

● **What's on today . . .** ●

Memorial meeting: Sylhet Bibhag Unnayan Parishad will hold a memorial meeting on Commander Manik Chowdhury. A doa mahfil will also be held. Venue: Parishad Central office premises, 53, DIT Extension Road, Naya Paltan. Time: 4:00 pm.

Nat'l workshop: Bangladesh Water Development Board's Consolidation and Strengthening of Flood Forecasting and Working Services will hold the 2nd National Workshop on improved Flood Warning Dissemination. Venue: Hotel Abakash, Mohakhali. Time: 4:00 pm.

Lecture: Robert Pledge, Curator of Chobi Mela will deliver a lecture on 'Retrospective of 20 years photojournalism.' During the lecture, a slideshow will illustrate the last 20 years of major world events. After the lecture, he will animate a round table. Venue: Alliance Francaise de Dhaka. Time: 7 pm.

● **and tomorrow** ●

National flower exhibition: A five-day long national flower exhibition will begin as part of the Dhaka International Trade Fair 2001. Organiser: Export Promotion Bureau. Venue: Trade Fair premises at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. Time: 9 am to 8 pm daily.

BDA lottery: The prize giving ceremony of the Bangladesh Diabetic Association Lottery 2000 will be held. Chief guest: Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria. Venue: Association auditorium, (2nd floor), 122, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Shahabagh. Time: 2:30 pm.

Film show: Alliance Francaise de Dhaka will screen documentaries on film makers and directors Claire Denis and Alain Resnais at 10:30 am while 'The Couple of the year II' will be screened at 6 pm. Venue: Alliance auditorium.

Annual conference: The 12th annual conference and general meeting of the Bangladesh Cancer Society will be held. Chief guest: Minister for Health and Family Welfare Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim. Venue: Sasakawa auditorium of ICCDRB, Mohakhali. Time: 9 am.

Discussion: Swadesh Chinta Shangha will hold a discussion meeting on a book 'Bangaleer Mostisko O Tahar Opababohar' by Acharja Profulla Chandra Roy. Keynote speaker: Prof Monsur Musa. Venue: Residence of late Prof Ahmad Sharif. Time: 10 am.

Weather

Dry weather likely

Weather is likely to remain dry over the country during next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Moderate fog may occur over northern to central parts and the river basins of the country during late night and early morning, Met Office said.

The country's highest temperature 27.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar & Teknaf and the lowest 07.5 degree at Dinajpur.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5:30 pm and rises on Friday at 6.44 am. Maximum and minimum temperatures and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in Percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	23.0	14.0	63	43
Chittagong	26.0	12.5	84	73
Rajshahi	23.4	09.2	69	67
Khulna	24.0	13.2	70	68
Barisal	23.5	12.0	89	91
Sylhet	24.6	10.8	76	46
Cox's Bazar	27.0	15.5	73	72

Discontent in BNP

From Page 1

following pressure from the parties and hardliners in BNP.

The sources said leaders of the three other parties of the four party opposition alliance prefer addressing joint rally as strength of their parties in the city has "drastically reduced".

They said Khaleda Zia was interested in a separate party programme and advised the leaders to arrange a public meeting of BNP alone.

The city BNP declared the programme. But she was later "compelled" to advise party leaders to invite chiefs of three other parties to address the rally.

They said names of chiefs of the three parties were included in the poster after the design and plate were readied at the printing press.

The mainstream party leaders had argued that BNP did not need support of any party to hold a public meeting and that leaders of other parties should not be invited to address a meeting organised by BNP alone.

But she accepted the proposal of the hardliners and design of the poster was changed, the sources said.

"The arrangement is completely against the desire of mainstream party leaders and activists. It has become very difficult for genuine BNP men to do politics as differences of opinion between the moderates and the hardliners has taken a serious turn," a senior party leader told this correspondent.

Another leader said, "The party Chairperson is in the grip of Rajakars, hardliners and fundamentalist forces".

