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JS session from today: AL to stay out

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The eighth Jatiya Sangsad goes into its second session at 10 this morning with the main opposition Awami League (AL) sticking to its decision of staying out of the House.

President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury is scheduled to address the opening sitting of the session, highlighting the policies and programmes of the BNP-led coalition government.

The second session will run through March 18, according to a decision of the parliament's Business Advisory Committee (BAC) taken at a meeting yesterday. Chaired by Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar, the meeting also discussed different agenda of the session that may linger, provided fresh issues come up for disposal.

According to the parliament secretariat sources, the House would be adjourned immediately after the newly elected president addresses the House. The House will

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Meeting on UZ Parishad ends inconclusively

REZAUL KARIM

A meeting of the cabinet sub-committee to finalise the modality of the Upazila Parishad ended inconclusively yesterday following a stormy debate about whether the body will be reintroduced or not.

Held at Bangladesh Secretariat with committee Chairman and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan in the chair, the fourth sub-committee meeting failed to finalise the modality of the Upazila as a member strongly opposed the concept of this local

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SH Imam

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Breath of fresh air

Auto-rickshaws keep off roads, BRTA vows more stringent steps



PHOTO STAR

Auto-rickshaw drivers lined up their vehicles at the roadside in Old Dhaka yesterday to protest the government decision to slap ban on the movement of fitness-expired vehicles.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka city dwellers yesterday had less toxic air to breathe thanks to the absence of pollutants-spewing two-stroke three wheelers. However, many office goers had to dig into their purse with little alternatives available to commute.

Protesting a government decision to slap a ban on the movement of autorickshaws and tempos having no fitness certificates, most three-wheelers remained off the city roads yesterday at the call of the Dhaka Auto-rickshaw Employees Union.

As a result, the city thoroughfares were free of traffic jam in absence of some 60,000 three-wheelers.

Meantime, some 13 associations of auto-rickshaw and tempo owners, drivers and employees are likely to announce today an indefinite strike from a rally at the Pallan Maidan.

Despite all the threats, the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) has asked owners of two-stroke auto-rickshaws to update their documents by February 18; otherwise, they cannot ply the city streets.

The move is part of stringent measures to check air pollution and ease traffic jam in the city.

Top BRTA officials said the two-stroke auto-rickshaws have to have fitness certificates, route permits and tax tokens and display the foolproof stickers on the windshield. Auto-rickshaws found without proper documents would be impounded.

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PHOTO STAR

Publishers ready stalls at the Bangla Academy yesterday ahead of the month-long Ekushey Book Fair beginning on February 1.

PSI system, licences of money changers may go

Saifur hints at meeting with FBCCI team

SHAHRIAR KARIM

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman has hinted at abolishing the pre-shipment inspection (PSI) system and cancelling licences of money exchange houses, expressing doubts about the whole mechanism.

"I am really doubtful whether the system (PSI) is working. So far, my impression is that it has not fulfilled its aims. We will look into the whole system and if necessary, abolish it," Saifur told a delegation of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) at a meeting yesterday.

The minister also questioned the

rationale behind giving licences to money exchange firms saying, "When there are banks working in foreign exchange sector, what is the necessity of allowing those firms?"

He also hinted that there could be a link between money exchange firms and hundi business.

Meantime, against the backdrop of such allegations, a committee headed by Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed is evaluating performance of the money exchange firms and the whole system.

"Based on the report of the committee, if necessary, we might take a decision to cancel licences of the money exchange firms," Saifur said.

Finance Secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan and Chairman of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) Dr Shoyeb Ahmed Chowdhury were present at the meeting held at the NEC auditorium in the city.

The FBCCI delegation led by its President Yussuf Abdullah Haroon also made different allegations against the PSI companies and said 'discretionary powers' were vitiating the system. They also suggested that PSI system should be run in a transparent manner or scrapped.

The minister said it is 'not realistic' to give the onus of overseeing the

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Regional power projects: ADB shows interest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) indicated yesterday it might take interest in financing viable regional projects in the energy sector, identified by South Asian Regional Initiative/Energy (SARI/Energy), sources said.

The two-day fourth semi-annual meeting of the USAID sponsored SARI/Energy ended in the city yesterday, working out a training schedule for 2002 for selected people in energy sector in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Bhutan.

Energy sector officials and experts from US, Bangladesh, India, Nepal Bhutan, Sri Lanka and the Maldives took part in the meeting. They discussed, among many

regional energy issues, a pre-feasibility study for power wheeling between Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Bhutan.

