

## Life on wheelchair

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without wheelchair. Those who have sustained spine injury are definitely going to become totally disabled over the years. Bullet wounds in spine never heal. Even the apparently healthy freedom fighters who are watching here might also become completely disabled in time, as some of them have sustained injury in spines," said Mostafa.

He also expressed his anguish over the words "Zindabad" engraved on the medal of Bir Bikram he received in the war. He said he fought against "Zindabad" with the slogan, "Joy Bangla".

Gulam Nabi is another wheelchair-confined freedom fighter from Jessore under Sector No 9. He was captured by Pakistan Army in the end of November in the Gopikishan region of Narail. His spine broke down during torture by the occupation forces and Rajakars (collaborators). He has taken recourse to wheelchair since 1990.

Shamsur Ali Mandal was a 24-year-old young man in 1971, who used to earn his livelihood as a professional kabaddi player. One day in April 1971, he saw piles of dead bodies at Bag Achra Bazar of Jessore and came to know about the genocide inflicted on the Bengalees.

A spirited Mandal immediately left for training in Hakimpur Youth Camp in India and became a guerrilla after the training. In the Battle of Balladanga, he sustained serious bullet injuries and since then he had undergone 11 operations.

He had a cerebral stroke in 1998, prompting him to take recourse to wheelchair. The stroke was a result of long-term affect of injuries sustained during

the war.

Mukti Joddha Kalyan Trust grants a monthly allowance of Tk 2004 to each of these wheelchair-bound fighters. The total welfare grant provided by the Trust stands at Tk 6,516 and includes hospital diet, medicine, and attendant costs.

The rest home started its journey in 1973 in three houses abandoned by the Biharees. At the beginning, the Trust allotted Taka 75 per month for the wheelchair-bound fighters. General Abdur Rab and his successor Major C R Dutta were doing an excellent job as Chairman of the Trust," informed Madhu.

They were turning the Trust into a profitable organisation. But repeated military interventions coupled with recruitment of corrupt and anti-liberation officials in the Trust have worsened the situation," he continued.

The Trust acquired 22 factories, cinema halls and other property abandoned by the Biharees for the welfare of the freedom fighters. Some of these abandoned estates include Coca-Cola plant at Tejaon, Mimi Chocolate Company, Tabani Beverage, Gulistan Cinema Hall, Naj Cinema Hall, Hamida Oil Company and Durber Advertisement.

But a number of corrupt officials have illegally leased out or even sold out many of the lands of the trust saying that it was not making profit, said the injured freedom fighters.

The injured freedom fighters have also been terminated from jobs due to their disability, they alleged.

They said they need an ambulance, an oxygen cylinder and a telephone.



Ms Heidemarie Wiczorek Zeul, the German Federal Minister for Development Assistance called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her hotel suite in Berlin yesterday. —PID photo

## WB health policy

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"I think you should also hold the bank accountable for actions including making health, nutrition and population (HNP) central to its macroeconomic work, making sure financing of health is not a subsidy from the poor to the better-off."

Let us also not forget that the bank is the largest financier of malnutrition programmes, particularly in South Asia."

Antonio Tujan, social activist from the Philippines, said the World Bank policies in the Philippines are aimed not at poverty reduction but at commercialisation and privatisation of the healthcare system. The poor have been marginalised into poverty."

Less than 3 per cent of the 1.8 billion US dollars given in loans by the World Bank to the Philippines were being spent on public health, Tujan said and called for rejection of the bank's policy prescriptions.

Another speaker said, "The so-called solutions proposed by many UN agencies, governments and multinational companies

have been donations or price reductions of patented drugs, private-public partnerships to support these initiatives and corporate community programmes."

He asked, "Are these responsibilities for the governments or the corporations. Are public-private partnerships viable solutions to the long-term responsibility of states to protect, promote and ensure right to access to healthcare? Where is the state in meeting these responsibilities?"

David Legg from Australia denounced the anti-poor regime and said, "The current global trading regime is against poor countries. Is it power or rationality?"

Charles Mutasa from Zimbabwe countering Skolnik's remarks said, "We don't need charity but justice. No matter how much the bank spends on TB, leprosy or water and sanitation, we demand fair share of wealth with poor."

He blamed the World Bank for a global economic system in which Africa was now caught in

a debt trap. The money spent by African countries on debt servicing is now four times the amount they spend on health and education.

The delegates later demanded of the World Bank that it spend more money on health-related social welfare projects. They also called for more South-South cooperation to shake off dependence on loans from institutions like World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

Thelma Narayan from India strongly criticised the bank for helping the transfer of resources from the poor to the rich. Narayan called the bank an 'undemocratic' institution that functions with no transparency and is controlled by the United States as it dominates most of the decision-making.

More than 10 international organisations, including Gonoshasthaya Kendra have held discussions over the last three years to hold this conference and drafted the Charter for the people's health.

## Narsingdi fire

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turers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) and Bangladesh Terri Towel and Linen Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BTLMEA) at a meeting on Tuesday decided to pay compensation to the victims and their families and to take steps to avoid such accidents in garment factories.

The decisions will be finalised at another meeting of the associations on Saturday, the press release said.

Tuesday's meeting was presided over by BGMEA President Anisur Rahman Sinha.

## ISPR

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The news of the rape incident. The army headquarters formed a group of officers from the army headquarters and Mymensingh Cantonment to probe the reported incident, and they are now engaged in the investigation, the release added.

The press release said the attention of the army headquarters was drawn to the reports of the rape by army personnel published in different newspapers on December 3.

A group of 21 newly recruited army personnel led by a sergeant and a lance corporal left Rajshahi Cantonment for Mymensingh by a train from Rajshahi railway station on December 2, the release said.

## 160 Assam rebels surrender

GAUHATI, Dec 6: One hundred and sixty separatist guerrillas surrendered arms in India's northeastern state of Assam today as the government offered to hold unconditional talks with insurgent groups to find a political settlement, reports AP.

"Our doors are always open," Assam state's top elected official Prafulla Kumar Mahanta said as he accepted arms from the guerrillas belonging to the United Liberation Front of Asom and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland.

The rebel groups have been fighting Indian security forces for more than a decade to carve out an independent homeland.

## Pakistani held at Tangail

TANGAIL, Dec 6: A Pakistani national staying here without valid documents has been arrested, reports UNB.

Taken into custody on December 2, police is interrogating Shakil Abdullah, 32, to find out if he was engaged in espionage or if he came to Bangladesh for engaging in subversive activities.

Admitting his Pakistani nationality, Shakil told police that he came to Bangladesh last March on a 3 months' tourist visa. On expiry of the visa, he procured a Bangladeshi passport under the name Qamruzzaman.

Police recovered \$3,600 and a Pakistani passport from him. He married 14-year-old Beauty, daughter of Abdul Motaleb living in Shababala area in the town.

## Hasina urges Daimler-Chrysler authorities to set up plant in Bangladesh

STUTTGART, Dec 6: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today visited a plant of Daimler-Chrysler, one of the world's biggest manufacturers of automobiles including the famous Mercedes Benz, reports BSS.

She was briefed on the production of the plant and the newly introduced Smart Car by Dr Peter Rudiger Puf, head of Economic Research Section of the company.

The prime minister took interest in the newly innovated two-seater Smart Car, which according to the manufacturer is environment-friendly and economic. The use of solar energy for the production of the car is yet another main feature of the vehicle.

She urged the company authorities to set up plant in Bangladesh, where there is no dearth of sunshine.

The Smart Car has already gained popularity in Europe, they said.

The prime minister rode in the car for a demonstration drive from the demonstration site to the solar energy section of the plant.

Members of her entourage including State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Principal Secretary to the PM Dr S A Samad, Foreign Secretary, CM Shafi Sami, Press Secretary Jawadul Karim and Bangladesh Ambassador to Germany Kazi Anwarul Masud were present on the occasion.

Later, the prime minister returned to Berlin where she is due to meet the President of the Federal Germany, Dr Hejorannes Rau, at the Presidential Palace in the afternoon.

## Khulna by-polls Officials asked to discharge duties neutrally

By Staff Correspondent  
Chief Election Commissioner MA Syed yesterday called upon officials concerned to discharge their responsibilities neutrally in the by-election in Khulna-5 constituency, due on December 20.

Addressing a meeting on law and order at the Election Commission Secretariat, the CEC warned that negligence to duty by officials would not be tolerated.

"Due action would be taken against such officials for negligence, if found," he said.

Officials concerned informed the meeting that the situation in the constituency was peaceful.

However, the Commission has decided to deploy a Company of army personnel there in addition to normal security arrangements during the by-election.

Police, BDR, Ansar and Armed Police Battalion and other security forces would be deployed in the constituency to maintain law and order.

Presided over by CEC M A Syed, the meeting was attended by the three Election Commissioners - Abdur Rahman, Mostafar Ahmed Chowdhury and Shafiqur Rahman - EC Secretary Anwar Hossain, IGP Mohammad Nurul Huda and other high officials from the ministry of Home Affairs, Armed Forces Division, BDR and Ansar.

## Khaleda hosts iftar party for political leaders

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday hosted an iftar for political leaders and parliament members at her 29 Minto Road official residence.

A large number of leaders and MPs from different political parties, including Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami, Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ), Jagpa, Ganotantri Party, Democratic League and Bangladesh Krishak Samik Janata League (BKSJL) attended the iftar party.

None however came from the ruling Awami League or the Left Democratic Front in spite of an invitation.

BNP leaders present at the iftar were Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, M Saifur Rahman, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Barrister Moudud Ahmed, Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Dr RA Gani, Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed, Tariqul Islam, M Morshed Khan and Sadek Hossain Khoka.

Leaders from the 4-party opposition alliance who came to the party are JP leaders Roushan Ershad, Nazirul Rahman Manjur, Kazi Firoz Rashid, Mostafa Jamal Haider, Shah Mohammad Abu Zafar, Dr MA Matin, GM Qader, Razia Fayez and Sunil Gupta, Jamaat leaders Golam Azam, Matiar Rahman Nizami, Ali Ahsan Mujahid, Mohammad Kamaruzzaman, Abdul Qader Mollah and ATM Azharul Islam, and IOJ leaders Mohiuddin Khan, Fazlul Haq Amin, ARM Abdul Matin and Muslehuddin Abu Bakar.

Ahmedul Kabir of Ganotantri Party, Shafiqul Alam Prodhan of Jagpa, Olid Ahad of Democratic League and Fazlur Rahman of BKSJL were also present at the party.

The iftar over, a group of top leaders, including Golam Azam, Roushan Ershad, Nazirul Rahman Manjur and Matiar Rahman Nizami, had an hour-long meeting with the Leader of the Opposition at her chamber.

After the meeting, Roushan told reporters that leaders of the four parties unanimously agreed to intensify the out-governments movement after Eid.

She claimed that the BNP Chairperson accepted the JP proposal to launch a unified movement by the alliance for immediate release of Ershad.

BNP leader M Shamsul Islam told reporters that the leaders at the meeting decided to hold a countrywide demonstration on December 9 to protest killing of workers at Mongla. In Dhaka, the 4-party alliance will organise a rally at Muktangan on the same day.

Meanwhile, expelled BNP MP Major (Retd) M Akhteruzzaman along with his wife attended the iftar at the invitation of Khaleda Zia although Khaleda's private security prevented him from meeting with her.

## Brick kiln destroying villages

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cion over the motive of the complainants. He defended the DoE in his report, saying its officials rightly issued the environmental clearance for Messrs Saudi Bricks.

The Honourable Minister (Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury) has recommended issuance of an environmental clearance (for the brick kiln) after prioritising aspects of environment, poverty eradication, employment and investment," Hossain said in his report.

The report helped Salam retain the licence for Saudia Bricks.

During a visit to the site on Tuesday, this correspondent found a large group of villagers comprising housewives, retired citizens, young men, women and children near the brick kiln.

The kiln has been set up to destroy the environment of the entire area inhabited by about 50,000 people, they said. It is because the villagers are law abiding and peace loving citizens that they haven't thrown the kiln materials into the Ichhamati, they said.

"People here are very angry at such a nuisance in their villages. We have even offered Salam to find a land outside the villages to set up his kiln, but he did not pay any heed to our plea," said Jahangir Alam, a retired businessman from Aligchar.

Haji Mohammad Lal Mia of Balmantachar said that people from all walks of life, irrespective of religious or political beliefs, sexes and ages, are determined to resist the move to light the kiln.

Housewives came out of their homes and registered their protest against the kiln. Shiri, mother of five, and Razia, mother of four children from Balmantachar were among many women who had appealed to the

government to immediately remove the kiln from their doorsteps. So were Noorjahan Begum, mother of five, and Rahima Begum, mother of four.

Just nearby workers at Saudia Bricks were busy making earthen bricks in dice to be first dried under the sun before being baked in the furnace. The entire area of the brick kiln was encircled with barbed wire. On the western end of the fence, a few families were seen in small houses. They said they were given the land under the government's programme to rehabilitate landless peasants.

"My family will simply die of heat if the kiln is lit," Lal Mia, 70, said.

His neighbour, a woman in her thirties, said that the kiln owners were throwing bricks on her tinshed to scare her family away.

Inside the kiln, workers were piling up sun dried bricks inside the furnace. A signboard said that the kiln was set up with a loan from the NCC Bank. One Selim, who identified himself as the nephew of Salam, said that as soon as the furnace is filled with 450,000 sun-dried bricks, they would light the fire. About three-fourths of the huge furnace was already filled.

"We cannot understand why the people are opposed to our kiln while there are so many in the area," Selim said, adding that they had invested Tk 50 lakh for the project.

But when this correspondent asked him to show a kiln near Saudia Bricks, he replied that there was one about five miles away at a place called Sadapur. Abdul Jalil, uncle of Salam, argued that everywhere brick kilns were set up in densely populated localities, adding that he saw no reason why Saudia Bricks could not function there.

"We have the environmental

clearance from the Ministry of Environment and a licence from the DC office," said Abdul Jalil. "We are doing our business legally."

He added that they would start burning the bricks anytime. In Nawabganj thana sadar town, TNO Abdul Mannan expressed his concern over the restart of the controversial kiln. He said that he had informed his higher officials of the 'problems' but the DoE issued the clearance nonetheless.

"There are about ten brick kilns functioning at different places of Nawabganj thana without any licence whatsoever. I filed cases against them with the police last year but no action has been taken," Mannan said. Mannan said that he would soon write to the owner of Saudia Bricks to show him the documents permitting him to run the kiln at a spot surrounded by villages.

But several villagers said that the environmental clearance could not have obliged the Deputy Commissioner of Dhaka to issue a licence. They said the Deputy Commissioner had the discretionary authority to turn down the application for re-issuance of the licence despite having a 'so-called' environmental clearance.

According to studies, no vegetation could survive within the radius of one kilometre of a kiln. The land gets parched even further away where nothing could be grown. Trees die and trees stop producing fruits. Building materials wear out quickly and people within a five-kilometre radius are exposed to extremely high air pollution. Children are particularly vulnerable to the pollution, generated by the kilns, and develop respiratory problems.

## Land Ministry Rejoinder

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among members of the Samity, and

c) Lease deed would be signed after full payment is made.

Thereafter, the DC of Dhaka gave the land document to the Samity upon receipt of Tk 1 crore 62 lakh, 55 thousands and 604.

As the aforesaid land falls under government's 'khasland', the Land Ministry had earlier allotted the land to the Samity under one-year lease. Later, on July 19, 1987, it gave the land on lease to Dhaka City Corporation under a similar contract for a year. But the allotment order was cancelled, as DCC could not make the payment for the lease.

Since 1987, the Samity had been persistent in getting the land on a long-term lease instead of yearly basis. At the approval of the then Head of Government, it finally got the land on a long-term basis in 1995.

Land Ministry further stated that it did not know anything regarding RAJUK approval of design of a six-storied commercial building and car-parking complex there. It, however, acknowledged receipt of a RAJUK letter dated December 5, 2000 which had mentioned a December 1, 2000 meeting of the Design Approval Committee. It sought Land Ministry's opinion in that

respect. The rejoinder said, Land Ministry was actively considering the RAJUK letter.

Our Reply: The rejoinder does not contradict our story in any substantive manner. It narrates the leasing process of the land, which was the subject of our story. The main contention of our original report was under what authority the Land Ministry leased out this prime land to the Samity. The fundamental question is who owns this piece of land. All the lands around this contested plot belong to PWD. By the same legal authority, this land should also belong to PWD. How this particular plot became a khas land and came under the authority of the land ministry needs to be answered. Taking advantage of this confusion over ownership, a section of government officials in connivance with vested groups is creating havoc with public property. In addition to who owns the land, the question that a parking lot is being turned into a shopping complex has not been addressed in the rejoinder. The main thrust of our story was to bring out this illegal evil practice to the public notice. We stand by our story and demand an independent investigation into this whole sordid affair.

## Mongla Port

From page 1  
Panic gripped the port area also.

Attendance in all departments of the office of Mongla Port Authority was thin and launch and ferry services remained suspended.

Electricity lines cut off in several areas during three-hour clash on Monday were not restored till 6 pm today, sources said.

