

Build a mega seaport to revolutionise economy

Prof Yunus says at reception in Chittagong

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

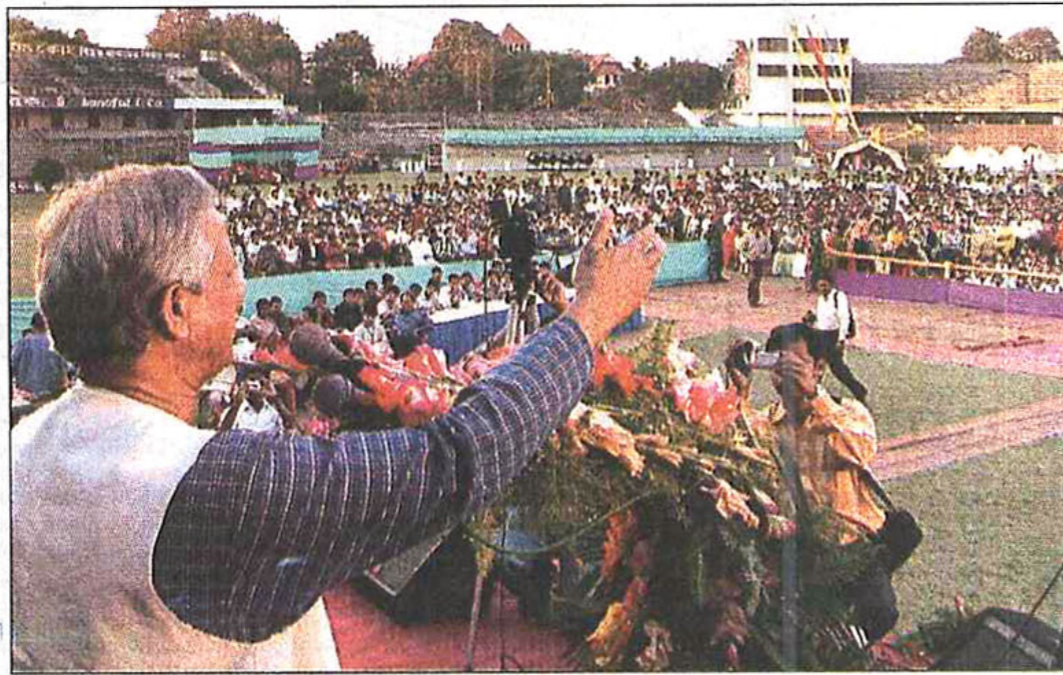
Nobel Laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus yesterday stressed the need for setting up a mega seaport, a mega airport and a transnational highway to speed up the wheel of economy and to materialise 'the dream of the people'.

"We have a lot of prospects and much less problems than many others and we only need to shrug off the narrowness of minds and widen the horizon of thoughts to build Bangladesh as we dreamt," said the Nobel laureate.

Dr Yunus was addressing a reception accorded to him during a daylong programme organised by Nobeljyoti Muhammad Yunus Sangbardhana Parishad in MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday afternoon.

Sketching a plan for pushing the country forward Dr Yunus emphasised on setting up a mega seaport somewhere on the offshore island of Maheshkhali or in the adjoining area of the Bay of Bengal.

Establishment of such a port



Nobel laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus addresses a reception accorded to him by the citizens of Chittagong at MA Aziz Stadium yesterday.

All parties evade filing election spending returns

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

None of the 55 political parties including BNP, Awami League (AL), Jamaat-e-Islami and Jatiya Party, which contested the 2001 parliamentary election, has submitted the return of their election expenditure yet to the Election Commission (EC).

Sources of their funds for the election have also not been disclosed to the EC, as they did not submit the reports in the last 65 months although the law asks for submission of reports within two months of polls.

The law, introduced before 2001 election, putting a ceiling on election expenditure of contesting electoral parties and laying down guidelines for collection of funds, empowers the EC to take punitive actions for any violation of it.

But the EC has been silent about the matter since the election was over and has not taken any action

against the parties for violating the law.

