

PM to inaugurate construction of Mohakhali flyover Dec 19

UNB, Dhaka
Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will inaugurate the construction work of a flyover at Mohakhali on December 19 as part of a plan to rid the capital of nagging traffic jams.

To ease growing traffic congestion in the city, Roads and Highways Department (RHD) is implementing the Tk 113.52 crore scheme under the Urban Transport Project, financed by the World Bank.

The RHD and Chinese Construction firm China First Metallurgical Construction Corporation yesterday signed an agreement with regard to construction of the flyover.

GM of the Chinese firm Geo Zhao Jun and Chief Engineer of the R&H Department Fazlul Huq signed the deal on behalf of their respective sides.

Communications Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda, State Minister Salahuddin Ahmed and Communications Secretary Syed Rezaul Hayat were present in the signing ceremony.

The one-kilometre flyover will have four lanes of 17.9-metre width each.

SAARC Summit Nepalese special envoy extends official invitation to Khaleda

UNB, Dhaka

Nepalese Prime Minister's Special Envoy Mahesh Acharya here yesterday called on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and extended an official invitation to her to attend the SAARC Summit in Kathmandu from January 4-6.

Acharya, the Nepalese Minister for Agriculture and Cooperatives, said preparations for the Summit were going on in full swing and the Nepalese Prime Minister was eagerly waiting to welcome her and other regional leaders.

The Nepalese envoy expressed his confidence that as the former Chairperson of the regional forum Khaleda Zia will significantly contribute to a grand success of the summit.

Acharya said regional cooperation is gaining importance in the present perspective of the global scenario.

In this context, he praised the vision and idea of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman who played the leading role in the formation of the seven-nation SAARC.

The Nepalese minister congratulated Khaleda Zia for her party's landslide victory in the last parliamentary election.

He also lauded the steps including the 100-day programme of the present government to revitalise the economy and ensure social development.

Khaleda Zia conveyed through the envoy her best wishes to the Nepalese Prime Minister. She said Bangladesh has a special relationship with Nepal, which was established during late President Ziaur Rahman's period, and it will continue to be strengthened.

Apart from regional cooperation, bilateral issues including economic cooperation and trade relations also came up for discussion during the meeting at the PM's Office.

Nepalese Charge d'Affaires Arun Prasad Dhital, PM's Principal Secretary Dr Kamal Uddin Siddiqi and Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury were present on the occasion.

Armed gang captures garment factory owned by Selim Osman at Fatullah

UNB, N'ganj

Armed terrorists captured an export-oriented garments factory at Dapa Ikradpur in Fatullah thana yesterday morning.

Witnesses said some 150 hoodlums stormed the apparel factory, "Wisdom Attires" owned by AKM Selim Osman, the elder brother of former Awami League MP AKM Shamim Osman.

They also beat up the security men at the main gate of the factory as they tried to resist them.

Authorities of the garment factory, set up on over seven acres of land, said there were imported yarn worth Tk 6.27 crore inside the building apart from its machinery and

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Govt decides to implement major election pledges

REZAUZ KARIM

The BNP-led alliance government has finalised the decision to implement some of its election commitments like repeal of Special Powers Act (SPA), 1974 and Public Safety Act (PSA), 2000, separation of the judiciary from the executive, restoration of women's reserved seats and autonomy of the Bangladesh Betar and Television.

Apart from the autonomy of the electronic media, the government would table all other issues in the next session of the Jatiya Sangsad, a highly placed source in the BNP said.

The main objective of the move is to stop political persecution on opponents and to establish the rule of law and independence of the judiciary.

Moreover, the government will soon set up a special tribunal for speedy trial of acid attackers. The tribunal will also try the cases of repression on women and children, kidnapping and child trafficking.

ABNP policymaker told The Daily Star yesterday that Prime Minister Khaleda Zia was all too concerned about the growing incidents of acid attacks and instructed the law ministry to formulate necessary laws, only if there

was any legal limitation, to strictly check the sale of acid and its abuse.

