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20pc rise in allowances of Ansars

Rise above petty politics, join development work: PM

SHAFIPUR, Gazipur, Feb 16: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina recovering illegal arms in the today urged all quarters to rise above petty politics and forget all differences to join the current national development maintaining law and order in works, reports UNB.

There is no alternative to democracy for a genuine development," she said addressing the 21st national rally of Bangladesh Ansars and Village Defence Party at Shafipur Ansar Academy here this

building up a society free from nunger, illiteracy and poverty.

The Amar Ekushey Book

The visitors at the fair were

Fair lost its festive mood due to

mostly from the Dhaka Univer-

sity and its adjoining areas.

They did not spend much time

at the fair like the previous

Bangladesh, which is providing

list of the books available at the

fair and other information re-

lating to the fair, stopped their)

operation at the fair venue from

yesterday due to the hartal,

They are now doing this at the

The fast food and drinks

Foreign Minister Abdus

Dhaka University Vice-

supplying vans were also not to

Samad visited the fair in the af-

to press its demands for aboli-

tion of the Public Safety Act

and resignation of the govern-

In the capital, police ob-

structed, tear-gassed and

clubbed opposition activists

at Bijoynagar and Naya Paltan

and on Tongi Diversion Road

six of them female, were injured

when police baton-charged and

shot tear gas canisters at ac-

tivists at BNP's main proces-

sion near Bijoynagar Law Col-

lege at around 11a.m. according

some unruly activists tried to

damage an auto-tempo which

leaders and activists and tried

to enter into the party central

office after pickets torched a

motorcycle in front of the office

A BNP procession came un-

morning. Three BNP activists-

Matin. Faruq and Zaman-

Police picked up eight BNP

Five people including three

female garment workers sus-

tained bomb injuries when

home-made bomb at a passen-

The injured were identified

ger bus at Sayedabad at about 8

as Panna, 30, Lucky Akhtar 22,

Tania. 20, Abdur Rajjak. 25.

The identity of the other man

could not be knewn immedi-

ately. The work for Venus Gar-

ments. They were admitted to

Dhaka Medical College Hospi-

tal (DMCH). According to the

doctors, condition of Lucky

when pickets allegedly blasted

bombs at RK Mission road in

Gopibagh area at about 10 a.m.

Jamal, 35, sustained bomb in-

juries when pickets threw bomb

Abdul Awal, 65, was injured

A rickshaw-puller named

Akhtar was critical.

were injured, witnesses said.

activists from the spot.

was passing through the proces-

Police went into action after

Police clashed with BNP

About a dozen BNP activists.

during the hartal hours.

to witnesses.

at about 4 p.m.

while they took out processions

ternoon delying the hartal

be found vesterday.

Data Soft System

hartal yesterday.

country's south and south-west-

side the police.

to rural women for income-generating projects and establish them in society with dignity.

Ansars and VDP, she announced that government has decided to make a 20 per cent rise in the allowances of all battalion Ansars, female Ansars

She said government has also decided to upgrade the thana-level Ansars-VDP officials to second grade, resolving Hasina said Ansars-VDP

Development Bank would gradually be set up at thana level. Already 67 branches of the bank have been set up disbursing about Tk 43 crore for setting up small projects. She said

