

Govt has solved problems in admn: Hasina

BARISAL, Jan 27: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said her government is doing everything possible for bringing dynamism in the administrative set-up, reports UNB.

"The main objective of our government is good governance and our government has done everything for it," she said while inaugurating a newly-constructed divisional administrative building here today.

The building has been constructed on 18 acres of land at a cost of Tk 6.60 crore.

The Prime Minister said the previous government could not do public any good as it was plagued by indecision. "There was administrative complexity everywhere. In fact, the country's administrative system collapsed during their rule. There were no rules and regulations."

Hasina said that after assuming power, her government took timely and pragmatic steps to solve the problems and infused dynamism into administration.

"Actually, we want to create a working environment where government employees can discharge their duties smoothly."

On the promotion of government officials, she said there was a serious promotion tangle in administration which her government has already solved successfully.

"We have given promotion in different cadres so that the administrative activities go smoothly and appropriately."

Terming village as the centre of all development activities, she said her government is doing everything possible for the development of rural infrastructure and improvement of rural life.

The Prime Minister said that during last four and a half years, the government had taken a number of pragmatic steps to maintain high economic growth and ensured all basic rights of the people.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visiting a stall at the Dhaka International Leather Fair 2001 after inaugurating the 3-day event at Hotel Sonargaon yesterday. --Star photo

PM opens leather fair

From Page 1 for encouraging local and foreign investments has been yielding results and increasing private investment and volume of export.

She said the export-import policy was formulated for a period of five years instead of the previous two years in order to boost export.

Besides, the subsidy to export sector has been increased to Tk 632 crore this year from Tk 631 crore in the last fiscal year, the Prime Minister said.

This is to increase export of commodities like leather goods, readymade garments, jute goods, etc. she added.

The leather sector earned US\$246 million in fiscal 1999-2000 against \$137 million in 1999-01.

Hasina said in recent years the leather sector could not flourish at the desired level because of fluctua-

tion of demand of leather and leather goods.

To improve the situation, she said, cooperation has been extended to take practical steps for raising the quality of leather and diversifying their use through appropriate technology.

The Prime Minister said the government has taken steps for formation of Leather Council, import of raw leather at zero tariff and credit facility for setting up industry.

Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed, Commerce Minister M A Jallil, Chairman of Bangladesh Finished Leather, Leather Goods and Footwear Exporters' Association (BFLFA) M A Sattar Bhuiyan and Vice-Chairman of Export Promotion Bureau A B Chowdhury also spoke.

PDB recommendations

From Page 1 Since losing the original bid for the first phase in 1997 to AES, Marubeni had strongly lobbied to get the second phase of the Meghnaghat project.

In 1998, it proposed to the government that if awarded the contract, it would develop the second phase as per AES terms and conditions and tariff pricing. Accordingly, the Cabinet Purchase Committee gave PDB the nod to go for the second phase Meghnaghat with Marubeni on condition that the conditions and pricing of the first one. Marubeni began unsolicited negotiations for the Meghnaghat phase-2 late October. But instead of providing free electricity during the Initial Operating Period (IOP) of the plant worth 45 million dollars, Marubeni offered free electricity worth five million dollars.

Marubeni later offered different packages of benefits to PDB just to avoid free electricity during IOP. After a series of negotiations, Marubeni convinced PDB that its package of benefits were 'much better' than that of AES.

PDB last week in its draft recommendations to the Power Division of the energy ministry said that it had spent Tk 18 crore to conduct "land compaction" through a special method to meet the land development standard of AES' Meghnaghat-1 project. Later, as AES pinpointed some faults in the land development, for which PDB had to pay another 4.5 million dollars. Marubeni's plant would not require such land compaction or any land rectification. Thus it would save the government 9.5 million dollars. Moreover, while AES is committed to build Meghnaghat-1 in 37.5 months, Marubeni will build the second phase in 35.5 months, PDB pointed out.

Marubeni will give 1,395,632,250 kWh units of free electricity on the 22nd year of operation, it said. Marubeni will take 35 acres of land for the project -- whereas AES took 70 acres -- and would give PDB the same amount of initial development charge and annual rent given by AES. PDB can set up its own power plants in the remaining 35 acres of land.

After the end of the 22-year contract period, it would give to PDB the plant as a gift. The power plant after 22 years of service should be worth 31.4 million dollars.

