

Huda warns against move to subvert three-wheeler ban

UNB, Dhaka

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda in statement yesterday warned of taking stern action against those who will oppose the government rehabilitation programme on banning the two-stroke three-wheelers in the city. "Law will take its own course if the rehabilitation offer is not utilised," he said. There is no scope to politicise the decision of banning the two-stroke three-wheelers in the city, he added.

He invited the auto-tempo, auto-rickshaw, auto-truck Malik-Sramik Oikya Parishad leaders and members to accept the offer made ahead of the ban coming into force from September 1.

Although, movement of the two-stroke three-wheelers will be banned in the city from September 1, scope is still there outside the city, and many people have already started plying their two-stroke three-wheelers in the districts, he said.

Besides, the communications ministry has taken massive programme to rehabilitate the owners and workers of the two-stroke three-wheelers, he said.

He mentioned offers to lease out 100 BRTC buses among the cooperatives of the affected owners and workers, open LCs for 5,000 BRTC taxicabs, distribution of 5,000 CNG-operated vehicles and four-stroke auto-rickshaws and provide training to the drivers of the two-stroke three-wheelers and effort to arrange bank loans for them.

He also mentioned the immediate issuance of cost-free route-permit for plying of two-stroke three-wheelers on the national and regional highways and A-type feeder roads.

"Despite all these, some leaders of Dhaka Auto-tempo, Auto-rickshaw, Auto-truck Malik Sramik Oikya Parishad are trying to confuse the general members of the parishad in the name of opinion-exchange meeting with the participation of some opposition leaders, and politicise the government move against environment pollution," Huda said.

He, however, asked the owners and workers of the two-stroke three-wheelers to enlist their names in

Hasina protests police action on AL men

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday strongly condemned and protested the police action on Awami League leaders and workers across the country.

"It is not possible to stop the forward march of Awami League through torture and repression," the opposition leader said in a statement.

She alleged that police and cadres of the alliance government yesterday launched attacks on Awami League workers, damaged offices of the party and obstructed feeding the destitute and milads during the national mourning day programme.

Hasina said police arrested former State Minister Abdur Rouf Chowdhury, AL leaders Sayed Hossain, Haji Momen, Mohammad Ali, Qamrul Morshed Khoka, and BCL leaders Golam Sarwar Kabir and Nasir.

Dhaka University BCL leader Delwar Hossain was seriously injured in police action, she said and demanded immediate release of all arrested leaders and workers.

Slum fire at Mohammadpur kills one

BSS, Dhaka

A minor girl was burnt alive in a devastating fire at a slum at Mohammadia Housing in city's Mohammadpur area yesterday.

Police and Fire Brigade officials said the fire originated from an oven at about 3:45 PM and soon engulfed the entire slum. Five fire fighting units rushed to the spot and extinguished the blaze after fighting for nearly 45 minutes.

Khaleda's birthday

FROM PAGE 12

Minister all the best presenting her with bouquets.

Senior leaders, including BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Khandoker Mosharraf Hossain, KM Obaidur Rahman, Meer Shawkat Ali, Tanveer Ahmed Siddiqui, Sadek Hossain Khoka, Mirza Abbas, Khandoker Delwar Hossain, Khurshid Jahan Haq and Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, first greeted the Prime Minister.

Academics, professionals and elite of society, apart from the politicians, also came to greet Khaleda on her birthday.

JICA to help improve quality of pry education

BSS, Dhaka

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) would give more importance to quality primary education in Bangladesh through extending its technical supports to improve teaching and learning in the educational institutes.

"The quality primary education can only be achieved by improving the teaching and learning situation. And hence JICA attaches more importance to increase attendance at schools and discourage drop outs as well," Takasi Sakamoto, Resident Representative of JICA Bangladesh, told this at a seminar in Dhaka on Wednesday.

Sakamoto said with a view to providing technical cooperation to primary and non-formal educational institutes and to study the best cooperation area in the sector, JICA has so far dispatched three long term experts under the Department of Primary Education and Department of Non-formal Education in the country.

