaders on Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) election. The committee of Double-mooring thana was reconstituted today. The remaining five thana committees will be reorganised within three days, party sources said. The city BNP decided to hold a public meeting at Laldighi Maidan and bring out a procession on January 17 demanding cancellation of the CCC election results.

Businessman allegedly abducted

By Staff Correspondent Having failed to extinguish his debts, one businessman yesterday allegedly abducted two other businessmen, when they were returning after a reconciliation meeting at Baitul Mukarram in the city, said police and witnesses. The victims, identified as Azad and Babu, both cousins and residents of Montipurpara in Mirpur, complained that one Khorshed and his goons allegedly abducted them from Baitul Mukarram area under Motijheel Police station yesterday noon. Azad and Babu, who sell in crockery, had supplied goods worth about Tk 2.5 lakh to Khorshed about two months ago, police said quoting the FIR. Khorshed had been declining to pay the outstanding sum on various pretexts, the victims alleged. According to the FIR, the two had gone to Khorshed's business office at Baitul Mukarram to settle the dispute regarding the payment. When they were coming out of Khorshed's office, some armed goons picked them up and took them to a locality near Titumir College at Mahakhali, police said. The goons released Azad and Babu after they had signed a stamp paper, saying that they owed Khorshed Tk 10 lakhs. Soon after release, the two went to the Motijheel police and lodged the FIR, police said, adding that they later arrested Khorshed from Baitul Mukarram.

Smoking, alcohol increase risk of blood clot

WASHINGTON, Jan 15: A healthy lifestyle diminishes the risk of the blood clots which cause heart attacks and strokes, a study published Friday confirmed, reports AFP. Individuals who smoke, consume alcohol and don't exercise increase their risk of blood clots, according to the study by researchers from Queen's University of Belfast in Northern Ireland. "Not only can individuals improve their cholesterol and blood pressure levels by exercising, keeping their weight at healthy limits, and not smoking, they can also reduce the tendency of their blood to form clots and help the blood to flow better," wrote John Yarnell, a leading author of the study.

Two held in Ctg BCL leader murder case

CHITTAGONG, Jan 15: Nurul Islam and Manik alleged killers of local BCL leader Kaiser, were arrested by Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) today, reports BSS. Acting on a tip-off, detectives of CMP in separate raids arrested Nurul Islam and Manik from Deyvihar and Chotta Pol areas of Kotwali and Doublimooring thanas. A single barrel US-made gun was recovered from Manik, police sources said. The arrested are also accused in Kaiser Hossain murder case.

Explosives recovered in Faridpur

FARIDPUR, Jan 15: Police recovered a huge quantity of explosives from a godown at Pijankhali under Sadarpur thana on Thursday night, reports UNB. Acting on a tip-off, Officer-in-Charge of the thana Nazrul Islam raided the godown at Pijankhali river port and recovered 28 bags full of explosive materials. Police arrested the owner of the godown Arshad Khan, who is also a Pijankhali union parishad member. He told police that one Akbar Ali of village Darjan Khan Dangi kept the bags and he (Akbar) would take these to Dhaka soon. Police suspected that the explosives were smuggled from India and these will be used in making bombs. A case was filed with the police.

Dhaka Int'l Trade Fair from Jan 29

Dhaka International Trade Fair-2000 will begin here on January 29, reports UNB. Commerce Minister Abdul Jalil yesterday visited the venue to see the progress of work. The minister said the objective of the month-long trade fair is to popularise domestic products among the buyers, particularly the foreign buyers. The minister urged the authorities concerned to provide essential services to the participants, foreign and local buyers. Commerce secretary Golam Rahman, EPB Vice-chairman AB Chowdhury and other officials accompanied the minister. Earlier, the EPB Vice-chairman apprised the minister of overall activities of the trade fair. Thirty countries, including USA, UK, Germany, Australia, Italy, India, Iran, Egypt, Pakistan, Singapore and UAE are likely to take part in the trade fair. Marez-Oyens also defined

