

FedEx
Federal Express
The World On Time

PACKAGES, DOCUMENTS
AND FREIGHT WORLDWIDE

Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.
Licensee of Federal Express Corporation
#5, Motijheel C.A. Dhaka; Tel: 9565114; Fax: 9565112

WARRANTY
Ideal gift for any occasion
PHILIPS
Let's make things better.
TRANSKOM ELECTRONICS LTD.
Official licensee of Philips Domestic Appliances
Dhaka: 8115307-10; CTG: 716393, 723578; Khulna: 720304; Bogra: 8215



Govt now wants to introduce rule of stick: Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia said yesterday the government is using the Public Safety Act only to harass the opposition activists, instead of improving the worsening law and order.

Apart from party terrorists, sons of ministers and top Awami League leaders are now unleashing a reign of terror, she said.

Khaleda was addressing a big student gathering at her Minto Road official residence in the city, organised to accord reception to the just released Jatiyadadi Chhatra Dal president Habibunnabi Khan Sohel, general secretary Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu and other leaders.

The opposition leader said the son of the Chief Whip forcibly occupied a seven-storied house at Kalabagan in the city, but he is still at large and no case is filed against him.

She alleged that the PSA is not being used against the Awami League terrorists who are killing and mugging people and grabbing houses and properties.

She said a Juba League activist was killed following intra-party conflict at Karwan Bazar recently, but none was arrested or no case was filed. Even the government is yet to take any action against the AL activists who damaged about 100 vehicles and halted traffic movement for several hours after the killing.

The BNP chief said the government now wants to introduce "rule of stick" as its ministers and leaders are threatening the judges of the higher court, organising demonstrations with stick-wielding activists.

Despite filing case against the ministers and leaders who led the stick procession, none was arrested. "People will accept no law if it is not applied neutrally. People are not ready to abide by that law which the government itself violates," she added.

She asked the government to immediately sack the ministers and arrest those who led the "stick procession" and threatened the judges.

"Arrest the ministers and

leaders right now if you (government) have minimum respect for law. If you want to prove neutral application of law, then arrest the ministers who have been accused under the Public Safety Act."

She said the government is scared of the opposition unity and is out to break it. She said the students have already been united and soon the youths, workers and other front organisations of the alliance partners will get united.

The BNP chief told the JCD leaders not to be misled by reports regarding dissolving of JCD central committee. "The present committee exists and it will exist. Disciplinary action will be taken against the persons who will spread misleading information within the party."

Presided over by acting JCD president Manjur-e-Elahi, it was addressed, among others, by BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Amanullah Aman, Habibunnabi Khan Sohel, and Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu.

No respite for Buriganga

By Shehab Ahmed

Chromium and lead-mixed toxic waste from tanneries at Hazaribagh is eating the Buriganga River away while the authorities are yet to come up with a permanent solution.

About 300 tanneries, big and small, operate in Hazaribagh, and almost all of them do not have any waste treatment plant.

The tanneries are dumping their effluents straight down the sewer into the river. A Department of Environment survey three years ago found that the river is not only highly polluted with the untreated waste, but also being encroached upon by illegal constructions.

A long stretch of Buriganga from Mohammadpur to Pagla at downstream has become septic where fish and aquatic animals are dying.

Chromium and lead among other chemicals are used to process the raw hide at the tanneries.

A visit to the Hazaribagh down the embankment will show anyone a thick light blue sludge flowing down the river.

There had proposals to shift the tanneries to Dhamrat. But the tanneries refused to move and more proposals to install waste treatment plants fell into deaf ears.

There had also been proposals to set up lagoons to store the wastes. But the tannery lobby is so powerful that they have thwarted all moves so far to streamline them.



Poisoning the lifeline
As administrative activism to save the Buriganga remains restricted to forming one committee after another, tanneries in the city's Hazaribagh area continue mindless dumping of toxic waste into the river.

—Star photo: Anisur Rahman

WTO report for further reforms

GENEVA, May 4: Bangladesh has made considerable progress in its economic reforms, but needs to carry out more structural reforms to reap the full benefits, said a WTO report released here today, says AFP.

The government had managed to reduce tariffs and quantitative restrictions on imports and was maintaining a liberal investment regime, said the report, by the secretariat of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Efforts had continued since 1992 to simplify and rationalise the country's trade regime, it added. The customs tariff was now Bangladesh's main trade policy instrument, and despite sharp reductions, protection was still high.

But the report also said the trade regime lacked transparency in its application of trade and trade-related measures such as customs administration, tariff concessions and subsidies.

