

HOLIDAY BANKING
From 9.30a.m. to 12.30p.m.
On **FRIDAY & SATURDAY**
Dharmendra, REPZA Complex, 19/5
Road No. 6, Ph: 8652784-5

COMMERCIAL BANK
Our Interest Is In You
COMMERCIAL BANK OF CEYLON PLC

PHILIPS
DVD Player
Now at 3,950/-
Customer Service Department
8853464-8, 01712-663463
TRANSCOM ELECTRONICS

HASINA RE-ELECTED AL CHIEF, ASHRAF ELECTED GS Council empowers them to pick all other leaders

SHAKHAWAT LITON and
HASAN JAHRID TUSHER

Sheikh Hasina was elected the Awami League (AL) president for the sixth time while Syed Ashraf Islam was elected the general secretary for three years without any contest yesterday.

The AL national council that elected them also bestowed them with the authority to choose leaders for 45 posts in the ruling party's 73-member central working committee, the highest decision-making forum. The party constitution empowers the president to choose

remaining 26 members of the working committee.

The 45 posts include 13 members of the party Presidium--the highest policymaking body, 31 departmental secretaries including three joint general secretaries and seven organising secretaries, and a treasurer.

Moreover, the council delegated to Hasina the power to incorporate any further changes, if necessary, in the party's declaration and constitution that were ratified yesterday by it with amendments, meeting the criteria for registration with the country's Election

Commission.

According to article 21 of the AL constitution, however, the president, presidium members, general secretary, departmental secretaries, and the treasurer must be elected by the triennial council.

Contacted by The Daily Star yesterday over the phone, the council's chief election commissioner MA Mannan said the council's election commission was ready to hold elections to other posts, but nobody filed for candidacy.

"We even received a proposal from a councillor to empower the newly elected

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Breach of people's trust won't be tolerated

Hasina warns AL leaders, workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday issued a warning to the ruling party leaders and workers saying breach of public confidence or any other unjust behaviour by her party members will not be tolerated.

Addressing the inaugural session of AL's national council held in the capital with festivity, Hasina, who was later re-elected the party chief without a contest, urged leaders and workers of all levels to work for the welfare of the people, and to remain vigilant in ensuring that every single paisa of the government coffer is spent for the people.

"We want to lead the country towards devel-

opment and prosperity. It's not only the government's responsibility, it is also the responsibility of every leader and worker of Bangladesh Awami League," said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who formed the country's cabinet on January 6 this year after leading her party into a landslide victory in the last parliamentary poll.

The AL chief also criticised those leaders of her party who turned 'reformists' during the immediate past caretaker government's regime to 'sideline Hasina in the party'. She said some of the party leaders 'joined hands with conspirators' to push her out of politics.

"Not everyone has the same moral courage. They [reformists] might have surrendered to

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7



Awami League President Sheikh Hasina with newly elected general secretary Syed Ashraf Islam at the inaugural session of 20th AL council yesterday. (More pictures on page 5)

PHOTO: AL

Khaleda greets Hasina

BNP team attends AL council

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia expressed her greetings to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and wished the twentieth national council of Awami League a success.

A three-member BNP delegation yesterday handed AL leaders a message at the council held at the Bangabandhu International Convention Centre.

The delegation comprised of former BNP lawmaker Fazlul Huq Milon, Khaleda

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

She is my leader, says Jalil

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Just-resigned Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil joined the party's national council meeting yesterday responding to a call of party President Sheikh Hasina.

"She is my leader. She directed me to join the council and I cannot but carry out her order," Jalil told The Daily Star over the phone.

He said he would continue to serve the party under Sheikh Hasina's leadership till his last breath.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

3 Rab men held on extortion charge, Tk 7 lakh recovered

Allegation of threat to kill in crossfire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested three Rab personnel Thursday night on charge of snatching Tk 10.86 lakh from a man threatening to kill him in crossfire. After the arrest police recovered around Tk 7 lakh from the arrestees.

The victim was Tajul Islam Hiron, 30, marketing manager of Fair Advertising at RK Mission Road in the capital. The arrestees were assistant superintendent of police Shobeb Ahmed and sepoy Sagar Chandra and Shahidul Alam of Rab-3.

The authorities concerned have suspended the three Rab personnel. They were produced before a Dhaka court, which sent them to jail yesterday.

