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NEWS BRIEFS

Tk 99 cr French grant
 France has agreed to extend a grant of 145 million French franc (Tk 98.90 crore approximately) to finance a few projects which include Emergency Water Supply Project for Dhaka, City Procurement of Cranes for the Railway and the Establishment of TV stations at Chittagong and 3 other places, says an official handout.

Tension grips Naikhyanchhari: Further attack feared

Burma coldshoulders offer for flag meeting

By Staff Correspondent
 Tension prevailed along the Myanmar border Monday as hundreds of families were fleeing the frontier areas of Bandarban and Cox's Bazar districts fearing further attack from the Burmese troops.
 The 37th battalion of BDR proposed a flag meeting with the Burmese force but no response was received, according to officials.
 According to reports received in Dhaka farming activities came to a complete halt as people from Naikhyanchhari upazila of Bandarban district and Ukhia upazila of Cox's Bazar district began deserting their homesteads in the face of threats of further attack and troops mobilisation across the border.
 The Burmese military have reportedly mobilised troops and amassed huge amount of weapons in two bordering townships in Burma.
 Tension soared along the border since Friday after Burmese border guards in a surprise attack killed two Bangladeshi nationals including a BDR personnel and injured 22 others.
 The invading troops also looted the border outpost at Rijupara village of Naikhyanchhari upazila and took away six Chinese rifles, one sub machine gun and huge quantity of ammunition, according to officials.
 Our Cox's Bazar Correspondent reports: Farming activities including rice harvesting, bamboo cutting in the Cox's Bazar district and 'jhum cultivation' in the hilly areas of Bandarban district remained suspended as people evacuated their homesteads along the border fearing further attack.
 Local people said Burmese See Page 12 Col 8

Strike leaves Ctg Port shut for second day

From Staff Correspondent
 CHITTAGONG, Dec 23: The Chittagong Port remained inoperative for the second day, Monday because of stevedores' work stoppage which coincided with the truck drivers' strike.
 The stevedores went on work stoppage complaining that a large number of dockworkers, employed by the Stevedores Association, were working at their whims, which was causing the association huge financial losses. The truck drivers have been continuing their strike since December 15, demanding their appointment letters.
 A total of 14 ships in and outer anchors remained stranded since the starting of work stoppage early Sunday, port authority sources said adding that attempts of negotiation were on to resolve the crisis.
 Chittagong Chamber of Commerce president engineer Ali Ahmed in a statement urged the authorities to take See Page 12 Col 7

Traders flout baby food ordinance

By Staff Correspondent
 Almost all the baby food businessmen have been violating the Breast Milk Substitute Ordinance due to lack of initiative to implement the rules, Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) said Monday.
 The CAB recently conducted a survey on 44 brands of powdered milk available in the market and found that 84.09 per cent of these brands do not bear any label about the superiority of breast milk, which is a must according to the law.
 More than 54 per cent did not mention that powder milk See Page 12 Col 5

All parties suspend activities in Sylhet

SYLHET, Dec 23: An all-party meeting today decided to suspend all political activities in the town for a week from tomorrow to defuse tension mounting over the killing of a student leader, reports UNB.
 A consensus on the moratorium was reached at the meeting of representatives from political parties, administration and various professionals including lawyers, teachers and businessmen.
 The Deputy Commissioner convened the meeting in view of the prevailing tension sparked in the town following the killing of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal leader Mahub Alam in a clash with a rival group on December 15.
 Since then, the town saw series of clashes between activists of the ruling BNP and the opposition Awami League almost every day that left more than 20 people injured.
 In the latest trouble, rival groups attacked a Juba League leader, Juel Ahmed, at Jindabazar Sunday night, injuring him seriously.
 A liaison committee was also constituted at today's meeting with an elderly politician of the town, Abdul Hamid, of Ganatantri Party as convenor to enforce the temporary labour on politics.
 Acting President of BNP Sylhet unit Advocate Lutfar Rahman and district Awami League President Advocate Abu Nasar were made joint convenors.
 The meeting also decided to hold a peace procession in a couple of days.
 Presided over by DC Abdus Shahid, the meeting was addressed, among others, by BNP leaders Advocate Lutfar Rahman and Advocate Abdul Gaffar, Awami League leader Advocate Abu Nasar and Iftikhar Hossain Shamim and President of the Sylhet Chamber of Commerce and Industry MA Munim.

Bhandaria Govt College closed sine die

From Staff Correspondent
 KHULNA, Dec 23: Bhandaria Government College in Barisal was closed sine die today following a clash between BNP-backed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and Awami League-backed Chhatra League (S-A).
 Three students were injured in the clash, of which two belong to JCD and the other to BCL (S-A).
 Supporters of both the student groups exploded at least 10 crackers during the clash.
 The clash ensued when provocative slogans were chanted from processions of the two rival student organisations.
 Campus sources said, both JCD and BCL (S-A) brought out separate processions in the college compound on the occasion of the course-ending ceremony of the final year students of the college in the morning, which at one stage turned into a clash.