"Such lack of transparency allows considerable scope for

administrative discretion and even corruption, which in turn increases the uncertainty and costs of trade with and doing business in Bangladesh," said a summary of the report.

"While barriers to access in export markets are undoubtedly obstacles to Bangladesh's economic development, the main obstacles are home-grown," it added.

The report, along with a policy statement by Bangladesh's government, served as the basis for a WTO review of the country's trade policy here May 2 and 4.

Bangladesh, one of the leading least developed countries (LDC) in the WTO's 136 membership, has one of the most liberal regimes in South Asia in terms of investment, offering relatively cheap and abundant labour, the report noted.

It highlighted World Bank estimates showing that annual foreign direct investment in Bangladesh more than quadrupled from 83 million dollars in 1994-95 to 386 million dollars in 1997-98.

Most foreign direct investment went into the gas sector, said the report.

But it was hampered in other areas by a lack of basic infrastructure, the slow pace of privatisation, an inefficient financial system and a generally uncertain political climate, it added.

"These factors tend to increase the cost of doing business in Bangladesh thereby impairing the competitiveness, not just of foreign-owned enterprises but also of domestically-owned enterprises," said the report.

Devastating floods, combined with infrastructure problems such as power shortages and inadequate port facilities led to a sharp drop in export growth from 17.1 per cent in 1997-98 to 2.9 per cent in 1998-99.

Textiles, especially clothing destined mostly for the United States and European Union, have dominated Bangladesh's exports and were a principal source of its economic growth in the 1990s.

SNS demands 10 pc JS seats for women

By Staff Correspondent

The Sammilita Nari Samaj, a coalition of the women rights organisations, yesterday demanded that political parties nominate woman candidates for ten per cent of the 300 seats in parliament.

The demand came up during an 'exchange of views programme' of the women organisations, held in the Naragraha Prabartana office in the city.

The discussants also demanded increase in the number of reserved seats for women in parliament and direct elections to those.

Chaired by Dr Naila Khan, the discussion was participated by, among others, Prof Nazma Siddika, Hajera Sultana, Shirin Akhter and Sultana Akhter Rubi.

The Sammilita Nari Samaj, a coalition of the women rights organisations, yesterday demanded that political parties nominate woman candidates for ten per cent of the 300 seats in parliament.

The demand came up during an 'exchange of views programme' of the women organisations, held in the Naragraha Prabartana office in the city.

The discussants also demanded increase in the number of reserved seats for women in parliament and direct elections to those.

Chaired by Dr Naila Khan, the discussion was participated by, among others, Prof Nazma Siddika, Hajera Sultana, Shirin Akhter and Sultana Akhter Rubi.

Stray incidents mark hartal in Chittagong

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, May 4: A dawn-to-dusk hartal today paralysed the life in the port city and its surrounding areas.

The All-Party Action Council of four opposition parties called the hartal protesting swearing-in of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) mayor and commissioners elected in January 3 and demanding cancellation of that election.

The BNP, JP, Jamaat and IOJ boycotted the January 3 election and agitated to resist the polls.

However, barring some stray incidents, today's hartal passed off almost peacefully, police said.

A member of Ansar received minor injury in his face when a cocktail exploded near a police van at Kalamir Bazar during hartal hours at 10 am.

Police chased some pickets there after the incident.

A truck was damaged by pickets during the hartal in Laldighi area at around 3:30 pm, witnesses said.

Police also dispersed pickets from Muradpur and Lalkhan Bazar area. Paramilitary, BDR, police and Ansars were deployed at different places of the city to foil any attempt of violence.

Road communications between Chittagong and other parts of the country were disrupted as most of the vehicles stayed off the roads and highways. A large number of rickshaws plied in the city during hartal hours.

Most of the shops and markets remained closed while some offices both private and public functioned with thin attendance.

Train service to and from Chittagong was as usual, railway source said. Delivery of goods to and from Chittagong Port was suspended during the hartal due to lack of trucks. But cargo handling inside the jetties was carried out, port sources said. Mills and factories at the industrial belts of Nasirabad, Kalurghat, Patenga and Sitakundu suffered production loss due to thin attendance of workers.

Rallies and processions were organised by hartal supporters while BCL activists held an anti-hartal rally at Bipanibitan.

Shazneen Rape Case: Framing of charges on May 24

By Court Correspondent

The Special Court for Women and Children Repression Prevention, Dhaka yesterday fixed May 24 for framing charges in the Shazneen Tasnim Rahman rape case.

The Judge, M Shah Alam Miah, fixed the date cancelling all petitions filed on behalf of the accused on April 19 for discharging them from case.