"Marubeni's free electricity is worth 5.7 million dollars, while AES is giving PDB free electricity worth 35 million dollars," a source noted, "but they are saying that their package of benefits would be worth 39 million dollars in total."

"If they are so eager to give more benefits than AES, it is not clear to us what is their problem in giving free electricity like AES during the IOP," he said. "Marubeni played a key role in setting up KAFCO where it is a major partner and KAFCO was supposed to be a good deal for Bangladesh as well."

"What Marubeni is trying to sell is not at all like the benefits offered by AES. Marubeni is giving PDB a benefit package that will be given over a period of 35 years while AES' benefit would be available within the next two years for a period of 10 months (IOP)," he noted.

AES had signed a contract with the government to provide electricity for a levelised 2.79 cents for the next 22 years. Marubeni's original offer in the same bid asked for a tariff of more than 3.5 cents per unit.

Attack on newsmen condemned

The journalists working for the United News of Bangladesh (UNB) at a meeting yesterday condemned the brutal attack on its Feni district correspondent Tipu Sultan on Thursday evening, reports UNB.

Presided over by Chief Editor and Managing Director of the news agency Enayetullah Khan, the meeting urged the administration to bring the culprits to book. The meeting was held at the UNB office.

The newsmen urged the government to arrange proper treatment for Tipu immediately and, if necessary, to send him abroad.

Tipu Sultan had his arm and knees broken when a gang of terrorists hit him with iron rods indiscriminately at Feni. Doctors at Feni Sadar Hospital said that the deep injuries may render the young and promising journalist disabled.

Tipu Sultan, 26, won the 'best correspondent' prize of UNB last year for his objective and extensive coverage of events in the violence-torn district.

It is gathered that Tipu has earned the wrath of the terrorists in the area for his objective reporting of their misdeeds.

Expressing concern at the threat to journalists working outside the capital, Enayetullah Khan demanded that the administration must ensure their safety and security.

Senior journalists of UNB urged the management to provide adequate financial assistance to Tipu Sultan.

REB substation inaugurated in Chandpur

State Minister for Planning Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir yesterday inaugurated the 5 MVA power substation at Kachua upazila of Chandpur at a function also attended by Rural Electrification Board (REB) Chairman M. Mehabuddin Ahmed and other senior officials, reports UNB.

Nearly 50,000 rural consumers of 242 villages in Kachua upazila will get electricity with the installation of a 33/11 KV power substation.

The 5 MVA substation will also give electric connections to 55B irrigation pumps, covering 41,150 acres of land and producing over 100,000 tons of additional food grains, a REB press release said here.

It will also link 315 shallow tube-wells, 64 LLPs, 351 small and medium enterprises.

The REB Chairman said the Board's system loss is 16.46 per cent while rate of revenue collection as high as 97.16 per cent.

REB so far supplies electricity to about 3.2 million consumers in roughly 30,000 villages.

Half-day hartal

From page 12 Headed by BNP leader and former MP Abdul Gaffar Biswas, the Parishad has been formed irrespective of party affiliation with city Awami League president Advocate Manjurul Imam as chief advisor.

The ruling party in Khulna is divided over calling of hartal by the Smriti Parishad which mainly comprises the partymen, sources said.

The suspects and godfathers of the murder case belonging to Mizan group of Jubo League have taken firm decision to resist tomorrow's hartal at any cost, said a reliable source in the city Awami League.

Rob Smriti Parishad, on the other hand, is also determined to make the hartal a success, said Abdul Gaffar Biswas, vice president of city BNP.

World Bank

From Page 12 society representatives and donors on the country's development priorities and how the World Bank Group can best assist Bangladesh in poverty reduction.

Zhang is scheduled to call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on January 31.

Shengman Zhang was appointed Managing Director of the World Bank Group in 1997. He currently oversees three of the Bank's six Regional Vice Presidencies, including South Asia; the Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development Network; the Human Resources Vice Presidency; and the Quality Assistance Group. In addition, he chairs the Bank's Operations Policy Committee, Sanctions Committee and the Corporate Committee on Fraud and Corruption Policy.

Rajuk's move

From Page 12 until two years ago. Last year Rajuk refused to allow DCC to set up a cattle market before the Eid.

"All the other parks that we handed over to DCC for maintenance have been either illegally occupied by DCC staff for housing or turned into places for commercial activities," said a Rajuk official.

Rajuk's move to convert the open space into a green park has created a mixed reaction in Banani residential area. Young people said that they would be deprived of a playground while elderly citizens welcomed the move saying it would be a good place to go for a walk.

