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Wishing the BEST for the 3rd Millennium

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DESCO MD, 2 directors fired

By Staff Correspondent
The Board of Directors of Dhaka Electric Supply Company (DESCO) has terminated three top officials of the company including its managing director.

Managing Director ASM Feroz, Director (Finance) Mubaroak M Ali and Director (Technical) A.B. Shaha were fired on grounds of failure to perform.

"The Board has found that the performance of these gentlemen is very unsatisfactory," said a DESCO press release.

The Board took the decision with a view to improving the services of the company, the release said.

See Page 12 Col 1

Mild tremor rocks Ctg

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, Jan 23: A mild tremor rocked the port city this morning, met office sources said.

The epicentre of the earthquake was located at 146 km off the city.

The tremor at 6:36 am lasted 16 seconds. Its intensity in Richter Scale could not be known.

No report of damage was however received, police said. Panic-stricken residents came out of their houses at the time of tremor.

Khaleda rejects PM's dialogue offer Dissolve JS, hand over power to caretaker govt



Khaleda Zia

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has demanded immediate dissolution of the Jatiya Sangsad, resignation of the government and hand-over of power to a caretaker administration to pave the way for general elections.

She also rejected the Prime Minister's offer for dialogue on Opposition's one-point demand and said, "There is no scope for discussions now as the government has already lost the opportunity to hold dialogue."

Dialogue can only be held with the caretaker administration after resignation of Awami League government, the Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad and former prime minister said.

Addressing a mammoth public meeting at Paltan Maidan in the city yesterday, she said there was enough scope for

talks when the Opposition placed its four-point demand. The four-point demand has now been replaced by the one-point demand for resignation of the government, she added.

"Now there is no scope for holding dialogue. There are clear provision in the Constitution how to resign and hand

Editorial on page 4

over power to caretaker government," she said.

"If you (PM) read the Constitution, you will find no necessary of holding dialogue."

"You read the Constitution and hand over power to a caretaker government immediately. People may forgive you (AL) if you quit just now. Otherwise, you must face people's anger," she added.

See page 11 col 6



Free ride

Train travel between Mymensingh and Bahadurabad via Jamalpur has never been easier! Thousands ride the rails without tickets daily, flaunting authority and draining the public coffers of critical cash. The danger involved in such a trip is anyone's guess.

— Star photo by Mohammed Ali

Inside Today Article

A 'Clash of Civilisation'?

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

Focus

The abortive Seattle talks: A third world perspective
Page 5

Business

SCCI seeks more commitment for regional development
EU holds out for quality WTO deal with China
DSE, CSE price quotations
Pages 6, 7 & 8

Prayer Timings

January 24		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:40	6:10
Zohr	12:45	1:15
Asr	4:15	4:30
Maghrib	5:44	5:48
Esha	7:15	7:45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Air pollution takes its toll 30pc officers of traffic dept fall sick

By Morshed Ali Khan

The traffic department is giving masks to some of its 1,900 police, but the number of officers with air pollution related illnesses is increasing.

Traffic inspectors, sergeants and policemen interviewed on the city streets said jaundice, allergies, kidney, heart and respiratory complications are rampant due to constant exposure to pollution.

Traffic department sources said about 30 per cent of their officers are currently ill.

"Jaundice is so common among that the number of men on prolonged sick leave can rise

to 50 per cent," said a traffic official who requested anonymity. "The problem is aggravated during the dry season."

Traffic police spend their eight-hour shift in one of the most polluted environments in the world. Air pollution peaks in urban areas during the dry season due to the thousands of faulty and two-stroke vehicles pouring black smoke into the atmosphere.

The traffic department recently bought about 1000 filtered masks to distribute to its 1,100 men on the street. How-

ever, the number of masks was inadequate, and many police complained the masks were useless after a week.

"The filters need to be changed frequently, and we aren't able to do our duty, which requires whistling, shouting or talking to road users," said a traffic inspector.

A senior BNP traffic official said the department bought the masks to protect its men and keep the city's traffic moving.

"Unfortunately, the move wasn't very effective because it's difficult for a policeman to

See page 11 col 6

DESA turns a deaf ear Arrears unpaid, system loss static

By Sharier Khan

Financial performance of Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) has not improved despite an earlier warning that it would be merged back with the Power Development Board (PDB) if it failed to reduce system loss and its arrears with PDB by July this year, sources said.

With its ever-increasing arrears with PDB, now at over Tk 1800 crore, DESA came under fire in recent months from the Prime Minister, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Energy, Finance Ministry, Energy Ministry, PDB and World Bank-led donors.

Still, DESA's system loss

remained almost static at 25-26 per cent for long.

System loss is responsible for a loss of over Tk 350 crore a year in the power sector. About half of the system loss is due to 'theft' of power by consumers in connivance with a section of employees of PDB and DESA, the sources said.

Though DESA authorities took some measures against some meter readers and ledger writers in recent months for their involvement in power pilferage, there has been no significant improvement in the performance.

"In the last six months, the PDB authorities took some

measures to improve its performance. DESA has also introduced some measures," said a source in the PDB.

PDB has more than Tk 2500 crore arrears due from DESA and other clients, which is equivalent to its 17-18 months' billing.

However, some top officials of PDB are also considering a second option. "If DESA continues to perform poorly, it might be converted into a subsidiary of PDB instead of merger. It would be easier to implement this concept," the source added.

DESA is also not serious

See page 11 Col7

Ministry mum on EC proposal No law yet to regulate political parties

By Nurul Kabir

The Election Commission has proposed formulation of a law with provisions for registration of political parties, auditing of their funds and imposition of ceiling on financial contributions to the parties by individuals and organisations.

The Commission sent the proposal to the Ministry of Law in October last year. Acting Chief Election Commissioner Moshataque Ahmed Chowdhury told The Daily Star on Saturday.

The government has, however, not yet taken any decision in this regard.

"Such a law is necessary to dissuade individuals and smaller groups who are not serious about polls, prevent big parties from receiving unlimited amount of money from business community and ensure transparency of the parties' income and expenditure process," the acting CEC said.

"These would eventually help build a sound democratic system in the country."

Defining political parties, Article 152 of the Constitution says, "Political parties include a group or combination of persons who operate within or outside parliament under a distinctive name and who hold themselves out for the purpose of propagating a political opinion or engaging in any other political activity."

But there is no law to regulate political parties in the country in any way.

"Many countries including India, Pakistan and even Nepal

have laws requiring political parties to be registered with their respective election commissions," said a top EC official. "In the absence of such a law in Bangladesh, the EC gets exposed to certain unnecessary complications every time the general elections come."

In the February 1991 gen-

See page 11 Col7

We Are Shifting

The offices of The Daily Star will be shifted to its new premises at the Karwan Bazar by the end of this month. Please direct all your letters and mails to the following address accordingly:

The Daily Star

19, Karwan Bazar (2nd & 3rd floors)

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