Chancellor Prof AK Azad

Chowdhury, Director General of

Bangla Academy Dr Syed An-

war Hossain and State Minister

for Sports. Youth and Cultural

Affairs Obaidul Quader accom-

They went around the book-

stalls and inquired about sales

of books during the hartal. The

sellers told them that the turn

out of visitors was lesser then

the previous days but selling

discussion on "Bangladesh in

the 20th Century: Evolution of

Literary Thinking" was held at

the Academy premises yester-

day with National Professor

Bangladesh in the 20th Cen-

Sufian, Mohammad Hossain,

areas were always tense during

the hartal hours with opposi-

tion parties bringing out a se-

ries of processions, some com-

bined, and police trying to pre-

vent the activists from parad-

ferent parts of the country was

between Dinajpur and Dhaka

was halted at the Dinajpur sta-

tion for about an hour and half

when pickets took over a level

crossing near the Dinajpur

railway station in the morning,

when pickets attacked the

Syedpur- Khuna Rupsha Ex-

press as soon as it reached the

Ishwardi railway station, police

said. However, it reached its

destination without further

disruption, railway sou ces

out a series of processions at

Naya Paltan, Mouchak,

Shantinagar, Bijoy Nagar

gaon, Elephant Road, Jatrabari

were not allowed to cross the

of All Party Action Council,

Dhaka city unit, organised a

rally and brought out a proces-

sion at 4 in the evening at Pu-

rana Paltan. APAC convenor

Sadek Hossain Khoka chaired

organisations also brought out

separate anti-hartal proces-

sions at Bangabandhu Avenue.

Press Club, Topkhana, Moti-

jheel. Dholairpar and Shah-

bagh areas and held a rally at

A good number of autorick-

shaws, mini-buses and some

state-run BRTC buses plied

some specific roads. Movement

of rickshaws was almost nor-

business establishments, shops

and private offices remained

closed. Attendance in govern-

ment offices, including

Bangladesh Secretariat, was

thin.

Educational institutions.

Muktangan in the afternoon.

Awami League and its front

barbed wire barricade there.

The opposition activists

The parties under the banner

Dhanmondi, Kalabagan, Tej-

and Purana Paltan areas.

During the hartal hours,

Four persons were injured

Train communication at dif-

Teesta Express that runs

Naya Paltan and Bijoynagar

Today's topic of discussion is

Kabir Chowdhury in the chair.

tury: Evolution of Literature'.

Meanwhile, the scheduled

was satisfactory.

Ahmed, it said.

ing the streets.

disrupted yesterday.

railway sources said.

panied him during the visit.

Book fair loses festive

mood due to hartal

By DU Correspondent

Hartal: Bomb blast

by BNP called the general strike Anwar Hossain and Mohiu din

der bomb attack allegedly by BNP. Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Is-

Awami League terrorists on lami, Islami Oikya Jote, Jagpa

Tongi Diversion Road in the and Democratic League brought

unidentified miscreants hurled Purana Paltan as police put up a

steps were taken to establish Ansars-VDP Cooperative Society Ltd and government would

government would bring a Bill in next session of Parliament to

posal for changing uniform of battalion Ansars is under active consideration. Already, all procedures for giving incentive allowance to female Ansars

Earlier, the Prime Minister inspected the impressive parade of Ansars and VDP and took salute from smartly turned out contingents. Home Minister Mohammad Nasim and Director General of Ansars-VDP Maj Gen Khandakar Mohammad Nurunnabi were present on the

Hasina also distributed prizes among Ansars and VDP for their outstanding performance in different sectors in

Opposition in Ctg threatens fresh hartal Sunday

Dhaka city unit of All-Party Action Council held a rally in the city yesterday.

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG. Feb 16: Normal life was disrupted due to the 36-hour hartal called by the opposition alliance.

Sporadic explosions of home-made bombs during hartal hours created panicky situation in the city. But no casualty was reported, police said. Two people were arrested. All modes of vehicles stayed off the roads and highways though rickshaws were seen plying in large number.

Most of the shops, markets and offices remained closed. Train service to and from Chittagong was as usual, railway sources said.

Delivery of goods to and

from Chittagong port remained suspended due to lack of trucks during hartal though cargo handling in the jetties and ship movement were carried out. port sources said. Mills and factories at the in-

dustrial belts at Nasirabad, Sitakundu, Kalurghat and Patenga suffered production loss due to thin attendance of workers, sources said.

Pro-hartal rallies and processions were held by the opposition workers at different points of the city and its sur-

rounding areas. Anti-hartal rally and procession were also organised by the Jubo League and Chhatra League on the Darul Fazal Market premises and at New Market crossing this morning.

Anti-hartal rally and procession were held amid tight security to avert any clash with hartal supporters.

UNB adds: Opposition here have threatened to enforce a dawn-to-dusk hartal on Sunday if the police involved in assaulting their leaders are not taken to task and arrested op-

Bomb explodes near KCC mayor office: One hurt

From Staff Correspondent KHULNA, Feb 16: A powerful hand bomb exploded near the office of the Khulna City Corporation Mayor at noon today. One Habibur Rahman of the Licence Department was injured. He was rushed to Khulna General Hospital.

