

NEWS IN *brief*

BFUJ suspends election for reunification

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) suspended its election for three months to continue the process of reunification of journalist unions.

The election, scheduled to be held on February 28, will remain suspended till May 31, said a press release of BFUJ yesterday.

The decision came at an executive committee meeting of BFUJ held at Jatiya Press Club in the

3 cops hurt in clash with BNP men

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

At least three policemen were injured in a clash between law enforcers and BNP men at Oxygen intersection in Chittagong city yesterday.

The BNP activists vandalised at least five vehicles including a private car and an auto-rickshaw during the clash.

Police said the clash ensued when they tried to disperse the BNP men from in front of KDS garment around 11:00am.

Earlier, after holding a mass contact campaign and a rally, some BNP leaders and activists started to gather in the area, creating huge traffic congestion on the city street.

Police charged batons and fired at least three teargas shells and eight rubber bullets to disperse

Two held with fake notes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two persons were caught with Tk 82,000 worth counterfeit currency in Kalamia Bazar area in Bakalia of Chittagong city yesterday.

The arrestees were Md Shahid, 32, and Md Nobil, 22, of the area.

Tipped-off, Bakalia police arrested the duo from the area around 12:30am and recovered 82 counterfeit notes of Tk 1,000 denomination from their possession, said police.

A case was filed with Bakalia Police Station in

Touchstone statue recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A touchstone Hindu idol of Ganesha, weighing 5 kilograms, was recovered from the capital's Fakirapool yesterday and one person was held in this connection.

The arrestee, Mokhbul Hossain, 44, hailed from Baliadanga upazila of Gaibanda and resided in the capital's Arambagh. He is an assistant editor of the daily Nobo Obhijan and the online news portal mybanglanews.com.

Tipped off, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-10) personnel, disguised as buyers, caught Mokhbul red handed while he was trying to sell them the statue in Fakirapool around 1:00pm, said Rab-10 sources.

Mokhbul was a member of a gang involved in smuggling such precious statues, they added.

Reunion of former DU English students tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former Dhaka University students who studied English literature will return to their alma mater for an annual reunion tomorrow.

Organisers say graduates, from as far back as 1940s to as recently as last year, are expected to gather at the Teacher-Student Centre for an event starting at 3:00pm.

The hours-long event will include reminiscences, a cultural programme and dinner.

This will be the 27th reunion since English Department Alumni Society was launched in December 1986.

A life member will pay Tk 300 as reunion fee while others will pay Tk 400 per person and Tk

Rubble, corrugated tin sheets and parts of wooden structures on a portion of Hatirjheel project in the capital's South Badda after an eviction drive on illegal structures by Rajuk yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

ZIA ORPHANAGE GRAFT SC fixes March 31 for hearing appeal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday fixed March 31 for hearing an appeal filed by BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia against a High Court verdict in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case.

In a verdict on December 14 in 2011, the HC rejected a petition submitted by Khaleda to stop the case proceedings and gave a nod to continue the case filed against her and six others at the lower court.

Challenging the HC's verdict, the opposition chief filed a leave-to-appeal petition with the SC through her lawyers on March 6 last year.

Following a prayer moved by Khaleda's lawyer Mahub Uddin Khokon yesterday, chamber judge of the Appellate Division of SC Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain fixed March 31 for hearing the leave-to-appeal petition.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), on July 3, 2009, filed the case against Khaleda, her son Tarique Rahman and five others with Ramna Police Station in connection with embezzling more than Tk 2.10 crore by forming the "fake" organisation, Zia Orphanage Trust.

Govt urged to execute policy for domestic workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers yesterday urged the government to implement the "Domestic Workers' Security and Development Policy 2010" to stop all forms of violence against domestic workers.

The demand came at human chain called by the Domestic Workers Rights Network in association with Manusher Jonno Foundation formed in front of Jatiya Press Club in the capital.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Maj Gen (Rtd) Dr Sardar Amir Ali, former director general of Birdem Hospital, died on Tuesday night. He was 74.

His first namaz-e-janaza will be held after Juma prayers on a playground near to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Dhaka Cantonment tomorrow, said a press release.

His second namaz-e-janaza will be held after Asr paryers at Allahu Mosque in the cantonment. Later, he will be buried at Banani Military Graveyard in the capital.

Hasina defends \$1b defence purchase from Russia

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Strongly defending the \$1 billion defence purchase from Russia, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government was modernising the armed forces in the light of "the country's defence policy".

"The defence policy was formulated in 1974 at the instruction of the father of the nation and in light of the policy, the "Forces Goal 2030" was prepared, and in light of that the armed forces is being reconstituted and modernised," she told a press conference at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday.

Military weapons will be purchased so that the armed forces grow strong and become capable of defending the nation's independence and sovereignty, Hasina said. "It is futile to become a king without swords and shields," she said in response to questions on the justification of the huge arms purchase.

The prime minister visited Russia on Jan 14-17 to sign a number of deals with Moscow, including the defence purchase and financing of the Rooppur nuclear power plant.

She said arms purchase was not a new subject, Bangladesh used to buy military hardware from many countries including China, Russia, USA, UK, Japan and Italy.

Recently, the government procured more military equipment including 44 tanks, training planes and missiles through cash payment from China but no-one raised any questions, she said, adding that Bangladesh needed military equipment as the country was engaged in UN peacekeeping missions.

