

PM opens National Youth Day 2001

UNB, Dhaka Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday underlined optimum utilisation of the huge potential of the youth force in the greater interest of the nation.

"Youths are the future of the nation. Socio-economic and cultural development of a nation is centered around the talent, courage and energies of the youth," she said while inaugurating the National Youth Day 2001 at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the morning.

As she arrived at the venue, young girls waving bands and ribbons welcomed the Prime Minister. She was received by State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman Patal.

The prime minister hoisted the national flag and flag of the youths as the women's band of the Ansars and VDP played the national anthem. She also released balloons and pigeons marking the occasion dedicated to the 'prime of life'.

The prime minister visited the different stalls displaying various facilities of training in computers, tailoring block printing, pisciculture and poultry farming provided to the youths and some products from successful projects.

"Youth is a period of energy, impetus and liveliness. Gigantic tasks can be accomplished utilizing this liveliness," the prime minister said speaking on the occasion.

She, however, also warned that youth is also the period when one can go astray and various problems and indiscipline may arise in society if employment, business and other working opportunities are not created for the youth.

She called on the youths to stand with their heads held high in every sphere of life and keep their mark of competence, skill and efficiency.

The prime minister said the youths have to reach the summit of success through their determination, labour and diligence.

She called upon them to take Bangladesh to a respectable position in the world community by developing and strengthening the

country through hard work and their talent.

Khaleda Zia assured them that the BNP government will always try its best for proper utilisation of the vigour and potential of the youths.

The youth ministry has chalked out elaborate programmes which include weeklong Youth Fair January 15-21 at Ramna Park and cultural functions. "Whatever the disputes, youths will build the country" is the theme of this year's National Youth Day.

Businessman murdered in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A gang of armed terrorists killed a mobile phone businessman at Bonogram bazar in Aitaikula upazilla of the district on Friday night.

The victim was identified as Abdul Gaffar, 30, who hails from Rasulpur.

Police said the miscreants called Gaffar out of his shop and chopped him with sharp weapons. He died on the spot.

According to local people, the killing followed a dispute over land.

The road communications on Dhaka-Pabna highway remained suspended for some time after the incident.

Police rushed to the spot, recovered the body and brought the situation under control.

Four persons were arrested in this connection. Tense situation was prevailing in the area.

Processions

FROM PAGE 1 The government's move to scrap the Special Security Act which was enacted during its tenure for protection of Sheikh Hasina and her sister Sheikh Rehana, two daughters of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The government imposed the ban on the stick and torch processions as these create panic among the public and pose threat to vehicles, the press release added.

Annual ordeal

FROM PAGE 12 admitted to a reputed school in the city, as there is only a few reputed schools despite the mushroom growth of schools in every nook and corner of the city," one headmaster of a city's prestigious school said.

He said there is only twenty-four government schools where students can study from Class I to X at subsidised tuition fees while admission and tuition fees are relatively high in private schools.

Meanwhile, Holy Cross School, one of the reputed educational institutions for girl students in the city, yesterday completed distribution of admission forms for Class I through an interview. The results will be published on December 11.

The school started distributing admission forms on Wednesday to enrol as many as 200 students. Distribution of admission forms for Class VI will begin on December 13.

Viqarunnessa Girls School have completed distribution of admission forms for both Bangla and English sections on its Bailey Road and Dhanmondi campuses. This year, there are 700 seats for Bengali section and 60 seats for English section in Class I. Admission tests will be held on December 27, 28 and 29.

Wills Little Flower School started distribution of admission forms on November 27 and would continue till December 4. Admission tests for various classes will be held on December 6, 29 and 30. Ideal High School and College will start distribution of admission forms in the first week of December.

There are about 200 schools in the city and most of them have already started admission procedures for the upcoming academic year.

Trade treaty

FROM PAGE 12 Nepalese government to combat Maoists in the kingdom.

Observers here feel had India not agreed to renewal of the treaty for three more months, it would have given rise negative sentiments in Nepal especially at a time when the Deuba has requested Vajpayee help to tackle the Maoists, the source said.

Although the Nepalese Prime Minister has not disclosed the precise nature of Indian assistance, New Delhi is understood to have agreed to expedite supply of defence hardware to Kathmandu to combat the Maoist rebels.

The sensitive nature of Indian assistance to Nepal in the Himalayan kingdom was underscored by Nepalese ambassador to India B B Thapa when he told foreign correspondents here last evening that both the countries have to proceed with care and caution in the campaign against Maoists.

Power sector

FROM PAGE 1 Adamjee Jute Mills, the sources said.