He said the party is rapidly moving towards the "anti-liberation camp" and it will have a difficult time in the next parliamentary election if its leadership continues to support the hardliners and ultra-rightwing elements.

Meanwhile, commotion has been created in the alliance over IOJ leader Fazlul Haq Amini's stance in favour of fatwa and remarks against the recent High Court verdict on the issue.

Sources said, IOJ has created pressure on BNP to stand by Amini and threatened to leave the alliance for non-compliance.

They said IOJ leaders also expressed their resentment over Khaleda Zia's remarks about fatwa at a recent meeting with newspaper Editors and for not supporting Amini on the issue.

IOJ leaders may speak in support of fatwa at today's public meeting, they said.

Earlier, a meeting of the Central Liaison Committee yesterday discussed fresh programmes, particularly the hartal programme.

A CLC member said the hartal may be called between 15 and 20 of this month.

Women's reserved seats

From Page 1

intangible as far as the ruling party's plan for election is concerned.

In her letter, the BNP chief also supported the popular demand for a change in the mode of election of MPs from women's quota and an increase in the number of such lawmakers. But, she did not elaborate on the two points.

BNP Secretary-General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told The Daily Star Tuesday that his party was yet to finalise details on the two issues. "We'll do it in time in consultation with other parties."

To another question, Bhuiyan said BNP along with other parties would make fresh arrangements to have reserved seats for women in the next parliament if the existing provision is lapsed.

Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Law Suranjit Sengupta criticised BNP for 'acting against the move for protection of the reserved seats'.

"If the bill lapses, half the voters (who are women) will vote against BNP in the next elections," he told The Daily Star Tuesday.

Commenting on BNP's suggestions for a direct election and an increase in the number of MPs from women's quota, he pointed out that there was still scope for the opposi-



Protesters remove a teargas shell fired at them by police during a demonstration in the Pakistani port city of Karachi yesterday. Several people received minor injuries and some 50 protestors were taken into custody as police used batons and tear gas to disperse hundreds of Christian minority demonstrators demanding an amendment to the country's 1985 blasphemy law to provide safeguards against alleged abuse of the legislation by Muslim extremists to harass minorities. --AFP photo

EC declares Akhter's JS seat vacant

From Page 1

petition filed by Opposition Chief Whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain for three hours on December 11 before giving its judgement on the dispute over Akhter's membership in parliament yesterday. The verdict referred to Articles 67(1)(e) and 70(1) of the constitution that deals with vacation of a parliamentary seat.

Chief Election Commissioner M A Syed took only five minutes read out the brief verdict in presence of the three other Commissioners Abidur Rahman, Moshtaq Ahmed Chowdhury and Shafur Rahman.

In his instant reaction, Akhter termed the judgement "unjustified" and said the CEC was biased.

Ordering vacation of the seat, the four-member quasi-judicial body also asked the authorities concerned to communicate its decision to the Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad immediately.

Article 70 (1) of the Constitution says, "A person elected as a member of Parliament at an election at which he was nominated as a candidate by a political party shall vacate his seat if he resigns from the party or votes in Parliament against that party."

Article 67(1)(e) refers to Article 70 in case of vacation of seat.

The constitutional explanation of Article 70(1) also says: "If a member of Parliament a) Being present in parliament abstains from voting, or b) Abstains himself from any sitting in parliament ignoring the direction of the party which nominated him at the election as a candidate to do so, he shall be deemed to have voted against that party."

"Having considered all the written and oral statements and in the light of relevant Constitutional provisions, it is ordered that the case is allowed on contest without costs. The seat of Major (ret'd) Akhteruzzaman MP elected from Kishoreganj-2 constituency in the parliament stands vacated with immediate effect under Article 67(1)(e) and Article 70(1) of the Constitution," the EC verdict said.

Termining the judgement "unjustified," Maj Akhter told a group of journalists immediately after the verdict that the chief election commissioner had nakedly tried to prove himself neutral to the BNP high-ups.