Bulbul Academy of Fine Arts brought out a procession yesterday to mark its 30th founding anniversary. —Star photo

Accord eludes SKOP leaders

By Nurul Kabir
 The memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the government and the Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) is yet to be signed although it was scheduled to be done on Saturday last.
 The SKOP postponed its proposed 48-hour work stoppage late Friday night on the government's assurance that a MOU on the basis of already agreed points of approach to the SKOP's 5-point charter of demands would be signed the next morning.
 But the MOU could not be signed, according to sources close to SKOP, due to the unavailability of Labour and Manpower Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan at the scheduled time. The minister was not also available last night for comment in this regard.
 According to the understanding between the government and the SKOP, both the parties would settle disputes on all the issues of the SKOP's five-point charter of demands within three weeks from December 24.
 Under the MOU to be signed, the government must announce a wage commission within a week from December 21. This still-to-be-announced commission according to the understanding, is supposed to announce the figure of minimum wages for the public sector industrial workers within two months from the date of its formation while it will submit its full reports within four months.
 The wages commission, according to the understanding, will ask the owners of private sector industries to reorganise the salary structure of their units in keeping with that of the government one.
 The wages commission award is to be implemented with effect from July 1991. According to the understanding, the government will pay every public sector worker twenty per cent of his or her basic salary in advance as an 'interim relief'. This money will be deducted from the salaries of the workers in installments after the wages commission award is implemented.
 According to sources, two SKOP leaders — Nazrul Islam Khan or ruling party backed Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal and Abdus Salam Khan of CPB backed Trade Union Centre (TUC) — went to the Labour Ministry yesterday morning to have the signature of the Labour Minister on the final draft of the MOU but they returned without success.
 See Page 12 Col 6

Retrieve and nourish heritage: PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday called upon the cultural workers to utilise their talents and labour for the healthy growth of our own culture, reports BSS.
 Begum Zia was inaugurating a nine-day-long function organised by the Bulbul Academy of Fine Arts (BAFA) to mark its completion of three decades, at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy auditorium here.
 State Minister for Cultural Affairs Prof Jahannara Begum, president and general secretary of BAFAMA Mahmud Nurul Huda and Amanullah Chowdhury also spoke on the occasion.
 Describing culture as the main element of national identity, the Prime Minister said See Page 12 Col 7

UAE wants Dhaka in its market

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) would welcome increased imports from Bangladesh to its "open market" and thereby help reduce the existing trade gap between the two countries, reports BSS.
 Apart from narrowing down the trade gap the "open market" could also serve as selling centre of Bangladesh products for the countries of the Gulf region, head of the Department of Economic Relations and International Cooperation of the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mohammed Khalifa Bin Yousof Al-Sowedi said here Monday.
 Talking to BSS, Sowedi, who led his country's delegation to the just-concluded second meeting of the Joint Commission of the two countries, suggested that Bangla-

Shantibahini men kidnap three, torch market

From Staff Correspondent
 CHITTAGONG, Dec 23: The Shantibahini men kidnaped three people including an engineer and torched a market in Kaokhali Upazila of Rangamati district in two separate incidents late Sunday and early today.
 The armed Shantibahini men numbering about 40 stormed the Azam Market at the Kaokhali Upazila headquarters early Monday and demanded toll.
 As the businessmen refused to pay the money, the agitating armed men set at least 50 shops of the market ablaze.
 In a separate incident late Sunday the armed Shantibahini men kidnaped an engineer and two wood cutters from Bulu village, about 5 km away from Kaokhali Upazila Sadar.

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 Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha,
 Dhaka.

