

Joy pulls

FROM PAGE 1
transport and investment and boost the country's nearly \$100 billion economy.

"We'll gain financially. We will get fees for transit of all goods through our land."
Aside from connectivity with India, the country will have road links with Myanmar, Thailand and Malaysia through the Asian Highway allowing easy access of our goods to those countries, he observed.

In addition, as China will be linked with the Asian Highway, bilateral trade between Bangladesh and China will shoot up.

"Ultimately, it'll benefit us," said Sajeeb, an IT professional with graduation from Texas University at Arlington, USA.

He, however, could not say whether the AL-led government has conducted any study as to how much Bangladesh will gain for providing connectivity to other countries.

But he cited a report unveiled at the meeting on the prospect of gains of enhanced trade, investment and economic activities and said, "Many studies were done internationally. You will get it if you go through them."

The report, published by Washington-based Asia Advisory Committee, observed that Bangladesh's

location could provide it with numerous advantages and opportunities over the next 10 to 20 years, if it develops its economic environment and connecting infrastructure.

"It is connectivity. Transit is an aspect. India will get transit and we will get a fee. We must get a fee. Why not," said Sajeeb, who is believed to provide policy advice to realise AL's promise for a Digital Bangladesh by 2021.

The government has almost finalised the agreement with India and taken different steps to improve its rail and road network and other infrastructures including telecommunication.

On the impact of confrontational politics on business, Sajeeb said the business climate has been affected for lack of "political capability" of a political party.

According to him, the "only way" to ensure economic growth, political stability and sustainable democracy in the country is to keep AL in power.

He has recently become a member of the party.

Asked whether it is good for politics if one party stays in power for long, he said: "It's not bad for politics. Malaysia and Singapore have made progress because of one party. They did not advance by changing parties."

Haikkar canal

FROM PAGE 1
Manik and Justice Sheikh Md Zakir Hossain also issued a rule upon the government to explain within three weeks as to why the government should not be directed to take necessary steps to protect and restore Haikkar Khal.

The Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB) yesterday filed the writ petition as public interest litigation following a news published in The Daily Star on December 6 titled "Haikkar Khal disappearing as encroachment goes unabated".

The Secretary to LGRD ministry, Dhaka City Corporation mayor, DG of LRD, DC of Dhaka, DMP commissioner, MD of Dhaka Wasa, and OC of Mohammadpur police station have been made respondents to the rule.

Advocate Manzill Murshid appeared for the petitioner while Deputy Attorney General ABM Altaf Hossain and Assistant Attorney General Purabi Saha represented the government in the HC yesterday.

Govt mulls

FROM PAGE 1
following farcical trial during the rule of general Ziaur Rahman, who illegally grabbed the state power. The matter is under the government's consideration."

The PM said this in response to a scripted query from ruling Awami League lawmaker Chayan Islam.

Major general Ziaur Rahman, who was the chief of army staff, illegally assumed the office of the president amid a volatile situation both in the armed forces and in political arena after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on August 15, 1975.

At that time, over one and half a dozen coups and counter-coups took place in the armed forces. Over 1,000 officers of the forces

were hanged through controversial trial in court martial.

Ziaur Rahman formed the BNP which won a landslide victory in the second parliamentary election in 1979. The parliament then passed the fifth amendment to the constitution that indemnified all activities of the martial law regime in between August 15, 1975 and April 9, 1979.

The fifth amendment now stands cancelled.

When contacted, CEPZ General Manager SM Abdur Rashid admitted that basic wages of the workers have been reduced.

Following negotiations with the workers, they agreed to join duty today (Thursday), he said.

Police and Rab personnel were deployed at the site.

In the DPEZ in Savar, a section of workers of Hi-Tech Sportswear Limited resorted to abstention from work yesterday morning, causing suspension of production.

Asked about this, a high official of the factory said those who have been working for a long time started the demonstration as comparatively new workers are getting more benefits than them (old workers) as per the new pay scale implemented last month.

Seeking anonymity, he said they are demanding a "balanced payment" based on their long experience, and cancellation of grading system in pay-

ment of their wages.

