

# Communications, power to get more govt funds

PM assures cabinet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday assured more allocations for communications and power sectors following the requests of her cabinet colleagues. The ministers said people started questioning the performance of the government in the two sectors. They urged on the government's effective measures to check price hike of soybean oil and rice. "People have been getting frustrated after about two years since we formed government, as they expected better performance in communications and power sectors," said a senior minister. He said people wanted more new roads, bridges, and repair of the damaged ones in the last two years. Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain requested for more fund to implement various projects in his sector after placing a summary of the ministry's activities.

Several of the ministers supported his request that allocation shortfall is mainly hampering repair and maintenance works of the roads and highways. Hasina asked the ministers, state ministers, and secretaries to maintain fairness so reputed companies get projects and quality work is ensured in the sectors. The PM's directive for fairness followed LGRD Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam's remark that a certain country is all along getting different projects of communications sector. "There are many reputed Japanese firms performing great in communications sector, which deserve works in Bangladesh. But companies from a particular country are being awarded projects", Ashrafur was quoted by a senior minister as saying. The cabinet thanked and congratulated the prime minister for her 'successful' visits to Japan, Belgium, and Russia. Prime Minister's Press Secretary Abul

Kalam Azad briefed journalists following the meeting. He said the cabinet holds that the PM's visit will expedite efforts to graduate Bangladesh to a middle-income country by 2021. The cabinet approved proposals for signing cooperation agreement on culture, education, and science with Spain. It also recommended bilateral capital-investment development and preservation agreement with the United Arab Emirates (UAE). "The PM will soon visit the UAE to sign the agreement," Azad told the reporters. He said Japan has assured the PM of assistances to Bangladesh. In this regard, Japan will sign economic partnership agreement with Bangladesh, help Bangladesh attain the MDGs, recruit Bangladeshi human resources and invest in various development sectors. The cabinet approved another proposal for ratifying bilateral capital-investment development and preservation agreement with India.

# WAR OF LIBERATION Memorial should be built for slain Indian soldiers: Muhith

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday said it is the duty for Bangladesh to build a monument in the country in memories of Indian soldiers who had sacrificed their lives during the War of Liberation in 1971. Paying rich tributes to the slain Indian soldiers, he said, many Indian soldiers had sacrificed their lives in the war while many are still alive with physical disabilities by the war. That was a great contribution which should be recognised, he added. Muhith told a discussion on the India-Bangladesh relationship, organised by the Ekattur Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee marking the 39th anniversary of international recognition to Bangladesh as an independent state. He also recalled the contribution of the then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to the war and its people. "Shrimati Indira Gandhi



Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith speaks at a meeting at the WVA Auditorium of Dhanmondi in the city yesterday.

Rajeet Mitter recalled his memories during the war of Bangladesh when he was a college student. He said the Indian students had started giving support to the war from very early by holding rallies and raising funds. Mitter said support to the people of Bangladesh and the war were not given only from the Indian government but also from its people. Journalist Shahriar Kabir said the Indo-Bangla friendship is fastened in blood and it never be disconnected. He recalled Indian contribution to over one crore refugees during the war. Presiding over the discussion, Justice Ghulam Rabbani said Bangladesh and India are now working together for a hunger-free South Asia and the existing friendship needs to be stronger to reach the goal. Awami League lawmaker Mostafa Farukh Mohammad and Sector Commander Maj Gen (Retd) KM Shafiqullah also spoke at the occasion.



Jagoree, a youth organisation, holds a discussion titled "People and constitution: Role of the constitutional bodies" at the Prothom Alo conference room in the city yesterday.

# Constitutional bodies unable to play due role, say experts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The constitutional bodies of the country are failing to play their due role in ensuring the checks and balances in democracy, which are crucial, observed legal experts and youth leaders yesterday. They said bodies like the Election Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, Public Service Commission and the judiciary are supposed to function independently, but somehow the executive branch of the state always exercises control over them. As the parliament is in the process of amending the constitution, these issues could be seriously discussed, they said. The observations came at a discussion titled "People and constitution: Role of the constitutional bodies" organised by Jagoree, a youth organisation, at the daily Prothom Alo conference room in the capital. "Constitution puts people at the heart of power. But today, the elected representatives are failing to play their role and are engaged in self-interests," said Dr Kamal Hossain. The members of the parliament are the ones to oversee the activities of the ministries but they are not carrying out

their decisions effectively, rather are more interested in getting duty-free cars and other businesses, he said. "The political parties appear to be the zamindars and brokers. But it is the people who are the root of all power," Dr Kamal said. The whole spirit of the country's independence was to establish autonomy but today the local governments are not given autonomy, rather the lawmakers are trying to control them, he added. "It is also frustrating that the local government polls are not held in time," said the jurist, calling upon the young people to work relentlessly to create awareness among people to establish their rights. Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud said the ACC appears to be frozen today. "Information Commission and National Human Rights Commission have been formed, but are they really functioning? Or have these been created to provide some people with jobs?" he questioned. People accused of criminal activities roam in broad daylight instead of being brought to justice, he said, adding that if that is the case, the rule of law will go down.

