

# The Daily Star

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## Resist hartal, PM urges people

In a sharp reaction to the opposition's nonstop hartal plan, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina urged the people to boldly resist such shutdowns for uninterrupted development, reports UNB.

"If the people come forward to resisting hartal, then it will totally lose its efficacy," she said, addressing the National Export Trophy distributing function at Osmani Memorial Hall yesterday afternoon.

Referring to Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia's Monday announcement on hartal at the Businessmen's Conference that the opposition will continue calling hartals one after another, the Prime Minister asked the business community to decide whom to support.

Seeking help and cooperation from the businesspeople, she said: "If we get assistance from you, we'll be able to overcome all odds."

She made it clear that without democracy, economic development is not possible. And consolidating the democratic process needs tolerance, understanding and discussion.

"We have always kept the door open for discussion with the opposition; we have taken all possible, and most cordial, steps to reach an understanding through talks," she said regretting that even the move of business community for a solution to the standoff also floundered.

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## Leaded fuel disappearing from marketplace

Old stock almost exhausted

By Sharier Khan

Leaded fuel is disappearing from the marketplace as stockpiles of petroleum products containing the toxic additive are exhausted, says an energy ministry official.

However, the official refused to take the next step and declare Bangladesh a lead-free fuel country.

"There could be some old stocks in the private sector which haven't been exhausted yet," said the official. "Before we officially announce the country's fuel is lead free, we must conduct some tests on the petrol and octane samples collected from the market."

Early last year, environmentalists and doctors raised the issue of air pollution and the consequences of lead poisoning. The government decided to phase out leaded fuel and stop the import of two-stroke engines, which pollute more than other types.

However, Bangladesh imports petroleum products roughly every six months, which means leaded fuel was used across the country until the stocks were exhausted.

Eastern Refinery renovated its processing plant after the government's decision. Its products no longer contain lead.

"We have tested the petrol and octane reserves at Padma-Meghna-Jamuna (the distributors) and found no lead," said a source with Eastern Refinery. "We can assure the public that all petroleum products are supplied by the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation through the Eastern Refinery. Eastern Refinery no longer uses lead to improve the quality of its petroleum products, so there is

no leaded petrol in the country. We now have a Tk 100 crore proposal to expand and modernise the plant to meet the country's future needs. This will help us refine petroleum products with higher octane numbers (the higher octane number means higher burning capacity - the present petrol range between 78 to 95).

Lead is used to refine imported crude oil or improve the burning quality of petroleum products. However, it is also a lethal substance that can cause paralysis or death when inhaled. It's impossible for someone to mix lead with petrol or octane outside the refinery.

"Besides, nobody would make any money mixing lead with fuel," said the source.

Although unleaded fuel is

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Owners and employees of an electric goods market at Nawabpur in the city kept their shutters down for half an hour yesterday protesting extortion. —Star photo

## Shop owners protest extortion, terrorism

By Staff Correspondent

Electrical shop owners in the city's Nawabpur area kept their shutters down for half an hour yesterday noon to protest extortion and terrorist activities.

The shop owners observed the token strike from 12 noon to 12:30 pm at the call of Bangladesh Electrical Association.

The shop owners also brought out a procession in the area and held a rally in front of the association office. The rally was presided over by the chairman of the association, Joyal Abedin Khokan.

Mian Mohammad Liton, Monjur Ahmed, Mosharrif Hossain, S M Nurul Alam, Mir Gias Uddin Ahmed, Mahubb Alam and Shahadat Hossain addressed the rally.

The speakers called upon the businessmen to get united against terrorism. They also threatened to stop paying tax to

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## 4-day JCE meet begins Friday

### Equal share of Teesta to be demanded

By Asad-uz Zaman

Bangladesh will demand from India equal share of Teesta waters after leaving aside 20 per cent of its flow for continuation of the river-line.

Sharing of Teesta waters will be on top of the agenda at the four-day secretary-level Joint Committee of Experts (JCE) meeting, beginning here on Friday, sources in the Ministry of Water Resources said. The meeting will discuss sharing of waters of all common rivers, they said.

Water Resources Secretary Dr. A T M Shamsur Huda and his Indian counterpart Z Hasan will lead their respective sides at the meeting, the third since formation of the JCE. The first meeting was held in Dhaka in 1997 and the second one in Delhi last year.

It will be followed by a ministerial level meeting within three months.

The sources said India has built a 921.53 metre barrage on

the Teesta at Gajaldoba under Jalpaiguri district in West Bengal for diverting about 1,500 cusec water every day to Mahananda river.

Bangladesh also constructed a 615 metre barrage on the river for flood control and irrigation in 5,40,000 hectares of land in 35 thanas in Rangpur, Dinajpur and Bogra districts.

But the barrage on the Bangladesh side could not fully utilised due to inadequate water flow. Withdrawal of water by India has also seriously affected the ecology in the entire northern region of the country, they said.

Talking to The Daily Star, Director of the Joint River Commission (JRC) Abdul Khaleque said both the sides will have to sacrifice as the required flow of water in the river is not available during the dry season.

"So far, both the sides im-

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## HC issues rule

### Provision of caretaker govt challenged

By SC Correspondent

The High Court yesterday directed the government and the Chief Election Commissioner to show cause why the Constitution (Thirteen Amendment) Act, 1996 introducing the provision of neutral and non-partisan caretaker government to hold parliamentary election should not be declared ultra vires of the Constitution and having no legal effect.

A Division Bench of the HC comprising Justice Mohammad Fazlul Karim and Justice MA Wahhab Mia passed the order upon a writ petition of Advocate M Saleemullah.

The 6th Parliament which existed only for 13 days passed the 13th Amendment Bill on March 26, 1996, and on March 28, 1996, President Abdur Rahman Biswas assented to it.

Advocate MI Faruqi, counsel for the petitioner submitted, "The Act introduced in the Con-

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## Dialogue a must but an atmosphere is needed

By staff correspondent

People of different social strata believe that dialogue should be the only means of resolving political crises, but most of them argued the government should create a congenial atmosphere for such a dialogue.

This was revealed when they were asked to give their reaction to opposition leader Khaleda Zia's recent rejection of a dialogue offer.

Barister Shafique Ahmed, president of the Supreme Court Bar Association, believes that in order to settle political disputes there could be no alternative to dialogues, particularly in a parliamentary democracy.

"It is really a dangerous situation. Hartal cannot be the means of settling political disputes in a democracy, he said."

Replying to a question, Ahmed said, "The government seems to be on the right track. It has been requesting the opposition to resolve the problems, if

### People's reaction

any, across the table." He, however, admitted that "there must be a give and take" between the opposing political camps.

General secretary of the Dhaka University Teachers Association, Ferdous Hossain, also believes that dialogue between the government and the opposition is very important for democracy. "But the government needs to create a congenial atmosphere for a meaningful dialogue," the DUTA secretary general said.

"It is perhaps not rational to expect Khaleda Zia to sit for a dialogue with several thousands of her party activists in prison and another several thousands leading miserable lives with politically motivated cases filed against them by the government."

He believes that "release of

the opposition activists, withdrawal of cases and Prime Minister's apology for insulting remarks against Khaleda Zia would create the atmosphere for a meaningful dialogue.

As for the hartals called by the BNP, Ferdous Hossain said, "The hartal culture is definitely suicidal for our economic growth. But it is dire dishonour for anyone to keep mum when a hartal is called by Awami League. To put an end to it, the parties concerned should reach a consensus to enact a law, under which organising hartals would be a punishable offence."

Dr. Sirajul Islam, a professor of Dhaka Shishu Hospital, found the present political situation "crazy and therefore unacceptable."

"The opposing political camps have certain grievances, right or wrong, against each other. But that should not appear to be a bar to amicable settlement."

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## JS tidbits

### Hazari's anti-thesis

By Nazmul Ashraf

A ruling party lawmaker said in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday that Badhan who was sexually assaulted on the Dhaka University campus during the New Year's celebrations must be punished.

Many in the House were taken aback by the comment.

"How could a Muslim woman go for an outing in the dead of night during the month of Ramadan? Was it wrong that the drunk young men jumped on the lady who was dancing on the street with half of her body exposed?" said Joyal Abedin Hazari, an Awami League MP from Feni.

"It was only natural that she was treated this way," he said and blasted newspapers for "writing too much" on the incident. "As if nothing like this had happened in the past... it's a conspiracy to taint the image of the Awami League government."

An angry Hazari then suggested that Badhan like Russel

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**Inside Today**

**Article**

**Amend the Constitution?**

Column: Between the Lines  
by Kuldip Nayyar  
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**Business**

Haripur Power launched as pilot PDB company

Cash flow to volatile emerging markets rising this year

DSE, CSE price quotations  
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**Supplement**

Special supplement on the Republic Day of India  
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**Prayer Timings**

January 26

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-45	6-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-44	5-48
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

## Dhaka hopes to launch first telecom sat by year-end

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh's first telecommunication satellite should be in the space by the end of the year, said Science and Technology Minister Nour Uddin Khan.

The satellite would give the country's telephone and Internet users a cost effective and higher speed for global communication," said the minister. He was inaugurating a three-day SAARC information technology workshop at a local hotel yesterday.

"If we do not use our space,

then other interested countries would grab the opportunity."

The government has taken steps to set up an IT Village at Mohakhali in the city to facilitate software exports.