Even the so-called restructuring steps like creation of Dhaka Electric Supply Company failed to improve revenue collection or management due to lack of will of the authorities, the sources said. Owned by DESA, the company is supposed to function like competitive private companies.

Increase of power tariff will not only have negative impact on the economy but also widen the scope of financial mismanagement in the sector, the experts said.

In the last ten years, when a new government came to power, it expressed the determination to take effective steps to realise the arrears. But in reality, nothing changed and the arrears kept on increasing.

"The donors have been forcing the government to implement their suggestions for what they say to bring about improvement in the sector". Loss making organisations like DESA and DESCO have been created and price of power increased after every six months but there has been no significant pressure from the donors to realise the arrears", said a high official of PDB.

"But we are under pressure from donors to clear the payment whenever we are late to pay the Power Grid Company of Bangladesh (PGCB) for one or two months", he

said. PGCB is also a brainchild of Asian Development Bank. Sources in PDB hinted that this time the increase might be ten poisa per unit as the immediate past Awami League government did not increase the rate in March this year and another five poisa increase was due in October.

The last increase was in November last year. At present the price of per unit of power is Tk 2.15 for domestic consumers, Tk 3.50 for small industries and Tk 4.65 for commercial use. The rate is Tk 1.75 for the agriculture sector, which is unchanged in the last several years.

WARPLANE The sources alleged that failing to get the appointees during the immediate past government's tenure 'punished' through the probe body, the group is now harassing them in different ways. This correspondent during a visit to the PIB saw indecent posters and letters in notice boards. A senior PIB official said the deadlock begun after end of the tenure of Sheikh Abdus Salam and it will continue till appointment of a new DG.

The sources said the government is looking for a new DG. The pro-BNP group is now trying to get appointed a DG of their choice.



PHOTO: STAR

Transport workers staged an anti-hartal demonstration in the city yesterday.

AL torch procession

FROM PAGE 1 They said at one stage police cordoned off the entire stretch of Bangabandhu Avenue and confined the AL supporters inside its central office premises. Police fired more than 20 rounds of tear gas canisters to disperse the processionists. They also picked up an unspecified number of pickets from the spot.

City AL General Secretary Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya and other AL leaders, who led the procession, termed the police action an infringement on democratic rights.

This is the first ever Awami League-sponsored hartal since the BNP-led four-party coalition government took office. Earlier on November 15, left-leaning political parties observed a six-hour country-wide general strike protesting the government plan on gas export.

During her five years in office, former prime minister Sheikh Hasina had promised not to call hartal even if her party were in the opposition. Now, the party says the government's post-election repres-

sion on the opposition activists and the Hindus has forced it to call hartal.

Several hundred police and paramilitary BDR personnel will be deployed at various strategic points in the city during the hartal hours to maintain law and order.

Meanwhile, AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman in a statement asked the party activists, leaders and others concerned to make the shutdown a success.

Earlier, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) imposed an indefinite ban on both stick and torch processions in the city.

Unlike the previous ruling party, the BNP will not bring out any anti-hartal procession during the hartal. "We won't take to streets as the Awami League did," Sadeque Hossain Khoka, the president of the BNP Dhaka city unit, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Adequate police forces will be deployed in the city to maintain law and order," he said. Police recovered about 150 tolas of gold worth Tk 15 lakh yesterday looted from jewellery shop owner by the muggers in front of the Public Health Department office on Friday night in the town.

Looted gold recovered in Sunamganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sunamganj

Police recovered about 150 tolas of gold worth Tk 15 lakh yesterday looted from jewellery shop owner by the muggers in front of the Public Health Department office on Friday night in the town. Four people were arrested in this connection. Some unidentified muggers in front of the Public Health Department office intercepted owner of the Suma Jeweller when he was carrying the gold in a briefcase from his shop. They decamped with the briefcase by showing knife.

Police rushed to the spot and arrested four people with the help of rickshawpullers in this connection. Arrested are Abdul Hanif, 20, Sangib Deb Nath, 18, Abdul Hasan, 20, and Biswanath Barman, 22 and recovered the gold at 2.00 am on Saturday. A case was filed with Sunamganj Sadar thana in this connection.

Major generals

FROM PAGE 1 Haider is joining as officiating chief of BDR.

General Wadood will join his new assignment upon his return from the US, where he is on training now.

Major General Jamil D Hshan who was on civil deputation for two years has been appointed Div Commander at Comilla. Earlier, General Hshan served as Director General of BISS. He was then appointed by the caretaker government to command the Ansar-VDP forces.

Brigadier General Manzurul Alam of Signals Corps will take over as the Officiating DG of Ansar-VDP after completion of NDC.

All the new appointees have been asked to join their new posts by December 3.