Officials at the EC Secretariat said it has become a dead issue, as the commission has not decided to go further with the matter. They said they had issued a number of circulars after the October 1, 2001 election, asking the contesting political parties to submit their election expenditure returns, but none of them responded to the EC directive within the stipulated 60-day period.

Experts have been observing for long that in absence of strict enforcement of the electoral laws, political parties enjoy a kind of liberty regarding their expenditure during elections, which makes it easier for black money to dominate polls.

Newly appointed Election Commissioner Sohul Hossain also admitted that electoral laws have not been implemented.

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JOINT FORCES CONTINUE RAIDS AL leader Jhontu, his brother Pintu held Relief goods seized from houses of two former BNP lawmakers

STAR REPORT

The army-led joint forces detained Awami League (AL) central committee leader and former lawmaker Sharfuddin Ahmed Jhontu and his brother district Zaker Party leader Abu Asghar Ahmed Pintu on Thursday in Rangpur.

They were handed over to Kotwali police yesterday morning who later produced them before a Rangpur court with a forwarding for one-month detention. The court ordered to send them to Rangpur Central Jail with one-month detention.

The joint forces also seized government relief materials, raiding the houses and farms of two former BNP lawmakers in Chapalnawabganj and Patuakhali.

They recovered two pistol magazines, two pistol covers and government relief materials—19 pieces of sarees, nine pieces of blankets,

18 pieces of tea-shirts and four sacks of sports materials—former BNP lawmaker Shahidul Alam Talukder's house at Baufal in Patuakhali last night.

The forces seized 19 pieces of corrugated iron sheets of government relief fund from former lawmaker's Harunur Rashid's farm, sources said.

The crack forces however could not arrest the former lawmakers. Besides, expelled Awami League president and controversial Pir Habibullah Kanchpuri was arrested at Hirajheel in Shiddhirganj upazila in Narayanganj the same night.

According to the UNB, a joint team of Detective Branch (DB) of police and Shiddhirganj police raided Hirajheel area at about 9:00pm and arrested Habibullah Kanchpuri in front of his house.

Kanchpuri is an accused in a

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SIX JMB MILITANTS Execution not held as jails get no decision on mercy petitions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prison authorities are now awaiting the president's decision regarding the execution of six of the seven condemned militants, including Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) chief Abdur Rahman and its operations commander Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai.

The six are in different jails while the other is absconding.

Around two weeks back the jail authorities sent mercy petitions of the six to the president through the ministry concerned but they are yet to receive his decision on those.

Earlier, the prison authorities had fixed one minute past zero hour yesterday for execution of the militants but that stands cancelled as they submitted mercy petitions to the president, Inspector General (Prisons) Brig Gen Zakir Hasan told The Daily Star yesterday.

The authorities sent the mercy petitions to the home ministry on January 27 and 28. As per law, the home ministry is supposed to forward the petitions to the law ministry for sending those to the president with its recommendations.

"We sent the mercy petitions for the president's decision. We do not

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Currencies, 11 cellphones seized from Salman's residence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A huge amount of local and foreign currencies and 11 mobile phone sets were seized from the Gulshan residence of industrialist Salman F Rahman when the joint forces arrested him on February 4 on charge of corruption, police said yesterday.

Police filed a case against Salman with Gulshan Police Station yesterday in connection with the seizure.

The case was filed under the Special Powers Act, Money Laundering Act and Excise Act. The seized currencies include 4,905 pound, 6980 Pakistani rupee, 869 Singapore dollar, 13,905 Indian rupee, 7,139 Saudi riyal, Tk 2,32,795 and 11,190 Thai baht, 10 Canadian dollar, 50 Danish krone, 200 UAE dirham, 175 Malaysian ringgit, 700 Indonesian rupiah, 2510 Hong Kong dollar, 345 Netherlands guilder and 60 Swiss franc.

The joint forces also seized 11 mobile phone sets from the house during the raid.