Khaleda also gave instructions for necessary steps against sale, distribution and abuse of other harmful materials. The work for establishment of a special tribunal is going on in earnest.

Moreover, Khaleda has given an instruction to all authorities concerned to take up programmes providing employment opportunities and rehabilitating the acid victims.

About the law passed by the previous Awami League (AL) government on autonomy of the electronic media, the frontline leader said the AL government in the name of autonomy strictly controlled them.

He said the government would also formulate a unified policy for the private radio and television channels in the country so that none could broadcast whatever they wish.

Another senior leader said the government might take time to give autonomy to the Bangladesh Betar and Television to formulate a realistic policy. The autonomy

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PM's directive Ensure public safety at markets, launch & bus terminals

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday asked law-enforcement authorities to ensure public security in market places, bus and launch terminals, rail stations and highways ahead of the holy Eid-ul-Fitr.

She directed the police to strengthen their drive for arresting identified terrorists and recovering illegal arms.

The prime minister gave the instruction at the 8th meeting of the cabinet committee on law and order she chaired at the PM office in the afternoon.

She instructed the authorities concerned to increase security measures at market places and

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Prime Minister Khaleda Zia presiding over a meeting of the cabinet committee on law and order at her office yesterday.

Geologists oppose gas export before meeting domestic need

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leading geologists of the country and other speakers at a discussion yesterday vehemently opposed the idea of gas export before meeting domestic demand.

Criticising the government's stance on gas export, they said the net benefit of gas export would be very negligible.

They suggested the government stop pilferage in the energy sector and use gas for economic benefits, making it available to every corner of the country.

Bangladesh Geological Society organised the discussion at the Jatiya Press Club auditorium.

Three keynote papers were presented at the discussion chaired by Rafiqul Islam, former additional secretary of planning ministry. One of the papers, 'Demand and Supply of Gas: Bangladesh Perspective', was jointly prepared by former Petrobangla chairman S K M Abdullah and former PDB chairman Nuruddin Mahmud Kamal.

Another paper, 'Critical Observation on Energy Issues of Bangladesh', was presented by

Prof. Nurul Islam, director of the Institute of Appropriate Technology, BUET.

On the other hand, Dr. Aftab Alam of the geology department of Dhaka University presented his paper on 'Gas export: A Suicidal Decision'.

Prof. Abul Barakat of Dhaka University, Prof. Khalilur Rahman of Jahangirnagar University, and Prof. Monirul Haq of Dhaka University were the key speakers.

Talking about the earning from gas export, the geologists said the government can save that much amount by simply stopping pilferage in the power and energy sector.

The government suffers a staggering Tk 1100 crore in loss every year due to systems loss in the power and gas sector. On the other hand, the net earning from gas export is estimated to be only Tk 1000 crore annually, they pointed out.

So, the government should ignore the propaganda by the international oil companies (IOCs) to export gas as these companies plan to plunder the country's mineral

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Laden's 'hideouts' attacked

REUTERS, Kabul

Afghan tribesmen and US bombers attacked suspected mountain cave hideouts of fugitive Osama bin Laden yesterday as Afghan factions clinched a power-sharing deal in Bonn.

Anti-Taliban commander Hazrat Ali said US aircraft kept up air strikes on targets in the rugged Tora Bora region, about 55-km south of the eastern city of Jalalabad.

"We have taken some areas which they (bin Laden's men) left around Tora Bora," he told Reuters by satellite phone from Jalalabad. "They pulled out from these areas without a fight."

A Soviet-era tank was firing at positions being simultaneously bombed by US planes, CNN reported from the scene. The tribesmen, also using rocket-propelled grenades and machineguns, were about two-km from their Taliban foes and suspected members of bin Laden's al Qaeda network.