Sub-inspector of Motijheel Police Station Tajul Islam who is also the investigation officer of the snatching case said, on his way to Rampura on a bus Hiron was intercepted by the Rab personnel at Kamalapur around 8:15pm Wednesday. They picked him on their jeep and took him to Doyel Square on Dhaka University Campus, he added.

The Rab men then snatched Tk 10.86 lakh from Hiron saying they had saved him from crossfire at which he would have been killed, the IO said, adding that thereafter the Rab personnel took the victim to different places of the city and at one stage they released him.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Ashraf praises Zillur's role during emergency

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There were efforts to create a crisis in the Awami League during the period of state of emergency just like in the aftermath of the killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, said newly elected AL General Secretary Syed Ashraf Islam yesterday.

"But the then acting president of the party Zillur Rahman, who is now the president of the country, played a sincere role to unite the leadership," he said, while presenting the general secretary's report at the 20th national council of the AL.

It is the leaders and workers at the grassroots level who supported the party at that time, he said. "Despite many conspiracies against the party, they prevented those."

It is time the party worked for the country, he said, urging all party workers and leaders

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

FURTHER PRICE CUT DEMANDED Food rationing for RMG workers uncertain again

PORIMOL PALMA

Food rationing programme for garment workers becomes uncertain again, as the readymade garment and knitwear manufacturers are pressing the government again to reduce the price of rice refixed twice.

Both the government and leaders of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters (BKMEA) agreed in March to introduce rationing of rice in April at Tk 18 per kilogramme.

But as the market price of rice came slightly down, BGMEA and BKMEA demanded that the price be fixed at Tk 16, and the Food Procurement and Monitoring Unit (FPMU) also agreed it on April 12.

Under the agreement, the government is supposed to sell rice to the readymade garment and knitwear factories at a subsidised rate of Tk 14.5 per kg. The factories through their dealers would sell the rice to the workers at Tk 16 and each worker would buy a maximum of 20kg rice a month.

BGMEA President Abdus Salam Murshedy had announced they would start the programme in Dhaka and Chittagong at least on a trial basis by May 15.

Both the trade bodies expressed their willingness to start the programme primarily for 19,340 workers of 18 factories. But the programme never started.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Maitree Express schedule revised

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

The schedule of Maitree Express train running between Dhaka and Kolkata has been revised adding another set of trains on the route with effect from August 1.

The train, revived after a gap of more than four decades, currently operates between the two countries on Saturdays and Sundays from both sides.

As per the revised schedule, the Maitree Express will start from Dhaka on Tuesdays while from Kolkata on Wednesdays, a senior railway ministry official said.

The Maitree will leave Kolkata on Saturdays while Dhaka on Sundays, he added.

He said India has responded to Bangladesh's request for increasing the frequency of the train between the two cities.

Bangladesh had proposed that besides the existing train service between the two countries, there should be one set of trains running in the middle of a week as the country's passengers enjoy weekend on Thursdays.

Meanwhile, an official statement said the timing of Maitree Express has been changed to reduce the total journey time between Kolkata and Dhaka by one and a half hours and by two hours and 15 minutes between Dhaka and Kolkata.

The train will now depart from Dhaka Cantonment at 9:30am on Tuesdays and Sundays and will reach Kolkata at 6:45pm (Indian time) the same day instead of at 9:00pm (Indian time) earlier, it said.

The train will leave Kolkata at 7:10am (Indian time) on Wednesdays and Saturdays and will reach Dhaka Cantonment at 7:00 pm the same day.

As per the new timings, the total journey time from Kolkata to

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Ershad desires to remain lifetime party chairman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

HM Ershad was re-elected unanimously chairman of Jatiya Party and ABM Ruhul Amin Hawlader its secretary general at the party's seventh national council yesterday.

Addressing the council at Engineers' Institute, Ershad said he had stood aside from the JP chairman's position in the post-1/11 years following the "minus-two" and, subsequently, "minus-three" formulas.

He expressed the desire to remain the party chairman until death.