Prothom Alo Assistant Editor Mizanur Rahman Khan said the prime minister holds a lot of power in the constitution, even in regulating the constitutional bodies, and this is a big flaw. The process of appointing judges and commissioners in other constitutional bodies is such that there is a control of the executive. This seriously hampers the independence of the process and thereby governance process, he said. "The chiefs of the Information Commission, ACC and Human Rights Commission should be appointed and removed as per rules but the rules have not been framed yet," he said. Prof Asif Nazrul of Dhaka University said peoples' civil and political rights are limited to those who are capable of appointing legal advisers with large sums of money. Ensuring right to food, housing and education of the citizens should be implemented as in the constitution, said the law professor. Jagoree Founding Member Bidhan Chandra Paul said youths should be involved in the amendment process of the constitution. Prothom Alo Joint Editor Abdul Qayum moderated the discussion.

# Admission to Class-I in govt schools thru' lottery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

For the first time in the country, candidate selections for admission in class one of 317 state-run schools (which have classes from I-X) will be made through lottery. However, the selection procedure for admission to all other classes (from class II to class IX) will remain the same. The candidates will have to take admission tests of 100 marks. The decision was taken in an education ministry meeting yesterday presided over by Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid. The meeting hoped that this would end the psychological torment a pre-school child has to go through to get a spot in those schools. Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education Director General Prof Noman-ur-Rashid and headmasters of all the city's state run schools were present at the meeting. Prof Noman said, "The decision includes that freedom fighter's children will enjoy five percent quota facilities while the disabled will get two percent." However, the meeting directed all the schools to finish the admission test within December 31

and begin classes on January 1 next year. Lottery forms for the class one admission, costing Tk 100 each, can be found in all 371 schools, including 24 in the capital, from December 8 to December 14. Schools across the country except those in the capital will conduct the lottery on December 21, 22 and 23. Admission tests will be held in the capital's 24 schools on December 18, 19 and 20 but the schools across the county will fix up their own date of admission. All state run schools across the country will supply the admission forms of class one to 10 from December 8 and the deadline of form submission is December 14. Meanwhile, Viqarunnisa Noon School and College of the capital will publish the primary selection list of 16,640 candidates for class one for all the four branches of the school. The lottery will be held on December 21 and 22, said Hosne Ara Begum, principal of the institution. The list of the selected candidates will be found at the notice board of school branches, she added.

Third conference of dev bodies begins today METRO DESK The two-day third grand conference of development organisations will begin at RRF Training Centre in Jessore today. The conference has been jointly organised by Ganokendro, Lokkendro, Ekota, CBO and Lahanti Akhra, being managed by Dhaka Ahsania Mission, ActionAid Bangladesh, CARE Bangladesh, Concern Worldwide and Ashroy. CARE Bangladesh Country Director Nick Southern, Dhaka Ahsania Mission Programme Director Shafiqul Islam, ActionAid Bangladesh Country Director Farah Kabir, Concern World Wide Country Director Kieron Crawley and Ashroy Executive Director Dr Ahsan Ali will attend the function.

# 3 cops to face music for rickshaw riding

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) authority is going to take departmental action against the three police personnel riding a rickshaw on the capital's Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue on Sunday defying rickshaw off-limit rules. Additional Deputy Commissioner Masudur Rahman of DMP said such action by the three personnel has tarnished the image of DMP. Expressing grievance in a press release, DMP said they noticed the photograph published in The Daily Star on Monday of the three personnel and are trying to identify them. Masud said they would be given exemplary punishment to stop recurrence of such offences by any personnel of DMP.

# Call to amend electoral rules

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Municipal Association of Bangladesh (MAB) yesterday called on the Election Commission to amend the electoral rules and code of conduct for the municipal election. Addressing a press conference, they criticised the rules and regulations, which prohibits the voter slip distribution and lack of self-defence during investigation against the municipal representatives. In a written statement, MAB President and Tongi Municipal Mayor Ajmat Ulla Khan said the Municipality (Code of Conduct for Election) Rules and Regulations, 2010, clause 6(3) prohibits distribution of voter slip among the voters, ban on meeting and allows only posters for campaign, which is absurd to follow for the candidates. Clause 10 (1) and 10(2) provides a candidate no scope of self-defence during any kind of investigation against the person, said the leaders at the press conference held at a city hotel. They also pointed out the problems of Clause 19 (2) of Local Government (Municipality) Law 2009. It provides scope of removal of nomination papers due to any kind of dues while the clause 19(2) does not tell the limit of punishment and time schedule for participation in the election again. MAB Vice-President and Narayanganj Municipal Mayor Selina Hayat Ivy, Shingra Municipal Mayor Shami Al-Razi, Brahmanbaria Municipal Mayor Hafizur Rahman Molla, Rangpur Municipal Mayor Abdur Rouf Manik and Cox's Bazar municipality's former mayor Nurul Afsar also spoke.