Commonwealth won't survive: Gorbachev

ROME, Dec 23: Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev said in an interview broadcast today he did not believe the new commonwealth of independent states formed by nearly all the Soviet republics would survive, reports Reuter.
 Interviewed by Italian radio, Gorbachev also suggested he still controlled the Kremlin nuclear weapons button.
 Gorbachev accused Russian president Boris Yeltsin, the driving force behind the new commonwealth, of being undemocratic and repeated calls for a final session of the Supreme Soviet to declare the Soviet Union dead.
 Asked if he considered himself the head of the opposition to Yeltsin, he said, "I don't believe in this new community. I believe it cannot survive. It will not manage to create the mechanisms of coordination. I think it will lack agreement and the normal functioning of institutions, which is what we need now."
 But he said he would not lead active opposition to the commonwealth for fear that this could cause more harm.
 Eleven Soviet republics formed the new commonwealth of independent states at a meeting in the Kazakh capital of Alma-Ata on Saturday and told Gorbachev that the Soviet Union and his job no longer existed.
 They postponed until December 30 a decision on who will control the Soviet nuclear arsenal, appointing Soviet defence minister Yevgeny Shaposhnikov temporary armed forces chief until that date, when republican leaders will meet to set up a permanent structure.
 In the interview — taped on Saturday in the Kremlin while the Alma-Ata meeting was in progress — Gorbachev was asked: 'do you still have the briefcase with the button for the nuclear command?'
 He answered: 'In my briefcase there are many things that you should not know about. There are always things that it is better not to know. It is probable, however, that the atomic briefcase, which weighs a kilogram and a half, is still with me.'
 Referring to his opposition to the new commonwealth, Gorbachev said: 'the greatest dangers are born of the divisions of the country and I, as president, must react.'
 'This is my political position and my conviction. But since the Supreme Soviets of the republics have decided (to go their own way) I don't think that I should counterpose my convictions in this difficult situation, with the risk of definitely dividing society.'
 Gorbachev contested the republics' declaration that the See Page 12 Col 3

Lebanese captors kill US hostage

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 23: The United Nations confirmed today that the body delivered to a Beirut hospital over the weekend was that of US Lieutenant-Colonel William Higgins, reports Reuter.
 Spokesman Francois Gtulin said he had received the confirmation from special UN envoy Giandomenico Picco, now in Beirut.
 Earlier, AP from Beirut said the coroner-general said Monday he found "great resemblance" between slain US hostage Lt Col William R Higgins and a partly decomposed body lying in a Beirut hospital morgue.
 Dr Ahmed Harati made the comment after his second examination of the remains that were left early Sunday at the morgue of the American University Hospital.
 "After comparing the remains with photographs of Higgins before his abduction Feb 17, 1988, "we found a great resemblance," Harati said. Dr Salim Najm, a second coroner who assisted in the second autopsy, nodded in agreement as Harati spoke.
 Harati said positive identification still awaits the arrival of US data, including dental records and details of possible birthmarks or war scars.
 Earlier, Harati said he would examine the teeth and analyse samples of hair.
 The US embassy would not say what, if anything, it is doing to help the probe. The embassy's Lebanese spokesman Suhail Abu Halka declined comment and said Ambassador Ryan Crocker was not available.
 Under Lebanese law, Harati must complete his report and submit it to the government, which will then decide if there is enough grounds to involve the US embassy.
 Hospital and police officials said Sunday they suspected the remains were that of Higgins, an American marine officer.
 The Organization of the Oppressed on Earth, claimed on July 31, 1989, that it killed the 44-year-old Vietnam veteran in retaliation for Israel's abduction of a Shiite Muslim cleric three days before.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
 জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ড
 সেগুনবাগিচা, ঢাকা
বিজ্ঞপ্তি
 রক্তাণীর ক্ষেত্রে দ্রুত শুল্ক ও করাদি প্রত্যর্পণের ব্যবস্থা
 রক্তাণী বাণিজ্যকে উৎসাহদান ও বাংলাদেশের রক্তাণীপণ্য বিশ্ব বাজারে অধিক প্রতিযোগিতামূলক করার উদ্দেশ্যে সরকার রক্তাণী পণ্য উৎপাদনে ব্যবহৃত কাঁচামালের উপর প্রদত্ত শুল্ক ও করাদি দ্রুত প্রত্যর্পণের ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করেছে। এ উদ্দেশ্যে শুল্ক রেয়াত ও প্রত্যর্পণ পরিদপ্তর নামক একটি স্বতন্ত্র দপ্তর জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ডের অধীনে স্থাপন করা হয়েছে।
 এখন হতে এ দপ্তরে সকল রক্তাণী পণ্যের জন্য প্রত্যর্পণযোগ্য অর্থ রক্তাণীকারকগণের নামে সরাসরি ব্যাংক চেকের মাধ্যমে প্রদানের ব্যবস্থা করা হয়েছে। এ ব্যবস্থার সহায়ক হিসাবে যে সকল রক্তাণীকারক শুল্ক ও কর প্রত্যর্পণ দাবী করবে তাদের ক্ষেত্রে রক্তাণীচালানের জন্য পৃথক রং (কমলা রং) এর শিপিং বিল এরও প্রবর্তন করা হয়েছে।
 এ বিষয়ে যেকোনো রক্তাণীকারকের শুল্ক রেয়াত ও প্রত্যর্পণ পরিদপ্তর (ডেডো) ১২২-১২৪, মতিঝিল বাণিজ্যিক এলাকা, চেম্বার ভবন (৮ম তলা), ঢাকা-১০০০ (ফোন: ২৪১১১৭, ১৪০৮৮৯) এর সাথে যোগাযোগের পরামর্শ দেওয়া যাচ্ছে।
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