Sakamoto was speaking at a seminar on the outcome of the "Formative Study on Intensive District Approach to Education for All (IDEAL)" held at the BIAM auditorium here.

The IDEAL is a JICA/UNICEF supported project aimed at improving the quality of education. Recently the Japanese government gave US dollar 2.1 million to the IDEAL project for conducting study on it.

A study on IDEAL shows that teachers play an important role in improving the quality of education and that there is a need for streamlining, consolidation, monitoring and internalisation under IDEAL project.

As of 2002, IDEAL is being implemented in 35 districts. The project was formulated in 1996 with assistance of UNICEF and has currently taken the shape of a multi-donor cooperation project.

Locals said the ansars fired about 100 gunshots creating panic in the locality. Some police constables camping in the area left the scene to escape the shootout, said Mahbubur Rahman, officer-in-charge of the Ramna Police Station.

As the shooting continued, additional police forces rushed to the spot and lobbed teargas shells to disperse the crowd. "Soon, it turned into a gory scene with bullet-hit people lying around and groaning in pain," said a local, who did not want to be named. "People were

The 6th GP course ends in Dhaka

The certificate award ceremony of the sixth Post Graduate Diploma in NGO Leadership and Management was held on Aug 14 at BRAC Centre, says a press release.

Pro-Vice Chancellor of North South University Prof Hafiz G A Siddiqi was the chief guest of the ceremony organised by the Global Partnership (GP).

A total of 19 students from Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Zimbabwe and Bangladesh successfully completed the course.

The GP for NGO studies education and training is a consortium of educational centers established by BRAC, Organisation of Rural Association of Progress (ORAP) in Zimbabwe and School for International Training in the United States.

It offers a post-graduate diploma as well as a Master's degree specifically designed for managers in the NGO sector.

With its centers in Africa, Asia, and North America, the programme is uniquely capable of facilitating South-South and North-South learning.

Shazneen case

FROM PAGE 1

Dhaka, filed a rape case with the same police station against seven people, including Shahid after six months' investigation into the Shazneen murder case.

Accused Shahid, Hasan, Shaniram, Badal, Minu and Parvin were not produced in the court due to hartal.

Agarwal, Modi

FROM PAGE 12 emphasis on their involvement in hundi transaction or manipulation of loan rules.

The BB is also going through the bank transactions of Doel Group owned by Deokinandan Kejrival and Ashok Kejrival. It is also probing whether false documents were used to draw cash assistance against apparel exports, according to sources.

Authorities concerned are thinking to engage other investigation agencies to track the Marwari businessmen's alleged involvement in money laundering.

The decision was taken in view of the presence of the large hundi curtain in the country that has overseas connection. In November 1999, one BB study revealed hundi transaction of TK 1,100 crore through different local and foreign banks.

At that time, one Nasrat Fateh Ali was accused of using the local banking system for hundi transactions.

Reports were published in the media that Giridhari had connection with the 'syndicate bank' of Faruk Ahmed Kajol in Koatchandpur, Jhenidah. Kajol allured people to deposit money in his so-called bank offering a 12 per cent interest per month.

2 ministries at loggerheads over CNG operations

UNB, Dhaka

The prime minister herself may have to intervene to resolve a staggering dispute between the energy and the communications ministries over CNG operations as the contention held back an emerging industry.

The two ministries are at loggerheads over who should have the authority to permit compressed natural gas (CNG) stations. And neither wants to retreat from their respective position, sources concerned said.

The energy and mineral resources ministry considers Ruptanarita Prakritik Gas Company Ltd (RPGCL), a subsidiary of Petrobranga, as the only authority to permit CNG stations.

But communications ministry thinks it should have the final say as most of the CNG stations are planned to be set up on the lands of either its railway or roads and high-ways divisions.

4 killed in city

FROM PAGE 1

Niamul, 30, Zahid, 20, Shahinur, 20, Abdullah, 25 and Shahid Iqbal.

