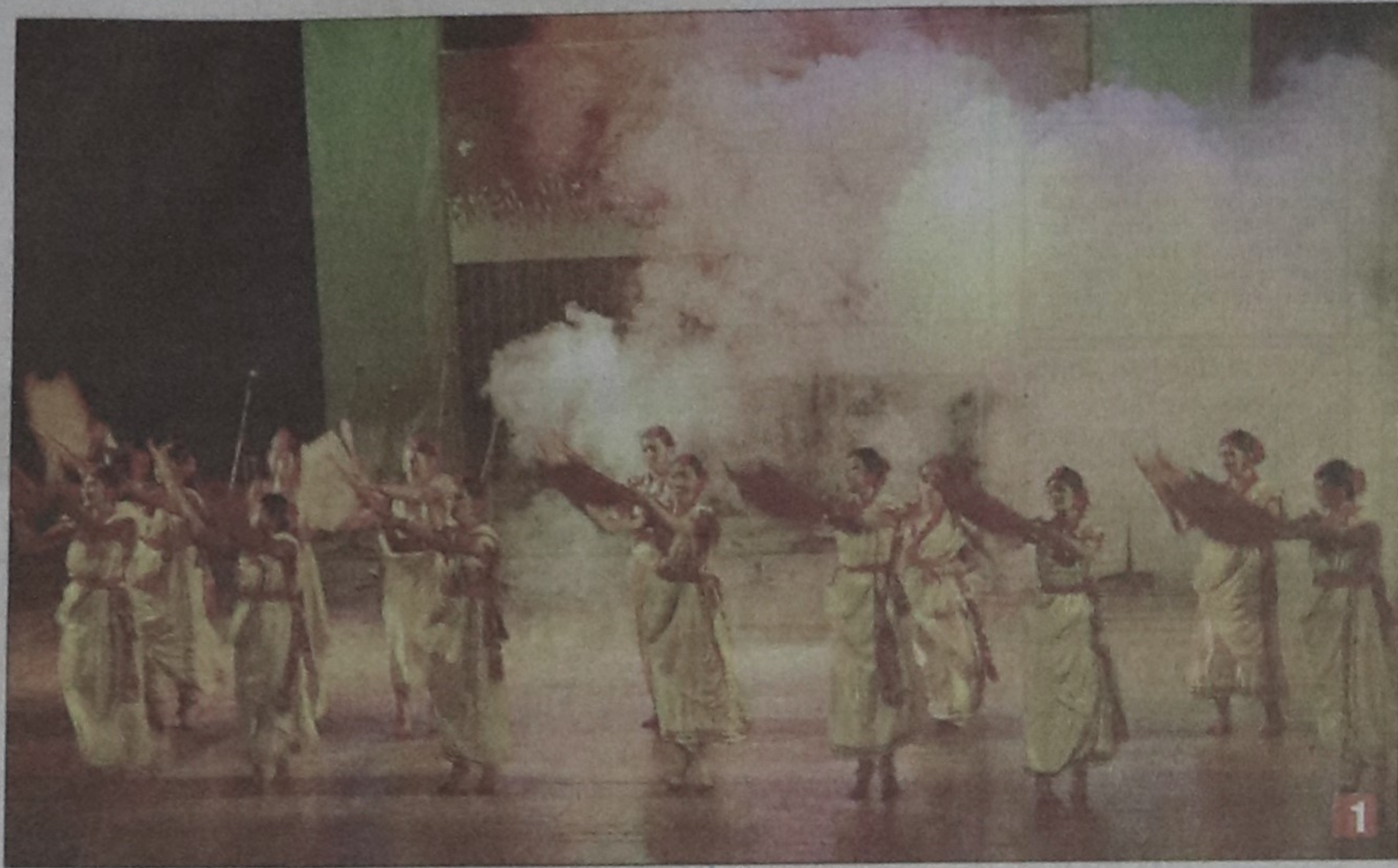


CULTURAL SHOW BY ENGLISH MEDIUM SCHOOLS



Students of renowned English medium schools perform at a cultural programme organised by The Daily Star at National Theatre Auditorium at Shilpakala Academy in the city yesterday. 1. BIS School; 2. Oxford International School; 3. Sea Breeze School; 4. Maple Leaf School; 5. BIT School; 6. Green Gems International School; 7. Playpen School; 8. Sunnydale School.

PHOTO: STAR

Enact new labour law to protect workers' rights

Trade union leaders urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Bangladesh Trade Union Centre (BTUC) at a meeting yesterday demanded the government enact a democratic labour law with provisions for protecting interests of labourers and cancel the undemocratic provisions in the existing laws.

They called on the government to form a national wage commission, determine Tk 4,500 as minimum wage for the workers and to launch interim and variable daily allowances for them.

They placed the demand at the concluding session of BTUC's two-day meeting at its office in the city with its Executive President Shahidullah Chowdhury in the chair.

General Secretary of the centre Wajedul Islam Khan presented a report that highlighted the situation existing for the last two years in the labour and industries sectors, prices of

essentials, financial depression, deplorable situation of labourers and doings of BTUC.

The report said the number of the jute and textiles mills and factories and their labourers are being reduced and their movements are also being weakened.

On the other hand, the number of labourers are being increased since employment generation at the sectors like garment, cement, drug, ceramic, plastic, ship-breaking and steel re-rolling industry, but the workers cannot organise them due to undemocratic rules of the labour laws, it added.

The meeting demanded a fair investigation into the mysterious killing of BTUC President Nurul Islam and not to sign the Tifa agreement with the US.

Labour leaders Tapan Dutta, Mohammad Ali, Abdul Malek, Manzurul Ahsan Khan, Mahbul Alam and Abul Kalam Azad also spoke.

Ashuganj Power Company runs on ad hoc basis

UNB, Dhaka

Although over 5 years have elapsed since the formation of Ashuganj Power Station Company Ltd (APSC), the public limited company still runs on ad hoc basis as its assets and liabilities have not been made over from Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB).

According to official sources, bureaucratic tangles and red tape, and finally indecision on part of government policymakers, are the main reasons behind this dilemma involving the second-biggest power hub in the country that faces a nagging electricity crisis.

The APSC has been operating under an ad hoc arrangement with the BPDB since 2003. But the new company is facing serious problem in running operation and also taking its decision independently.

"We are not being able to operate like a real commercial company as the power-purchase agreement and vendor's agreements have not been signed with the BPDB," said APSC Chairman ANM Rijwan.

APSC was established incorporating the power plants and other setups in the previous Ashuganj power stations of the BPDB as part of government's reform programmes in the power sector.

The new company was registered with the Registrar of the Joint Stock Companies & Firms of Bangladesh under the Companies Act 1994.

It owns the second-largest power station in the country having an aggregate installed generation capacity of 724 megawatts of its 8 units. The present de-rated capacity is 642 MW. Ashuganj Power Station fulfills about 15 percent of power requirements of the country.

Initially, 51 percent of total shares are held by BPDB and the rest 49 percent are distributed among ministries of finance, planning, and power and energy.

The main objective of establishment of the APSC as a PLC in public sector was to make the power station an independent entity in the power sector which will operate commercially and do its business on its own.

"To reduce the system loss and make the power-generation business profitable was the main motto," said an APSC top official.

The sources said that the BPDB board has approved a proposal few months back to officially hand over its assets and liabilities to the APSC and also to endorse the vendor's agreement and the power-purchase agreement.

The resolution was then sent to the power ministry for approval.

The power ministry approved the proposal and finally sent it to the finance ministry for clearance and also to the law ministry for a legal vetting.

"But there has been no further progress in the last two months," said one of the sources.

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