Police could not identify the culprits responsible for the blast in the protected area of the City Corporation office where some riot police were earlier deployed in view of hartal. The mayor was not in his office during the explosion.

Mrs Sharif says Verdict in case against Sharif by month end DUBAI, Feb 16: The wife of

- Star photo

deposed Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif was quoted today as saying she expected the court trying her husband to issue its verdict at the end of this month. Reuter quoting newspaper reported. The Saudi-owned London-

based al-Hayat said Kulsoom Sharif had made her comments in the interview with the paper. "The military treats us like enemies of Pakistan. They cut off the telephone lines in my house and I cannot call abroad,"

it quoted Kulsoom as saying. Kulsoom has been allowed to visit her husband in jail.. "He told me in my last meeting with him that he is writing

his memoirs. He said he will tell all the truth in these memoirs," she said. Sharif, his brother and five

others have been charged with kidnapping, terrorism, attempted murder and hijacking relating to an attempt on October 12 to divert a plane bringing army chief General Pervez Musharraf back to Karachi from Sri Lanka.

Hijacking carries a possible death sentence in Pakistan.

Financial irregularities in Barendra project

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Accounts discussed various financial irregularities of the Agriculture Ministry's Barendra Multipurpose Development Project yesterday, reports UNB.

The meeting discussed 10 audit objections of the project in 1991-96 and financial irregularities involving over Tk 3.22

high tide is at its peak, the river water becomes almost immobile hindering the dilution of the lethal pollutants, the villagers explained.

Sixteen-thousand cubic metres of highly toxic wastes from the Hazaribagh tanneries flow into Buriganga daily through two sluice gates at Rayerbazaar and Hazaribagh. The gates were built jointly by the Dhaka WASA and the Water Development Board (WDB).

Sylhet hartal: 4th day passes off peacefully

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET. Feb 16: The fourth day of the five-day hartal called by the opposition here passed off almost peacefully.

However, considering the sufferings of the people, leaders of the opposition parties have reduced the hartal period. Hartal has been withdrawn for 12 hours from 6 pm today but it will be observed for 6 hours from 6 am tomorrow.

The All Party Action (Opposition) Committee called the hartal for immediate withdrawal of the names of different halls and buildings in the Shahjalal University of Science & Technology. The commercial establish-

ments were shut while all types of vehicles were off the streets and the educational institutions remained closed for the fourth day. Transactions in the commercial banks were also totally suspended while government offices could not function. However, the Biman service and rail communications were operational with a very few number of passengers.

During hartal hours, some rickshaws and autorickshaws were damaged by the pickets in different areas. There was no report of any arrest from any-

The All Party Action Committee held a rally at the Courtpoint with district Jatiya Party president Advocate Giasuddin Ahmed in the chair.

It was also addressed by joint secretary of the district BNP Advocate Noman Mahmud. City Jamaat Ameer Dr

Shafiqur Rahman. Khelafat Majlish leader Moulana Khalilur Rahman. The speakers said that, the

leaders of the ruling party would have to pay for ignoring the demand of the people of the greater Sylhet region. They also threatened to go for tougher programme.

Meanwhile, the district Command of Muktijoddha Sangsad at a meeting held in its office last night protested activities of the 'anti-liberation

The speakers resolved that any move to change the name of the women's hall in the Shahjalal University named after Jahan Ara Imam would be resisted at any cost.

Anti-people forces are out to create an unwanted situation in the name of movement, they observed.

Enam Ahmed Chowdhury, District Commander presided the meeting.

District Awami League President Syed Abu Nosor Advocate and General Secretary A N M Shafique in a statement issued to the press tonight said the activists of BNP had pushed the people to the extreme in the name of movement. They are doing this for their personal benefit, the leaders said.

Warning the opposition, the AL leaders said. undemocratic and vengeful activities would not be tolerated. They also called upon the government for taking stern steps against those who are engaged in the vandalism and anarchism.

Abolish PSA, demands Opposition By Staff Correspondent

The opposition alliance leaders reiterated their demand yesterday for immediate abolition of the Public Safety Act and early general elections.

