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Historic Mar 7 today

By Staff Correspondent

The nation today celebrates the March 7, commemorating Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's historic address this day 29 years ago.

'Ebarer Sangram Aamader Mukti Sangram, Ebarer Sangram Aamader Swadhinatar Sangram (This struggle is the struggle for freedom, this struggle is the struggle for independence)', declared the undisputed leader of the independence movement at a mammoth public meeting at the then Race Course Maidan (now Suhrawardy Udyan) in the city on March 7, 1971.

Bangabandhu's speech calling upon the nation to prepare for an armed struggle against the military regime of the erstwhile Pakistan rekindled the long cherished dream of the Bangladeshis for independence.

Eighteen days after the call from Sheikh Mujib, the Pakistani occupation forces

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CCCI drama Javed's bid flops

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Mar 6: The drama for the post of president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) continued today though the bid by its Senior Vice-president Saifuzzaman Chowdhury Javed for 'grabbing' the post apparently flopped, sources said.

Javed is the son of Aktaruzzaman Chowdhury Babu. The drama began as Javed allegedly stormed into the CCCI office yesterday morning, 'seized' the chair of its president and declared himself president of the trade body, the sources said.

Javed denied the allegations while talking to this correspondent at the CCCI office today. 'Kamal Uddin Ahmed is still the president of CCCI and I am its senior vice-president', Javed said.

'I sat in the chair of the president to receive a telephone call. This was misinterpreted in press photographs today', Javed said. 'But I am a candidate for the post of president of the trade body'.

Javed claimed that 20 out of the 24 directors of CCCI were in his favour. 'If they want to elect me president of CCCI, I will agree. We requested Kamal Uddin to resign to change the president of the chamber body, but he did not attend the board meeting yesterday', Javed said. Kamal Uddin Ahmed did not

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Our new numbers

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Prayer Timings

March 7

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-20	5-50
Zohr	12-45	1-20
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-10	6-15
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

Bureaucracy trying to torpedo move for effective HR body

By Nurul Kabir

A government initiative to set up an independent national human rights commission has drawn stiff resistance from the bureaucracy, active to make it a 'toothless institution'.

The resistance came recently from the secretariat of the home ministry even after Sheikh Hasina's Cabinet approved a draft Bill seeking constitution of the commission, sources said.

The ministry objected to those provisions of the draft law which, if remain unchanged, would substantially contribute to prevention of human rights violation by government officials in general and law enforcing agencies in particular.

In the first place, the ministry raised objection to the definition of 'human rights'. The draft Bill said that the phrase 'human rights' would mean 'the right to personal life, freedom, equality and status guaranteed by the state's constitution, the rights enshrined in international human rights instruments ratified by Bangladesh and those enforceable through any court of the country'.

The home ministry found the definition 'broad-based' and was 'unhappy' as the Bill envisaged a violation of the rights as punishable offence. Arguing for trimming the definition, the home ministry secretariat said that it 'would enable any person to sue the

Prime Minister, Ministers and government officials on charge of human rights violation', while 'law enforcing agency people have to face cases very often'.

The ministry suggested dropping of another provision that would give the proposed commission the authority to conduct investigation - *suo moto* or on application of victim/s - into allegation of human rights violation, or failure by any person, group, organisation or public servant in preventing violation of human rights. If the provision is not dropped, certain NGOs working on so-called human rights issues would have the scope for

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Draft amendments to PSA finalised

By Staff Correspondent

The cabinet yesterday finalised the draft amendments to the Public Safety Act, according to official sources.

The amendments proposed omission of the provision relating to criminal action against police officials for concealing facts or negligence to duty in investigating a case under the PSA, said one source.

But the provision regarding departmental action under Section 18(6) of the PSA has been retained.

The cabinet also approved amendments to Section 16 (3), empowering the appeal court to grant bail if there is reasonable doubt that the accused has not committed the offence. The amendments also provided that the accused should be released on bail till the disposal of the case.

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Representatives of opposition alliance to meet today

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP-led opposition alliance will hold a joint representatives meeting, the first since it formed on January 6, 1999, at the leader of the opposition's residence at 4 p.m. today.

Sources said BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami, Islami Oikya Jote, Jagpa, Democratic League, Progressive Nationalist Party and Nationalist Democratic Alliance representatives from Dhaka's 100 wards, 21 thanas and city committees will attend.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will be the chief guest and address the leaders and activists.

The meeting will discuss ways to intensify the alliance's

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12 OTs at DMCH unutilised for lack of equipment

By Naimul Haq



The four main Operation Theatres at Dhaka Medical College Hospital are too busy while 12 newly built ones remain unutilised.

— Star file photo

Twelve operation theatres built about two years ago at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital still remain unutilised due to lack of required equipment and instruments.

Doctors say many operations cannot be performed in time because of the shortage of operation theatres. 'In many cases, we are forced to reschedule operations and even cancel scheduled operations,' said one doctor.

