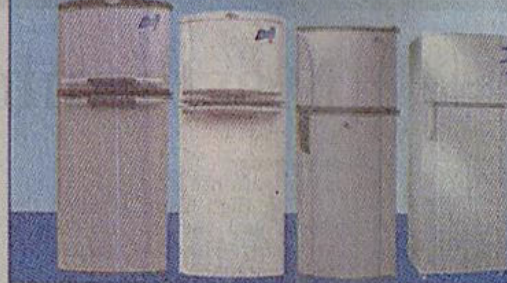




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Boucher to replace Rocca

Richard A Boucher will soon replace Christina B Rocca, currently visiting Bangladesh, as the US assistant secretary of state for South Asian affairs while the White House has nominated Patricia A Buteinis as the ambassador to Bangladesh.

President Bush has already sent Richard A Boucher's nomination to the Senate as the next assistant secretary of state for South Asian affairs. The nomination is now in the Committee of Foreign Relations for its consideration.

US embassy sources in Dhaka said Rocca is expected to be replaced by Buteinis.

Udichi blast case hearing postponed

The hearing date of the Udichi bomb blast case was postponed till February 8 following petition from the lawyers of the defendants yesterday.

Defence lawyers submitted a petition to postpone the date of argument and the District Special Judge Abul Hossain Bepari fixed February 8 for the next hearing. Thirty-one out of 64 witnesses have however completed giving their testimony on January 14.

Bombs were exploded at the Jessore Town Hall Maidan during the 12th National Conference of Udichi on March 6, 1999. The blasts killed 10 people and injured at least 100 people. Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police of CID Dulal Uddin Akand submitted the charge sheet accusing 14 people including the Environment and Forest Minister Tariqul Islam. In 2004 a High Court bench acquitted Tariqul Islam of the charge.



Graft charges Interpol issues red notices for Benazir, Zardari

Interpol has issued international notices following a request by Pakistan for the arrest of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto and her husband on corruption charges, officials said yesterday.

The police body said "red notices" have been sent out for Benazir, Pakistan's first female premier, and Asif Ali Zardari, but

Hamas posts shock win in Palestinian polls

PM resigns; clouds over ME peace process

Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas was to ask Hamas to form a new government yesterday after its stunning election victory plunged the stalled Middle East peace process into fresh turmoil.

Prime minister Ahmed Qorei resigned immediately after conceding the long-ruling secular Fatah faction had been defeated by the Islamists movement, which was contesting its first ever parliamentary election.

As thousands of its supporters took to the streets in celebration in a sea of green flags, Hamas said it would open negotiations with Abbas about forming "a political partnership" with Fatah and other parties.

Israel meanwhile made clear it would have nothing to do with a government that included Hamas.

As Abbas urged all parties to respect the result of only the second ever Palestinian general election Wednesday, international players such as the United States and Europe made clear their unease at the outcome.

"Hamas has won more than 70 seats in Gaza and the West Bank, which gives it more than 50 percent of the vote," said Ismail Haniyeh, a leader of the militant group dedicated to Israel's destruction.

Haniyeh told Reuters he based

the numbers on initial ballot counts from Hamas representatives at polling stations.

A senior Fatah official said it appeared Hamas was on course to form the next government. A senior member of the previously dominant faction, told AFP.

Meanwhile, US President Bush urged Abbas to remain in office after Hamas victory.

