

Clock goes back 1-hr on Dec 31 night

Cabinet decides; 1.5 lakh war heroes to get allowance; president's JS speech okayed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday decided to put the clock back by one hour on December 31 midnight and the new time will continue until March 31, 2010 midnight.

The decision came at a cabinet meeting at the Prime Minister's Office last night.

With Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair, the meeting also decided that from now on 1.5 lakh freedom fighters instead of the earlier 1.25 lakh would get government's increased monthly allowances of Tk 2,000 each.

The government will advance again the Bangladesh Standard Time by one hour on March 31 next year by enforcing the Daylight Saving Time (DST) for seven months. It will continue till October 31 until further notice.

Earlier on June 2, the cabinet approved DST proposal by pushing forward the clock an hour which came into effect from June 19 to better utilise daylight and save electricity.

Briefing newsmen after the

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With the arrival of winter, thousands of migratory birds, mostly lesser whistling ducks, have taken shelter at the Jahangirnagar University sanctuaries. Despite less in number this year, their chirps attract the birdwatchers as always.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Distribution of MRP from April next

Says home minister

UNB, Dhaka

Home Minister Sahara Khatun yesterday said the distribution of machine-readable passports (MRP) will begin from April next year.

Once the MRP is introduced, the Bangladeshi passports will be more credible abroad, reducing the harassment of Bangladeshi expatriates, she said.

"The BNP-Jamaat alliance government had shelved the

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Slum fire kills 3 of a family

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Three members of a family were burnt alive and 44 shanties gutted as a fire broke out at a slum in the town early yesterday.

Locals said the fire might have originated from a mosquito coil at the house of Mono Rani at about 3:00 am and soon engulfed the adjacent shanties of Tanbazar Rally Bagan Slum.

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2 DIVISIONS Crisis may deepen further

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Splitting the law, justice and parliamentary affairs ministry into two divisions might deepen the crisis by adding to the grievances of judicial officials, said judicial officials.

The government, through a gazette notification, on Wednesday divided the ministry into two divisions -- law and justice division, and legislative and parliamentary affairs division -- with their tasks rearranged.

Two secretaries will be

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Law ministry in a shambles

Recruitment, promotion policy mostly ignored, judicial officials deprived

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The recruitment and promotion policy for the law, justice and parliamentary ministry was not followed in appointment and promotion of many officials in last three years, depriving the judicial officials.

Introduced in 2001 in consultation with the Supreme Court, the policy says

the law secretary and 75 percent of the first class officers at the ministry's law and justice wing shall be appointed from among the judicial officials.

But it was breached when Kazi Habibul Awal was made acting secretary to the ministry in June 2007 and made permanent in the position in June next year.

The High Court in February 2008

declared the appointment illegal as it noted Awal was not from the judicial cadre, but from the legislative drafting wing of the ministry.

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court on Thursday upheld the ruling.

Earlier in 2007, the HC rejected a challenge against the provision of keeping 75 percent posts of the first class officers

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Hopes brighten on Teesta

Secy-level meeting with India from Jan 3

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh hopes to resolve the long-standing issue of Teesta water sharing with India at the next secretary-level meeting on water issues to be started on January 3.

Besides, six other common rivers -- the Dharla, Monu, Muhuri, Dudhkumar, Khowai and Gomti -- and bank protection of different rivers are also expected to be on the agenda.

Dredging of the Isamoti river will also come for discussion, says an official from the water resources ministry.

Secretary for the Ministry of Water Resources Sheikh Wahiduzzaman will lead the Bangladesh delegation, while his Indian counterpart Shri Umesh Narayan Panjiar will lead an eight-member Indian delegation.

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Hasina flies to India Jan 10

Talks with Manmohan Singh next day

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will leave for India on the night of January 10 to hold crucial summit talks with her Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh in New Delhi on January 11.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, announcing the PM's date of departure, told reporters yesterday at the foreign ministry that details of the programs are being worked out.

The upcoming Hasina-Manmohan formal talks are seen significant in redefining the Bangladesh-India bilateral

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GOVT SCHOOLS Admission tests start in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Admission tests in the city's government schools began yesterday.

The tests in schools under Group-A were held in two shifts, from 11:00am to 1:00pm and from 3:00pm to 5:00pm. Exams for class I to class IV were taken in the first shift and class V to class IX in the second shift.

The schools under Group-A are Government Laboratory School, Mirpur Government High School, Motijheel Government Girls' High School, Khilgaon Government High School, Islamia Government High School, Nawabpur Government High

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A teacher with the help of a scout is trying to take a child to the exam hall of class I admission test at the Government Laboratory High School in Dhaka yesterday, but the little boy is adamant not to move a single step.