"The management is continuing negotiations with the workers so that the factory could be reopened today [Thursday]," the official said.

At least 9,000 workers are employed in the factory, he mentioned.

The workers began agitation on Tuesday and did not join work yesterday morning.

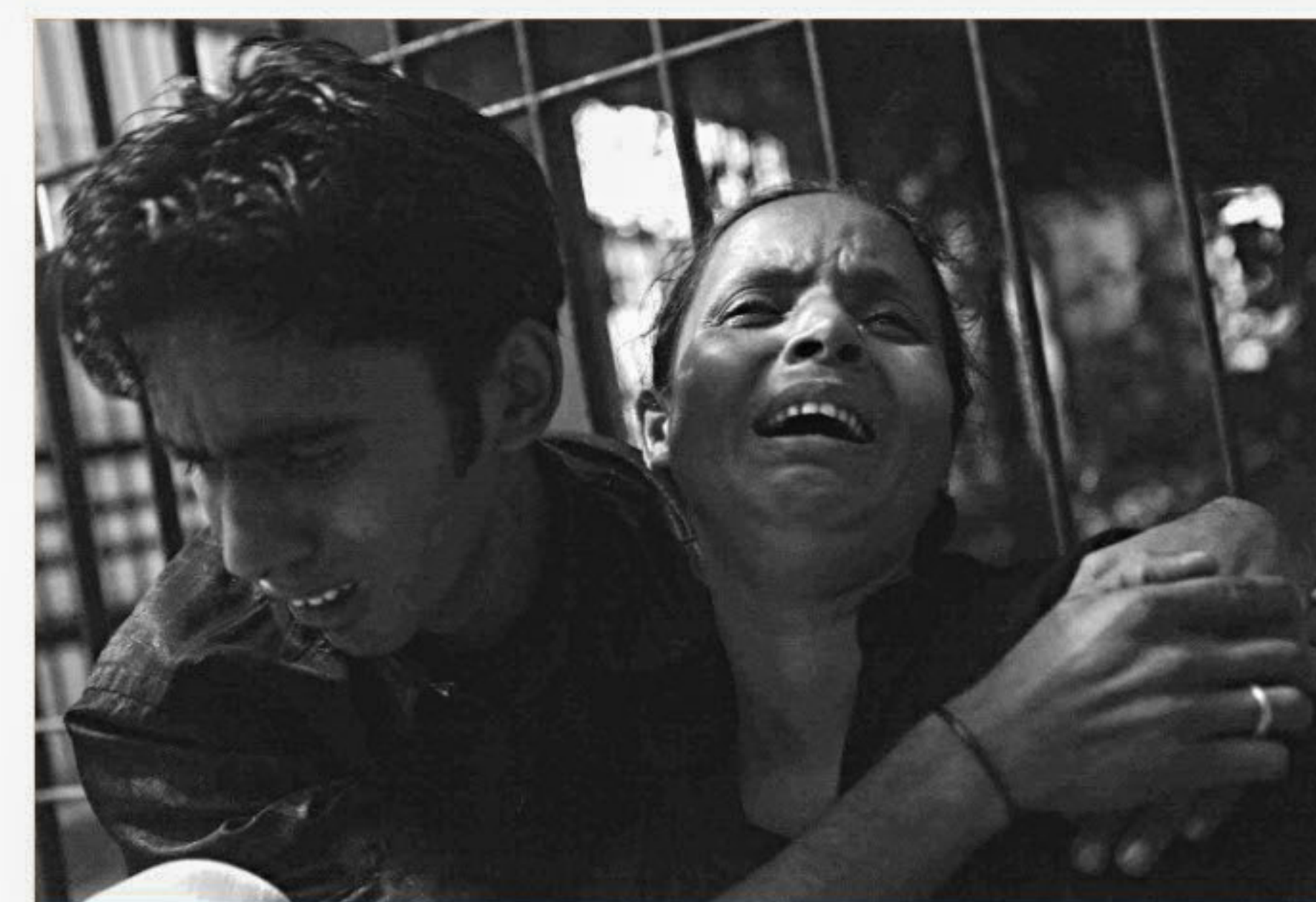
Savar Circle Assistant Superintendent of Police Monwar Hossain said the workers stopped work due to dissatisfaction over payment.