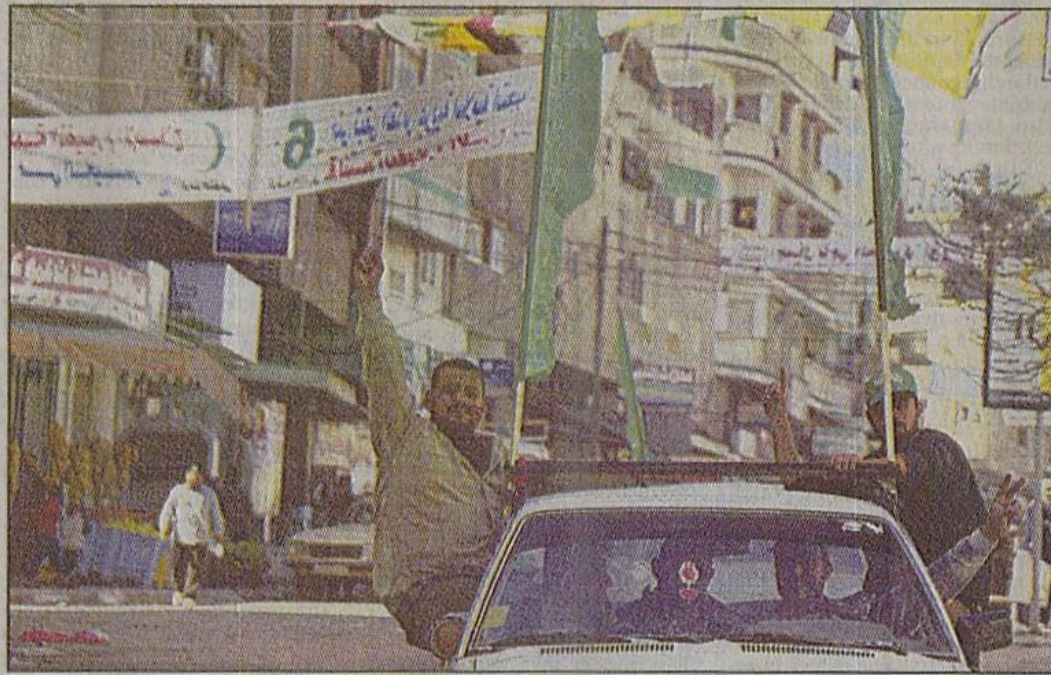
Hamas's campaign traded heavily on disillusionment with

uprising, must now assume full responsibility.

"President Abbas will give Hamas the task of forming the government, in which Fatah will not participate," Erakat, a leading member of the previously dominant faction, told AFP.

Meanwhile, US President Bush urged Abbas to remain in office after Hamas victory.

Hamas's campaign traded heavily on disillusionment with



Supporters of the Palestinian Hamas movement celebrate in Gaza City after the stunning election victory yesterday. Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qorei, left, going to his office in West Bank in Ramallah after tendering his resignation immediately after the election result.

Equipment dearth makes claim over maritime boundary difficult

Meeting the provisions in the United Nation's (UN) maritime charter to establish the country's claim over maritime boundary faces difficulties for lack of equipment and coordination between the ministries concerned, observed a parliamentary body yesterday.

The parliamentary standing committee on defence ministry at a meeting discussed the status of the ongoing task to meet the requirements of the maritime charter. Lawmakers, chiefs of three services, senior officials of defence, foreign, energy and mineral resources, shipping and home ministries attended the meeting.

Bangladesh has 12 nautical miles (NM) of territorial sea, 200 NM of exclusive economic zone (EEZ), 18 NM of contiguous zone and continental shelf up to the outer limits of the continental margins.

But the country has yet to be in the position to use its claim over the territory, as it has not fulfilled the UN maritime charter provisions to delineate the areas that Bangladesh is entitled to in marine laws.

The officials of the foreign ministry and the Navy said want of adequate modern equipment and, to some extent, lack of coordination have been hindering the progress in drawing the country's water territory.

In reply, the parliamentary body

asked the ministries and departments to expedite the task, if necessary, by purchasing necessary equipment. They said the claim, if established, will ensure the exploitation of marine resources and the country's sovereignty in specific areas of the Bay of Bengal.

"It's an issue of national interest. We should pay urgent attention to it and there should not be any negligence in the work," Committee Chairman Mahbubur Rahman told reporters after the meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

The meeting that discussed the status of the ongoing task for submitting necessary documents to the UN by 2011 to claim country's

Case against Pintu Govt petition not heard as it was not on cause-list

Court correspondent

A Dhaka court yesterday fixed March 20 for the hearing on the government petition to withdraw the bomb blast case filed against ruling BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu.

Judge Mohammad Aman Ullah of the Fifth Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court could not hear arguments of the case as the bench assistant mistakenly did not include the case in the daily cause-list yesterday.

The court directed the three accused including Pintu to appear before it on the fixed date.

Pintu failed to appear before the same court on November 20 last year, but will appear on March 20, Masud Ahmed Talukder, Pintu's lawyer told The Daily Star.

KANSAT AGITATION Protesters snap road link with land port

Staff correspondent, Rajshahi

Angry protesters in Kansat yesterday broke a culvert snapping road communication with Sonamasjid land port as they continued agitation against the police action against the rural power subscribers demanding cheaper and uninterrupted supply of electricity.

District police and administration officials stayed away from visiting the troubled area in Chapainawabganj district since the police firing that left eight people killed on January 23. No

step has been taken in the last four days to quell the protests.

The three-member probe committee which the government formed a day after the incident is yet to visit Kansat. The committee has been asked to submit a report within a week.

The protesters put up fresh barricades using logs on a 5-kilometre stretch of the Chapainawabganj-Sonamasjid road and demolished the 4-foot wide concrete culvert at Takshaldighi, some 7km off the land port.

The agitated people assaulted

Shahbazzur union chairman and BNP adherent Tozammel Haque when he tried to prevent them from breaking the culvert.

People have become furious as the authorities have not yet met their demand for release of the arrested leaders of power subscribers association and uninterrupted power supply, said Senaul Islam, a member of Shahbazzur Union Parishad.

Several hundred men, women and children yesterday in a procession paraded the area chanting

SEE PAGE 19 COL 3

Handover of Ctg airport to Thai Airways postponed for 3 months

Staff correspondent, Ctg

The management of Chittagong Shah Amanat International Airport is not being handed over to Thai Airways on February 2 as scheduled in an agreement with the Bangladesh government.

The handover has reportedly been postponed for the next three months to examine and scrutinise the agreement to see if there was

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Bangladesh model for Muslim world to fight AIDS

Nafis Sadik tells The Daily Star

Reaz Ahmad

Bangladesh can be a role model for other Muslim nations in involving religious leaders for creating awareness on taboos like HIV and AIDS, Dr Nafis Sadik, special adviser to the UN secretary general, said.

In an exclusive interview with The Daily Star at Hotel Sonargaon in the city yesterday, Dr Nafis, also the UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Asia, said, "support of religious leaders is very important. In Bangladesh, Mullahs are trained on AIDS awareness building. Bangladesh should preach this model to other OIC (Organisation of Islamic Conference) countries."

Dr Nafis, who served the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for 30 long years since 1971 in various capacities including Executive Director in 1987, came to Dhaka this time to deliver keynote speech at "Second Sub-regional Parliamentary Seminar on HIV/AIDS in South Asia" in



Dhaka attended by the Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

Dr Nafis was fresh from an audience with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia as she was talking to The Daily Star yesterday afternoon. Referring to her meeting with the prime minister, she said, "the prime minister is very positive about AIDS interventions. She is open to the ideas of introducing

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Two killed in road crashes

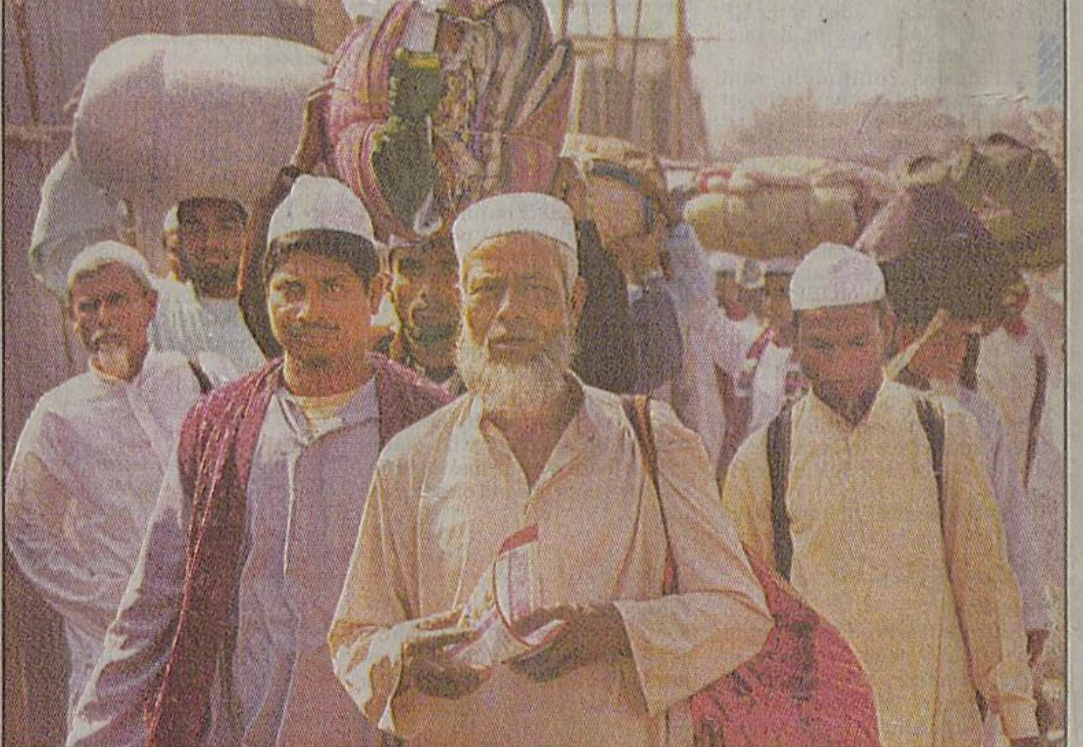
Staff correspondent

One person was killed and 50 were injured in a road accident in Ashulia, while two groups of transport workers clashed and vandalised several buses in Gabtoli yesterday as a driver was killed in another accident.

The transport workers chased each other, disrupting traffic on Dhaka-Paturia Highway and nearby Mazar Road for one hour.

In Ashulia on the outskirts of the city, two passenger buses collided

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Devotees arriving at the Biswa Ijtima ground in Tongi yesterday as the three-day grand congregation of the Muslims starts today.

Judges' body to draw up agitation plan now Feb 12

Court correspondent

The Bangladesh Judicial Service Association (BJSa) has shifted its scheduled extended meeting from January 29 to February 12 for discussion to press home their 11-point demand.

BJSa President Judge Mohammad Rafiqul Islam of the Dhaka District and Sessions Judge's Court told the press yesterday that the date of the meeting was changed due to Biswa Ijtima that is beginning today and would end on January 29.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 3

Iran nuke stand-off China backs Russian compromise plan

Afp, Beijing

China yesterday backed a plan to have Iran's uranium enriched in Russia, as the Islamic republic's top security envoy met with Chinese officials in Beijing for talks on his nation's nuclear programme.

Ali Larijani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, on Wednesday gave fresh life to the Russian plan as a way to appease international concern that the Iranian nuclear energy programme is a front for weapons.

Larijani, who was in Moscow, said "we positively evaluate this offer", and that the plan could be "perfected" in talks with Russian officials next month.

Larijani then travelled to Beijing, where he held talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing and other senior officials on Thursday.

China, which is a key player in the global stand-off because it is a permanent veto-wielding member of the UN Security Council, said it

too backed the plan to have Iran's uranium enriched on Russian territory.

"We think the suggestion would be a good attempt at breaking the stalemate," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Kong Quan told a regular press briefing when asked about the proposal.

Kong also reiterated China's opposition to UN-imposed sanctions and that it preferred diplomatic efforts to any other method of ending the global stand-off over Iran's nuclear programme.

"In treating similar complicated issues, our position has been very clear, we are opposed to the use of sanctions or the threat of sanctions to resolve problems, as this will often complicate issues," he said.

China's comments may have offered hope to Iran as it seeks to fend off efforts from the United States and the so-called E-3 nations of France, Germany and Britain to refer it to the UN Security Council over its nuclear programme.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 8

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Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-46	5-50
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

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