Since its launching in Kathmandu in December '99, SARI had one meeting in Delhi and another in Colombo.

ADB's S Chander, principal project engineer from Manila, had a presentation on regional energy activities at the meeting yesterday.

A local participant in the meeting told The Daily Star, "SARI will conduct only feasibility studies and training programmes, but they are not going to finance the projects."

According to him, ADB representative said ADB would discuss the possibility of financing regional

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Govt urges people not to take law in own hands

UNB, Dhaka

The government yesterday asked police to prevent recurrence of incidents of lynching and urged the people not to take law in their own hands.

The appeal came from Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury while he was briefing newsmen at his office in the afternoon only a couple of days after three alleged muggers were beaten and burned to death at Motijheel.

"We seek people's cooperation in preventing crimes but don't support them to take law in their own hands... any civilized society will not support it," Chowdhury said referring to Monday's Motijheel incident.

At least two dozen people have been beaten to death in the last couple of months.

"I have requested the people to

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Another alleged mugger beaten to death in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An alleged mugger was beaten to death and another critically injured by a group of students of Agriculture University at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the city yesterday.

The students caught Mohammad Salauddin, 25, and Harun Ahmed, 24, at about 9:45 am while the two were trying to flee after snatching a gold chain from a female student in front of the university.

They beat up the alleged muggers mercilessly and later handed them over to police.

Police sent the muggers to Pangu Hospital (Orthopedic Hospital) where Salauddin succumbed to his injuries at noon.

The body of Salauddin was sent to DMCH for autopsy. A case was registered with Tejgaon thana.

Meanwhile, three alleged muggers were burned to death by a mob in Motijheel Commercial Area in the city on Monday.

Shibir threatens to confine CU VC in house till he resigns

CU CORRESPONDENT

Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) at the Chittagong University has threatened to confine its vice-chancellor in his residence until he steps down.

The ICS made the declaration at a rally at the administrative building yesterday. The ICS will launch tougher programmes to end the stalemate facing the university, ICS leaders threatened.

Terming the VC's speeches published in newspapers false, they said that if the situation would go worse, only the VC would be responsible. They will also seek the government's intervention to resolve the stand-off, the leaders said.

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Law soon to dissolve local bodies on expiry of term

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to introduce a law providing for dissolution of the elected local government bodies Union Parishad, Pourasabha and City Corporation on completion of their tenure.

Under the existing law, those elected to these bodies continue till holding of new elections. Tenure of the elected bodies is five years.

According to the proposed law, the government will appoint administrators for the local bodies for the

interim period between dissolution of the old ones and election of new ones.

Officials said the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development yesterday sent a note on the planned law to the Ministry of Law for preparing a draft. The LGRD Ministry may place the draft law at the next Cabinet meeting for its approval.

After the cabinet's approval, a bill in this regard is likely to be moved in the parliament session beginning today.

The decision for the new law was taken at a meeting of the cabinet sub-committee on local government yesterday with its chairman and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan in the chair.

It was attended by four of the five committee members Health Minister Dr. Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, Industries Minister M K Anwar and Communications Minister Nazmul Huda.

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When death descends

Siamese twins die at ICU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Grief and a sense of loss descended on the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the Dhaka Shishu Hospital (DSH) last night, as both the Siamese twins died yesterday.

One of the twins died yesterday morning. The baby surviving on a life-saving apparatus died from acidosis (presence of acids in the blood beyond normal limits).

As reported from the ICU at 11 last night, the ventilator on which the second baby was surviving after she

was declared brain-dead also died.

About the baby who died in the morning, Prof. AFM Masood, the paediatric surgeon who led the operation on Tuesday, said, "The baby died at 10 in the morning from acidosis. Normally, the pH should be 7.3, but it continued to decline. As a result, acids rose beyond the tolerable limit."

"The second baby is also going to die within an hour," the doctor said.

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NCTB has to print 26 lakh more books

STAR REPORT

The secondary-level students are already into one month of the current academic year and yet the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) has not met its deadline to print and distribute the textbooks among the students. It has now ordered fresh printing of 26.50 lakh additional books just yesterday, a day before the deadline ends.

The NCTB initiated printing of fresh books after it detected a serious shortfall of textbooks that caused scarcity in the market. As it

appears today, the situation would remain unchanged for at least another month.

Sources said 70 printing companies were given the task to print 39 categories of books of class IV to IX. The printers are supposed to deliver the books within a week and would get about Tk 60 lakh for the job.

Now the printers say they would start distribution of the books within a week. But according to NCTB procedures, the printers have to buy paper before obtaining print orders.

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