Rajuk officials said they would post a guard and a gardener after the work is complete.

Textbook crisis

From Page 1 price Tk 25, English -- quoted price Tk 41.99 current price Tk 45.

Pustaka, a concern of the Beximco Group, has increased the board textbook price by at least 20 per cent, violating the agreement with the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB).

The NCTB earlier announced that textbook price would be increased for the academic year 2001.

Meanwhile, leaders of three organisations in the country's printing and publishing industry said that they could print and distribute textbooks within a week, not in three months as Pustaka has taken.

"If the government allows us to print and distribute books of secondary level, we would be able to resolve the crisis within a week," a leader of the associations said. "We have experience and expertise on these jobs."

The NCTB in violation of all rules awarded -- Pustaka, Shuktara and Free Press -- three Beximco

concerns, the bid to print and distribute around eight crore books of both primary and secondary levels.

Leaders alleged that some NCTB officials awarded the job to Beximco concerns, which have no experience for such a job.

Meanwhile, Pustaka in a press release accused a vested quarter of printing fabricated reports on textbook crisis to create confusion among people.

Signed by Mir Mustafizur Rahman, manager of Pustaka, the release said some unscrupulous businessmen have been capitalising on the situation by increasing the prices of books.

There is no textbook crisis in the country and there is a huge stock of books with Pustaka, affirmed the release.

"It was a ploy of conspiracy by vested quarters to unsettle the situation of textbook distribution," the release added.

Pustaka called upon all not to be misled by propaganda.

Bumper boro forecast

From Page 1 crop-sector multinational, project "an increase in acreage this year," and as a result, "a record in rice production."

Farmers, eager to make up for their aman loss, are working round-the-clock, bringing more and more land under boro cultivation.

"They are getting adequate fertiliser and prices are behaving quite normally. So, it cannot be any better year for them," said the Novartis field report.

Half a million MT of aman paddy were damaged by late-monsoon deluge in 16 south-western districts.

Uninterrupted power supply and irrigation remain the primary concern for boro farmers in February when demand would be at the peak.

Official sources attributed the Ganges water sharing treaty and Gorai river excavation to the increase of boro acreage in the salinity-prone southern zone.

"With sweet water gradually flushing out the saline water, pros-

pect for more boro in the southern districts are brightening," said an expert.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, however, put accent on developing saline-tolerant varieties.

"If more effective saline-tolerant varieties could be developed," she told this correspondent, "we would have gone for vigorous boro cultivation in the South giving some sort of a relief to the North."

The government would rather release some boro land for vegetables, wheat and maize cultivation in North Bengal where groundwater was being over-exploited for boro, explained Matia.

Bangladesh grew 24.3 million MT of food-grain against a net annual requirement of 21.3 million MT in 1999-2000. Upon deduction of 10-12 per cent usual crop loss, net production settled exactly at the requirement level.

The country produced 0.7 million MT more rice than required in 1999-2000. However, wheat production fell 0.7 million MT short of domestic requirement.

Diplomatic deck

From page 1 ambassador to The Netherlands, earlier served as a Director General at the Prime Minister's Office. He is the first Joint Secretary-level officer tipped for such a high-profile posting.

Sarjil, an Additional Foreign Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, successfully coordinated US President Bill Clinton's visit to Bangladesh last March.

Kaiser, a ruling party stalwart, is returning home.

Sohrab Hossain, another Joint Secretary-level official who has completed just over a year as the envoy to Thailand, will take over another high-profile posting as the High Commissioner to Ottawa. Like Gyaash Uddin, he has also been the DG of the Prime Minister's Office.

Syed Maudud Ali, Director General of the South Asia desk at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, will be going to Singapore. Ashfaqur Rahman, now envoy to Shaqpur, will move to Berlin as Bangladesh's

new ambassador to Germany. Hemayet Uddin, Director General of the UN desk at the foreign ministry, will be the new ambassador to Thailand.

Shamim Ahmed, consul general in New York, will move to The Netherlands as ambassador.

Additional Foreign Secretary and Chief of Protocol Jahangir Sadat is tipped to be posted in Paris.

Ambassador to Paris Syed Muazzem Ali will be back in Dhaka shortly to take over as the new Foreign Secretary.

Mohiddin Ahmed, principal of the Foreign Service Academy and a Secretary-level officer, will retire on January 30. He was the Second Secretary at the London High Commission during the Liberation War and defected to Bangladesh. He declined to take ante-dated seniority of two years.