Police said the foreign currencies were being possessed illegally. Besides, no one can keep such a

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HOUSING PROJECTS, PLOT ALLOCATIONS Special team probing Rajuk corruption

PINAKI ROY

Corruption, nepotism and irregularities in Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) in approving housing projects of some influential real estate companies and allocating plots in some posh areas of the capital in the last four years are being investigated by a special team of law enforcers.

They have asked for all necessary files regarding Rajuk's board decisions in 2003-2006 and lists of all plot allottees during this period at Gulshan-Banani, Uttara third phase, Tongi and Badda projects.

Sources said the team from the Special Branch (SB) of police is probing alleged corruption of Housing and Public Works minister Mirza Abbas as well as those given special facilities by Rajuk. It will also investigate corrupt practices of at least 20 Rajuk officials who made huge amounts of money during the tenure of the BNP-led four-party alliance government by providing illegal facilities to many. Some of them went into hiding following the arrest of three leaders of Rajuk officials recently.

A high official of Rajuk said that

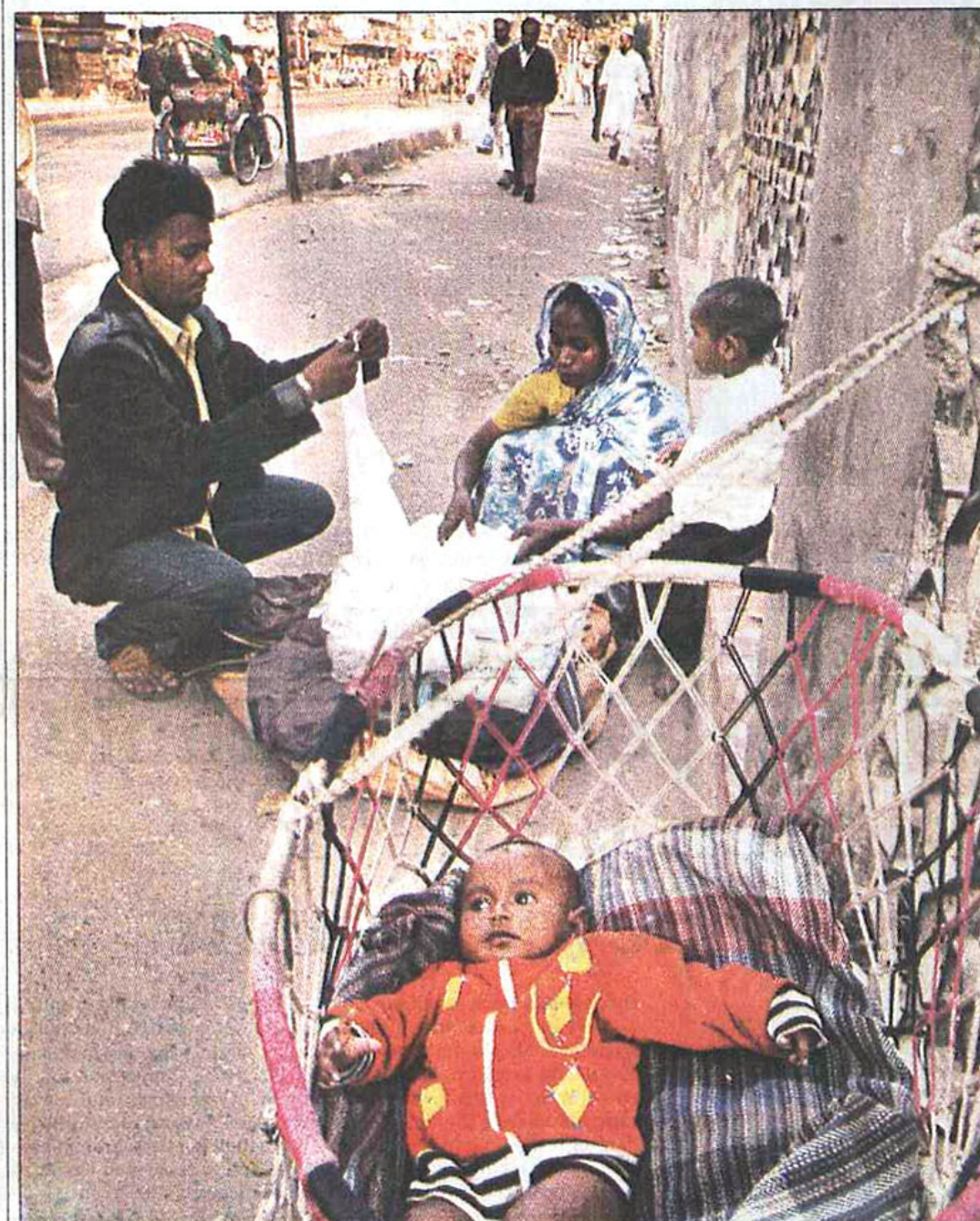
the government might cancel allocation of plots under political consideration or those of allottees who used false names.

Rajuk chairman KM Harun admitted that the SB is conducting a probe.

"Yes, special branch sought some files from us. They are investigating certain allegations of corruption," Harun said when contacted.

He however said he did not know anything about possible cancellation of any housing project or allocation of plots. "It is

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Rozina, wife of an evicted vendor, makes a desperate attempt to earn by selling clothes on footpath while her four-month-old baby lies in a cot and another child looks on. The photo was taken from the north gate of Baitul Mokarram mosque yesterday.

EVICION DRIVE Prior permission from advisory body needed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has asked the authorities concerned to take permission of the advisory committee on law and order before any eviction drive in the capital as well as in other metropolitan cities.

Such drives at the district and upazila levels will also need prior approval of the district committee on law and order.

Against the backdrop of countrywide eviction drive, the decision came from a meeting of the advisory committee on law and order on February 14, said a press release of the home ministry yesterday.

The authorities concerned have been asked to be careful so that the poor and the destitute do not suffer from such eviction drives.



Owners themselves dismantle and restructure their shops at Sheorapara in Mirpur as drive to remove illegal structures continued in the city yesterday.

Indian FM to arrive Feb 19

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India's External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee will visit Dhaka on February 19 to extend the invitation to Bangladesh leaders to the 14th Saarc summit to be held here on April 3 and 4.

It remains to be seen to whom the invitation is extended—the head of Bangladesh's caretaker government Fakhruddin Ahmed or President Iajuddin Ahmed—for the summit.

It also remains to be seen who represents Bangladesh—foreign Secretary or the foreign affairs adviser—in the Saarc Council of Ministers meeting ahead of the summit.

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PANTHAPATH-RAMPURA ROAD THRU' HATIRJHEEL Traffic congestion may ease but waterlogging to worsen

RAFIQ HASAN

The government's plan to construct a 3.5-kilometre elevated roadway connecting the city's Panthapath and Rampura without protecting Hatirjheel canal might lead to perpetual waterlogging in the areas sprawling along the proposed structure.

The urban planners fear that the construction without a comprehensive programme for the surroundings might result in loss of

Hatirjheel and the adjoining wetlands. It would disturb the ecological balance and damage the natural beauty.

The roadway project has been undertaken by The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) to ease traffic congestion at the ever-teeming Sonargaon crossing, where, a study says, fuel worth around Tk 70 lakh burns out every month due to gridlock.

Estimated to cost Tk 530 crore, it does not include measures to leave

intact Hatirjheel and the other waterbodies, said sources.

Still, the local government and rural development (LGRD) ministry has given the seal of approval to the project, added the sources.

Chief Executive Officer of the DCC Saifuddin Ahmed claimed that the roadway would be constructed without altering the wetlands.

He said the Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) has plans to

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4,000 may be freed to ease load on jails

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

Around 4,000 prisoners, who were arrested on charges of 'petty crimes', are going to be released, as the government recently decided to free them gradually in a bid to lessen the load on the crammed jails, prison sources said.

The caretaker government (CG) on Wednesday decided to review

the cases of those detained on suspicion and charges of petty crimes and to release them gradually through legal process.

Currently, the number of inmates is three times more than the prisons can house.

Following the decision of the advisory committee on law and

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