Major General Rafiqul Hossain was the first to be promoted to the rank of Major General from erstwhile Rakkhi Bahini. Brig. General Manzur is also from Rakkhi Bahini.

The army men serving as ambassadors abroad are Major General Anwar Hossain (Morocco), Major General Hasan Mashud Chowdhury (Abu Dhabi), Major General (Retd) Amin Ahmed Chowdhury (Oman) and Major General (Retd) Azizul Rahman (Bahrain).

The government is learnt to be considering more changes in key positions in the Army.

17 promoted

FROM PAGE 1 Shamsuzzoha, Joint Secretary in Finance Ministry; Khandaker Shahidul Islam, Registrar of Cooperative Department; Nazmul Alam Siddique, Director General of BT; Mohammad Ashraf, Director General of Relief Directorate and Mohammad Shahjahan, Joint Secretary in Food Ministry.

Their services have been placed at the establishment ministry for further posting, sources said.

The Superintendent Engineer of Facilities Department of Education Ministry, SFMA Mannan, has also been made OSD and his services placed at the establishment ministry.

Others working for the welfare of the victims were also attended the iftar party.

Nasrin Huq of Social Initiative said that they were happy that they could draw the attention of the prime minister to the agonies of the acid burn victims. Munira Rahman, Programme Director of Acid Survivor Foundation said, "We have drawn the attention of the Prime Minister for quick disposal of cases of acid violence and restriction on sale of acid".

Acid burn cases

FROM PAGE 1 The acid attack victims present on the occasion were Sonia, Khodeza, Nurunnahar, Salma, Ruma, Dolly, Lovely, Fazila, Asma, Mukti, Ferdousi, Rubina and Shahinur. A five-month old victim of acid violence, Mamun, was brought by his mother.

Among others, Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar, Finance and Planning Minister Saifur Rahman, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Communications Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda, Land Minister Shamsul Islam, Foreign Minister Mirshad Khan and Works Minister Mirza Abbas were present at the party.

Shahriar Kabir was arrested by the Special Branch of police on November 22 at Zia International Airport on his return from Kolkata. Later, he was charged with seditious and sent to jail with a 30-day detention. However any specific charge is yet to be brought against him.

Various human rights organisations from home and abroad have protested the government action and demanded his release.

Since October, Shahriar had been protesting attacks on the Hindus. He went to Kolkata to interview Bangladeshi Hindus who fled there recently following the attacks.

Deputy Attorney General Tariqul Hakim appeared on behalf of the state. Shahriar Kabir was arrested by the Special Branch of police on November 22 at Zia International Airport on his return from Kolkata. Later, he was charged with seditious and sent to jail with a 30-day detention. However any specific charge is yet to be brought against him.

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Collapse of footbridge railing: Negligence of builders blamed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gross negligence by the construction firm resulted in collapse of the huge concrete railing of the under-construction footbridge over Pragati Sarani at Badda on Monday, a Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) probe body report said yesterday.

The one-member body comprising DCC's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Nurul Huda submitted its report to acting Mayor Humayun Kabir.

One person was killed and 15 people were injured when the 60-ton structure collapsed on two motor vehicles.

The DCC has already black-listed the construction firm, Surma International.

Sources close to the probe body told The Daily Star yesterday that the firm was supposed to appoint its own 'traffic personnel' to ensure

security to vehicles and pedestrians during the construction work. But it did not do so. It also did not take proper security measures for the construction work.

Testifying before the probe body, the construction firm however claimed that the railing collapsed as some extortionists, being refused toll, tried to take away a hydraulic jack that was holding the railing, the sources said.

Huda said a show cause notice has been served on the firm and authorities will take action against it on the basis of the investigation report and the reply to the show cause notice.

Meanwhile, DCC engineers are preparing a report on conditions of existing and under-construction footbridges, as ordered by the Mayor Hanif after the Badda incident, the sources said.

Fate of CHT accord

FROM PAGE 1 tion of a new voter list, only enlisting permanent residents of the CHT.

The settlers say this would strip them of their constitutional rights as citizens and that the demand was ignored by the immediate past Awami League government which signed the treaty, the caretaker government and the Election Commission.

The PCJSS called a general strike on October 1 and stayed off the general elections.

It has now renewed its call to the government to 'fully implement' the accord.

PCJSS leader Jyotirindriya Bodhipriya Larma alias Shantu Larma, who is also Chairman of the Regional Council (RC) of CHT, has a host of other issues and has sought a meeting with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to resolve those, sources close to him said.

Besides, the issue of three hill district councils is yet to be resolved. The past government as per a High Court order only extended their tenure.