Some 1,000 devotees gathered at the mosque site in the afternoon and attempted to offer Asr prayer there by knocking down the mosque's boundary. As they announced their plan through loud speakers, the some local youths came out of the mosque.

The two groups started throwing bricksbats at each other and continued fighting for more than an hour. Several crackers were also exploded during the fight.

This prompted the ansars from a nearby camp to open fire on the feuding groups, killing three and injuring 10 others, according to witnesses.

Witnesses also claimed to have seen some youths shooting at the devotees from rifles taken from the ansars. Litan, a local youth, is among the witnesses.

The mosque inside the T&T Colony was built on a 20-katha land donated by one Emdad some eight years ago.

On Monday, the authorities evicted about a dozen families living on the mosque complex. Some locals supported the eviction drive.

Janina Begum, one of the victims of eviction, said her family was permitted to reside there by the donor of the land seven years ago.

BTTB cell phone project on

FROM PAGE 1

Earlier, the ambitious mobile phone project with an estimated cost of Tk 2,500 crore was rejected by the ECNEC on the ground of being 'uneconomic and unrealistic'.

The ECNEC said instead of spending Tk 2,500 crore for 10 lakh mobiles, the BTTB must become realistic and reduce the number to 2.5 lakh.

According to an estimate, the country's projected demand for phones in the next five years is 35 lakh. Currently, there are about nine lakh mobile phones and about 6.5 lakh fixed telephones.

The BTTB would float tender for the project and hope that both local and foreign companies would participate in the bid, Posts and Telecommunications Minister Aminul Haque said.

"The project would help reduce the demand of telephony to a greater extent," BTTB Chairman SATM Badrul Hoque earlier told The Daily Star.

The BTTB mobile would be Global System of Mobile communications (GSM) having hi-tech and futuristic Mobile Virtual Private

Network (MVPN), General Packet Radio Service (GPRS), Wireless Application Protocol (WAP), Short Message Service (SMS), and Intelligent Network (IN), sources said.

He said funds for the project could be tapped through selling bonds to non-resident Bangladeshis.

The country with a population of 13 crore has a total of about 15.5 lakh telephones provided by the state-owned BTTB and four private mobile operators.

BTTB initiated the mobile project during the past Awami League regime and floated tenders twice. But the first bid was found non-effective due to non-responsive bidders.

The first tender was called on January 4 and the BTTB cancelled the bid and asked for fresh bid on May 9 last year, sources said.

The Awami League government could not award the job as it was not possible to evaluate the bid in the short span of time before the government handed over power to the caretaker government.

The project had created huge enthusiasm among the people as it was supposed to be the cheapest cellular service among the existing ones.

The service would be able to charge lower tariff as the BTTB need not to invest more in the project due to its existing infrastructures.

Meantime, the approval to the BTTB's mobile project has made the private operators worried.

"We are not afraid of the BTTB's venture if a level-playing field is ensured," Ola Re, managing director of the GrameenPhone told The Daily Star.

He said private operators have come to know that the BTTB would introduce the service at a subsidised rate since it has infrastructure, manpower and other resources at hand.

The government should apply the same kind of agreement for the BTTB as it did for the private operators, he said.

"Uneven competition is not desirable," said a key official of another mobile service provider, who did not want to be quoted.

Bangabandhu's killing

FROM PAGE 1

and kept the national flag at half-mast in the capital and elsewhere in the country. It also hoisted black flags and kept the party flag at half-mast.

There was, however, no official programme, first time over the last six years, to mark the day.

The AL aside, the Jatiya Party (M), the Communist Party of Bangladesh, the Gano Forum, the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, several socio-cultural and professional organisations chalked out programmes to observe the day.

There were discussions, processions, recitations from the Quran, milad mehflis, blood donation programme and exhibitions. Poor people were fed at different places. Besides, Bangabandhu's historic March 7 speech and songs on him were played while black banners inscribed with mourning messages were put on display.

Soon after the hartal ended at noon, thousands of mourners thronged the Bangabandhu Square at Dhanmondi 32 to show respect to Bangabandhu.

The pavement in front of the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum was overlaid with wreaths and bouquets. Thousands of visitors crowded the museum where

Bangabandhu and others were murdered on the day 27 years back.

Sheikh Hasina, the AL president and daughter of Bangabandhu, placed wreaths at 12:30pm as thousands of people wearing black badges and carrying flowers waited in long queues. Hasina stood in sombre silence for some time in front of her father's portrait.

Senior AL leaders then paid their homage by laying wreaths at the portrait. Leaders of AL's front organisations, different political and socio-cultural organisations followed them.

Joining them were people from all walks of life, including children and women. The mourners carried black banners inscribed with the demand for execution of Bangabandhu's killers.

Meanwhile, the Awami Secchhasebak League and the Awami Foundation organised blood donation programmes at the Bangabandhu Square.

Hasina stayed for some time at the Bangabandhu Bhaban. Atop the building, national and party flags were kept at half-mast along with a black flag.

From Dhanmondi, Hasina went straight to the Banani graveyard, offered fataha and placed wreaths

Clashes AL hartal

FROM PAGE 1

ally turned into a battleground as police barred AL activists from bringing out a procession from the party central office there. Chase and counter-chase between the two sides took place repeatedly during the six-hour hartal.

At about 10:15 am, failing to break the police cordon, AL activists pelted bricksbats on police personnel who were in riot gear. Police threw those back at the activists.

In a novel technique, angry AL activists also threw chilli powder and tobacco dust at police. Many of the policemen were found washing their eyes following this.

Police then fired teargas shells and used batons to disperse the demonstrators, witnesses said.

Thick smoke clouded part of the Bangabandhu Avenue as police lobbed tear gas shells. Activists and pedestrians ran helter-skelter for safety.

"It was a battle going on," one witness said, adding that at least eight people were rushed to hospital.

The incident took place outside the AL central office where the activists gathered to place wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu.

Window panels of several business establishments were damaged as police and AL activists exchanged bricksbats. An auto-rickshaw for reporters of the Prothom Alo on hartal duty was damaged in the street fight. Another newspaper vehicle was also damaged and a photographer of the Bhorer Kagoj was injured at that time.

Witnesses said the gang comprising Sagar, Ameer, Jewel, Kabir and Sohail entered the business house when salary was being disbursed among the employees at about 6pm.

The gang snatched away the money at gunpoint and asked the manager to keep ready Tk 5 lakh for them.

A case was filed with Mohammadpur police. None, however, was arrested till 8pm.

Business house looted at Mohammadpur

UNB, Dhaka

Gunmen looted Tk 70 thousand from Mask Designer, a business house at Adabar in the city's Mohammadpur area yesterday evening.

Witnesses said the gang comprising Sagar, Ameer, Jewel, Kabir and Sohail entered the business house when salary was being disbursed among the employees at about 6pm.

The gang snatched away the money at gunpoint and asked the manager to keep ready Tk 5 lakh for them.

A case was filed with Mohammadpur police. None, however, was arrested till 8pm.

Palestinian child killed as talks falter

AFP, Jerusalem

Security talks between Israel and the Palestinians on a phased Israeli withdrawal were put off at the last minute yesterday, while in the Gaza Strip a Palestinian child was killed and his father seriously injured.

The talks had been set for yesterday evening, the Palestinian leadership said, and were to focus on how to reach a staged Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, where the scheme was slated to start, and Bethlehem.

Israeli public radio had said the meeting would be a second round of talks between Israeli Defence Minister Binyamin Ben Eliezer and Palestinian interior minister Abdel Razaq-al-Yahya.

But shortly before the discussions were set to begin, Israel's Channel 2 private television said the meeting had been put off until next week, citing serious divergences of the two sides' views.

A defence ministry spokesman said there would be no meeting Thursday but one would be held in the coming days.

The "Gaza First" plan for a phased withdrawal from recently reoccupied areas in the Gaza Strip in exchange for a Palestinian crackdown on militants there was first presented during a Jerusalem meeting between Yahya and Ben Eliezer on August 5.