"The judgement reflects the CEC's bias, and he will not be able to conduct the next general election in a neutral manner". The judgement would make the party leadership more autocratic and hence, the democratic practice may be hampered once again, he added.

When asked whether he would challenge against the EC verdict, Akhter said, "No. Even the question to participate in the by-election following the vacation of the constituency does not arise."

"I will contest the next general election if BNP nominates me for Kishoreganj-2 constituency," said Akhter.

Barrister Mahub Uddin Khokon, the petitioner's lawyer, said there was no option for the EC other than to pass such a judgement. "The judgement will be considered as a precedence to maintain party discipline."

The Election Commission Secretariat sources said that the copy of the verdict was sent to the Speaker soon after it was delivered.

Earlier on October 11, 1999, the commission vacated seats held by Hasibur Rahman Swapan of Sirajganj-7 and Dr. Mohammad Alauddin of Rajshahi-5. Both of them were elected on BNP ticket but later joined the government of Awami League.

BDR forces

From Page 1

has been doubled, the sources said.

The cease-fire agreed upon at a Company level meeting of BDR and Naska on Monday is due to expire on Sunday next.

It was learnt that Nasaka yesterday sent a message to the BDR commander at Palangkhali regarding Monday's incidents. Contents of the message were not known immediately.

Foreign ministry sources said they are still waiting for an assurance from Myanmar government that it would not proceed with construction of the embankment. Building of the embankment will be violation of international rules and a maritime border agreement signed between the two countries in 1966 and renewed in 1980.

JS session

From Page 1

reference, Parliament Secretariat sources said.

Opposition BNP and its allies have been abstaining from attending the proceedings since the 13th session of the current parliament for what they said the partial role of the Speaker in running the House.

The Speaker's latest attempt to bring the boycotting Opposition back to the House failed as the Leader of the Opposition refused to join to the session, saying there is no "congenial atmosphere" to attend it.

As in previous sessions, a faction of Jatiya Party led by Anwar Hossain Manju will attend the session.

The business of the session will include a thanks giving motion on the Presidential address. Three bills will be placed. These are: Supreme Court Judges (Remuneration and Privilege) (Amendment) Bill 2001, Law Commission (Amendment) Bill 2001 and Standards of Weights and Measures (Amendment) Bill 2001.

The House may deal with 17 pending bills including the much talked about Constitution Fourteenth Amendment Bill seeking retention of women's reserved seat in parliament.

Meanwhile, police arrested two pickets from Kachari Bazaar point. Jatiya Party enforced the hartal demanding immediate release of JP Chairman HM Ershad.

Police say 'missing'

From Page 1

Qamrul Islam admitted that he had told Halima Khatun to keep away, as he said he had been too busy with Nikunja and Rubel murder cases. Moreover, he said, the court is going to be shifted as its judge has been promoted and assigned elsewhere.

"Both Nikunja and Rubel murder cases are at the fag end and the cases will be over within a month. Then I will work on Jalal murder case," he said.

Islam added that 'only' two dates for witnesses in Jalal murder case have gone by without any hearing.

When contacted, CID Investigating Officer ASP Munshi Atiqur Rahman told The Daily Star that he was aware of the difficulties of Halima Khatun and her children.

Sporadic clashes mark JP-called hartal in Rangpur

RANGPUR, Jan 10: A dawn-to-dusk hartal called by district Jatiya Party was observed here today amidst sporadic clashes, reports UNB.

All business establishments and shops remained closed in the district and upazila headquarters during hartal hours.

Some 10 people were injured during chase and counter-chase between the activists of Jatiya Party and Chhatra League in the town, witnesses said.

Meanwhile, police arrested two pickets from Kachari Bazaar point. Jatiya Party enforced the hartal demanding immediate release of JP Chairman HM Ershad.

20 hurt as workers clash at Uttara EPZ site in Nilphamari

NILPHAMARI, Jan 10: Some 20 people were injured in a clash between two groups of labourers at under-construction Uttara EPZ site here today, reports UNB.