Ruhul Amin, a former envoy to Kuwait and Egypt and an expert on Middle-eastern affairs, recently promoted to the rank of a Secretary will be retiring on February 1.

Nirmal Sen, Dilip Barua hurt in road accident

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Jan 27: Nirmal Sen, columnist and general secretary of Samik Krishak Samajbadi Dal and Dilip Barua, president of Samabadi Dal, were injured when a Khulna-bound bus from Dhaka collided with another bus near Noapara rail crossing on Khulna-Jessore highway today.

The two leftist leaders were coming to Khulna from Dhaka to address a public meeting organised by the 11-party alliance at Shaheed Hadis Park this afternoon.

Some other passengers, who were travelling in the same bus, were also injured in the accident.

Dilip Barua left for Dhaka by a private car after first aid while Nirmal Sen is undergoing treatment at Upasham Clinic in the city.

Six of a picnic party killed in road accident

PATUAKHALI, Jan 27: At least six people were killed and 25 injured when a bus carrying a picnic party met with an accident at Gabua in sadar upazila on Patuakhal-Barisal highway Friday night, reports UNB.

Witnesses said some 50 people of the Barisal Steamerghat Merchant Association went on a picnic at Kuakata tourist resort Friday morning. On way back, the driver suddenly lost control over the steering and the vehicle rammed a roadside tree, killing two people on the spot at 9:30 pm. They are Jalal Ahmed, 65, and Salahuddin Mia, 60.

Of the injured, 16 were rushed to the Barisal Medical College Hospital where bus helper Khokon, 25, and businessman Abdul Jabbar, 40, succumbed to their injuries. The identity of the others could not be known.

HC verdict

From page 12

The judgement was given by the HC Bench comprising Justice Ruhul Amin and Justice Abdul Wahab Mia on a bail petition by Abdul Abedin, who was arrested in Balaganj thana of Sylhet. He was sought by British police on charge of murdering a British citizen, Mark Sharp, in Bedford, Luton, in 1993.

Barrister Maudud Ahmed moved the bail petition for Abdul Abedin. He argued that his client was entitled to bail since Bangladesh does not have a treaty with UK for extradition of an accused.

Deputy Attorney General Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik pointed out that under the Commonwealth Scheme, Abedin could be extradited and pending that, he could not be enlarged on bail.

The British government had also sought his extradition on the basis of the Commonwealth Scheme, he told the court.

Gold haul at ZIA: GD filed

By Staff Correspondent

Customs officials yesterday filed a General Diary with Cantonment police in connection with two gold hauls from two Biman flights on Thursday.

A Customs Intelligence team at the Zia International Airport (ZIA) seized 3,000 tolas of gold bars, worth about Tk 20 crore, from a Biman plane from New York and 200 gold bars from another Biman flight from Kuwait on Thursday.

Anwar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Cantonment police station started investigation into the matter yesterday evening, sources said.

Quake claims 15000

From Page 1 children were rescued within hours, but 16 bodies of the students, aged 16 to 18 years, were pulled out later.

It was not known if the remaining 15 children were dead or alive. "Till Friday afternoon we could hear the cries of the children. Now we hear nothing. But we are continuing our efforts," said police inspector Ramesh Barot, in charge of the rescue operation.

"I want my son back. Why can't they do something," wailed Nainabehn Patel, her eyes red and swollen from crying. Her 16-year-old son, Bhowmik, was trapped under the rubble.

"We will soon rebuild the flattened houses and resettle innumerable habitations which were wiped out by the quake," Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said in a speech calling for a national "war footing" in reaction to the quake.

"Immediately we need 25,000 to 30,000 tents to set up camps for the homeless," said Gujarat's Home Minister Haren Pandya. More than

100 multistorey buildings and thousands of smaller houses collapsed like stacks of cards.

The survivors' other immediate needs are for bread, milk powder, rice, wheat flour, protein-rich cereals, gasoline, kerosene, water and medical attention, Pandya said on television. That are the "top most urgent" requirements, he said.

Bhuj, a town of 150,000 people, suffered the worst from the most powerful quake to strike India in more than 50 years. It rippled through Gujarat as people prepared to watch a live television broadcast of Republic Day celebrations in India's capital, New Delhi.

"The situation can't be called a happy one," India's agriculture minister, Bhaskar Barua, told reporters in the capital. "People are sleeping outside at night. Ninety percent of the houses have developed cracks. It's not possible to go inside them because of the many aftershocks."

Damage was also severe in Ahmedabad, where 40 to 50 high-

rise buildings collapsed. In one building, a four-story elevator shaft remained intact, while the apartments around it came down in a heap.

Some 14,000 people, mostly suffering broken bones and cuts, jammed hospitals.

Survivors sifted through the surface of the rubble, looking to salvage belongings or to hear possible sounds from their still-buried loved ones. Rescue workers, equipped with little more than crowbars or pickaxes, dug through the debris. A few bulldozers were deployed.

Some people crept up the twisted stairwells to pack valuables into suitcases and baskets, lowering them by rope to the ground. But most people were too afraid to re-enter the shaking buildings. They slept in the street around campfires with temperatures at 13 degrees Celsius (55 F).



Bangabandhu Mahila Parishad staged a demonstration at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday to protest terrorism, repression of women and anti-democratic activities in the country. --Starphoto

Seminar: Give CPA autonomy

From Page 12 Port was estimated to be between Tk 7721 million to Tk 9523 million for 1999-2000. This rent is about 1.7 times higher than the total revenue collected by CPA. Decrease in rent-seeking will certainly increase the competitive edge of our producers and exporters.

Citing data he said that Chittagong Port's cargo-handling activities remained closed for about 96 hours per month on the average from July '97-August 2000 due to hartal, labour unrest, natural causes etc. Dr Belayat opined that DWMB makes dock workers unruly and uncontrollable and stvevoring firms have no control over them. They often have to negotiate with gang leaders about the speed money for keeping cargo operations normal.

He urged the authorities concerned to examine the scope for and the extent of private sector participation in increasing the efficiency of Chittagong Port for greater benefit of the region in general and Bangladesh in particular.

Professor Wahidul Haque said that South Asia's globalisation experience has been sad and cautioned that South Asia may get a bad deal unless it watches out. In particular, Bangladesh must do her homework before the final negotiation.

Bangladesh experts, at home and abroad, should not remain in the wilderness or stand in the wayside any longer. Referring to George Bush's comment during the Gulf War that the 21st century would be the American century, Prof Wahid said if 'Pax Americana' even remotely resembles 'Pax Britania' then South Asia, along

with many other regions including Europe, will have to think about a different world order which is hard to visualise at this state of globalisation.

Speakers on this topic, in response, said that globalisation should not be like a vehicle without brakes in the context of Bangladesh's perspective and interest. They urged for a commanding state's control and role on this issue.

Presided over by Dr. Omar Haider Chowdhury, research director of BIDS, the seminar was addressed among others by Professor Jamal Nazrul Islam, Professor Anupam Sen, Professor Mahfuzul Haq Chowdhury, Professor Harendra Kanti Dey, Dr Moinul Islam, Professor Jyoti Prakash Dutta and Professor AK Azad.

Blast at rally

From page 12 bomb explosion. Seven persons were killed and over 50 injured in the blast.

CID is now investigating the distribution of some leaflets against CPB President Monjurul Ahsan Khan who is also leader of the Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation, the sources said.

The leaflets were distributed during the rally before the bomb blast.

The Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation (Reg No: 494) controls toll collection at Syedabad bus terminal in the city.

Another union-- Dhaka Zilla Sarak Paribahan Sramik Union -- has been trying to control the terminal.

This union, led by Sadar Ali General Secretary of Demra thana Awami League and Shajahan Shaju of Kaptan Bazar, is also using the registration No. 494.

A case filed with High Court regarding the dispute over the registration number is yet to be settled. The two groups clashed in the past.

UNB newsmen

From page 12 that both may be amputated. The doctor said the condition of his legs was also not good.

Sources in Feni said a so-called journalist working for Zainal Hazari's local newspaper 'Hazarika' yesterday filed a case with Feni Sadar thana accusing six persons for attacking Tipu Sultan.

Meanwhile, opposition leader Khaleda Zia has strongly condemned the heinous attack on Tipu Sultan and demanded immediate arrest and exemplary punishment of the culprits.

"The government is not only unleashing attacks on journalists, it is also trying to curb press freedom by controlling advertisements and newspaper quota," she said in a statement yesterday.

The opposition leader said the armed cadres of the ruling Awami League are attacking journalists besides killing BNP leaders and activists.

Khaleda said that they would ensure security of the journalists and freedom of the press by ousting the 'fascist' Awami League government through mass upsurge.