Around 20,000 surgeries are performed a year at the DMCH, which now have only four main OTs. Of the total operations, about 13,500 are done under anaesthesia and the rest under local anaesthesia, an official estimate said.

The 12 operation theatres are in a separate OT complex beside the hospital building, built with ADB assistance.

The equipment and instruments needed for those are OT light, table, surgery instruments, diathermy machine, post operative monitor/bed, autoclave and instruments for intensive care unit - ventilator.

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Beijing increases military spending by 13pc

BEIJING, Mar 6: China will increase military spending by 12.7 per cent this year, outstripping an expected economic growth rate of about seven per cent, the finance minister said today, reports AP.

The spending hike for the People's Liberation Army, the world's largest military, comes amid renewed tensions over Taiwan and matched a 12.7 increase in last year's budget.

China lavished double-digit spending increases on the PLA for much of the 1990s, reflecting the military's political clout and efforts to modernise force of 2.5 million. China's growing military might has raised concerns among other Asian nations, some of which have territorial disputes with Beijing.

In announcing this year 2000 budget to the national legislature, Finance Minister Xiang Huacheng said 120.5 billion yuan (814.5 billion) would be spent on national defence. The funds will mainly cover salary and allowance increases for troops, as well as expenditures on garrisoning Macau, the territory that Portugal handed

back to Chinese rule in December, Xiang said.

Xiang did not break down military spending. Western analysts believe China's actual defence spending is three times higher than the published figure. Purchases of sophisticated weapons at home and abroad are not included in the official figure.

Xiang railed in his speech against wasteful spending, saying money that China can ill-afford is being lavished on increasingly opulent hotels, office buildings and auditoriums and on 'high consumption'.

'Some local governments even cannot guarantee funds for performing their normal functions, but such phenomena as ostentatious and extravagant behaviours and pleasure-seeking are still prevalent in some localities and departments. Budgetary funds are seriously lost and wasted,' Xiang said. 'This has aroused strong resentment among the people.'

Xiang's comments expanded on an anti-corruption theme running through this year's annual 10-day session of the Na-

tional People's Congress. At the meeting's opening on Sunday, Premier Zhu Rongji promised a tougher government fight to punish corrupt officials, no matter how powerful.

Xiang said overall central government spending would increase by 12.3 per cent to 920.3 billion yuan (\$111.1 billion). Revenue will increase by 7.9 per cent to 690.4 billion (\$83.3 billion). That will leave a deficit of 229.9 billion yuan (\$27.7 billion), up from the 179.7 billion yuan (\$21.7 billion) deficit Xiang said was recorded in 1999. But he attributed the deficit increase mainly to a change in the way the budget is calculated, for the first time including interest payments on government bonds.

Xiang said spending on social security increased 110 per cent last year to 36 billion yuan (\$4.3 billion), much of it to support retirees and workers laid-off from state-owned factories. This year, the government will spend 70.7 billion yuan (\$8.5 billion) on social security.

Clinton's visit Hasina to raise a number of issues

Issues like zero-tariff access, garment quotas, regularisation of Bangladesh immigrants and extradition of Bangabandhu's killers might be raised during official talks between US President Bill Clinton and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, reports UNB.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad made the statement at his office yesterday afternoon.

Azad, who left for New York last night in chair the UN Security Council, said Bill Clinton's visit was very important for Bangladesh as well as for South Asia in respect of peace and stability.

'The visit will deepen understandings between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and President Bill Clinton, and create scope for our economic progress through enhanced trade and economic cooperation,' he said.

The Foreign Minister did not rule out a discussion on the crucial question of exporting Bangladesh's natural gas, a persistent request made by US companies.

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Trial of Shazneen murder case begins today

By Court Correspondent

Trial of Shazneen murder case begins today at the Women and Children Repression Prevention Court, Dhaka following an order of the High Court.

Following an appeal from the prosecution side, the HC on February 22 vacated its earlier stay order, passed 11 months back.

The HC had stayed the proceedings of the Shazneen murder case and the rape case on May 5 on grounds that two separate cases on the same incident could not continue.

Two separate cases, one for murder and the another for rape, were pending with the Court of First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge and the Women and Children Repression Prevention Court, Dhaka respectively.

The HC had stayed proceedings of both the cases on a criminal appeal by two of the accused.

The appeal was filed on April 23 last year on the grounds why charges were brought against the six accused in the Women and Children Repression Prevention Court, Dhaka.

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Govt losing Tk 25cr a day Customs strike at Ctg paralyses port

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Mar 6: Customs officials and employees continued their indefinite strike for the second consecutive day today protesting 'harassment' of a customs official at Chittagong airport on Friday.

Customs house sources said the customs officials and employees went on strike yesterday protesting alleged harassment of Assistant Commissioner Hossain at Chittagong airport by the mayor of Chittagong City Corporation ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury on Friday.