Police and witnesses said the clash took place in the morning while some labourers were unloading bricks from a truck.

Both the groups used sharp weapons during the trouble.

On information, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control. They also recovered some weapons from the spot.

In the afternoon, a section of labourers brought out a procession in the town protesting the attack and submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner.

Following the incident, additional police have been deployed in the EPZ area.

Benapole-Petrapole goods train service from Jan 12

Goods train service between Bangladesh and India on Benapole-Petrapole route will begin on January 12, Railway sources said here last night, reports BSS.

An Indian goods train carrying 35 Indian BCX wagons will leave Petrapole for Benapole in Bangladesh at 3 pm to revive the route, which remained inoperative since 1974.

Rezaul Karim, General Manager of West Zone, Bangladesh Railway, will represent Bangladesh at the ceremony to be held at Petrapole. Bangladesh Deputy High Commissioner in Kolkata, West Bengal, is likely to be present.

The decision to reopen the route was taken in 1996 and Bangladesh Government has spent about Taka 10 crore to restore the line.

16 army men hurt in Bandarban road accident

BANDARBAN, Jan 10: At least 16 army men were injured in a road accident at Chimbuk on Bandarban-Chimbuk Road, 16 kilometres from Bandarban town this morning, reports BSS.

Official sources said, the accident occurred as the driver lost control over the vehicle.

The vehicle overturned and fell into roadside ditch.

Of the injured, six were taken to Combined Military Hospital in Chittagong while the rest are being treated locally.

AAPP confce

From Page 12

Asian Parliamentarians Conference for Peace and Cooperation (APCPC) in Dhaka decided to float the new organisation for exchanging views, ideas and experiences and developing common strategies for promoting peace in Asia and elsewhere in the world.

Out of 31 founding-members of the AAPP, 26 have signed the charter of the organisation. They are Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Laos, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Russian Federation, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Syria, Thailand, Tonga, Vietnam and Yemen.

Others who attended the APCPC meet in September but did not sign the AAPP charter are Bahrain, Bhutan, the Maldives, Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan. The House of Representatives of Cyprus has recently informed the Secretariat of its decision to join the AAPP Conference 2001.

Hartal paralyses

From Page 1

All kinds of vehicles except rickshaws were off the roads while shopping arcades and markets remained closed.

Railway sources said train service to and from Chittagong was as usual.

Delivery of goods to and from Chitagon Port was suspended while cargo handling inside the jetty took place partially, port sources said.

Production in mills and factories at the industrial belts of Patenga, Kalurghat, Nasirabad and Sitakunda was hampered due to think attendance of workers, sources said.

Meanwhile, police recovered 16 cocktails at 1 pm today from Chandgaon.

None was arrested in this connection, police said.

Opposition activists held rallies and brought out processions in different parts of the city.

An anti-hartal rally was held by BCL activists at Bahaddarhat crossing today.

Trucks barred

From Page 1

found playing hide and seek in some city areas for the last few days.

Meanwhile, the leaders of truck owners and drivers are disappointed at the government decision and warned that they would go for a strike if the decision was not withdrawn by yesterday.

Different hawkers associations continued protesting the eviction drive. Bangladesh Hawkers Federation (BHF) brought out a procession in the city yesterday.

A BHF press release claimed last night that more than one lakh hawkers have been evicted during the current move.

Sharmin Murshed of Brotee, who has contributed immensely towards identification of arsenic patients, particularly in the southern districts, said, "We should first focus on finding safe water sources. Let us leave ground water alone in this search because there are too many risk factors involved."

NATO to set up spl commission to probe uranium hazard

Population of Serbia not in danger

BRUSSELS, Jan 10: NATO is to set up a special committee to study the possible health consequences for soldiers who served in parts of the Balkans where the alliance used depleted uranium munitions, NATO Secretary General George Robertson announced today, reports AFP.

