

Govt ready for automation of all institutes, offices

Says commerce minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is set to go for automation of its all institutes and offices as part of its election pledges, said Commerce Minister Col (ret) Faruk Khan yesterday.

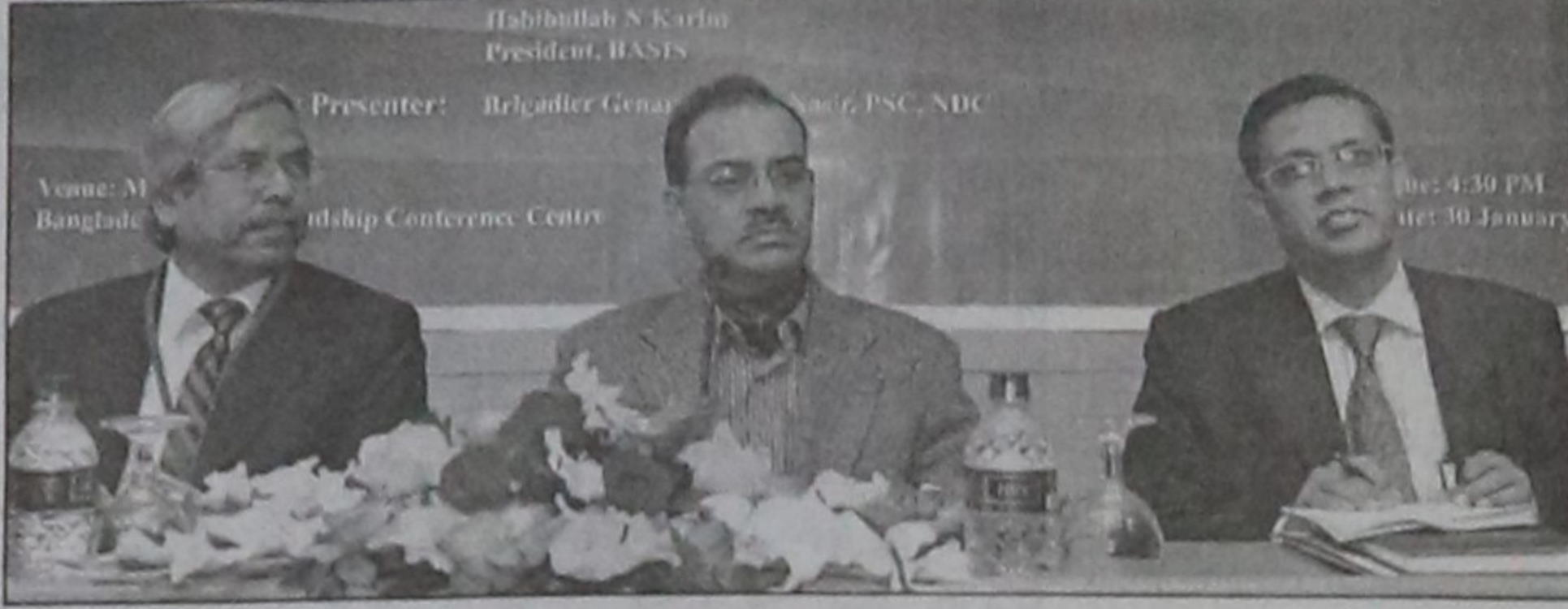
"Automation would help ease manual operations and gain efficiency reducing corruptions and reinforcing accountability in government's offices and institutes," he said.

The minister was speaking at a seminar on 'Chittagong Customs House Automation Project: A Walkthrough and Cookbook Presentation' organised by Data Soft Management Services at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the capital.

The minister said the government considers strengthening IT education in all educational institutions and extending cooperation for IT entrepreneurs to turn the country into a Digital Bangladesh by 2021.

He said parliament will also be automated soon.

Appreciating the venture of Chittagong Customs House Automation, Muhammad Abdul Mazid, chairman of the National Board of Revenue



Commerce Minister Lt Col (ret) Muhammad Faruk Khan speaks at a seminar on 'Chittagong Customs House Automation Project: A walkthrough and cookbook presentation' yesterday. On his left is NBR Chairman Muhammad Abdul Mazid and on his right is Mahbub Zaman, CEO of DataSoft.

(NBR), said local talents have made it possible.

When donor-funded projects failed to fully complete automation of Chittagong Customs House by spending over Tk 247 crore and working for around 10 years, Data Soft, a local company, successfully did the job in eight months at a minimal cost, he said.

Mahbub Zaman, CEO of DataSoft, said, "We were able to make the project run at a reduced cost mainly because it will function on build-own-operate-transfer basis."

He said the project is a

successful example of public-private partnership where all stakeholders are involved directly.

One of the reasons behind the failure of earlier projects is that their technology was not transferred to the locals properly, he added.

The main feature of the new automation project is that DataSoft has employed around 45 engineers in the project to troubleshoot any problem that the stakeholders may face.

In his keynote paper, Brigadier Hasan Nasir, project coordinator of the venture, showed the detailed planning

and action of the project.

Earlier in 1999, a project titled CAM-1 (customs administration modernisation project-1) was the first step for automation.

Later in June 2001, another project titled 'ASYCUDA++ Migration Project' was designed to interface the ASYCUDA++ software with the computer system at five customs houses in the country.

Habibullah N Karim, president of Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (Basis), was also present at the seminar.

Saraswati Puja today

UNB, Dhaka

Saraswati Puja, one of the main religious festivals of the Hindu community, will be celebrated today.

As Saraswati is considered as the Goddess of wisdom and knowledge, Hindu devotees, especially students, celebrate the Saraswati Puja in different educational institutions and temples.

Traditionally, the students of Dhaka University's Jagannath Hall celebrate the Puja setting up 35-40 mandaps, which every year turn into the main attraction of the celebrations.

DU to ensure congenial academic atmosphere

Says Prof Arefin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique yesterday said the authorities would ensure a congenial academic atmosphere on the campus for the sake of students.

He was talking to newsmen after attending the 'Third Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Lecture 2009' organised by Department of Peace and Conflict Studies at the RC Majumdar auditorium on the campus as the chief guest.

"The ideals and values of Mahatma Gandhi are very relevant to today's society and there is no alternative to his philosophy that can resolve the existing conflict and pandemonium in our society and attain ultimate development and peace," Prof Arefin added.

Deputy High Commissioner of India in Dhaka Mukta D Tomar said Gandhi's moral values continue to be relevant in the context of menace of terrorism facing the world today and no cause or religion either justifies or sanctifies resource to acts of terror. "Mahatma Gandhi will always be an inspiration in the troubled world we live in," she added.

Shibir leader

FROM PAGE 1 University (DU) and resided at Shahidullah Hall.

But the university authorities refuted their claim saying that there was no document to prove him a student of the university.

Quoting Shafiqullah, Officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station Rezaul Karim told The Daily Star that when the two were returning home after attending a meeting of Shibir at Basiruddin road at Kalabagan, four muggers attacked them near Aziz Supermarket at around 12:15am.

The muggers stabbed them in legs and took away Tk 2,000 and cell phones, leaving Fazlullah critically injured.

He was rushed to the Islami Bank Hospital where the doctors referred him to the Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH).

Later, he was taken to the DMCH where the on-duty doctor declared him dead at 1:15am.

The victim's family members claimed that it was a pre-planned murder, not an incident of mugging. But they did not mention any name as murder suspect.

DU Vice Chancellor AAMS Arefin Siddique, along with the chairman of statistics department, provost and house tutors of Shahidullah Hall visited the DMCH Morgue.

The VC said the deceased could not be identified as a DU student. He said the statistics department and Shahidullah Hall authority had checked their documents but could not find any records on him.

However, Shibir Central Committee President Mohammad Rezaul Karim said the deceased was a Kamil student of Govt Madrasa-e-Allia at Bakshibazar in the capital.

OC Rezaul said Fazlullah was a leader of Dhaka city Shibir unit. Police questioned the security guards stationed at the buildings near the market. The guards said they knew nothing about the incident.

Police suspected that an internal feud in Shibir might have led to the incident. They are now investigating the incident.

Extortionists

FROM PAGE 16 he was returning home from Biralddaha bazaar at about 10pm Thursday. The critically injured BNP leader was rushed to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his injury around 2:30am.

"Daud lived in fear of attack since Wednesday noon when some local AL cadres threatened to kill him or one of his sons if he didn't pay them Tk 1 lakh toll," said Daud's wife Sahera Begum while talking to The Daily Star.

After the attack, a police patrol team rescued Daud with a pool of blood and took him to RMCH.

Sahera lodged a complaint with the local police accusing 14 persons, including Baneswar union AL vice president Wazed, ward Jubo League secretary Makhu, Union Jubo League secretary Ashraf and Zahidul Islam, a cousin of local AL lawmaker Kazi Abdul Wadud Dara.

The police arrested an FIR-named accused and Daud's nephew M Chand Kabiraj.

Talking to The Daily Star, Circle ASP Anwar Zahid said they found a vital clue to the murder. The deceased had a rivalry with his nephew M Chand Kabiraj and cousin Jewel over some business shares and the duo also threatened him to kill, he said.

Asked about the threat by AL men, he said, "The claim is yet to be substantiated."

Daud's son Nurun Nabi alleged that AL men tortured BNP activists and leaders in the area after BNP candidate won in the upazila election.

Prepare 25-yr-long plan to resolve energy crisis

Speakers urge PM at roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday urged the prime minister (PM) to prepare a 25-year-long plan and appoint an experienced and patriotic man as energy adviser to help solve energy crisis.

They alleged that there is a conspiracy inside the new government to appoint some controversial people in power and energy sectors.

The roundtable titled 'Energy sector and people's expectation' was organised by weekly magazine 'Saptahik' at the National Press Club in the city.

The speakers called for mass movement to safeguard the energy sector for protecting gas, oil and coalfields from the grasp of those involved in corruption and conspiracy.

Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury suggested the government to create a separate ministry to protect marine and natural resources within the maritime boundary of the country.

"Energy is a very vital sector and as such a patriotic and honest person should be given the charge of this ministry," he said, adding that Bangladesh is losing control over its maritime boundary due to interference of Myanmar and India.

Prof M Shamsul Alam alleged that the new government has taken a wrong decision over the appointment of some controversial persons especially Dr Taufiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury as energy adviser to prime minister.

Prof Anu Mohammad said domestic consumption of gas will be more gainful than its export.

Prof Abu Ahmad said it is very difficult to extract more than 22 percent gas from the reserve fields.

Saptahik Editor Golam Mortuza moderated the roundtable which was also addressed by Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Barkatullah Bulu, Prof M Shamsul Alam, Major (ret) Anwarul Kabir Talukder and Prof Hossain Mansur.

Mirpur Freedom Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is Mirpur Freedom Day. The day will be observed in a festive mood in the city.

Residents of Mirpur, which was liberated 14 days after the independence of the country, will celebrate the day.

To mark the day, Mirpur Nagorik Sangha will hold a discussion and a cultural programme at 4:30pm at a community centre of Ward No 2.



Birth anniversary of Justice Abu Sayeed today

METRO DESK

Today is the 87th anniversary of birth of former president Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury, says a press release.

To mark the day, Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury National Memorial Council will distribute stipends and certificates among meritorious students soon.

Justice Chowdhury was born on January 31, 1921 at Nagbari, Tangail. He resigned as vice chancellor of Dhaka University on March 15 in 1971 in protest of the killing of two students by Pakistani occupation forces.

He also played a significant role in mobilising world opinion for the cause of Bangladesh as special envoy of the provisional government.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abu Sayeed Md Shabeed, former chairman of Bangladesh Textile Mills Association, passed away on Thursday at the age of 71, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, one daughter, one son.

His Quikhani will be held at Grand Azad Mosque at Gulshan in the city after Asr prayers on Monday.

Death anniversary

BSS, Dhaka

Today is the ninth death anniversary of Asgar Hossain, a freedom fighter, an academic and father of Iftekhar Hossain, Principal Information Officer of the Press Information Department (PID).

On the occasion, Qurankhwani and doa mahfil will be held at his village home in Comilla.



A model sashays down the catwalk at the UNAIDS-organised Red Ribbon fashion show 'UN Ball' in collaboration with UNWA at Hotel Radisson in the city yesterday.



No change in temperature

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Light to moderate fog may occur over the country during late night till morning, Met Office said.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 28.6 degree Celsius was recorded at Cox's Bazar and the lowest of 9.0 degree at Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:44pm today and rises at 6:39am tomorrow.

The highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Table with 4 columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening). Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.

DHAKA TODAY

Seminar

Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA) and International Trade Centre jointly organise a seminar on 'ICT-Bangladesh-Africa'. Venue: BTMA office. Time: 11:00am.

Book review session

A review session of the book 'Democracy in Crisis' by Dr Masihur Rahman will be held. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:00pm.

Council

The council of Bangladesh-India Friendship Society will be held. Venue: Hotel Rajmoni Ishakha. Time: 4:30pm.

Seminar on financial crisis

The inaugural ceremony of the seminar on global financial crisis and our preparedness to face the challenge will be held. Venue: Hotel Summer Palace, Bandhara. Time: 9:30am.

Photo exhibition

Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts Limited organises a photography exhibition. Venue: Bengal Gallery. Time: 5:00pm. The exhibition will remain open from 12:00am to 8:00pm till February 9.

Seminar

US Awami League organises a seminar on 'Journey of democracy, Role and expectation of expatriates'. Venue: Hotel Sundarban. Time: 10:00am.

Award giving ceremony

The award giving ceremony of the Prime Bank-Patua Kamrul Hasan National Children Art Competition will be held. Venue: Poet Sufia Kamal Auditorium. Time: 4:30pm.

Rotary Dhaka Central

The regular meeting of Rotary Club of Dhaka Central will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club. Time: 1:30pm.

Losers, local leaders lobby for tickets

FROM PAGE 1

and Saiful Islam, general secretary of the district unit.

Contacted by Moudud Ahmed said he is not interested in contesting by-election. "I am not interested at all. But I can consider only if the party or chairman wants me."

Asked about his possibility of contesting the by-election, Khandaker Mosharraf said he does not know anything about this.

BNP sources said if the party decides to nominate central leaders, Khandaker Delwar and Jamiruddin Sircar might be picked.

Otherwise, two local leaders would get party ticket.

Some other sources in the

party however said Khandaker Mosharraf and Jamiruddin are likely to be nominated to contest the by-election.

But several party leaders said Mosharraf might not get nomination due to the recent media disclosure that the former minister, his wife and a son have huge wealth in the British Isles, found investigators in the United Kingdom.

Mosharraf and his wife Bilquis Aktar Hossain have one million pounds in a joint account with Lloyds TSB Bank in Guernsey, a Crown dependency in the English Channel, said a source here citing findings of a probe by the Proceeds of Corruption Unit of London's Metropolitan Police.

Bogra BNP President Rezaul Karim Badsha, when contacted over telephone Thursday night, said, "As a political activist, I have some expectation from the party, and I hope the party will consider the matter."

He however added, "If the party thinks that we need more senior leaders in parliament, then we have to accept the party decision regarding nomination."

Local sources said some district unit leaders including Rezaul and Saiful (general secretary) are lobbying with party high-ups for party ticket.

Against this backdrop, Khaleda Zia leaves for Bogra today.

Bapex finally breaks free

FROM PAGE 1

months of opening the tender.

Being used to budget revision and re-tendering, Ecneec sought to know that there would not be a re-tendering. Bapex explained how it devised the budget and why it believed that this would be successful.

The Ecneec has approved the budget. Now with a letter from the energy ministry, Bapex will obtain an approval of the Bangladesh Bank to open a Letter of Credit (LC) against which the Chinese company would build and supply the rig.

The first bid held in 2004 drew a price offer of Tk 70 crore but was cancelled due to pressure from the then state minister for energy AKM Mosharraf Hossain.

Apparently Hossain did so under pressure from a local agent of a bidder that was not the lowest responsive one. The next tender drew a lowest price offer of around Tk 140 crore. From then on, the project was

hovering around budget revision.

A Bapex official said: "Of course the project price has increased. Given the dollar and euro exchange rates, the 20 million euro rig in terms of taka was costing us around Tk 210 crore last year. The same has come down to Tk 182 crore now."

An influential retired army official cum politician campaigned hard with the caretaker government to cancel this bid on ground of high project cost. Actually, the price of the rig increased by \$2 million between 2004 and 2008.

Bapex presently has three rigs - two capable of deep drilling - but all are old. The need for the new rig was felt long ago. "In its absence, Bapex could not expedite enough works. We hope from 2011, we'll expedite a higher number of drilling activities," Imaduddin noted.

Since its inception in 1989

as an independent national exploration organ, Bapex was allowed to take up only seven projects till last year.

The caretaker government took an interest in gearing up the country's only exploration arm by allowing it to take up a seven-year plan under which an investment of Tk 3,200 crore will be pumped into Bapex in the next seven years.

The schemes are workover of Fenchuganj well-3 and drilling a new well, procuring a workover rig, undertaking appraisal drilling of well in Srikal hydrocarbon structure, development drilling on Saldanadi Gas Field, Begumganj Gas Field Development Project, drilling four exploratory wells in Block-8 and 11, Shailokupa Exploratory Well Drilling Project, Jaldi Exploratory Well Drilling Project and Sitakunda Exploratory Well Drilling Project.

Two Ctg fertiliser units limp for faulty design

FROM PAGE 16

cooling tower which were supposed to be installed at the CUFL under an augmentation scheme to cut installation cost, sources said.

As per the plan, the Dap factories were supposed to supply 3MW of additional power it would have had to CUFL in return.

However, the augmentation project of the CUFL was cancelled leaving the Dap factories with a steam generator that neither has a boiler nor a cooling tower.

After the augmentation project fell flat, a fresh initiative was taken to set up the boiler and the cooling tower at Dap-1 site. Disappointingly, BCIC floated as many as seven tenders but failed to achieve any mentionable result.

Installation of the plant with the boiler and the cooling tower would have cost around Tk 40 crore three years ago but now it will cost over Tk 70 crore. BCIC had Tk 48.49 crore as an ADP grant for the installation, said a Dap engineer concerned.

Diammonium Phosphate Fertiliser Company Ltd was ready to provide over Tk 30 crore, which it realised as penalty from TEC for handing over the Dap-2 without completing the performance-guarantee test runs, for installation of the boiler and the cooling tower.

But the penalty money cannot be used since a project cannot be financed by the ADP and Dap's own money, the Dap engineer observed.

Diammonium Phosphate Fertiliser Company Ltd Managing Director (MD) Mahfuzur Rahman said as per quoted prices offered in the seventh tender, the installation of the boiler and tower would cost over Tk 70 crore.

"We cannot expect further increase in the allocation made for the boiler and the tower installation as the budget was revised three times and raised to Tk 543.67 crore from 510.64 crore," said the MD.

Rules allow a budget to be revised no more than three times.

"So we may have to refund the additional Tk 33.03 crore taken from the ADP and install the boiler and the cooling tower with our own funds realised from Dap and its sister concerns under BCIC," he added.

Meanwhile, the officials concerned at Dap fear that it may not be possible to raise daily production to 1,600 tonnes even after the power plant goes into operation.

The factories were constructed with "faulty designs" and develop technical problems, they said.

"After operating any of the factories in full swing for one or two days we have to suspend production for a period of time since running in full capacity jams the production line with dust which requires manual cleaning," said a highly placed factory official preferring anonymity.

The official said the Techad to return over Tk 30 crore as penalty for handing over Dap-1 only after three days of test runs instead of 10 days.