The ground attacks were being met by small-arms fire, CNN said. Pashtun tribal chief Hamid

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Two murdered in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two people were murdered in separate incidents in the city yesterday.

Miscrants killed an unidentified young man at Botanical Garden in the city's Mirpur area last night.

The body, found tied up with a tree in the garden, bore marks of injuries in his back and legs.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morgue for autopsy at 10:30 pm last night.

An unnatural death case was filed with the police in this regard.

In another incident, a young man was shot dead by unidentified miscrants at Agargaon in city's Tejgaon area yesterday morning.

The identity of the man could not be known immediately.

Tejgaon police recovered the body from under a tree near the Radio Station at Agargaon at about 5 am after being informed through a telephone call.

Police said that unidentified men brought the victim to the Pangu Hospital in the early morning where attending doctors declared him dead. The men accompanying the victim said they would take his body to the DMCH morgue. Instead they dumped the body under the tree and fled the scene.

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Top Bodo faction to give up demand for separate land

AFF, Guwahati

A prominent tribal group in India's northeastern Assam state said yesterday it was giving up its demand for a separate homeland, raising hopes for an end to 15 years of violent insurrection.

"We have decided to give up our demand for a separate Bodoland state and instead want a Bodoland Territorial Council," said Rabiram Narzary, president of the radical All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) which has been spearheading the statehood movement.

"The creation of the council would help bring back peace and unity among the Bodos and non-Bodos residing in the Bodoland area," Narzary told AFP.

At least 10,000 Bodos marched through the streets of Assam's provincial capital Guwahati demanding a green light from the federal government to set up the council in the Bodo-dominated western Assam districts of Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon.

"On our part, we have climbed down from our original demand for a separate tribal homeland and now it is for the federal and the state governments to immediately create a

territorial council," Pramila Rani Brahma, a Bodo woman legislator in Assam, said.

"If the government ignores our demand there will be bloodshed once again with militant groups taking advantage of the common people's anger," she added.

At least 5,000 people have died since the agitation for a separate Bodo tribal homeland began in 1978, with two rebel groups hijacking the statehood movement and launching a guerrilla war to achieve independence.

The demand for a Bodo state sparked off violent ethnic clashes in the region with the majority Bodos attacking the tribal Santhals.

Some 2,000 Santhals, a community of tea garden labourers who migrated into Assam in the 19th century from eastern India, died in the clashes, while up to 200,000 were rendered homeless.

The Bodo movement leaders pledged that all non-Bodos could live peacefully in the region if the government met their demand for a territorial council.

The federal government earlier said it had no objection to granting more powers to the Bodo people

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Demolition of illegal structures along Buriganga ordered

UNB, Dhaka

The government has directed the authorities concerned to demolish on sight any new illegal structures on the banks of river Buriganga.

It also directed the law-enforcing agencies to arrest the persons involved in building illegal structures and take legal action against them.

Shipping Minister Lt Col Akbar Hossain (Retd) gave these directives while visiting the work on improvement of navigability of the river Buriganga and providing landing facilities from Sadarghat to Ashulia under 'introducing river route surrounding Dhaka city' project yesterday.

He said none has the right to capture the riverside areas or fill up the river route.

The main objective of the Tk 40.5-crore project is dredging the river to improve its navigability and setting up 12 terminals at different sties of the river. The primary work on the project has already begun.

The project will help improve transportation in the city area and curb traffic jam, facilitate irrigation and fisheries, boost tourism and improve the capital's environment.

Drive in city to drive out faulty vehicles



Drive against vehicles emitting black smoke has been launched in the city. Photo shows an employee of the Directorate of Environment checking a bus yesterday.

ABUL KALAM AZAD

The government at long last has started drive in the city to seize faulty vehicles emitting black smoke and causing environment pollution.

The drive began in the city's Sayedabad area yesterday under the supervision of the Directorate of Environment. A mobile team led by Metropolitan Magistrate M Shafiq Anwar initiated the drive.