Uma Bharati quits Vajpayee govt

NEW DELHI, Jan 15: India's Tourism Minister Uma Bharati resigned from the federal Cabinet today, protesting a police baton charge on her supporters that left 12 people seriously wounded, reports AP. Bharati alleged that members of her Bharatiya Janata Party were beaten up during city council elections Thursday as officials looked on in Bhopal, capital of the central state of Madhya Pradesh. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee also belongs to the BJP. Madhya Pradesh is governed by Sonia Gandhi's Congress party, which is the main opposition in Parliament. Bharati said she had sent her resignation to Vajpayee. Twelve members of the municipal council, including five women, were seriously wounded in the baton charge. Press Trust of India reported. It did not say why officials ordered the charge. The police beat me ruthlessly. Blood was flowing from my head and my leg is fractured," Hemlata Kohari, one of the members, told the private STAR television network as she lay on a hospital bed with a bandaged head. Bharati represents the Bhopal constituency in the Lok Sabha, the lower house of Parliament. "There is a lot of anger inside me. We will not treat this as an ordinary incident," Bharati told the network. "I will now step on the streets as an ordinary lawmaker to seek justice." The BJP called a citywide shutdown Saturday to protest the incident.



The first congregation of South Asian bourses in progress at Chittagong yesterday. —Star photo

South Asian bourse bosses

From page 1 The key ingredients of a stock exchange - transparency, performance, omniscience, rights protection, secure environment and rock bottom cost structure. "A stock exchange is a self-regulatory organisation by character," said Deena Mehta, vice-chair at Bombay Stock Exchange, in her paper on "Challenges before South Asian Stock Exchanges". Arif Habib, chairman of Karachi Stock Exchange Ltd., praised the initiative of the CSE leaders and assured support to the cause. Among the participants were Hiran Mendis, head of Colombo Stock Exchange, Lava Kumar Devkota, chairman of Nepal Stock Exchange, T Yezer, CEO of Bhutanese regulatory agency and senior South Asian diplomats including the Sri Lankan High Commissioner.

Akimul Murder Case Shikdar, 7 others to be chargesheeted today

From Staff Correspondent KHULNA, Jan 15: Chargesheet in Akimul Murder Case will be submitted to the court here tomorrow accusing eight people, including Ershad Shikdar and his first wife Khodeja. Akimul, a telephone operator of Lockpur Fish Processing Company was murdered by Ershad Shikdar and six of his armed cadres on the night of February 25, 1998 at the Ice Factory at Skid Ghat (River Jetty). But the case was filed on September 29, 1999 with Khulna thana following confessional statement of Noor-e-Alam who was one of the witnesses of the murder. Shikdar killed Akimul for having illicit affairs with Khodeja, the chargesheet stated, adding that the case was not recorded then by police because of 'financial gain'. Akimul was in love with Khodeja, mother of two sons and two daughters. She was caught red-handed by armed cadres of Ershad Shikdar while eloping with Akimul. They took Khodeja and Akimul to the Ice Factory where Shikdar was waiting. Khodeja was confined in a separate room, while Ershad tortured Akimul to death. His dead body was dumped into the river Bhairab near fish landing ghat. The accused in the murder case are Ershad Shikdar, Liaguat Lashkar, 'Jamal' Faruque, Khodeja, Idris Jamal, Faisal, Sultan and Noor-e-Alam. 'Jamal' Faruque, Khodeja and Sultan are still at large.

Admission tests on 7000 vying for 850 seats in 7 Ctg schools

From CU Correspondent CHITTAGONG, Jan 15: About 7000 students are vying for 850 seats in different classes as admission tests in seven main schools in Chittagong began today. Over 900 candidates are vying for 45 seats in Class Six and Class Eight at Ispahani Public School and College. Seven hundred and twelve admission seekers are contesting for 40 seats in Class Six while 200 are contesting for 35 seats in Class Eight. At Nasirabad Govt Boys' High School at least 1356 students are vying for 205 seats. Of them, 564 are vying for 105 seats in Class Five and 792 for 100 seats in Class Six. For 120 seats in Class Four at Dr Khastagir Girls' High School, 1562 students took part in the admission test. A total of 2082 students are vying for 230 seats at Chittagong Collegiate High School. Among them, 1474 are vying for 200 seats in Class Six and 608 for 30 seats in Class Nine. At the Nasirabad Girls' High School, about 600 students are contesting for 120 seats in Class Six and at Chittagong Govt High School 712 students are vying for 100 seats in Class Five. Meanwhile, 703 students are contesting for 67 seats in Class Five and Class Six at Bakulia Govt Boys' High School where 503 are vying for 60 seats in Class Five and 200 for only seven seats in Class Six. Admission tests at Nasirabad Girls' High School, Chittagong Collegiate High School, Bakulia Govt High School (Class Six), and Nasirabad Govt Boys' High School (Class Six) will be held tomorrow.