PHOTO: SHAFIQUE ALAM

Students to get books in 7 days

Insists textbook board

WASIM BIN HABIB

A major part of textbooks for the next academic session has already been printed and sent to districts for free distribution and the authorities concerned hope all the students will get the books on schedule.

Seven days are left to end the government-set deadline for distributing free textbooks among the students of primary, secondary, ibtedai (primary level of madrasa) and dakhil classes. The authorities are working round-the-clock to meet the target.

Sources in the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) said almost all the books for secondary and ibtedai classes have already been sent to districts but they are lagging behind in sending primary and dakhil books.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is likely to inaugurate the free distribution of textbooks on January 1 or 2. Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid on Wednesday reaffirmed that the government will deliver free textbooks to the students in time, dispelling all the rumours.

In the wake of textbook crisis recurring every year, the

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Xmas today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Christians in Bangladesh and around the world will today celebrate Christmas, which commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ.

According to Christian belief, the Virgin Mary gave birth to the son of God in a stable in the city of Bethlehem.

It is one of the most important days of the year for Christians, who will hold special prayer services in churches.

In Dhaka the celebrations began on Christmas Eve with carol singing in hotel lobbies, restaurants, lounges and other public places.

The Sonargaon Hotel, Dhaka Sheraton and the Westin Dhaka have arranged parties featuring carols, games and dance performances.

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BNP blames PM for 'failure'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP said yesterday Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina failed to project the country's interests at the Copenhagen summit on climate change held recently.

And Bangladesh delegation's performance at this UN-sponsored climate conference was miserable, said the main opposition party. It termed the conference a "failure."

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Climate discontent justified: Obama

UN envoy urged an end to post-summit recriminations

AFP, Washington

President Barack Obama said disenchantment over the Copenhagen climate talks was "justified" but defended the chaotic outcome as the top UN envoy urged an end to post-summit recriminations.

The climate change conference held in the Danish capital ended last week with a non-

binding agreement that the European Union has blasted as a Sino-US stitch-up which will do little to curtail global warming.

"I think that people are justified in being disappointed about the outcome in Copenhagen," Obama told PBS television Wednesday after the summit ended with only vague prescriptions to curb greenhouse gas emissions.

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Delwar's son sued for bid to grab shops

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A case was filed yesterday against BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain's son Abdul Hamid Dablu on charges of attempting to take possession of four shops illegally in the capital's Motaleb Plaza.

Mohammad Ali Manu, general manager of Good Luck Real Estate Ltd, filed the case with a Dhaka court.

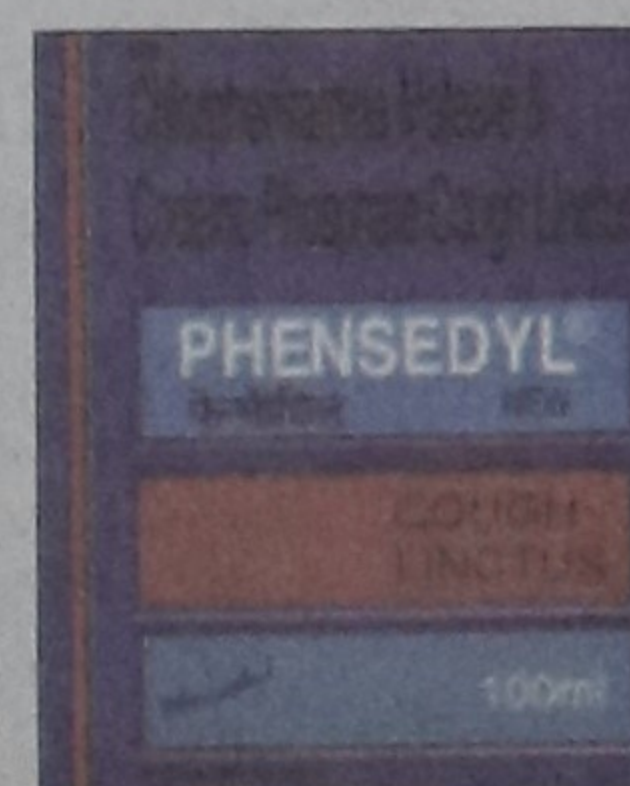
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Fake Phensidyl factory in city busted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-3) personnel yesterday unearthed a factory of contraband Indian drug Phensidyl at North Rayerbagh in the city and arrested three persons with huge quantity of Phensidyl-making chemical and other materials.

The arrested were identified as Moni Akhter alias 'Phensi Moni', 40, Kamal Hossain, 35,



and Parvej. But the key figures behind the illegal business couldn't be arrested.

The factory is housed in a tin-shed building. It is used as a storehouse of the smuggled Phensidyl from where it is supplied to the wholesalers across the city.

Rab-3 officials said they seized a huge quantity of smuggled Phensidyl, Phensidyl-making liquid chemicals,

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