Forty-seven acres of land have been allocated for the village whose development work will start shortly, the minister said.

The government also plans to set up an IT Park on 264 acre at Kaliakoir in Gazipur. The first ever SAARC re-

gional workshop titled, "Information Infrastructure in SAARC Region" aims to discuss the prospects for infrastructure and challenges of information technology in the region.

The workshop organised by BANSDOC of Ministry of Science and Technology was addressed among others by Mahfuz Anam, Editor, The Daily Star, as special guest; Abdul Quddus, Joint Secretary of the Ministry and Md. Shafuliah, Director of BANSDOC.

Mahfuz Anam stressed the need for a concerted effort to facilitate the country's Internet users to become part of the cyber society and move ahead with the changing times.

Nine participants and three observers from six SAARC countries have been taking part in the workshop. Bangladesh has 12 participants.

Information technology experts from home and abroad will present about 17 technical papers on different aspects of IT.

A recommendation is likely to be adopted at the end of the workshop on January 27 that will seek cooperation among SAARC members on information technology, sources said.

## Business community won't give up

By M Shamsur Rahman and Shahriar Karim

Despite its failure to foster a government-opposition dialogue to end their stand-off, country's business community will continue its effort to convince politicians to shun politics of confrontation.

Some business leaders however have words of criticism that adequate groundwork was not done for the two-day Businessmen's Conference which ended in the city on Monday. There should have been prior discussions with both the sides before holding the conference, they observed.

"We are not frustrated. We will continue this process. It may take some time but we think a positive result will emerge," President of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) Abdul Awal Mintoo told The Daily Star yesterday.

He was asked about the out-

come of the conference, where Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina renewed her dialogue offer to opposition leader and BNP chief Khaleda Zia, but the latter rejected.

"There may be a political reason for the Leader of the Opposition to announce that hartal would continue. But I believe they will ultimately act on logic," he said.

"This is just the beginning and it would take some time to totally wipe out politics of confrontation in the country."

"I believe the government and opposition will ultimately sit for a dialogue. But we have to keep the pressure. All other segments of the civil society have to come forward and play their roles to bring the two opposing political camp to the table."

He said the business leaders

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**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)  
Dhaka -1215  
Bangladesh



Mr. A. Ahmed Yusuf, Executive Vice Chairman of Alpha Group is seen receiving the National Export Trophy from the honourable Prime Minister. Incidentally, Bangladesh Leaf Tobacco Company Limited, the recipient of the Export Trophy for the fourth time contributed significantly in the national economy and looked after shareholders' interest admirably by giving 497.5% dividend.

## Shibir-led student alliance calls hartal in greater Ctg today

From CU Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 25: The four-party student alliance, led by Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) of Chittagong University (CU) will enforce dawn-to-dusk hartal in greater Chittagong tomorrow protesting arrest of its 54 leaders and activists from four dormitories of the university last night.

Police picked up 91 Shibir activists including two journalists of The Daily Janata and The Daily Dinkal during a raid in AF Rahman Hall, Alawal Hall, Suhrawardy Hall and Shaheed Abdur Rob Hall at around 2:30 am today. Of them, 37 were released this morning.

Meanwhile, Chhatra Shibir and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) declared five-point and

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**গ্লোব নিবাস**

রাজার বাগ

রাজউক অনুমোদিত  
অত্যাধুনিক  
আবাসিক  
ফ্ল্যাট প্রকল্প

মাত্র ১০ লক্ষ টাকা  
এককালীন মূল্য পরিশোধে  
১০০০ বর্গফুটের থেকে ২/৩ বাকের  
ফ্ল্যাট কেনার সুযোগ  
একই দায় বহনাদায় স্বাধীনতা  
এই সুযোগ কেবলমাত্র  
২০০০ পর্যন্ত

নির্মাণ শুরু  
জানুয়ারী ২০০০  
হস্তান্তর  
জুন ২০০২

✓ ক্রেতার সর্বোচ্চ সুবিধা বিবেচনা করে সব ফ্ল্যাটেই ০.০৫, ২/৩ বাগ, ড্রই, ড্রাইসিং, কিচেন, দুই বারান্দা, সার্ভেট বেড + বাথের ব্যবস্থা করা হয়েছে।

✓ বেশ সুন্দর, ফায়ার ক্রেন হাট, কমপ্লেক্স লু, স্টেন্ড, স্ট্রী, টেনসিট হাটের ও বিপণিবিত্তির টায়।

✓ ১০০০, ১১০০, ১২০০, ১৪০০ বর্গফুটের ফ্ল্যাট

✓ ৫ টি স্বতন্ত্রমূলিক লিফট

✓ প্রতি ফ্ল্যাটের জন্য নিজস্ব প্যারেল

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