Speaker asks MPs to attend JS session on time

Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury yesterday asked the members of parliament to attend the session of the Jatiya Sangsad on time for smooth functioning of the House and enhancing its dignity, reports BSS. He said that it was being observed that when the Leader of the House, owing to her state responsibilities, arrives late in the House, the sitting is delayed due to lack of quorum. He expected that the members would attend the sittings timely to help the Speaker begin the day's proceedings. The resumption of the House was delayed by 44 minutes yesterday due to lack of quorum, which prompted the Speaker to make the above observation.

Acid thrown on housewife

By Staff Correspondent Acid was thrown on a housewife allegedly by another wife of her husband at Rayer Bazar in the city late Friday night, hospital sources said. The victim was identified as Poppy Akter, 18, wife of a tempo driver Faruk Hossain. With burn injuries in her face, Poppy was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), police and hospital sources said. Police took Sathi, another wife of Faruk into custody yesterday. No case, however, was filed in this connection till filing of the report. According to hospital sources, the incident took place when Faruk and Poppy were preparing to go to bed inside a room of their house at about 10:30 pm Friday. Suddenly, Sathi got inside the room and locked in an altercation with Poppy. At one stage, Sathi threw acid on Poppy's face, hospital sources added.

Nikunja murder Shukur confesses involvement of nine

By Staff Correspondent Shukur Ali, arrested in connection with Nikunja murder, gave his confessional statement in the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court yesterday. Shukur also confessed involvement of eight others in the killing. Police, however, are yet to arrest Ohi, the main suspect in the killing. Nikunja Bahari Debnath, 55, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development was stabbed to death by muggers near the Swadhinata Sangram (struggle for independence) sculpture at the road intersection between the S M Hall and Jagannath Hall on Tuesday night. Nikunja was returning to his Azimpur residence from Kamalapur Railway Station in a rickshaw. Shukur was taken to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court yesterday. Later, he was sent to the Dhaka Central Jail, police said. Ramna police have so far picked up 95 people in connection with the Nikunja killing. Of them 12 have been shown arrested. According to sources, the arrested were allegedly tortured by police and forced to confess their involvement in the killing.

Schoolgirl kidnapped in N'ganj

From Our Correspondent NARAYANGANJ, Jan 15: A schoolgirl was kidnapped from her residence allegedly by four local youths at Lamapara under Fatulla thana here this morning. The girl aged about 15 and student of class X was kidnapped when she was working in the kitchen, police said quoting her father Mahubullah. The four - Razzak, Alam, Zakir and Faruk - entered Mahubullah's residence and picked up the girl in front her mother and brother at gunpoint, police said. The criminals threatened the girl's mother and brother when they came forward to rescue the girl.

167 shops, houses gutted in Rangamati

RANGAMATI, Jan 15: About 167 shops and houses were gutted in a fire at Kachalong bazar under Baghaichhari thana, leaving 20 people injured on Friday night, reports UNB. Witnesses said the fire originated from a shop and soon engulfed the bazar. There is no Fire Brigade station in the area. Army personnel with the help of the local people brought the fire under control after three hours of frantic efforts. About 300 people were affected by the fire. Power Development Board sources said 50 kv line was also damaged in the fire. 1807 foreigners freed in KSA RIYADH, Jan 15: Saudi King Fahd Ibn Abdul-Aziz has granted amnesty to 4,637 prisoners convicted of minor offences, the official Saudi Press Agency reported yesterday. Xinhua quoting an Interior Ministry statement said 1,807 of the pardoned inmates were foreigners. The amnesty was announced to mark the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan which ended January 6 here, the news agency said.

Bus dacoity in Rangamati

RANGAMATI, Jan 15: A group of gunmen stopped a bus and looted all belongings of the passengers at Baghaichhari-Dighinala road today, reports UNB. A gang of 12 tribal youths stopped the Dighinala bound bus from Baghaichhari, beat up the passengers and looted cash money and other belongings.