They said the current movement is now becoming a mass upsurge and the fall of the government is imminent. Speaking at a press briefing

at 29 Minto Road, BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said the government is pushing the country towards a conflict and instigating the opposition parties to create lawlessness.

Bhuiyan alleged that the government like in the past attacked opposition activists in different parts of the country to foil the hartal. The BNP secretary general

said police raided houses of party leaders and activists in Feni on Tuesday night and seized immovable goods without any court order.

He asked the government to accept the opposition demands or face tougher agitation programmes in the days ahead.

Muggers stab businessman in Demra

By Staff Correspondent

A businessman was stabbed by a gang of muggers at a place called 'Signboard' in Demra area Tuesday night.

The victim was identified as Solayman Mian, 45, owner of Azad Pipe Factory in the area and a resident of Road Number 15. Dhanmondi Residential area in the city.

Solayman came under attack by the gang as soon as he reached near his factory by a baby taxi at about 8:30 pm.

When the victim came out of the vehicle and was about to pay the fare of the vehicle, a gang of about five intercepted him and asked to part with his valu-

When Solayman refused to oblige, the gang stabbed him on his right chest and fled the spot. He was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital in a

critical condition from where he was shifted to the Orthopaedic Hospital. When contacted, Demra po-

lice said that a case had been filed but none was arrested in this connection.

month by DESA Chairman on

grounds of inefficiency and ir-

regularities. But sources

claimed that they were sacked

due to bitter relationship with

the DESA Chairman. Sources

said the government has plans

to expand DESCO's network

"In the last two decades,

promotion became more a po-

litical issue than qualification.

Therefore, there has been re-

peated instances of extension of

services after retirement. This

trend, coupled with the lack of

fresh recruitment, has now

created a big vacuum of expert

manpower in the whole energy

sector," the source added. "Now

that the government is involv-

ing private sector and expand-

ing its activities, it is actually

heading towards a total anar-

chy as regards administration.

The government should pay

from July next.

Energy sector posts tives of DESCO were sacked last

From page 1 leadership crisis."

Key organisations like BAPEX, Eastern Refinery, Padma Oil and RPGCL are being run under make-shift arrangements due to lack of top officials, sources said. The post of Director Opera-

tions in Petrobangla is vital for PSC monitoring. But there has been no serious attempt to fill up the vacancy through promotion or appointment. As a result. Petrobangla is handicapped in the current Second Round Block Bidding for oil and gas exploration and so the Energy Ministry has become more involved in negotiations with foreign companies, the sources

"Consequently, PSC negotiation has become a cumbersome and uncoordinated process. The worst is that nobody seems to be paying attention to this," bserved a source, "As there was been no fresh recruitment or promotion of efficient officials for years. Petrobangla is now a demoralised entity. It is no longer able to play the role it had played even in early or mid-nineties." The worst instance of hitch

was between the BAPEX MD and the State Minister for Energy. As per an order issued by the State Minister, the MD was suspended in mid-99 for alleged misuse of power and corruption while he was the MD of Titas Gas earlier.

The ministry formed an inquiry committee to probe the allegations of the State Minister. The MD instantly challenged the Minister by sending a legal notice. The committee after investi-

gation late last year found the BAPEX MD innocent. But the State Minister did not take any step to reinstate him, he sources said. In the absence of the MD.

Petrobangla's Planning Director was made Acting MD. No attention was given to fill

up the post of managing Director of RPGCL's in the last one year although RPGCL initiated

immediate attention to recruitment of manpower in this

2 cases filed From page 1 demand, which occurred on February 11. However, chances of rescuing the kidnapped child

were slim, they said. Nayan. Alamgir. Tuhin and Rubel were also charged in the case but have eluded arrest, po-

However, police said they didn't know why a case wasn't filed immediately after the incident occurred. The victim's

On Tuesday, Shyampur police registered a case under the act in connection with the same event, but nobody had been ar-

under Mohammadpur Police. registered a case against 23 people, including 13 identified people, yesterday for a creating panic in the area with home made bombs. She also accused

Mohammadpur Police said they haven't made any arrests. but insisted such incidents were not unusual in the area. The case was not politically moti-

US message on matchboxes, rupee notes for arrest of bin Laden ISLAMABAD, Feb 16: The reports of 100 rupee notes being

United States has taken its campaign to arrest suspected terrorist Osama bin Laden to the people of Pakistan — at least to those who smoke, reports AP.