Shazneen, 15, youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, Chairman of Transcom Group, was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998.

Shahidul Islam Shahid, a domestic help of that house, is the principal accused in the case while contractor Hasan is the alleged mastermind.

Shahid, Hasan, Badal, carpenter Shani Ram, guard Humayun Kabir and maids Parvin and Minu were arrested soon after the incident. Among them, Humayun Kabir died of cardiac failure last year.

All the accused were present at the court during the proceedings yesterday.

Two separate cases — one for murder and the other for rape — are now pending with the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court and the Women and Children Repression Prevention Court, Dhaka, respectively.

Opposition out to snatch voting rights: Hasina

SREEPUR, Gazipur, May 4: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called upon the people to resist the opposition trinity of 'vote thief, autocrat and rajakar,' reports UNB.

"They have united to come to the power by stealing vote, which the people will not allow anymore," she cautioned the opposition parties while addressing a big public meeting at Sreepur University College ground in the afternoon.

The Prime Minister said 'vote thief, autocrat and rajakar' united to snatch the voting right of the people and grab power by undemocratic means, because they know that they will not be able to come to power with people's mandate.

"Those who do not believe in independence and whose roles are very clear to the people have joined hands to topple the present government by snatching people's rights," she told the audience.

Hasina said the government of Khaleda was pulled down for stealing votes in 1996 and the autocrat Ershad was toppled through a mass upsurge in 1990.

"Vote thief Khaleda, autocrat Ershad and collaborator of the Pakistani occupation forces Golan Azam are now launching movement from a single platform to oust the present government," she said.

This government has restored the voting right of the people and ensured peace and food security for the poor, which the opposition parties don't like. "Not getting the chance of plundering public money, the opposition has started movement against the present government."

She said while in power, they plundered public money and made huge fortune. She cautioned the people against the 'evil design of the trio.'

The only target of their movement is to protect the killers of father the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, killers of women and children and the killers of four national leaders, she said.

Launch disaster Death toll rises to 121

From Our Correspondent

NARSINGDI, May 4: The death toll in capsizing of two passenger launches in the Meghna on Monday rose to 121, with the recovery of 25 more bodies at around 11:30 pm yesterday.

The bodies were recovered when BIWTA salvage vessel Rustam lifted ML Bengal Bird which was lying 45 feet under water. The bodies were trapped inside the launch.

Local people are still apprehending the death of over 30 other launch passengers who are still missing.

Earlier, some 96 bodies were recovered from inside MV Dolphin and river water.

The over-loaded launches carrying more than 200 passengers each capsized in the river Meghna due to a nor'wester at about 4 pm on Monday.

Of the bodies recovered last night, 19 were identified. They are, Siraj Mia, 46, Regia, 34, Alauddin, 36, Raihan, 5, Hena, 50, Shamsuddin, 55, Sharif, 4, Nurjahan, 55, Suhel, 16, Mohrham, 50, Sharif Mia, 30 and Jamaluddin, 20 — all from Raipura thana of Narsingdi.

The dead also include Modhu, 65, Jalaluddin, 15, Jallil, 15, Rokaya, 38, Shamsunnahar, 35, Abdul Aziz, 38, and Komol, 30, all from Nabinnagar of Brahmanbaria district.

Whip's son moves out

By Staff Correspondent

Belongings of Chief Whip's son Sadik Abdullah were removed yesterday from the sixth floor flat of the seven storied building that he had allegedly occupied forcibly at Lake Circus in the city.

The belongings were removed two days after the OC of Dhanmandi thana requested his senior officials that some other agency investigate into the forcible occupation.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, OC M Hanif said that there was no pressure on him regarding the investigation and that he was still dealing with it.

He said he wanted transfer of the 'complaint' to some other agencies for the sake of transparency since the mother of the accused also felt that police were involved in it.

Asked why the police station accepted the complaint as a GD (general diary) instead of an FIR, the OC said the matter concerned the Rent Control Board.

Shahjahan Begum sister of the owner of the house said Sadik vacated the sixth floor flat and the ground floor, also occupied by him, is expected to be vacated on Friday.