The last extension was made in

July this year and it expires on December 31. The councils were elected on June 25, 1989. The task before the new government is to hold their elections or extend their tenure again.

Another issue to be resolved is the demand by the settlers for their proper representation in the RC. Its 22 members including six settlers were nominated by the government, along with the chairman, in October 1998 after a long dispute with Larma over implementation of the accord.

Apart from these, the government faces the biggest challenge of maintaining law and order in the CHT.

PCJSS is at odds with those who broke away on the question of peace accord, demanding 'full autonomy'. There were a number of abductions of each other and clashes between the two sides.

Against this background, the new government perhaps wants to take 'cautious steps' regarding the CHT issue, sources pointed out.

AIDS: 2 foreigners

FROM PAGE 12 condition did not improve. He was then sent to Dhaka central Jail and from there, he was shifted to Banghabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital for further tests.

Three days after he tested positive, the jail authorities got him admitted to IDH on July 7.

While talking to this correspondent, deeply frustrated Dong said, "I don't want to lead such a life. I want to go back to my family, please help me."

He also said, "This is where I am going die and I am counting my days. I witnessed Awang Maung's (a Myanmar national with AIDS) death in the next bed and perhaps the others here would see me die the same way."

Yuan, who cannot speak Bangla and also does not understand it, expressed similar frustration through gestures. None from the Thai Embassy in Dhaka came to see him, the hospital authorities said.

After six years of confinement, 28-year-old Awang Maung died in the same room in May this year.

Maung also was arrested for illegal fishing. As he failed to pay a fine of Tk 2000, he was sent to Khulna Central Jail for 15 days. Maung attempted to commit suicide twice. He left behind his wife and a six-year-old daughter.

Dr Md Kauser Ali, who is in charge of the hospital, said he witnessed death of 25 AIDS patients

at the hospital. "The government has no separate funds for AIDS patients. They get normal diet and apart from vitamins, they get no special drugs."

When contacted, home ministry officials said such convicts cannot be released despite completion of their jail term. But efforts are underway to send them back to their respective countries. "Unfortunately the missions concerned refuse to recognise them as their nationals," said one Jail official.

CHT situation

FROM PAGE 1 that the situation in the CHT was deteriorating again. The collaborators of 'previous dictators' are spreading tension among the tribal people which is not desirable, she said.

She reminded all that those in power now have opposed the peace accord.

Hasina said that her government was able to make a lot of progress in establishing peace in the country without any support from a third party. She said the AL government had taken up a massive development programme of Tk 2,149.17 crore to develop CHT region.

Approval was also given to set up a science and technology university in the area, she added.

She pledged for her continuous efforts to establish peace in the area saying that Awami League is committed to implementation of the peace accord.

JS sits today

FROM PAGE 1 Sircar, the prime minister and Roushan Ershad, leading the pro-Ershad Jatiya Party MPs, are expected to deliver their valedictory speeches during the last sitting.

Beginning its journey on October 28, the first session of the new parliament has so far suffered heavily owing to unmatched record of absence of the lawmakers in the largest ever treasury bench comprising 216 members. The senior parliamentarians apart, most of the young and new MPs appeared to have lost interests in the dull proceedings, if the attendance register is anything to go by.

Leader of the House Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and most of the ministers were irregular and the ordinary MPs followed suit. A section of the opposition consisting of the two Jatiya Party factions, the Krishak Samik Janata League and six independent members was no exception while the largest opposition AL stayed off the House since the very first sitting.

The crisis of quorum - presence of at least 60 members in the 300-strong House - had forced adjournment of the proceedings on one occasion while the speaker continued running the business without quorum on several occasions as no one had brought the crisis to his notice. The quorum crisis also caused delay in the scheduled start of all but the first two sittings.

The otherwise dull proceedings

of the parliament that had 18 working days until today witnessed the treasury bench members playing devil's advocate apparently because of absence of their arch rivals in the AL and a faction of opposition still loyal to the government.

Verbal salvo involving MPs and ministers and the speaker dominated the proceedings almost regularly. Ministers came under verbal attacks on several occasions either for their absence or for not performing as per will of the treasury benchers who did not spare even the speaker for his intervention in the free-style deliberations in the House. The legislators also went after each other over many an issue.

The 35-day old eighth parliament is yet to form its standing committees on different ministries, which are intended to scrutinise performance of the government. So far, the Business Advisory Committee, the House Committee and the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions have come into being. However, the AL representatives are yet to attend meetings of those committees for obvious reason.

The prime minister answered questions from the lawmakers only on last Wednesday while the parliament did not sit on four other Wednesdays scheduled for the PM's Question Time.