No case was filed in this connection, he added.

DU dismisses
The decision came at a meeting of DU syndicate last night after evaluation of the recommendations made by the university's standing committee on December 1.

"The DU authorities warned them several times in accordance with the university rules but they didn't respond. Finally the syndicate has taken the decision," DU Vice-Chancellor Prof AAMS Aref Siddique, also chairman of the syndicate, told The Daily Star.

DU sources said the syndicate first collected information on their breaking agreement with the university and then forwarded it to the standing committee for verifying the allegations against the teachers.



One of the families that have lost loved ones in yesterday's train crash.

PHOTO: STAR

Trains collide, kill 14

FROM PAGE 1
Mohammad Mostafa, an electrician of Chattola Express, told The Daily Star, "Our train was supposed to run on track-2. I don't understand why it was directed to track-1."

Meanwhile, locals said the employees of the station disappeared soon after the accident.

Rail communications between the capital and major cities remained suspended till 11:00pm.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has expressed deep shock over the accident and directed all concerned to do their best in rescue operation and treatment of the injured.

Military personnel were working with police, Rab, firefighters and locals to pull passengers out of the wreckage.

Divisional Rail Manager Habibur Rahman said a relief

train with a medical van reached the scene to help the rescue efforts at around 9:45pm.

As a huge crowd gathered at the scene, it became difficult for the rescuers to do their job properly. Law enforcers had to charge baton to disperse the onlookers.

Humayun Kabir Jewel, 22, a passenger of Godhuli who is now at DMCH, told The Daily Star that after the collision he got trapped in his coach, which was just behind the locomotive. After a while, he noticed grills of one of the windows bent and broken. He pulled himself out of the wreckage through that window.

Sumon, an eyewitness, said soon after the accident, a fire brigade crane was called in, but it failed to lift the heavy coaches.

Parliament last night passed

a condolence motion for the ones who have died in the accident.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has also expressed condolences to the families of those who have died and demanded proper investigation into the accident.

Bangladesh Railway has formed a four-member committee to probe the accident. Headed by Railway's Chief Engineer Yusuf Ali Mridha, the committee has been asked to come up with a report within the next 48 hours.

At least 21 people have died so far in three major train accidents this year.

According to railway, 5,050 train accidents were recorded in the country between 2000 and 2009. At least 60 people died in around 1,000 accidents last year alone.

Unrest at EPZs

FROM PAGE 16
Witnesses said around 3,000 workers demonstrated

demanding payment of basic wages at the previous rates, suspension of seven senior officials who were in the wages review committee and increased food allowance.

Injured Line-in-Charge Jamal Hossain said the workers got reduced wages since the factory management decreased their basic wages under the new pay structure.

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He refuted BNP's apprehension that the government officials might favour the ruling party's candidates in the polls.

Two election commissioners Muhammad Sohul Hussein and Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakhawat Hossain, Home Secretary Abdus Sobhan Sikdar, Principal Staff Officer of Armed Forces Division Lt Gen Abdul Wadud, Inspector General of Police Hasan Mahmud Khandaker among others were present at the meeting presided over by the CEC.

Army watch

FROM PAGE 1
EC Secretariat that reviewed the current law and order.

"The commission opted for army deployment on a limited scale apprehending deterioration of law and order in some large municipalities like Tangail, Mymensingh and Savar," CEC Huda told the reporters.

He said a list of the municipalities will be disclosed in a couple of days where the army will be deployed during the polls on January 12, 13, 17 and 18 in seven divisions.

The EC chief said a mobile force consisting of Rab, police and BDR will patrol the streets to maintain law and order on the polling day.

Three tier security measures will be taken to ensure security of the polling stations, he added.

The main opposition BNP had demanded EC's move to deploy the army to hold the municipality polls in a free and fair manner. But the ruling Awami League had opposed the proposal.

The CEC, however, said the law and order situation is now under control.

The law enforcement agencies will continue their routine work to maintain law and order and there is no need for special drive at this moment, he added.

