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Countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal today

By Staff Correspondent
BNP-led opposition alliance has called a nationwide dawn-to-dusk hartal today demanding immediate resignation of the government and early parliamentary elections.

In support of today's hartal, the BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami, Islamic Oikya Jote and some other smaller parties brought out separate torch processions and held rallies in different parts of the city yesterday.

BNP brought out torch processions from 11 places simultaneously. Its main procession was brought out from the central office at Naya Paltan.

Jatiya Party brought out its torch procession from Mukhtagan and paraded different city streets while the Jamaat and IOJ brought out their processions from Baitul Mukarram and Purana Paltan crossing re-

See page 11 col 4

BDF meets in Paris today

The two-day meeting of the Development Forum on Bangladesh begins in Paris today, reports UNB.

The country's political situation, rampant corruption and slow pace of reform are likely to dominate the agenda.

Unlike previous years, donors have already indicated that aid to Bangladesh in the coming fiscal year will be between 1.8 billion and 2.2 billion US dollar.

Finance Minister Shah A.M.S. Kibria will lead the Bangladesh delegation, while World Bank representative will act as a coordinator for donor countries and agencies.

However, the donors warned Bangladesh that accelerated reforms would be key.

This assistance could be significantly higher if the pace of reform was accelerated.

stated a letter by the World Bank Country Director in Bangladesh, on behalf of the donor countries and agencies, to the Finance Minister last month.

See page 11 col 5

Our new numbers

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Inside Today

Article

The Insulted and the Injured

Column: Between the Lines
by Kuldeep Nayar
Page 4

Focus

Agri business development: Scope and potential in Bangladesh
Page 5

Tomorrow

Read Prof Rehman Sobhan's article on Paris Aid Club meeting — "Farewell to Paris" — on page 4

Business

MCCI proposes slab system of corporate tax rates
Anti-globalisation protesters gather for WB meeting
DSE, CSE price quotations

April	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
13	5:38am	7:20pm
14	5:38am	-

Prayer Timings

April 13		
Fajr	Azhan	Jamaat
5:00		5:30
Zohr	12:45	1:30
Asr	4:45	5:00
Maghrib	6:25	6:28
Esha	8:00	8:30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Low revenue receipts show slowdown in the economy

CPD report identifies governance as a major problem

By Shahriar Karim

The failure to meet the highly ambitious revenue collection target for the current financial year could have serious effect on the macro-economic balances, according to the Independent Review of Bangladesh Development (IRBD), prepared by Center for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

Besides ambitious target, CPD also blamed governance problems in tax administration process for the sizeable deficit in revenue receipts.

"The low level of revenue receipts possibly reflects an overall slowdown in domestic economic activity, particularly where it is registered through

sluggish imports during first part of FY 1999-2000," the IRBD report titled 'Current issues in Bangladesh Development' said in its macroeconomic outlook.

As the share of revenue in GDP fell to 11.3 per cent in the last financial year (FY 1998-99) the government announced an ambitious target for financial year 1999-2000 of Tk 241.5 billion, which is 22.6 per cent higher than the amount realised in the preceding year.

But, "initial figures available on revenue receipts for FY 1999-2000 indicate that the obtaining situation on this front has hardly improved and may even have deteriorated," the re-

view said.

The figures at the end of March this year show that total NBR collection of tax revenue stands at Tk 102.55 billion which is about 16.7 billion (about 14 per cent) less than the nine-month target. And the realised amount is only 0.41 per cent higher than the collection during the correspondent period of the previous year, even after introduction of Pre-shipment Inspection (PSI) system.

CPD also said though an apparent stability prevails in the macroeconomic scenario, traits of dynamism remain weak along the country.

"The mixed signals projected

by the macro-economic and sectoral trends during the first half of the fiscal year 1999-2000 are giving rise to some concerns regarding the prospect of consolidation of the achievements of the 1990s," CPD's independent review on the country's development said.

The major constraints facing the Bangladesh economy in the 1990s are the weaknesses in the domestic resource mobilisation effort.