After approving the plan in principle, the Palestinians later rejected it, arguing Israel had set new conditions in the meantime.

The Palestinians fear that the proposal might become "Gaza Only," with Israel taking credit for pulling back while sealing its grip on the West Bank, and want iron-clad guarantees that Israel will also withdraw from areas in the West Bank.

Erakat, who met late Wednesday with Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, said the label "Gaza First" had been dropped as such, but added that there would be no problem if Israel wanted to start its withdrawal in the Mediterranean coastal strip.

Sifting thru evidence

FROM PAGE 1

not want to make any judgement on the quality of what before chemical tests on wheat samples are carried out.

The probe body homes in on the silos against which allegations of procuring Indian wheat have been levelled.

Shafiqul Islam will leave Dhaka for Satkhira today to visit warehouses. Earlier, The Daily Star reported that a good amount of wheat was procured last week of July, though the government ran its procurement drive from March 15 to July 31.

On Wednesday, Islam told local journalists at the Pabna Circuit House, "Storage of a huge volume of wheat in a short period seems quite illogical."

He said that it was all too unnecessary to set fresh targets in July when local growers had no wheat to sell.

The food ministry probe committee led by Joint Secretary Yakub Ali is now working to finalise its investigation report on the scam.

Head of the four-member committee Yakub Ali told The Daily Star yesterday that his committee would work even today (Friday) to complete the task as early as possible.

The food ministry committee formed on August 3 was scheduled to submit its report on August 14. But it could not meet the deadline and sought ten days more time.

The probe body is now waiting for the results of the tests carried out on 160 wheat samples collected from different silos in Mymensingh, Bogra, Pabna and Satkhira over the last two weeks.

Secretary of the food ministry Abdul Latif Mandal, however, declined to sanction ten days more to the committee and asked it to submit the report soon.

Sources in the Food Directorate laboratory told The Daily Star that 50 per cent samples were tested, while a few more days would be needed for the rest.

Dengue

FROM PAGE 1

blood banks for platelet for treatment of DHF.

According to the Red Crescent Blood Centre in Mohammadpur, a total of 54 units of platelet were supplied till late evening yesterday.

Meanwhile, entomologists predict that dengue crisis may turn worse because of the incessant rain.

"We are deeply concerned since rain is somewhat favouring the Aedes mosquitoes to lay eggs," said an expert. "Very few people have idea that they must keep open containers clean and empty to stop Aedes mosquitoes from laying eggs. Without water, eggs don't hatch. Though it is very easy to prevent infection, most of the people still seem ignorant about how dengue spreads."

Police resorted to baton charge without any provocation, witnesses said.

Two BCL activists Titu and Yakub were picked up by police from the spot.

Of the injured, Farhadabad union BCL president Alamgir and two activists Kamrul and Millat were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH), BCL sources said.

In the port city, police prevented city AL and its front organisations from bringing out processions at several important points.

A big procession of city AL led by its general secretary and city mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury was intercepted for some time in New Market area at around 10 am.

Besides, BCL processions in Islamia College and City College areas were intercepted by police.

The 'commercial capital' of the country wore a deserted look with all modes of mechanised transports keeping off the roads and business establishments, schools and colleges, markets and shopping centres remaining closed during the hartal.

Inter-city trains however set out for different destinations with smaller number of passengers.

In Sirajganj, thirty-six people, including six policemen, were injured in a clash between BNP and Awami League in the town during hartal hours yesterday.

Witnesses and police said the clash took place at about 11:15 am as BNP activists attacked Awami League leaders and workers at their office at Chourasta crossing.

They said the BNP men torched the party flag of Awami League and damaged furniture of the office where AL leaders and workers were holding a discussion on the death anniversary of Bangabandhu.

The injured policemen are SI Jahangir, 40, ASI Mostafa, 28, Nayek Ashraf Alam, 24, constables Fakir Mahmud, 26, Shawkat Ali, 25 and Julfikar, 25.

The injured persons were admitted to different hospitals and clinics.