

## Chinese team calls on Abdur Razzak

The visiting eight-member Chinese delegation led by Vice Minister for Water Resources Zhang Jiayao called on Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak in the latter's secretariat office yesterday, reports BSS.

An official press release said they discussed matters of mutual interest.

Razzak apprised the Chinese vice minister of the importance and necessity of construction of Ganges Barrage and sought Chinese help and assistance in this regard. Both the ministers expressed identical opinion on the problems of siltation and erosion faced by the two countries.

Welcoming the visit of the Chinese delegation to Bangladesh, Razzak said the existing relations between China and Bangladesh are excellent and hoped that it would be further strengthened in the years to come.

## Poet Talim Hossain's anniversary of death tomorrow

The first death anniversary of eminent Nazrul researcher and founder of Nazrul Academy poet Talim Hossain will be observed tomorrow, reports BSS.

The family members of the poet have chalked out a day-long programme in observance of the day.

The programme includes offering *fatiha* at the grave of the poet at Banani at 10 am, *Qurankhwan* at 21, West Ialibagh residence of the poet at 11 am, *milad mahfil* after *Asr* prayers and discussion meeting on the life and works of Talim Hossain at 7 pm.

Well-wishers, literary and cultural activists and relatives have been requested by the family members of the poet to attend the functions.

## Air chief to attend confce in Singapore

Chief of the Air Staff Air Vice-Marshal Jamal Uddin Ahmed left Dhaka on Saturday night for a four day visit to Singapore, reports BSS.

During his stay in Singapore, the chief of air staff will attend the Millennium Air Power Conference and will witness the Asian Air Space Exhibition-2000. He is scheduled to call on the Chief of the Singaporean Defence Forces Lieutenant General Bee Soo Kiang and the Republic of Singapore Air Force Chief Major General Raymond NG Teck Heng.



Artistes presenting recitation at a cultural function organised by Ekatturer Ghatak Dalai Nirmul Committee at the TSC road island on the Dhaka University campus yesterday.

— Star photo

## JS body reviews BRTA activities

A meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications Ministry yesterday reviewed the activities of the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA). reports UNB.

Leaders of the country's transport workers and owners associations raised their various problems in the meeting. The meeting was told that the communications ministry would take initiative to arrange an inter-ministerial coordination meeting soon to resolve the problems.

The meeting also laid stress on the necessity of modernisation of the existing national transport policy.

Chaired by committee chairman Afzaluddin Ahmad the meeting was also attended by Communications Minister Anowar Hossain.

## West Bengal agri minister arrives tomorrow

Minister for Agriculture and Consumer Affairs of West Bengal Narendra Nath Dey arrives tomorrow on a four-day official visit, reports UNB.

He will lead a four-member delegation. During the visit Nath will call on Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, Fisheries and Livestock Minister ASM Abdur Rob and State Minister for Planning Dr Md. Huddin Khan Alangir.

The West Bengal Minister will visit Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute and Bangladesh Rice Research Institute. He will also visit IPFM programme at Joydevpur.

Besides, Nath will visit Bangabandhu Memorial Museum, said an official handout.

## BCL celebrates Int'l Mother Language Day

By DU Correspondent  
Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), student wing of ruling party, yesterday brought out a procession on the Dhaka University campus to mark the International Mother Language Day today.

Following the procession, BCL held a rally at the Aperaeo Bangle. Addressing the rally, the BCL leaders urged the students to uphold the honour of Bangla language and significance of International Mother Language Day.

Presided over by Sajjad Hosain, the rally was also addressed, among others, by Bahadur Bepari, Ajay Kar Khokan, AKM Azim, Alamgir Hasan and Delwar Hossain, reports UNB.

He told a review meeting held at the Industries Ministry that 176,348 tons of urea is now in stock at buffer godowns and another 44,484 tons in transit to meet the demand of 328,628 tons during the month of March. Another 4,00,000 tons are already in stock at mills' godowns. Stocks are being increased by production in own mills and procuring 25,000 tons from abroad.

The BCIC officials informed the meeting that most of the fertilizer allotted for February have been lifted by the dealers. They said, due to huge supply of urea at districts, 194,849 tons of urea would be available at mill godowns and buffer stock after meeting the demand of March.

The stock will be increased by 260,351, 304,822 and 344,178 tons in April, May and June respectively after meeting country's demand.

## Metropolitan

# Could a capital other than Dhaka solve city's worsening traffic?

Environment Department chiefs debate a solution

Should Bangladesh have another capital to redeem Dhaka crumbing under pressures of burgeoning population, mushrooming structures and honking fleets of transport?

The question cropped up at a press briefing yesterday on the worsening environmental conditions of the capital city of nearly ten million, reports UNB.

The chief of the government's environment department endorsed the idea of a second capital for the country to ease the pressures on Dhaka at the briefing.

Dhaka will eventually become a dead city if haphazard construction of high-rise buildings are not stopped immediately, it was observed at the news briefing.

"We don't say we oppose construction of high-rises. But, what we say is high-rises fulfil all prerequisites for maintaining an environment for everybody's livelihood," said Department of Environment Director General AR Khan while briefing the members of the Forum for Environmental Journalists:

He observed that the envi-

ronmental situation of the capital is so bad that the DOE can't give permission for constructing high-rises until a proper plan is formulated.

"If the present law is not relaxed or modified and the plans are not formulated locating permissible areas for construction of high-rises, it will be difficult for DOE to give permission for high-rise buildings," he said.

Only three months ago Rajuk, responsible for developing the capital, made a provision that the builders would have to take no objection certificate from the Department of Environment to get their high-rise plans approved. Buildings with more than 6 floors are considered high-rises.

Considering the existing laws and the Environment Guidelines 1997, the DOE decided to give no objection certificates only if the plan fulfills all the criteria set by it, including the service situation of all the service organisations like electricity, WASA and City Corporation.

According to AR Khan none of the plans submitted so far got no objection certificates from

the DOE as none could live up to the set criteria.

"So far, DOE got 16 to 17 applications and none could fulfil the criteria," he told the journalists.

The official also said that the DOE is under tremendous pressure from the influential quarters, including high government officials, for issuing NOCs. He will not name the influentials trying to clutch no objection certificates illegally.

However, the DOE DG added that his department was equipped enough to perform its responsibilities. He suggested that the responsibility should be performed by the Rajuk itself. Presently, the DOE's manpower is only 138 against an approved strength of 178.

"CIDA recommended that DOE should have a 15,000-man staff. However, if we get only 1,500 people to work, we can manage the situation."

Explaining the acute environmental problem of the capital, AR Khan said although the government in 1995 formulated broad-based master plan for the capital, "We still continue to follow the 1959 master plan formulated for a provincial

capital."

Again, there is no provision for high-rises in the 1959 master plan and we don't have proper guideline where to construct the high-rises, where not.

But, the Rajuk has given the permission of constructing high-rises here and there only using its discretionary power," said the DOE DG about the mishmash.

He said that the DOE prefers creation of zones allowing definite types and height of buildings.

"We have suggested this at the recent meeting of the National Executive Committee on Environment headed by the Environment Minister."

He said many of the members, including the minister, supported the idea terming it the last opportunity to save the capital.

## Minor boy ran over by car

By Staff Correspondent

A three-year-old boy was run over by a speeding car in city's Ramna area yesterday.

Police failed to seize the vehicle or arrest the driver.

The dead boy was identified as Joy, 3, son of Shahadat Ali and a resident of Anandabazar in Ramna area.

The car ran him over as he was walking on the street. He was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in a critical condition where the attending doctor declared him dead.

## Chehlu of NY fire victims today

The chehlu of three members of a family who died in a fire in New York will be held today morning at the family's Mianbari house in Nabinagar thana, Brahmanbaria, reports BSS.

Businessman and contractor Kabir Ahmad (Hasan), his wife Taslima Ahmad (Rebu) and daughter Lutfa Begum (Rimi) died in an apartment fire in New York last month.

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