On the revenue expenditure, CPD said that one of the disturbing features was the structure which continued to be dominated by salaries and al-

See page 11 col 7

Opposition parties plan to form electoral alliance

By Rezaul Karim

The opposition alliance has started to discuss the formation of an electoral alliance to contest the upcoming general election.

The BNP-led alliance components have already begun preparing individually for the election side by side with carrying out the anti-government movement.

Sources said the idea of an electoral alliance is yet to take any concrete shape. They said leaders of the alliance want to work out a modality of the electoral alliance sooner rather than later with the next parliamentary election nearing.

Some senior leaders of BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Oikya Jote that form the alliance told the Daily Star that the parties have reached a consensus on contesting the election together to fight

the ruling Awami League.

They said chiefs of the four parties in the joint declaration issued on November 30 last promised to form a nationalist government by contesting the ensuing polls forging an electoral alliance.

Senior leaders said they will take a move probably at the end of the month to hold another meeting between Khaleda Zia, H. M. Ershad, Golam Azam and Azizul Haq to see whether there could be an understanding on the formation of an electoral alliance.

Since the chiefs are now busy with organisational tours, the move is going to take place after the tour programmes end, the leaders said.

A senior JP leader said he discussed with the leaders of other component parties about holding another meeting of the

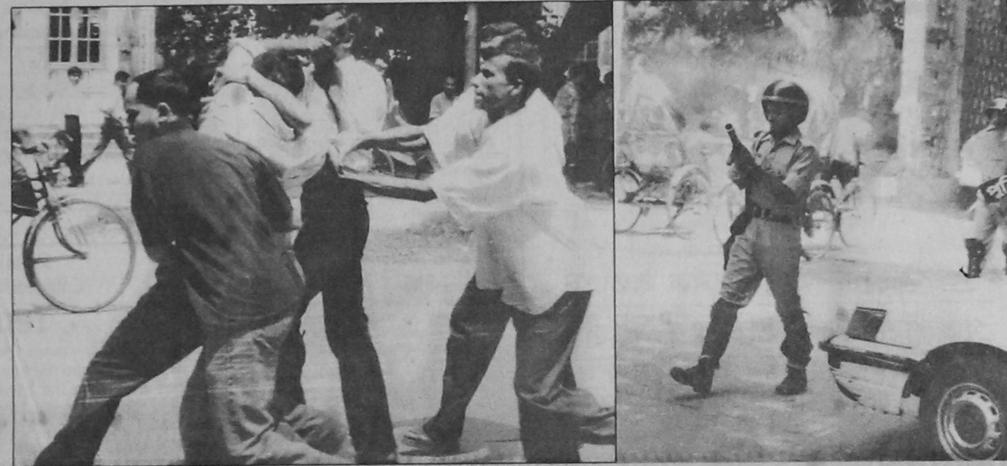
four chiefs and settling the issue of sharing of seats for the election.

A senior BNP leader, preferring anonymity, said the party's Standing Committee agreed in principle to form an electoral alliance. But at the same time it wanted to ensure in the first place that the party had the majority in parliament.

He said BNP is capable of running more than one candidate in all 300 constituencies. It is the alliance partners rather than the BNP who would benefit most if there were an electoral alliance, the leader said.

However, he said, although the party is committed to forming an electoral alliance, it is too early to say whether the opposition parties will go for such an alliance or contest the polls individually.

See page 11 col 8



Plainclothes policemen forcibly taking away JCD leader Tuku from a rally in front of the DUSCU building (left) and police in action on DU campus yesterday. — Star photo

New brand of researchers needed to fight poverty

Prof Yunus tells regional workshop at Rajendrapur

By Staff Correspondent

Development agents from Bangladesh, India and Vietnam have agreed to emphasise quality research for poverty alleviation and human resource development.

Some 30 NGO representatives from the three countries reached this agreement at the third 'Regional Workshop on Country Research Programme in Asia', held at BRAC Centre for Development Management in Rajendrapur, Gazipur yesterday.

Earlier, inaugurating the three-day workshop on Tuesday, Managing Director of Grameen Bank Prof. Muhammad Yunus told the participants that Bangladesh needed a new brand of researchers in its effort to reduce poverty.

Regretting that researchers were too much consultancy-oriented, Prof. Yunus said he aspired for researchers with open mindset who would also be capable of setting agenda befitting the peoples' requirements.