Police reinforcements brought from neighbouring districts of Khulna Range and the armed police battalion assisted by BDR were found patrolling entire Mongla port area. Army has been deployed at the port to ensure security of cargo-loaded foreign ships and their crew members.

Officers-in-Charge of Mongla police station filed a police assault case today accusing some leaders of Mongla Bandar Samik Sangha, said local people.

Local people blamed leaders of Dock Labour Management Board for Tuesday's bloody clash.

They said dockers brought out a procession demanding appointment of more casual workers in the clinker-carrying ships and also protesting filing of a case with Mongla thana on Sunday against striking dockers under the Public Safety Act.

Meanwhile, government has constituted a committee to enquire into Tuesday's incident at Mongla.

The committee will start work from tomorrow, Port Authority sources said.

Leaders of Mongla Bandar Samik Sangha have further threatened vigorous movements paralysing the port if their demands are not met immediately. They also demanded removal of Mongla thana OC and punishment to the policemen responsible.

Namaz-e-janaza for three out of four persons killed in police firing on Tuesday was held today in front of Sraniak Sangha office at Mongla after Asr prayers.

Two state ministers, Dr Mozammel and Talukdar Abdul Khaleque, attended the janaza with over 2,000 others.

Earlier in the morning, bodies of the four were sent to Bagerhat Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Top ranking officials of Bagerhat district and police administration headed by Additional DIG of Khulna Range were also present in the namaz-e-

janaza. Body of Avijit Bank was cremated at Mongla.

Later, the ministers assured the port workers of resolving the issue immediately.

UNB adds: Getting assurances of meeting their demands within a month from the government, the workers at Mongla Port today decided to join their duties tomorrow.

The decision was taken at a high-level meeting at Khulna Circuit House today.

State Minister for Shipping Mozammel Hossain Chowdhury Maya presided over the meeting.

It was decided in the meeting that the demands of the workers would be met through discussion among the parties concerned within a month.

Joint Secretary of Shipping Ministry, Anisur Rahman, Khulna Divisional Commissioner, Mongla Port Chairman, DIG Khulna Range, Joint Labour Director, DC and SP of Bagerhat, Storekeepers Association leaders, labour leaders and concerned people were present at the meeting.

## Lok Sabha

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In Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state where Ayodhya is located, Muslim shopkeepers downed shutters fearing the outbreak of Hindu-Muslim violence. The state government issued a high alert and posted riot police on the streets to prevent any religious violence, with Hindu right-wingers planning to celebrate the destruction of the mosque.

## Directive

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impose a ban on elections of loan defaulters to registered bodies. The Finance Ministry asked the central bank to clarify what it meant by 'registered authority' and to specify where bank loan defaulters would not be allowed to contest in election. The Finance Ministry in a letter requested the Commerce Ministry to look into these matters and to clarify its position whether bank loan defaulters would be members of trade bodies or allowed to contest in the polls.

## Applications invited for "You have Got the Look" contest

Pantene pro-V and Head & Shoulders are going to hold a beauty pageant "You have Got the Look 2001," says a press release.

Applications have been invited from all over the country for the event. Males as well as females are eligible for the contest.

The criteria for eligibility is an age range of 18-24 years and a minimum height of 5 feet 4 inches for females and an age range of 18-28 years and minimum height of 5 feet 10 inches for males. Educational qualifications are minimum SSC/O Level and HSC/A Level respectively for both categories.

Judges will short-list the primary candidates from applications before a personal interview for the finalists on December 23.

Interested persons can send an application with a resume and 3 photographs (one close up and two with full profile) to the following address: "You have Got the Look contest, PO Box No 6116, Dhaka 1212.

Last date for receiving entries is December 17.

## Business leaders

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those who spoke at the rally.

The president of Chittagong chamber said a staggering amount of Tk 288 crores is lost in industrial production and business a day in Chittagong due to hartal.

Giving a breakdown, the CCCI president said a day's hartal means loss of Tk 60 crore in industrial production, Tk 60 crores in export, Tk 100 crores in import, Tk 30 crore in the garments sector, Tk 35 crores in frozen food and Tk 35 crores in revenue.

The operation cost at Chittagong port is very high due to hartal and work stoppage. Chowdhury said. He added that handling charge of a 20 feet container at Chittagong port is 640 US dollar while in the regional ports of Colombo, Bangkok and Singapore it is 220, 360 and 216 US dollar, respectively.

He called for concerted efforts to resist hartal and terrorism in the port city.