Bangladesh purchased military equipments including armoured personnel carriers (APCs) from Russia when peacekeepers were sent on peace missions, and the UN later reimbursed the expenditure, she said.

Apart from modernising the armed forces, Hasina said the government kept in consideration the maintenance of sovereignty on the 1,11,631 square kilometres of area in the Bay, which Bangladesh won against Myanmar.

Asked if the arms deal got the cabinet approval, she said it was not.

A committee comprising defence, finance, foreign and cabinet division officials was constituted to scrutinise the deal, she said. "Not everything about defence is made public, some is kept secret everywhere."

ROOPPUR NUKE PLANT

The PM said ROSATOM, the atomic energy commission of Russia, was very eager to start the actual work of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant within this year.

"The design will be completed by May, and preparatory work of the plant site will be finished by August and actual work will start by September-October," she said.

The nuke power plant will have two reactors of 1000MW, and there will be five-tier safety arrangements.

As per the agreement, Russia will take back the waste of the plant, she said.

The prime minister said two agreements were inked to set up the nuclear power plant, under which Moscow would provide \$500 million to finance the preparatory works. The interest rate is very low, she said.

7-year-old girl raped, culprit held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A seven-year-old girl was raped on Tuesday and police detained a man in this connection on the same day from the capital's Khilgaon area.

The detained is Manik, a night guard and father of a two-year-old girl, who is also the victim's neighbour.

Faruk Hossain, sub-inspector of Khilgaon Police Station, said on Tuesday evening Manik called the victim to his room. The child's mother came looking for her and heard her daughter's groans from inside Manik's room.

She knocked on Manik's door and demanded to know why the room was locked with her daughter inside and why the girl seemed in pain, Faruk said, adding that Manik could not give any satisfactory answer to her or to the locals who were called.

The sub-inspector said Manik's wife along with their daughter had gone to their village, so Manik was alone in his rented house.

The victim's mother filed a case and Khilgaon police arrested Manik in the area on Tuesday.

The victim was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday where doctors found evidence of rape on her.

Manik yesterday was produced before a Dhaka court, which sent him to jail.

The victim has been admitted to DMCH One-Stop Crisis Centre (OCC). Dr Bilkis Begum, coordinator at OCC, said doctors who examined her found injury marks on the victim.

A forensic test will be done on the victim to ascertain the rape.



Vehicles kick up dust clouds, major contributor to respiratory complications in humans, on a worn-out road in the capital's Gulistan area yesterday.

PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

INDO-BANGLA EXTRADITION TREATY Indian cabinet nod likely today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

The Indian Cabinet is likely to consider a proposal today to sign an extradition treaty with Bangladesh ahead of Home Minister Sushilkumar Shinde's visit to Dhaka next week.

The treaty could be signed during Shinde's three-day visit to Dhaka beginning January 28.

The long-awaited extradition treaty is being considered by the cabinet after the Bangladesh government made minor modifications in the draft, sources said.

The cabinet meeting will be presided by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

The extradition treaty, if signed, is expected to pave the way for deportation of jailed Ulfa (United Liberation Front of Assam) General Secretary Anup Chetia and many other insurgents from Bangladesh.

The agreement will also help Dhaka in getting back its criminals who are currently lodged in Indian jails.

India has been pressing for Chetia's deportation since long. The Ulfa militant has been in a Dhaka jail following his arrest in 1997 on the charge of entering Bangladesh without valid documents.

He, however, moved court seeking asylum in Bangladesh on security reason, making it "legally" difficult for Dhaka to execute New Delhi's demand.

UP chairmen blast MPs for interference in local govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty union parishad chairmen, a ruling party MP, and local government experts yesterday blasted lawmakers for their "shameful" interference in test relief, food-for-work, and other social safety net programmes carried out at union level.

They also criticised the government for showing "double standard" regarding strengthening the local government bodies.

The government says many things about empowering local bodies but did very little to make the UPs effective, several UP chairmen told a discussion in the capital's Cirdap auditorium, where they also shared the obstacles they

face for interference.

A three-time UP chairman and current Awami League lawmaker from Gazipur, AKM Mozammel Huq, said, "There is no other country in the world except Bangladesh where lawmakers' main interest is in test relief, food-for-work programmes, appointments in local educational institutions, and other money-related activities at local level."

Lawmakers should attend to making laws, for what they are elected, but unfortunately, they just do the opposite and show interests in different "grants", he said.

"Why an MP will meddle in development activities at local

level? Huq wondered. "If he wants to do so, he can participate in the local level elections."

Huq, also chief of the parliamentary body on the law ministry, said the government talked about empowering local government and parliament also passed laws to this effect, but nothing more was done so that the UPs could work or take decision independently.

Amid huge support from the UP chairmen and members, he said that according to the union parishad law, seven ministries were identified, local level activities of which should be run by the UPs. "But [works of] not a single ministry were handed over to union

parishads ever after four years of the law's passage."

The fact is the government wants that the local government bodies should remain subservient to the central government, he observed.

Krishnalal Guho, chairman of Amra Jhuri union parishad in Kaukhali Upazila, said due to interference of local MPs, he could not implement development plans of his UP.

Another UP chairman said he could not give tube wells to the right persons in his areas due to interference from the local lawmaker. "The MP sent me a note asking me to give a tube well to a man of his choice," he added.