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Anniversary issue

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Week-long nat'l programme to observe Mother Language Day

A seven-day national programme has been drawn up to observe the International Mother Language Day, report agencies.

The decision was taken at a meeting at the International Conference Centre auditorium yesterday morning with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

Ministers, advisors, MPs, vice-chancellors of all universities, intellectuals, educationists, Language Movement heroes, representatives of different professional groups, cultural activists and high officials of education and cultural ministries attended the meeting.

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Clinton's visit Massive security arrangement being planned

By Mizan Ali

Government plans to beef up security arrangement and carry out a 'cleansing operation' to net in the wanted criminals around the capital prior to the visit of US President Bill Clinton, official sources said yesterday.

A massive crackdown on the criminals in the city is likely to take place soon, hinted top police officials, adding that they were likely to seek support from other disciplinary forces during the operation.

The officials warned of stern actions against people trying to create trouble during the visit of Clinton.

The crackdown is aimed at sorting out the listed criminals, he said, assuring that it would not be used for political victimisation.

Officials involved in design-

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US team visits some places in city, Gazipur

By Special Correspondent

A 16-member advance US team yesterday visited some places in the city and Gazipur district where President Bill Clinton may visit during his Dhaka trip on March 25.

Led by Dan Rosenthal, a White House official, the site survey team members arrived yesterday. Three of them came from New Delhi.

Accompanied by officials, including from the DMP's protection and Foreign Ministry's protocol section and the US Embassy, the team members went to Gazipur to see a primary school run by BRAC and a mi-

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President urged again not to assent to PSA

Token hunger strike observed

By Staff Correspondent

Over 100 BNP MPs led by party chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia yesterday observed a token hunger strike at the city's Paltan Maidan to protest enactment of the Public Safety Act and dissuade the President from assenting to it.

The nine-hour hunger strike began at 9:7 am with a recitation from the Holy Quran by Harun-or-Rashid Khan Monno MP and ended with a speech by the BNP Chairperson.

Thirteen Jatiya Party MPs led by its Chairman HM Ershad reached the venue at 9:37am and took part in the hunger strike, but they left after about one hour.

Jamaat-e-Islami MPs Delwar Hossain Saidee and Mizanur Rahman kept sitting with BNP MPs for some hours, but did not observe hunger strike on religious ground.

Islamic Oikkya Jote (IOJ) leaders Fazlul Haq Armini, A R M Abdul Matin and Mohiuddin Ahmed also joined the sit-in for some hours but were not on

hunger strike on religious ground. The IOJ has no MP.

Thousands of people including leaders and activists of the parties and various professional groups gathered at the venue. The MPs observed the hunger strike sitting under a huge canopy.

Addressing the gathering, Khaleda Zia reiterated her appeal to President Shahabuddin Ahmed not to assent to the "black and repressive" Public Safety Act (PSA) and show respect to the people's demand for scrapping it. The Act was passed "unilaterally" by the ruling Awami League, she added.

"I, on behalf of the nation, request you not to assent to the law. I hope you will not defame yourself by assenting to the black and repressive law. You are the President of the country. The main objective of this hunger strike by MPs is to request you not to assent to the PSA."

Not only BNP, the 4-party alliance or the 7-party alliance -

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PM questions Hunger strike for whom?

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina scoffed at the Opposition lawmakers' hunger strike, asking whether it was for establishing the rights of snatchers, hijackers, hoodlums and toll collectors against whom the Public Safety Act was adopted by Parliament, reports UNB.

"The law was framed according to our commitment to ensuring security, human rights and free movement of people by purging society of snatchers and hijackers... And we'll do whatever needed for it," she told a function marking the foundation laying of a multi-story building of the Press Institute of Bangladesh yesterday.

Referring to the joint hunger strike yesterday Hasina said deposed President General Ershad, ousted in the 1990 mass upsurge, and Khaleda Zia, the widow of another General (Zia) who captured power in 1975 and killed senior army and airforce officers, shook hands with Gollam Azam and communal forces to oppose this law.

The Prime Minister wanted to know whether the opposition staged fasting at Paltan maidan to preserve the rights of anti-social elements engaged in mugging, extortion and high-way robberies.