Earlier, BNP objected to the appointment of deputy commissioners as appellate authorities to settle disputes over candidacies.

In defence, CEC Huda said as the EC has shortage of manpower, so it is not possible to appoint the EC's own officials as appellate authorities.

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"We could not make any contact with anyone on board and now we just have to wait and see," Rahmat Ullah said.

The ship has 25 crewmembers and the wife of its chief engineer on board.

The government has established contact with all authorities concerned around the world to ensure security and release of the 26 hostages, a top official of foreign ministry said Tuesday.

"We have even talked to people in Somalia who in the past had successfully negotiated release of captives," the official added.

AL lawmaker Tofail Ahmed said Hasina received UNESCO peace prize for the CHT treaty.

"She will transform Bangladesh into a modern country by materialising the dreams of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman," he said.

AL lawmaker Sayadul Haque said, "Hasina's contribution is as glittering as stars."

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) lawmaker Mayeen Uddin Khan Badal said "Leaders like Nelson Mandela and Sheikh Hasina are born rarely in the world. They have no materialistic desire and they sacrifice their lives for the betterment of people."

Five-year-old thrown from train in Mumbai

AFP, Mumbai

A five-year-old girl was thrown out of a moving train in Mumbai during an argument between her family and another passenger over sharing a seat, police said yesterday.

The girl suffered head injuries when she landed on the tracks in an eastern suburb of the city after the train had left the main Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus.

"A scuffle broke out over seating and the little girl was thrown out of the door. It happened in just a few seconds," Mumbai railway police chief Tukaram Chavan told AFP.

"She's receiving treatment and recovering. She was very lucky not to have been hit by another train."

Chavan added that a 19-year-old man had been arrested. Indian newspapers said other passengers in the crowded train had beaten him up after the incident.

"Had I known that the man was a maniac, I would have

Chinese group goes for rebel 'peace prize'

AFP, Beijing

A shadowy Chinese group said yesterday it planned to award a rival version of the Nobel Peace Prize as Beijing ramps up efforts to discredit the Nobel's choice of jailed dissident Liu Xiaobo.

The "Confucius Peace Prize" will be awarded on Thursday to former Taiwan vice president Lien Chan, one of its organisers, Tan Changliu, told AFP, just one day before the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in Oslo to honour Liu and comes as China has stepped up already fierce criticism of the Nobel Committee.

Tan denied that his group had any link with China's government.

The award was announced on a Chinese Buddhist website.

It said other candidates included South African democracy icon and Nobel peace laureate Nelson Mandela, software tycoon Bill Gates and the Panchen Lama, the second-highest ranking figure in Tibetan Buddhism.

On Tuesday, a Chinese government spokeswoman referred to members of the committee as "clowns" and said most of the world opposed Liu's award - a claim rejected by the committee.

The law enforcement agencies will continue their routine work to maintain law and order and there is no need for special drive at this moment, he added.

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given him the seat instead of putting my daughter's life in danger," the girl's father told the Hindustan Times.

"My wife, my brother and I ran after him but before we could stop him, he flung my daughter out of the train. My mind stopped working and was numb. My brother acted quickly and pulled the (emergency) chain."

Mumbai's suburban trains carry an estimated seven million people every day and are a lifeline in an overcrowded city with traffic-clogged, potholed roads.

Train doors are normally open to the elements to combat high temperatures and humidity, with many travellers also hanging out of carriages or perching between them.

In 2008, an average of 17 people died every day on Mumbai's suburban rail network, according to government figures. Most deaths were trespassers on the tracks.

INDO-PAK STALLED TALKS

Sushma Swaraj takes on Musharraf

PTI, New Delhi

Joining issue with Pervaz Musharraf who has blamed a top External Ministry official for failure of the Indo-Pak talks in Agra, BJP leader Sushma Swaraj said the former Pakistan President was responsible for the collapse of the summit.

In a twitter message, she said the Agra summit collapsed as Indian political leadership did not accept Musharraf's effort to bring Kashmir as 'core issue' and no mention of 'cross-border terrorism' in the agreed statement.