Sahara, Nahid visit stalking victim Suma BSS, Dhaka Home Minister Sahara Khatun yesterday visited Suma Akter of Barguna who is undergoing treatment at Trauma Centre in the city after an attack on her by stalkers on Saturday. Sahara talked to victim's parents and assured them of all cooperation including arrest of other culprits. Meanwhile, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid also visited Suma at the centre. He talked to the concerned doctors and asked them to ensure better treatment for her. Obituary STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet Veteran politician AH Faizul Hasan was laid to rest at his family graveyard at Gowainghat upazila in Sylhet yesterday. Hasan, former provincial assembly member, died of old age complications on Sunday at his village home at Longpur. He was 87. Death anniversary STAFF CORRESPONDENT Today is the third death anniversary of Shafika Hossain, former president of Padatik Natya Sansad. On the occasion, a milad and doa mahfil will be held at Lalmatia Jame Masjid in the city after Asr prayers today. Nripen Biswas STAFF CORRESPONDENT Today is the seventh death anniversary of journalist and writer Nripen Biswas, says a press release. Different programmes will be held in his village home in Ghatail and Bhupur Press Club marking the day. He was the general secretary of Bangladesh Sangbadik Samity.

**WEATHER TODAY**

## Light rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light rain is likely to occur at one or two places over Dhaka, Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Rangpur and Sylhet divisions with moderate falls over Sylhet division in next 12 hours until 6:00pm today. Light fog may occur over the river basins of the country during morning, Met Office said. Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country. The sun sets in the capital at 5:11pm today and rises at 6:29am tomorrow. Country's highest temperature 33.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 15.4 degrees Celsius at Dinajpur. Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	25.4	20.8	68	77
Chittagong	30.0	21.5	74	61
Rajshahi	23.8	17.0	81	87
Rangpur	25.3	16.8	65	72
Khulna	24.6	18.8	80	84
Barisal	28.6	19.0	88	80
Sylhet	26.8	19.7	68	80
Cox's Bazar	33.0	21.8	76	75

# Ulamas' agitation from today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ulama Mashayek Parishad, an anti-government forum of religion-based political leaders, yesterday said they will stage continuous demonstration from today and consider calling a countrywide hartal after December 26. They will hold protest programme to force the government to bring changes to education policy. The parishad leaders, most from different religion-based parties that are allies of main opposition BNP, announced the protest programme at a press briefing. The briefing was organised at the office of Masik Madina, a publication of Islami Okyo Jote (IOJ) Vice-chairman Muhiuddin Khan. Khelfat Majlish Chairman Muhammad Ishaq and IOJ Secretary General Abdul Latif Nezami, among others, were present at the programme. The parishad's President Muhiuddin Khan earlier said they will observe a countrywide hartal on December 26. However, the IOJ secretary general later told The Daily Star that they will think about calling a hartal after December 26. The parishad leaders were supposed to submit a memorandum today to Speaker Abdul Hamid demanding amendment to the education policy. But they could not submit it, as the law enforcers baton-charged the workers trying to gather near Matsya Bhaban. Police picked up at least 10 persons from the spot after the parishad workers pelted them with pieces of bricks. Officer-in-charge Shibli Noman of Ramna Police Station said they did not allow anyone to gather as the prime minister was returning home from the secretariat.



Artist Rafiqun Nabi speaks at a press conference on Radhuni Pitha-Payesh Utsab at Ramna Batamul in the city yesterday. On his right are Square Group Executive Director M Ashiqul Hoque and Prof Siddiqua Kabir.

# Pitha utsab begins on Jan 7

DU CORRESPONDENT

Recipes for different kinds of local pithas (cake) have been sought from people for Radhuni Pitha-Payesh Utsab, a month-long festival to be held at Ramna Batamul in the city. People from different divisions were urged to join the event that will continue from January 07 to February 07. The organisers briefed about the festival at Ramna Batamul yesterday. M Ashiqul Hoque, executive director of Square Group; Prof Siddiqua Kabir, chief judge of he competition; and artist Rafiqun Nabi were present at the time.

The recipes are divided in four categories that include Tel Pitha, Bhapa Pitha, Rosh Pitha, and Firmi-Payesh. A judge panel of culinary experts following primary selection will evaluate the recipes received from all over the country. The judges will choose 40 recipes in all, 10 from each category, to display the cake items at the festival. Anyone above 18 years of age can send recipes that must reach before January 07 to this address -- Radhuni Pitha-Payesh Utsab, Square Consumer Products Ltd, Square Centre, 48 Mohakhali C/A, Dhaka.

Today is the seventh death anniversary of journalist and writer Nripen Biswas, says a press release. Different programmes will be held in his village home in Ghatail and Bhupur Press Club marking the day. He was the general secretary of Bangladesh Sangbadik Samity.