Defending the new law, she said the legislation contains

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We at the Daily Star would like to thank our valued readers, advertisers and well-wishers as we spring into our tenth year of publication today. Falgoun, or spring for that matter, does not begin until the 13th, but we feel like celebrating!

— Star photo



Deposed President and Jatiya Party Chairman H M Ershad seeking permission from a smiling Khaleda Zia to leave the dais during token hunger strike by opposition MPs at Paltan Maidan yesterday.

—Star photo

Meeting on memoir for donors held

By Staff Correspondent

The first meeting of the Task Force for preparing a memoir for Bangladesh's development partners' meeting in Paris was held yesterday.

The Paris meet is scheduled for April 13-14. Representatives of about 15 ministries and different government departments and agencies attended the meeting, held at the ERD (Economic Resources Division) conference room. ERD Secretary Mashiur Rahman presided.

At least 20 such meetings will be held to finalise the country's aid requirements for the next year and agenda of the Paris meet. EDR sources told the Daily Star last night.

The World Bank sponsors the Paris meeting where representatives from around 24 countries and international financial organisations attend and discuss Bangladesh's development issues.

The government is learnt to be preparing a memoir seeking 2.04 billion US dollars as aid from the development partners for implementing different development projects.

Arrival of ships at Ctg port drops

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, Feb 8: Arrival of ships at Chittagong port has dropped since the middle of January, resulting in less congestion at the port, port officials said.

"Every year this time around we've less traffic, but it would increase later with more shipment of cargo to and from the port," one official said.

Presently, about 30 ships are now staying at the jetties, moorings and outer anchorage of the port against over 50 ships a month ago, the officials said.

As a result, ships are now hardly required to wait longer than usual at the outer anchorage for entry into the port jetties.

Tarek Anis, chairman of Bangladesh Steamer Agents Association said arrival of ships at Chittagong port decreased because of 'lean period' persisting now.

"The lean period started with the end of 'quota' period of the year, but it may pick up again by the end of this month with new trade deal coming into effect," said Anis.

DEOs to be upgraded

Cabinet body decides 4 yrs after EC proposal

By Nurul Kabir

More than four years after the Election Commission's recommendation, the government has finally decided in principle to upgrade the post of district election officers, finance ministry sources said.

The decision was taken yesterday at a meeting of a Cabinet Committee headed by Finance Minister S A M S Kibria.

With the implementation of the decision, District Election Officers (DEOs) would enjoy salaries and allowances under Grade VII of National Pay Scale (Tk 6,150-Tk 9,750).

There are 83 posts of DEOs in 64 districts. Some districts with larger areas and population have more than one post. Seventeen posts are lying vacant now.

The DEOs have been enjoying salaries and allowances under Grade IX (Tk 4,300-Tk 7,740). They had been demanding Grade V (Tk 9,500-Tk 12,100),

while the EC proposed to upgrade their position to Grade VI (Tk 7,200-Tk 10,840).

Yesterday's decision put the DEOs to the level of District Education Officer. But they are still below the levels of Thana Agriculture Officer and Thana Livestock Officer, who are in Grade VI.

Implementation of the decision would, however, pave the way for the EC to recruit thana election officers. The Assistant Commissioner (Land) is discharging the responsibilities of a thana election officer now.

The EC still does not have thana level staff of its own although 487 posts were created in 1995 during the government of Khaleda Zia. Khaleda's government had also agreed to provide two other staff including a stenographer to each TEO and allocated funds for this in 1995-96 financial year.

While putting forward the

proposal for TEOs, the EC wanted them to be placed in Grade IX, "keeping in mind that the post of district election officers would be upgraded".

After government's approval for placing the TEOs in Grade IX, the EC wrote to the relevant authorities in May 1995 to upgrade the post of the District Election Officer from Grade IX to Grade VI. The Commission argued that the DEOs would have supervisory authority over the TEOs. "So, the status and the salary package of the district level officers must be higher than those of their thana level junior colleagues."

The EC proposal had reached the Ministry of Establishment in May 1995. But the ministry took more than three years to be convinced that the status of the DEOs should be higher than their thana level colleagues.

