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Strike at 11 ports across India

BOMBAY, Jan 18: Nearly 100,000 workers went on strike for higher wages today at 11 major ports in India's first nationwide dock strike in a decade, reports AP.

Indian ports handle some 684,000 tons of cargo daily and a prolonged strike of workers up to the level of superintendent is expected to cripple the movement of ships and goods.

The strike began in the southwestern port of Bombay at midnight on Monday. Workers from 10 other ports joined in at 6 am today, said Anthony Pillai, general secretary of the All India Port and Dock Workers Federation.

Huge explosives seized in Assam

GUWAHATI, India, Jan 18: Police in India's troubled far-east today said they had seized a large amount of powerful explosives, including RDX, with which separatist rebels had planned to stage blasts ahead of the country's Republic Day next week.

A police spokesman in Guwahati, capital of Assam, told AFP 10 kilograms (22 pounds) of RDX, seven kilograms (15.4 pounds) of plastic explosives and numerous detonators were recovered early Monday from a bamboo basket placed in a bus.

The explosive consignment was seized from a private bus by our men while they were on a routine patrol," he said. "The consignment was destined for Guwahati and were sent by rebels to stage blasts there."

Gunfight leaves 15 hurt at Barisal

From Staff Correspondent BARISAL, Jan 18: At least 15 people were injured three of them seriously, in a gunfight between the armed activists of two rival groups in the town today.

According to police and witnesses, one 'Boma Mamun' an associate of a Jubo League leader was beaten up by the armed activists of the rival group over collection of tolls and drug trading at Palashpur in the town last night.

As a sequel to the incident the supporters of Mamun led by Muna and Chhikka attacked the area at around 1:30 pm today. They exploded crackers and fired shots during the attack.



Better judgement, please

Rajshahi University campus bans the sexes from mixing near the teacher's residential area. The restrictions are supposed to prevent students from engaging in "naked sexual behaviours" that degrade the residences' environment, but isn't there a better way to make students behave than by posting such an indecent sign.

—Star photo by Kamran Reza Chowdhury

Opposition plans another round of hartal this month

Star Report

BNP-led opposition alliance ponders another round of hartal this month as the four parties are designing their campaign strategy towards forcing the Awami League's ouster.

They are likely to announce a series of programmes, including a hartal on January 26 or 27, from separate public rallies on January 23, sources said.

This time, a top BNP leader said, the hartal would also protest the proposed Public Safety (Special Provision) Bill, which the Cabinet cleared on Monday.

The parties plan to intensify the campaign from February, the sources said. The tentative decisions came after a series of intra-BNP meetings and consultations among alliance partners.

BNP chief Khaleda Zia is expected to announce the new programmes on January 23.

However, Jatiya Party, the second largest alliance component, is not sure about its plans.

Party chief H M Ershad, the principal accused in the Manzur murder trial, is scheduled to appear in court on January 23.

A party official said the planned rally would go ahead if the trial schedule changed.

Meanwhile, the two parties yesterday buried hatchets over composition of all-party action councils after five days of negotiations at different levels. Both Khaleda and Ershad personally intervened when their colleagues failed to reach consensus.

In another development, the government's reported willingness to soften its stand has added a new dimension to the political crisis. Political sources say there has been some pressure on both sides to create a favourable climate which could lead to a dialogue ahead of President Clinton's expected visit in March.

On Sunday, Prime Minister See page 11 Col7

Indian state minister for external affairs due tomorrow

By Diplomatic Correspondent

Discussions on transshipment, opening of multi-modal communication links and bilateral trade are expected to top the agenda of talks between Indian State Minister for External Affairs Ajit Panja and Bangladesh State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury.

The Indian minister is due to arrive here on a three-day official visit tomorrow. It will be the first visit by an Indian leader since the BJP-led coalition government bounced back to power.

Diplomatic sources said the visit will be 'very important' as several key bilateral issues will be discussed. Talks on opening of rail links between the two countries are also expected to be held.

Ajit Panja, who is a former Central Information Minister will be received by State Minister Abul Hasan Chowdhury. The two will hold official talks the same afternoon.

The Indian minister will make a courtesy call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. He will also call on Finance Minister Kibria and Industries Minister Toifal Ahmed.

Reported hijack bid was a hoax, JS told

By Staff Correspondent Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday that the recent reported bid to hijack a Bangladesh Biman flight at Calcutta proved to be a 'hoax'.

The minister issued a statement in the House about the so-called plane hijacking bid, following a call attention notice from Abdul Latif Mirza of the Treasury Bench.

He said, the Calcutta police arrested 11 Palestinian Muslims having Israeli citizenship on January 11, after Bangladesh's Deputy High Commissioner (DHC) there reported the hijacking bid.

Dhaka to join Indian Ocean Rim tomorrow

Bangladesh will formally join the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IOR-ARC) at a meeting of the organisation in Muscat, Oman, tomorrow, reports BSS.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad will lead the six-member Bangladesh delegation at the extraordinary meeting of the council of ministers of IOR-ARC.

With induction of Bangladesh into the grouping of littoral and island states, the members of the body will rise to 19.

Bangladesh applied for its membership during the second council of ministers meeting of IOR-ARC in Maputo, Mozambique, in March last year.

Meanwhile, Azad signed the 'instrument of acceptance' for joining the organisation on January 6, Foreign Ministry sources said yesterday.

The Special Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials of the member states will begin tomorrow in the Omani capital.

Rubel murder Cross-examination of sixth PW held

By Court Correspondent

The cross-examination of Mohammad Shahidullah, the sixth prosecution witness in the Shamim Reza Rubel Murder Case was completed by the three defence lawyers in the Third Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka yesterday.

The case was adjourned till January 30.

The CID charged 14 people, including former AC Akram Hussain and Mukull Begum, a local Awami League leader, with murder. Ten of the 14 accused appeared in the court yesterday.

The four other accused - SI Nurul Alam, Mong She-oen, Abdul Kalam Azad and Zakir Hossain — are still at large.

Rubel, a 24-year-old BBA student of the Independent University, was picked up by a team police near his residence on July 23, 1998 and was tortured to death in custody the same day.

No plan to cut defence budget, PM tells JS

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday told Parliament that the government has no plan to reduce the country's defence budget, reports UNB.

Replying to the question appeared in the name of JP member Dr Rustom Ali Farazi, she said the armed forces' budget is prepared considering the requirement of the defence as well as resources.

The budget is not prepared with intention of reducing or increasing, she added.

She told the House that bumper production of Aman and Boro during this financial year was possible for making agriculture inputs available with the farmers and ensuring fair price of farm produce.

Favourable weather, timely use of fertilisers besides availability of agriculture inputs contributed to the bumper production. Hasina said while replying to Adv Sheikh Mohammad Nurul Huq of the Treasury Bench.

She told the House that production target of paddy was set at 145.88 lakh metric tons from 35 lakh hectares for the current fiscal year.

The Prime Minister said Boro production was recorded

at 158.28 lakh metric tons during 1998-99. She hoped that this year's Aman production might cross one crore tons.

She said preliminary estimation of Boro crop is not possible at this stage. However, it is expected that Boro will also yield bumper harvest this year.

Prime Minister said Bangladesh's election to UN Security Council is a manifestation of the success of its pragmatic foreign policy and wise diplomacy.

Replying to a question from ABM Abdul Kashem (Chittagong), the prime minister told the House that from March next Bangladesh would take the responsibility as president of the Security Council.

The Prime Minister said, this post would lead the country to a dignified and honourable position at the very onset of the new millennium as Bangladesh has played a vital role in maintaining peace, security and balance in the present day world.

As only country from South Asia to the Security Council, Bangladesh would play significant role in this 188-member world body in reducing nuclear tension and other conflicts, she said.

Students lock main gate of Queens University

By DU Correspondent

Students of Queens University (QU) in the city yesterday locked the main gate of the university for about three hours protesting what they termed irregularities and corruption by the university authorities.

The 'Queens University Chhatra Sangram Parishad (QUCSP)' also submitted a 30-point demand to the authorities, which include stopping 'conspiracy' to oust the vice-chancellor (VC) and appointing VCs on the basis of the President's recommendations, stopping expulsion of the students illegally and increasing the number of hostel seats. The students also demanded permission for setting up of students' union at the university.

QU sources said, the students who were agitating on the campus for the last few days to press their demands had locked the gate at about 11 am confining the teachers and the students.

They brought out a procession and organised a rally on the campus at about 12 noon, from where the QUCSP decided See page 11 Col7

Hons examinees put up barricade on Mirpur Rd

By Staff Correspondent

Traffic on Mirpur road came to a halt for about two hours yesterday as a section of examinees of Honours Part-III of Dhaka College put up a barricade there.

They were demanding holding of the examination on schedule.

Earlier, the examinees brought out a procession in the city and held a rally at Central Shaheed Minar. The rally was addressed, among others, by Firoz, Rubel, Lucky and Kiran.

Speakers at the rally protested the demand for shifting of Honours Part-III examination date to the end of March and urged the NU authorities to hold the examination on schedule.

Examinees of Honours Part III under the National University (NU) on Monday gave a 48-hour ultimatum to meet their demand. Otherwise, they would resort to strike at all colleges from January 23, they threatened.

Meanwhile, the authorities of the National University at a meeting yesterday called upon the examinees of Honours Part-III to cooperate with all concerned for smooth holding of the examination scheduled to begin on January 24.

The meeting in a resolution said, if any examinee fails to appear at the examination beginning on January 24, the authorities will allow him to sit for the same examination in June this year, a press release of the university said. See page 11 Col7



Against the tide

Dhaka College students lay a two-hour siege to the Mirpur Road in the city yesterday demanding that the examinations of Honours Part-III under National University be held on schedule. —Star photo

PDB's bid to improve billing & accounting

By Sharier Khan

Billing and accounting should be more transparent and competitive under a Power Development Board plan to introduce separate systems in each of its 22 zones.

The performances of each zones will be compared, with the best receiving incentives," said a well-placed source.

Under the present system, zones collect bill separately, but the accounting is done centrally. The performance of the zones is never considered.

Board authorities are restructuring the system to cut the system losses to a tolerable level by 2003.

According to power experts, the board could turn a profit if it can cut its losses below 20 per cent.

The board wanted to cut its losses from 22 per cent to 18 per

cent by the end of this month but it hasn't achieved its goal. The board also plans to improve bill collection and fight power theft. Various clients owe the board over Tk 2,500 crore in unpaid dues.

The latest plan come on the heels of a government decision to amalgamate the board's Ashuganj power plants to form the Ashuganj Power Company. The move triggered unrest among the board's staff, who worried it was the beginning of the PDB's end.

However, the staff stopped their movement after the government assured them the board would not be abolished.

The authorities designed other reforms so the staff don't resist change," said a source. He said he expects the staff to cooperate with the proposal.

Floods: Modern warning, management stressed

By Staff Correspondent

Politicians should consider modern warning and disaster management systems to minimise the damage caused by annual floods and save lives, concluded a symposium at the LGED Bhavan yesterday.

"Peoples' Livelihoods at the Land-Water Interface - Emerging Perspectives on Interactions between People and the Floodplain Environment" was organised by the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies in conjunction with the University of Leeds and the University of Newcastle.

In his presidential speech at the opening session, Tauhidul Anwar Khan, the director general of the Water Resource Planning Organisation, said fresh water management planners should learn from their past mistakes and consult people living in vulnerable zones.

Khan also emphasised the need for better maintenance of flood protection infrastructure.

A. Z. M. Obaidullah Khan, the centre's chairman, expressed concern at degradation of organic contents in soil due to the applications of chemical fertiliser and pesticides. He stressed the need to protect the rights of farmers and fishermen.

Matthew Chadwick, a University of Leeds' delegate, said the 1998 floods caused extensive crop losses and property damage but also helped increase the soil's fertility.

Experts from home and abroad also discussed livelihood strategies, water resources management, policy frameworks, agricultural production and wetland resource management.

Advertisement for Sonaali Byangk featuring a large graphic of a sun and text in Bengali. The text includes: '২০০০ সালের অঙ্গীকার গ্রামীন অর্থনীতির উন্নয়নে বহুমুখী বিনিয়োগ- হাঁস-মুরগী পালন, মৎস্য চাষ এবং গবাদি পশু পালনে অর্থায়নের ক্ষেত্রে সোনালী ব্যাংকের রয়েছে বিশেষ বিনিয়োগ কর্মসূচী। জামদানী শিল্পসহ বিভিন্ন কারুপণ্যের উন্নয়নে আর্থিক সহায়তার জন্য রয়েছে বিভিন্ন কর্মসূচী। গ্রামীন স্বল্পবিত্ত মহিলাদের অর্থ কর্মসংস্থানমূলক কর্মকাণ্ডের বিভিন্ন পর্যায়ে রয়েছে বিনিয়োগ ব্যবস্থা। বিত্তহীন জনগোষ্ঠীর বিভিন্ন উৎপাদনমুখী কর্মকাণ্ডে সহায়তা দেয়ার জন্য রয়েছে বিত্তহীন প্রকল্প। উল্লেখিত কর্মসূচীগুলোর মাধ্যমে গ্রামীন অর্থনীতিকে গতিশীল ও উৎপাদনমুখী করার দৃঢ় প্রত্যয়ে সোনালী ব্যাংক অফিসরমান সারা দেশে কর্মরত ব্যাংকের ১৩০৫টি শাখার মাধ্যমে আমরা আপনাদের আশেপাশেই রয়েছি সোনালী ব্যাংক'

Advertisement for Technomart-3 featuring a large graphic of a gear and text in Bengali. The text includes: 'বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি মন্ত্রণালয়ের উদ্যোগে টেকনোমার্ট-৩ TECHNOMART-3 A FINDER & TECHNOLOGY PARK (বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি মেলা) ঘন : বি সি এস আই আর (সায়েন্স ল্যাবরেটরী) গ্রাউন্ড অফিস : ২০, ২১ ও ২২ শে জানুয়ারী ২০০০ ইং নম্বর : সকাল ১০টা থেকে সন্ধ্যা ৭টা অংশগ্রহণের : বাংলাদেশ বিজ্ঞান ও শিল্প গবেষণা পরিষদ বাংলাদেশ পরমাণু শক্তি কমিশন বাংলাদেশ কলি পউটার কাউন্সিল জাতীয় বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি জাদুঘর ব্যাপডক আলফা এরোমেটিকস লিঃ এরপোর্টেড ইন্টারন্যাশনাল এম ইসলাম ফুড প্রোডাক্টস বাংলাদেশ ফুড ডেভেলপমেন্ট ইনস্টিটিউট ওয়াশিংটন হার্বস বাংলাদেশ সয়াপ্রোটিন প্রকল্প লিঃ লাইফ লাইন ইন্টারন্যাশনাল ম্যাক ইন কর্পোরেশন কানুশাহ ফুড প্রডাক্টস নিপু কেমিক্যাল কোং ডেনীস ব্রেড এন্ড ফুড প্রডাক্টস আপনি আমন্ত্রিত Editor: Mahfuz Anam Published by the Editor from City Publishing House Ltd, 90 Kakrail, Dhaka-1000 on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd., 52 Motijheel C.A., Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No: 11, Road No: 3, Dhanmandi R/A, Dhaka-1205. PABX: 8616772-4. Commercial: 8616771, Fax No: 88-02-8613035, GPO Box No: 3257, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA. Internet edition address: http://www.dailystarnews.com and Email address: dstar@bangla.net