Earlier, the government imposed a 'ban' on old vehicles in the city 'which do not possess registration, road permits and fitness certificates.'

The BRTA (Bangladesh Road Transport Authority) in a circular issued on November 15 banned plying of trucks over 25 years in service, buses and minibuses over 20 years in service, autorickshaws and tempos with two-stroke engines and delivery vans registered before January 1, 1993 on city roads.

The action was taken to reduce air pollution, traffic jam and road accidents but such vehicles have been plying the city roads with virtual immunity, creating scope for the corrupt law enforcers and officials to earn money illegally.

Plying of such vehicles solely

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DUTA election on Dec 11 Pink Panel to remain out of fray this yr

DU CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-backed White Panel and the Awami League-backed Blue Panel will be the two contestants in the December 11 election of Dhaka University Teachers Association (DUTA).

The left-leaning group of teachers, who used to participate in the polls under the Pink Panel, will remain out of the fray this year due to "strategic reason", according to their leader Prof. Abu Zafar.

Prof. AFM Yusuf Haidar and Dr. Earul Kabir will run for the posts of DUTA president and general-secretary respectively from the White Panel. Blue Panel's candidates for the posts are Prof. AZM Nowsher Ali and Sharif Ullah Bhuiyan. Bhuiyan is the incumbent general-secretary of DUTA.

Other nominees of the White Panel are: Vice-president Prof. Abul Khaer, treasurer -- Prof. Anwar Hossain and joint secretary -- Tahmina Akhtar Tofy.

The Blue Panel's candidates for

the posts of vice-president, treasurer and joint secretary are Prof. Hossain Monsur, Mahfuzur Rahman and Dr. Mujib Uddin Ahmed respectively.

White Panel's candidates for the 10 posts of executive members are Prof. Abu Ahmed, Prof. Abul Kalam Monzur Morshed, Prof. AKM Sirajul Islam Khan, Prof. Tajmeri SA Islam, Prof. Mohammad Abul Bashar, Prof. Mohammad Asaduzzaman, Mohammad Ferdous Hasan, Dr. Mohammad Mahbubur Rahman, Prof. Sayed Abul Kalam Azad and Prof. Sayed Rashidul Hasan.

The member candidates from the Blue Panel are incumbent DUTA President Prof. Aminur Rashid, Prof. AAMS Arefin Siddique, Prof. Tofael Ahmed, Prof. Anwar Hossain, Dr. Nazma Shahin, Prof. Khondokar Ashraf Hossain, Prof. Ashraf Uddin Chowdhury, Prof. Sultana Shafi, Prof. SM Imamul Haque and Dr. Ajay Kumar Das.

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News Analysis

Jayalalitha's changing colour



PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Now that a High Court has cleared Jaiaram Jayalalitha, the film star-turned-politician in southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, of corruption charges, speculation is rife in political circles here that she may again join hands with India's ruling alliance headed by Prime Minister AB Vajpayee.

But most political observers here do not expect immediate realignment of forces bringing together BJP and Jayalalitha's party All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) because her sworn rival M Karunanidhi and his party Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) is already an ally of the saffron party.

But analysts have not failed to note signs of warming up of relations between BJP and AIADMK in the last few months. Although, Jayalalitha had tied up with Sonia Gandhi-led Congress to contest the assembly elections in Tamil Nadu in April this year which gave her party landslide victory in the state, she has chosen to maintain distance from that party after the polls.

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'Kala' Jahangir's wife, bodyguard arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A team of the detective branch of police yesterday arrested the wife of notorious terrorist Kala Jahangir and his bodyguard from a residence in the city's Uttara area.

The detectives raided a residence at Road No 8 in Uttara and arrested Momtaz Akther alias Sonia Akther and Mohammad Shafiq, 22, at about 11:30 am.

They were arrested under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).

The team also seized some documents, mobile telephone sets, and bottles of phensidyl and whisky.