"Musharraf is wrong to blame Vivek Katju (who is now Secretary, West) for failure of Agra talks. Katju was then Jt. Secy in MEA," said the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha.

"The truth is that Musharraf wanted Kashmir as 'core issue' and no mention of 'cross-border terrorism' in the agreed statement. This was not acceptable to the political leadership then. This is not acceptable even today," Swaraj said.

While referring to the summit meeting, Musharraf, in an interview to an Indian TV channel, had said that things were progressing fine during his talks with the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee till Katju intervened.

"There was someone from the Foreign Ministry sitting there named Katju. He may still be there, he created a lot of hurdles," he had said.

Katju, who is now Secretary (West), yesterday dismissed Musharraf's claim that he created a "lot of hurdles" during the Agra peace talks.

Katju, a 1974 batch IFS officer, was then joint secretary in-charge of Pakistani affairs in the External Affairs Ministry.

Vajpayee and Musharraf met in Agra on July 15 and 16, 2001 to resolve outstanding issues between India and Pakistan.

But the summit collapsed as the two sides couldn't arrive at any agreement, despite five one-to-one rounds between the two leaders and hours of discussion between the two delegations.

Police recovered one knife and a machete from a nearby field after the incident.

Crew still
FROM PAGE 1
Jahan Moni expects the pirates to contact them or make ransom demands once it reaches the coast. They have not been able to make contact of any sort with the crew or the pirates since the hijack.

Technical Manager Rahmat Ullah of Brave Royal Ship Management, the operating company of the ship, said they are tracking the ship via satellite.

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Investors burn

FROM PAGE 1
government high officials and big market players might have a hand in the directive.

One angry investor said: "The big fish knew very well that the directive would take the market down, and they could cash in on the consequent volatility."

Another directive on Monday also stung the market this week. The rule on executing buy orders only after cashing an investor's cheque contributed to a 332-point loss in the prior two days.

Md Zahurul Alam, chief operating officer of the Dhaka bourse, said: "We talked to some of the angry investors, and it seems that the SEC's two directives cast negative repercussion on the market."

Yesterday's protests and market crash -- greater even than 1996 crash -- prompted the SEC to postpone both directives; one at 12:26pm and another at 1:01pm.

Once the news was posted on the trading servers, the market recovered most of its losses from the first half of the trading. At the close of trading, the benchmark DSE General Index closed only 134 points lower, at 8,451.

"It's an unprecedented and untoward incident," said Ziaul Haque Khondker, chairman of the SEC, who vowed to look into the matter.

"It is natural that there will be ups and downs in the market. But we, as the regulator, never want a drastic intra-day fall in the market."

A big correction in share prices was widely predicted

Govt to start

FROM PAGE 1
Chuadanga, Meherpur, Kushtia, Jessore, Khulna, Satkhira, Bagerhat, Jhenidah, Magura, Pabna and some other adjacent districts, said home ministry officials.

The drive will be conducted to arrest outlaws of different parties and groups to prevent them from influencing the election in favour of any particular candidate.

"We will conduct a massive drive in the south-western region to nab the outlawed party men and recover their arms and ammunition so that they can't influence the upcoming municipality polls," Home Secretary Abdus Sobhan Sikder told The Daily Star yesterday.

Different law enforcement and intelligence agencies have already prepared a list in this regard and handed over the list to the government high-ups, said the ministry sources.

The government will provide all out assistance to the election commission to ensure a free and fair election across the country, the secretary added.

The government has information that a good number of outlaws in the south-western region are returning to their localities to work for many candidates in the forthcoming local body election.

They are regrouping under the shelter of their 'political godfathers' ahead of the polls to manipulate it by muscle power, government sources said.

The municipality elections are scheduled for January 12, 13, 17 and 18 next year in 269 municipalities of 310 in seven divisions.

last year, as analysts warned many times that the soaring market was dangerously overheated.

The "bull run" lured thousands of fresh investors with crores of taka in hands into the market, increasing the demand for shares and making the stocks overvalued.

The government last month directed dozens of state-owned companies to offload their shares in the stock market in a bid to create new supply; yet most have yet to come into the market.