"We are going to set up a dedicated committee on depleted uranium," Robertson told a press conference.

"We will do everything to make sure that the relevant information is known," he added, asserting that the alliance has "nothing to hide."

Some of NATO's European members are irate about a spate of cancer cases, some fatal, among former Balkan peacekeepers and other personnel, which they say could be linked to depleted uranium (DU) munitions used in the alliance's tank-busting attacks.

Robertson described calls for a probe into the United States' use of DU in Bosnia in 1995 and Kosovo in 1999 as "legitimate demands", but added that he was "confident that there is little risk in NATO ammunition."

"I wouldn't have agreed to these ammunition when I was minister if we knew that they would involve any health hazard. It is a proven technology and valuable on the battlefield," said Robertson, whose was Britain's defence minister in the Kosovo crisis.

Concerning UN complaints of NATO's failure to cooperate with investigations, Robertson said it was only due to "bureaucratic delay, which we all regret."

Robertson said that NATO's North Atlantic Council, the alliance's highest decision-making body made up of the permanent ambassadors in Brussels, had agreed to a request from Italy to provide maps of where DU ammunition had been used.

The council also decided to act as a hub for all national reports into the use of DU, and also offered assistance to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) if investigators - currently in Kosovo - are also sent to Bosnia.

A definitive UNEP report on Kosovo is expected in March.

US fighter jets fired some 31,000 DU rounds during the NATO air war against Yugoslavia, according to the Pentagon. Another 10,800 rounds were fired in 1994-95 in Bosnia, where many of the afflicted peacekeepers were stationed.

Seven Italian soldiers and one aid worker, five Belgian peacekeepers, two Dutch nationals, two Spaniards, two Portuguese and a Czech have died after tours of duty in the Balkans, many from leukemia and other cancers.

3 held for killing CID informers

By Staff Correspondent

Police yesterday arrested three people in connection with the killing of two CID informers on Tuesday.

The arrested were identified as Hira, Mijan and Kabir.

Two CID informer Mohammad Jahangir, 30, and Kabir Hossain, 38, were shot dead by unidentified assailants at Gobindapur in the city's Demra area at about 2:45 pm on Tuesday.

The arrested were not FIR-named accused.

Kabir's wife filed a case with Demra police station accusing 12 people.

Two High Court judges promoted

From Page 1

aries of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) was held at its office yesterday afternoon with its President Barrister Mainul Hossain in the chair to discuss the situation.

The meeting was attended by, among others, Barrister Syed Ishtiaque Ahmed, Dr. Kamal Hossain, Advocate Abdul Malek, Advocate Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed, Dr. M. Zahir, Barrister Nazmul Huda, Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar, Advocate Ayesuddin, Ataur Rahman and Zainal Abedin.

It is learnt that the meeting decided to form a new forum Supreme Council of Lawyers - with Barrister Ishtiaque Ahmed as its convenor to "unite all lawyers to protect the judiciary from interference and keep its independence".

Pressed by newsmen after the meeting, Mainul Hossain said the meeting was called to "forge a greater unity among lawyers, keep them above partisan politics and to uphold independence of the judiciary."

He said that a meeting of the SCBA Executive Committee would be called to discuss the situation.

In a joint statement yesterday evening, 13 senior lawyers including the former presidents and secretaries of SCBA expressed their "great concern in the manner in which the latest appointments of judges of the Appellate Division have been made."

"These appear to have been done disregarding time-honoured and established practice thus giving due respect to the views conveyed by the persons holding high constitutional office in relation to the functioning of the Supreme Court, in the course of consultation with them. Without intending any disrespect to those who have been appointed, it is a matter of regret that the manner of their appointment has raised questions of propriety, and generated controversy which could and should have been avoided, in the national interest", the statement said.

Signatories to the statement included the names of those who attended the SCBA meeting in the afternoon.

Mission in Malaysia

From Page 1

"years back".