Yunus, also the Executive Trustee of the Grameen Trust, the organiser of the workshop, added that there was no dearth of support from donors for research on poverty alleviation. "But we don't receive enough good research proposals."

He presented the success story of GrameenPhone before the participants and urged the participants to tap the enormous potential of information technology for development.

The workshop is part of a regular exercise, said the organisers. Bangladesh, India and Vietnam who run similar programmes funded by the Netherlands organise such workshops each year alternatively with an objective to share experiences.

Grameen Trust managing director Prof. H I Latif, director for Programme for Research on Poverty Alleviation Shamsul Bari and Dr. Meghna Guhathakurta of Dhaka University also spoke at the inaugural session. Dr Hamida Hos-

sain of the Ain-O-Salish Kendra was present.

The participants at the working sessions that began yesterday presented as many as 12 papers focusing on a wide range of issues starting from local level development experience to the plight of sex workers, from benefit of organic farming to health care achievements in Kerala, India.

They attached special importance to picking up ideas and thoughts from the grassroots while designing programmes aiming at poverty alleviation.

Piet de Lange, a representative from the donor country, the Netherlands, informed the workshop that there had been a policy change in Dutch development support programmes. "We are now far more interested in targeting poverty alleviation and like to see the support recipients become more responsible."

See page 11 col 4

Gunshots rock DU campus

By DU Correspondent

Gunshots rocked Dhaka University campus yesterday following arrest of a JCD leader from a rally.

Mustafizur Rahman, a student of Management Department, received bullet in his left hand during the violence. He was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Mustafiz, a resident of Sir A F Rahman Hall, was standing on the premises of Business Studies building when the bullet hit him.

The university authorities formed a three-member committee headed by Prof Shahadat Ali, Pro-Vice Chancellor of the university, to probe the incident. The other members of the committee are Prof Kazi Shahidullah, Dean of the Arts Faculty and Prof A K M Nurun Nabi, Proctor of the university.

The JCD activists first fired blank shots after the arrest of Sultan Salauddin Tuku, assistant general secretary of JCD central executive committee, by Detective Branch (DB) of police from its rally in front of the DUSCU building at around

See page 11 col 7

Power, water shortage compound suffering

By Raziur Rahman

People in the capital are already suffering in the early days of summer due to low pressure in the water supply lines and frequent power disruption and low voltage.

Residents of Rampura, Moghbazar, Khilgaon, Pallabi, Kalyanpur, Elephant Road, Kathalbagan, Kataban, Mugdipara and old parts of the city yesterday alleged that they have been suffering from inadequate supply of water for the last few days.

"Sometimes our underground water reservoir is not getting any water from the supply lines through out the day. We are getting water with very low pressure in the supply line at night," said Hema Kajori, a resident of South Paikpara area of the city's Kalyanpur area.

A resident of a multi-storied building of city's Kathalbagan area said yesterday, "When our underground water reservoir is full, we can not lift it to the roof top tank as the water pump does not work due to frequent power disruption."

It has become almost a common scene in different

parts of the city to see people running with containers and collecting water from alternative sources particularly from those areas where water supply remains normal.

Besides, residents of Armanitola and West Rampura complained that they were getting inadequate water with bad smell for the last few days.

City dwellers Dhaka Electricity Supply Authorities (DESA) have been suffering from load-shedding of around 200 megawatt in average for more than ten days, said sources at DESA.

Besides, problems of transformer's supply line, low voltage have made people's life miserable. A transformer of 132 KV grid station has been out of order for the last two months which results in routine power disruption in Kamalapur, Khilgaon and some parts of Dhanmondi, sources added.

Line overloading problem in Tongi-Basundhara supply line, Ulon-Dhanmondi supply line and over loading at Hasnabad grid transformer resulted 50 megawatt overloading only in

See page 11 col 6

Commercialisation of Dhanmondi RA Construction of 17 buildings worries residents

By Staff Correspondent

Many residents of Dhanmondi residential area oppose "commercialisation" of the Dhanmondi lake area under its development project, saying it will totally destroy the residential status of the area.