On Wednesday in the frontier city of Peshawar, which borders Afghanistan, the United States was circulating matchboxes with a picture of bin Laden accompanied by an Urdulanguage message: Reward for Osama bin Laden.

The matchbox message promised that the identity of the informer would be confidential. It also carried a misprint in the reward offering 500,000 dollar instead of the 5 million dollar, which has already been announced by Wash-

The US Consulate in Peshawar said it had launched the matchbox advertising campaign.

Washington accuses bin Laden of masterminding the twin bombings of its embassies in East Africa in 1998. Bin Laden lives in neighbouring

a guest in their country and Afghan culture and tradition

demands that he be protected Bin Laden also has denied involvement in the US Embassy bombings.

The United States has

banned all trade with an investment in Taliban-ruled areas. Last November the United Nations imposed limited sanc-

again announcing the 5 million dollar reward. Laden's arrest. There were reports this week in a Pashtu-language newspa-

per that bin Laden had recently visited the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad, barely 75 kilometers from the Afghan border with Pakistan. Pakistan's military leader, Gen Pervez Musharraf is to

travel to Afghanistan, possibly this weekend, to meet the Tal iban leadership to discuss a strategy to combat terrorism. Previously Musharraf offered to negotiate between the Taliban and the United States to find a solution to the issue of bin Laden. The Taliban have offered to family could not be reached for comment.

the gang of stealing Tk 10,000 from her.

PHILIPS

tion to curbing terrorism and

morning. She urged all including VDP and Ansars to unitedly work for

Praising the role of 45 lakh Ansars and VDP in maintaining law and order and public safety, especially in human resource development and income-generating projects, she said Ansars and VDP would be given more responsibilities in ensuring local development works and security to public

She said despite limited facilities. Ansars and VDP have been working hard with the army in Chittagong Hill Tracts and made courageous contribu-

Referring to socio-economic activities by male and female Ansars and VDP, the Prime

and absorbed Ansars.

the problem of last 22 years.

ern region. 'She also lauded their role in

major towns and cities along-Minister urged them to carry on their efforts to impart training

About various problems of

provide primary capital for it. The Prime Minister said the

amend the Ansars Battalion Act-95, removing legal complications to make permanent the jobs of Ansars battalion who is in service for 15 years. Besides, she said the pro-

have been completed.

56 held on charge of attacking Hazari's car

From Our Correspondent FENI, Feb 16: Police arrested 56 people including 6 minor boys for their alleged involvement in Tuesday's bomb attack on the car of local ruling party MP Joynal Hazari. Police last night raided

During the raid, they recovered a pipe gun, six cartridges and nine crackers. Police also confiscated all movable property from the residence of district Jubo Dal president Syed Mizanur Rahman

Syed Mizanur Rahman

termed the bomb attack on the

car of Hazari as a pre-planned

houses in Rampur area in the

town and nabbed mem.

this evening.

drama and said it has been arranged only to harass the opposition workers, according to He denied involvement of BNP activists in the incident Joynal Hazari MP, however,

this report regarding Tuesday's car attack. 24 shops gutted, 11 injured in

is yet to file case till writing

Cox's Bazar COX'S BAZAR, Feb 16: Eleven people were injured and property worth about Tk 70 lakh was destroyed in a devastating fire in Chakaria in Cox's

Bazar district Tuesday night,

reports BSS. According to police, 24 shops were gutted when a fire broke out suddenly in a market in front of Chakaria thana headquarters, 45 kilometres from Cox's Bazar. Witnesses said the fire origi-

nated in a restaurant. Locals

and police brought the fire un-

der control before the fire fight-

ers arrived. There is no firehall in Chakaria. MPs revolt against

Nepalese PM KATMANDU, Feb 16: Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai faced ouster from office today as more than half of his governing Nepali Congress Party's lawmakers revolted against

his leadership, reports AP. Bhattarai, 76, took of ice "The government has failed to fulfill the party's pledges and the prime minister has failed as a leader. We need to have a new

leader," said Suresh Malla, head of the rebel group. The rebels sent a letter signed by 58 party lawmakers to the party parliamentary office, which is expected to hold a meeting within 15 days to settle

the leadership issue. The rebels did not name their choice to replace Bhat-The governing party con-

trols 113 seats in the 205-seat

lower house of parliament.