Most of the undocumented Bangladeshis there are victims of false work permits given to them by fraud recruiters, the sources said.

Thirteen Malaysian employers, 40 Indian, two Indonesian and three Bangladeshi workers were detained on the first day of the crackdown, according to an international news agency report.

Malaysian Immigration Enforcement Director Nasir Ahmad was quoted as saying,

Last year, the immigration department repatriated 97,281 people, mostly Indonesians, and this year we are targeting 100,000 for deportation." Nasir had said that the department would conduct raids, targeting construction and service sectors.

The detainees are being housed in eight deportation camps.

An estimated 5,000 recruiting agents and business concerns in Malaysia hire foreign workers without permit, it was learnt.

In 1998, about one lakh undocumented Bangladeshis were affected in a similar crackdown.

At that time, Malaysia had spent four million US dollars and set up 16 special squads to detect "overstaying and undocumented foreign workers". In the process, thousands of jobs were created for local people against the backdrop of an Asian currency crisis.

Some three million Bangladeshi wage earners are working in countries in the Middle East, Gulf and South-East Asia. They remit around Tk. 9,000 crore a year.

Writ against PSA

From Page 1

Justice Abu Saeed Ahmed and Justice Khademul Islam Choudhury granted the prayer for time.

Barrister Sayed Ishtiaque Ahmed, Dr. Kamal Hossain, Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud, Barrister Rafiqul Haq, Khandakar Mahbubuddin Ahmed appeared for the petitioner.

Another hearing on a leave petition on fatwa was not held in the Appellate Division yesterday as the Chief Justice was sick.

The petition was filed challenging a recent High Court verdict which declared all types of fatwa illegal.

Death threat

From Page 12

The report was first published in the 'Daily Bherer Kagoj' on April 20 last year. Later, the same news was published in a section of newspapers. But Amini did not contradict the news.

Dr Kazi Farook Ahmed filed a criminal case with the CMM's Court, Dhaka against Fazlul Haq Amini on May 14, 2000. After hearing, the CMM's Court issued summons upon the accused to appear before the court, but he did not appear.

The court, later issued a warrant of arrest against Amini on July 2 the same year.

Amini appeared before the CMM's Court on July 3 and was granted bail upon a bond of Tk 50 with two sureties.

Screening at 28 upazilas

From Page 12

"We have only seen the tip of the iceberg. The arsenic issue is a gigantic one but we have so far ignored the matter. There is a lot of uncoordinated activities going on, which we or the government does not know about," said Professor Quazi Quamruzzam, Chairman of Dhaka Community Hospital who also detected the first arsenic cases in the country. "Above all, the affected people still do not have any alternative source of drinking water and are continuing to drink poison."

The project, which is not bound by any timeframe, would detect affected tube-wells by testing water samples at field level followed by laboratory tests for confirmation and identify patients suffering from arsenic-related diseases. Each upazila receives Tk 30 lakh for the implementation of the work.

Upazila authorities have already formed, or in the process of forming, Field Survey Teams (FST) in each ward for the screening of tube-wells and identifying patients. They would also build capacity for accessing safe drinking water, assist arsenic affected patients to link with local health officials for health related advice and also create awareness in the community about arsenic contamination.

"The objective of the programme is to involve local initiative and for that we proposed local level ward and union committees to supervise activities. The programme is designed in such a way so that the villagers actively participate in the problems," said a senior official of LGRD ministry. "The ideas have been tried in Singair upazila in Manikganj district and Gazaria union in Munshiganj and the results were very encouraging."

This community initiative in arsenic mitigation through local government institution was found highly successful during the pilot phase of the National Emergency Screening Programme of Bangladesh Arsenic Mitigation Water Supply Project (BAMWSP) that was implemented in six upazilas since October 1999.

Sharmin Murshed of Brotee, who has contributed immensely towards identification of arsenic patients, particularly in the southern districts, said, "We should first focus on finding safe water sources. Let us leave ground water alone in this search because there are too many risk factors involved."