Talking to the Daily Star, a good number of residents expressed their concern over the construction of 17 commercial structures under the Dhanmondi Lake Development Project.

"We are also worried about security of the area once the project is completed," said a resident.

On completion of the project, the area is expected to attract hundreds of visitors daily in a city where open spaces are pitifully few.

The residents said the authorities did not involve them in the project. They said that the authorities held only one meeting with some 'select' residents who did in no way repre-

sent all the inhabitants of the area.

"There was no notice in the newspapers nor was there any effort to involve residents of the area before or after launching such a project. We are still in the dark about the project," said a resident of Road-32.

However, the residents appreciated the government's resolve to recover the encroached public land along the lake.

Architect Iqbal Habib of Vitti Sthapati Brindo Ltd., consultant for the Dhanmondi Lake Development Project, told the Daily Star that everything depends on the government management once the project is completed.

Habib said only a good management policy could ensure a peaceful life in the neighbourhood. The commercial structures are situated near the bridges, far from the

2 killed, 57 hurt as nor'westers hit 3 districts

By Staff Correspondent

Nor'westers lashed Rajshahi, Sirajganj and Jamalpur districts on Tuesday night, killing two people and injuring 57 others apart from damaging hundreds of houses.

Our Rajshahi Correspondent reports: One person was killed and seven others injured when a nor'wester accompanied with thunder-showers hit Rajshahi city and its adjoining areas Tuesday night.

More than 100 houses and hundreds of trees were damaged by the storm that lasted about an hour.

Power supply was disrupted in the region for about nine hours. However the power supply was restored in some areas of the city at around 11 pm.

Ariful Huque, 27, of Baduria village under Charghat thana was killed by lightning while returning home from Baneshwar Bazar.

Local office of Bangladesh Agriculture Extension Department said that the hail storm caused damage to standing crops.

Local Met office recorded 14 mm rainfall during the storm.

Our Sirajganj Correspondent writes: Nor'wester lashed

See Page 12 Col 4

Asma in hospital again

By Naimul Haq

Asma is in hospital again only 14 months after she had a kidney transplantation.

The 19-year old girl was admitted to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMUH) on Sunday, about eight months after she left it with a fresh lease of life.

Looking pale and worried Asma said, "I was leading a normal life till a couple of weeks ago when doctors suggested me to discontinue one of the drugs (cyclosporine) I have been taking since my kidney transplant."

Sitting in her bed at a cabin in the hospital on Tuesday, she went on, "For the last one month, I have high fever and subsequently acute pain in my lower right abdomen."

When contacted, BSMMUH's head of kidney department Prof Harun-ur-Rashid, ruled out that Asma was having any kidney trouble like the body 'rejecting' the kidney. "Her kidney is functioning quite good," he said.

Prof Rashid, who had supervised

See page 11 col 7



Seriously ill Asma sleeps in her mother's lap in hospital bed yesterday. — Star photo

Maj (retd) Jinal remanded for 5 days

By Court Correspondent

Major (retd) Jinal Abedin Chowdhury, arrested in connection with the 'embargo on his return' into the country was taken on a five-day police remand yesterday.

The alleged accused was produced before the CMM's court yesterday with a prayer for seven-day police remand.

Chowdhury was arrested on his arrival at the Zia International Airport from America on Tuesday. He was arrested under section 54 of the CrPc. No specific case was filed against him in this regard.

After primary investigation, immigration authority handed over him to the Cantonment police. According to police, authority put embargo on his entry back into the country several months ago. But specific reasons for embargo on his return were not mentioned for the sake of the investigation, police added.

A bail petition was moved on behalf of the accused while the court rejected the prayer and granted the remand.

DU rejoinder & our reply

The Dhaka University authorities at an emergency meeting yesterday discussed The Daily Star report headlined 'Party activists virtually hold DU students hostage' published on Wednesday.

In a letter to the Editor of The Daily Star, sent by the DU Public Relations Officer, it was said, "DU authorities held a thorough discussion of the report with Vice-Chancellor Professor A K Azad Chowdhury in the chair. The meeting was attended by the Pro-Vice Chancellor, Treasurer, Provoosts of all Halls and Proctor of the University.

See page 11 col 8