The Establishment Ministry

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Sajal's father in dark about final report

By Raziur Rahman



Sajal Chowdhury

This day a year ago BNP activist Sajal Chowdhury was gunned down at the intersection of Mirpur Road and Green Road in the city by killers in a motorcade allegedly led by ruling party MP Mokbul Hossain in defiance of an opposition-sponsored hartal.

Police submitted the final report of Sajal murder case in the last week of December last year, but they could not bring charges against anyone involved in the killing that took place in broad daylight, before hundreds of people.

Final report of a case is submitted when a police investigation fails to prove charges against the accused, which

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10000 Youngone staff deprived of pay raise

From Abdullah Al-Mahmud

CHITTAGONG, Feb 8: About 10,000 employees in 10 Youngone Corporation factories haven't received a pay raise in three years.

The issue has lowered morale in the factories, which are located in the Chittagong Export Processing Zone.

Sources said newspaper advertisements and Youngone authorities told workers when they were hired that the Korean company, the largest foreign investor in Bangladesh, would give them two pay increases annually.

However, the increases stopped between 1997 and 1998. The issue also disappeared from the factories' notice boards.

Workers appointed in early 1998 haven't received a pay increase. The only employees who have received raises have been Youngone officials, just 5 per cent of the total work force.

Workers said they were beginning to resent Youngone, considered to be one of the better companies operating in the zone, since it seemed to have changed its attitude towards its staff.

The workers said they used to work from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., including four hours of overtime. They received lunch at noon and a refreshment break at 6 p.m.

However, the company has cut the workers' overtime by

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Tough fight for OIC post

Dhaka needs more vocal support from Riyadh, allies

By M Anwarul Haq

Dhaka will face a tough fight to win the post of Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).

Election to the post of the 55-member organisation will take place during the 27th meeting of Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM), scheduled for June 23 in Malaysia.

Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury is Bangladesh's nominee for the post.

Dhaka has taken the race "more officially and more seriously" as Bangladesh nominee lost the fight for the post of Commonwealth Secretary General late last year, according to insiders in the government. But analysts feel that it would be a "tough fight" for the OIC post.

The only other candidate officially endorsed for the position till now is Turkey's nominee.

Another likely candidate is the incumbent Secretary General of OIC, who is from Morocco.

Turkey, being the only Muslim country to be a member of NATO, has an "enviable position to win more influence" in



Humayun Rashid Chy

the OIC, the analysts said.

On the other hand, Saudi Arabia, which commands significant clout among many Middle Eastern and Muslim countries, has said that it would support Dhaka's candidature.

Humayun Rashid Chowdhury, who is a former foreign

secretary and served as a foreign minister under former President H M Ershad, was Bangladesh's ambassador to Riyadh for some time.

However, Dhaka needs more vocal endorsement from Saudi Arabia if it is to win votes of the countries close to it. But Dhaka even failed to send its new envoy to Saudi Arabia Mahbubul Alam promptly, which is important for diplomatic maneuvering. The position of the envoy is vacant for quite some time now.

As yet, Bangladesh's candidature has not received official support from the six Gulf States which are close to Saudi Arabia in diplomatic terms.

Observers also feel that if Bangladesh wants its candidature to sail through, it will have to garner support from African members of the OIC, who are around 20.

Official backing from Iran is also crucial since Tehran wields considerable influence among Central Asian countries. Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad visited Tehran early this

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National Export Trophy for commendable contributions in export business

Winner of 1996-97 Silver trophy, **Alhaj Khalilur Rahman**, Chairman and Managing Director, **KDS Garments Industries Ltd.** and Director, **National Bank Ltd.**



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina handing over Trophy to Alhaj Khalilur Rahman



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina handing over Trophy to Alhaj Khalilur Rahman

1997-98 Bronze trophy winner, **Mr. Md. Abdul Halim**, Managing Director, **Aziz Pipes Ltd.** and Director, **National Bank Ltd.**

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Notice

Today's issue of The Daily Star will have 56 pages including the 40-page Anniversary Supplement - Let's move forward in spite of... The price, however, remains unchanged at Tk. 6.00.

— Management

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Prayer Timings

February 9

Azhan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-45 6-15
Zohr	12-45 1-15
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Source: Islamic Foundation