down after the revolt first surfaced in December. But he apparently changed his mind. Party lawmakers blame him for poor administration, deteriorating law and order and failure to control attacks by Maoist insurgents.

Parliament is scheduled to

Bhattarai had offered to step

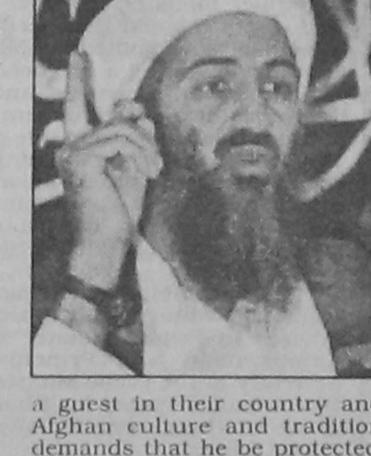
From page 1 partnership under a fresh eq-

uity formula. These companies

have talked about a partnership

meet March 1.

before, but couldn't agree on equity sharing. Sources said the government invited Enron to negotiate on Block 3 and Block 6 next week, but Enron was unlikely to attend. It hasn't negotiated with



Chowdhury and Manzur Morshed MP in the city's Bahaddarhat area and arrested a good number of activists from a procession on Tuesday. Addressing a joint meeting of four-party alliance during hartal today at Reazuddin Bazaar here. City BNP chief

Meer Mohammad-Nasiruddin

said they would enforce another

hartal in the city protesting po-

position activists are not re-

BNP general secretary Dastagir

Police allegedly beat up City

lice action and arrest of opposition leaders and workers. Oil cos discuss tax issues with officials

By Staff Correspondent Oil company representatives held an open discussion with officials from Petrobangla, the Energy Ministry and the National Board Of Revenue on the tax hurdles they faced in Bangladesh.

The meeting addressed the

lack of coordination encoun-

tered by the companies in cer-

tain areas, since the concept of production sharing contracts was relatively new to the coun-It was resolved Petrobangla would place a number of recommendations before the min-

istry in order to fix the problematic issues. The meeting was attended by NBR Chairman Abdul Mueed Chowdhury, Energy Secretary Dr. Towfik-e-Elahi Chowdhury. Petrobangla Chairman Mosharraf Hossain, NBR Member (Taxation), Petrobangla di-

The oil companies said it was unclear which currency they would use to return tax. They said the also had trouble estimating the depreciation equipment and property used for oil and gas exploration abandonment cost and other is

rectors and oil company execu-

Abdul Mueed Chowdhury listened to the companies concerns before he instructed officials to take appropriate steps in keeping with the Bangladeshi context. Dr. Towfik-e-Elahi Chowdhury said the government wanted to prioritise foreign in-

vestment in Bangladesh. The

taxation system would become

more transparent and user

friendly in the near future, he

Buriganga From page 1

The Rayerbazar sluice gate built about three years ago deviates the flow of a huge volume of tannery wastes from southern side to new areas outside the flood protection embankment. The sluice gate instantly contributed to polluting vast stretches of low-lying areas. natural canals and fresh areas of Buriganga River in the west.

circulated on which a Pashtu-

language message was stamped

The reward which was announced several months ago also offers possible asylum or relocation to anyone with information leading to bin

allow international observers monitor bin Laden's move-

lice said.

rested at that time. In the second case, Sufia Begum, a resident of BNP slum

vated, they added.

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at his rickshaw at Tejgaon Satrasta crossing. Both the bomb victims were admitted to DMCH. Jatiya Ganatantrik Party (Jagpa) claimed that police detained four party activists in front of the party office at about 1.30 p.m. The arrested were Aba Editor: Mahfuz Anam