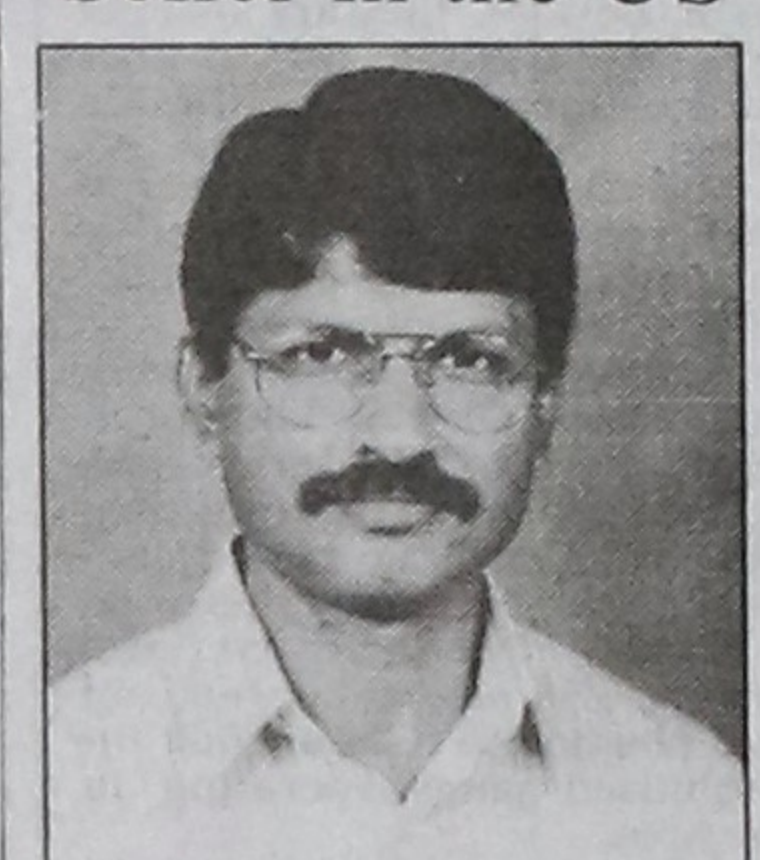
Shahjahan Begum had earlier lodged a GD with Dhanmandi thana accusing Sadik of forcibly occupying the sixth floor and ground floor flats of the building.

Asked about Mahbulul Alam, the owner of the house, she alleged that he was terrorised by Sadik and was hiding. But when contacted yesterday, Sadik denied the charge. "Had I terrorised the house owner, why should I vacate it now?" he said.

Talking to this correspondent, some sources close to Mahbulul Alam claimed that he was hiding since his bail in connection with a case was cancelled few months back.

When asked about it, Shahjahan Begum admitted that her brother was an accused in a case

Prof. Emdad-ul-Haq's Book Becomes Best Seller in the US



By Staff Correspondent

Drugs in South Asia: From the Opium Trade to the Present Day, a book written by Prof. Emdad-ul-Haq of the Department of Political Science, University of Chittagong, has become one of the best sellers in the US.

The news appears on the website that has been provided by Amazon, Infoseek, Lycos, Yahoo etc, says a press release.

Macmillan Press Ltd, one of the world's most famous publishing houses, has published *Drugs in South Asia* from England in April 2000. Scholarly and Reference Division of St. Martin's Press, another leading publishing company in the US, is the North-American co-publisher of the book.

This book tells the story of

See page 11 col 8

SC Bar Assoc submits memo to President

Bangladesh Supreme Court Bar Association told President Shahabuddin Ahmed yesterday that lawyers' community is fully cooperating with benches in disposing of cases pending for long time, reports UNB.

Making a courtesy call on the President at Bangabhaban, the newly elected members of the executive committee of the Bar Association also pointed out reasons responsible for pending of the cases.

Bar Association President Barrister Mainul Hosen led the delegation who submitted a memorandum to the President mentioning various problems the lawyers are facing in discharging their professional duties.

A Bangabhaban press release

See page 11 col 7



Desperate reapers
With all hopes of a full harvest water-logged, farmers at a village in Sonargoan try to get whatever there is left.

—Star photo: A K M Mohsin

Editor: Mahfuz Anam
Published by the Editor from Transcraft Ltd, 229, Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka-1208 on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd, 52 Motijheel C.A., Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: 19 Kurwan Bazar, Dhaka-1215. Telephone Numbers: 8124944, 8124955, 8124966, Fax: 8125155. CPO Box No: 3257. Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA. Internet edition address: http://www.dailystarnews.com and Email address: dstar@bangla.net

May	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
5		6:29 pm
6	5:21 am	

Prayer Timings		
May 5		
Azan	4:15	Jamaat 4:45
Fajr	4:15	4:45
Juma	12:30	1:30
Asr	5:00	5:15
Maghrib	6:30	6:33
Esha	8:00	8:30

Source: Islamic Foundation