Meanwhile, the crisis deepened today as customs services of Chittagong Customs House, Chittagong airport and jetties, sheds and gates of Chittagong port came to a halt, sources said.

Chittagong Customs House that handles 80 per cent of the cargo imported in the country is being deprived of revenue worth Tk 25 crore a day due to the strike, customs sources said.

At Chittagong airport, some

customs services were provided to few incoming passengers on emergency ground, the sources said.

However, suspension of customs services disrupted the activities at Chittagong port. Delivery of goods to and from the port, shipment of export cargo and loading and unloading of cargo in the containers remained fully suspended, port sources said. Ships anchored at the port jetties and waiting at the outer anchorage may get stranded if the strike continued for long, feared the port officials.

The agitating customs officials and employees staged demonstration and held a rally on Chittagong Customs House premises today. They demanded immediate justice for the incident of harassment.

Sources said there was no sign of an immediate solution to the stalemate although higher government authorities were informed of the developments.

Kohinoor co fined for evading VAT

By Staff Correspondent

The customs authorities have fined Kohinoor Chemical Co. over Tk 31 lakh for evading VAT and supplementary duties of more than Tk 13 lakh.

The Commissioner of Customs, Excise and VAT, Dhaka (North) yesterday ordered the cosmetics company to pay the penalty and the evaded taxes immediately.

The customs authorities during an investigation found that the company was producing its 'Tibet' trademark products outside the factory without informing the authorities concerned to evade VAT.

Acting on a tip-off, a special squad of VAT officials raided the factory of Lily Cosmetics at Gazipur in May last year and seized different cosmetics products of Kohinoor Chemical Co.

Lily Cosmetics produced Kohinoor products without any declaration to the VAT authorities and evaded Tk 1052000 duties, they said.

The Commissioner in his order directed Kohinoor Chemical Co to pay Tk 2,49,572.67 to the government treasury as duty and taxes on the seized

goods. He also ordered payment of Tk 10,52,298.82 to the government treasury for the goods produced and supplied earlier by Lily Cosmetics.

In June last year, the Customs Commissionerate Dhaka (North) had issued a show cause notice on Kohinoor asking why steps would not be taken against it and Lily Cosmetics for producing products evading taxes.

As no reply was given by the two companies, the customs authorities fixed November 29 for hearing of the case and asked the accused parties to be present.

On that day, the Kohinoor authorities wrote a letter to the customs authorities to extend the time to reply to the show-cause notice and re-fix the hearing date. The Kohinoor authorities also said that the complaint was against Lily Cosmetics which was engaged in producing Kohinoor's counterfeit products.

But Kohinoor authorities did not lodge any complaint against Lily Cosmetics that it

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2 murdered in city

By Staff Correspondent

Two men are dead and one injured after separate incidents in the city yesterday.

Police recovered the body of Manik Chandra Shaha, 22, from a residence in Dhakinpur, Uttara, yesterday afternoon.

He was found lying naked on his bed with a pillow over his face. There were also marks on his thighs. Hospital source said the victim might have been strangled.

Shaha's body was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for an autopsy. Uttara police said they didn't know the motive behind the killing. An unnatural death case was filed with the thana.

In another incident, Mohammad Hanif, the 20-year-old son of Anwar Hossain, was beaten and stabbed to death in Gulbagh.

Hospital sources said Shahan Begum, Hanif's mother, found her son in critical condition in front of Awal Hossain's house.

Shahana rushed her son to DMCH, where he was declared dead.

Shahana said a gang in the area stabbed her son six months ago. Witnesses said gangs from Malibagh and Gulbagh were feuding in the area.

Bazlur Rahman, a garment worker, was also stabbed in the back during the incident. He was sent to the DMCH in critical condition.

Motijheel police said knew about the incident but could not comment since their mobile team hadn't returned to the station yet.

Kalaroa incident: Case filed under PSA

From Our Correspondent

SATKHIRA, Mar 6: A case was filed today against unidentified accused under the newly enacted Public Safety Act-2000 with Kalaroa thana on charge of damaging several government offices at Kalaroa thana headquarters of the district.

An angry mob on Thursday damaged vehicles and government offices following the tragedy in which six people including two examinees and a female teacher were killed in a stampede at Kalaroa Government College SSC Examination Centre.

Raisuddin, Thana Nirbahi Officer of Kalaroa, filed the case under Section 7A, B, 10 and 12 of the PSA. Names and number of the accused were not stated in this case.



The drama at Daulatdia ferry terminal is shrinking rapidly during the dry season. Authorities are struggling to keep a channel open for the ferries to dock at the terminal. But the skippers of ferry boats are finding it difficult to negotiate the channel which provide transport services easy access to the south and southwestern districts.

— Star photo by A K M Mohsin