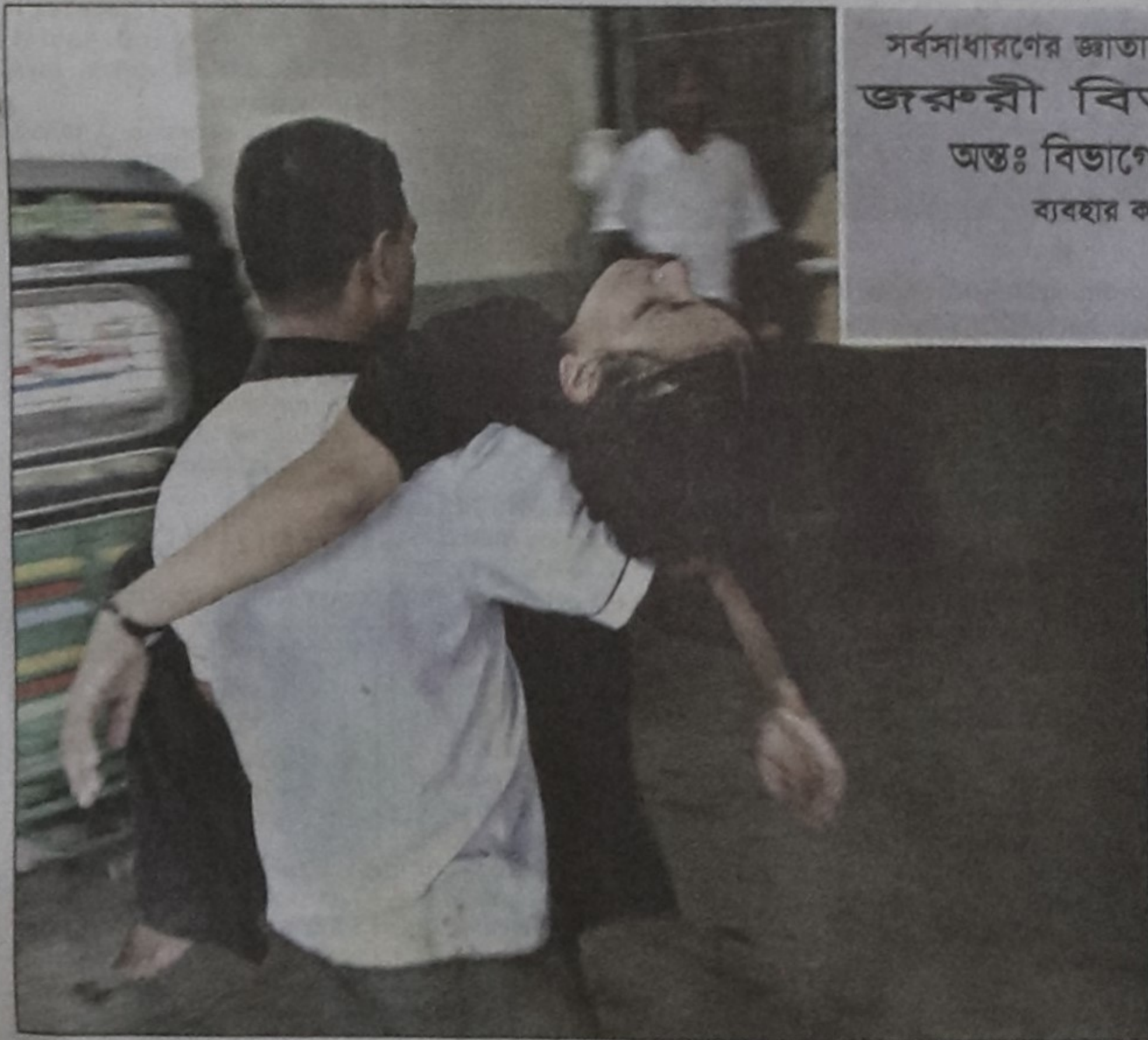
"From today there is no need for an acting chairman and I want to be the chairman of the party until death," said Ershad who presided over the council.

Ershad inaugurated the council by hoisting the national and party flags and releasing balloons and pigeons. Thousands of councillors and delegates of the party's district units from across the country attended the council.

Terming the caretaker government system a disgrace for politicians, Ershad said the interim takeover by a non-political administration must be ended.

The JP chief emphasised strengthening of the Election Commission.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



A father carries seriously ill daughter, left, to the Emergency of Dhaka Medical College and Hospital at 1:05pm yesterday while trolleys of the department are used for carrying hospital wastes, right. Authorities have vainly hung notices around the Emergency Department, inset, against using trolleys for purposes other than carrying patients.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN