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The Daily Star



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How Yeltsin Upstaged Gorbachev to Form his Commonwealth
 The end of the Soviet Union came before December 31. Creation of a Commonwealth of Independent States has finally killed the state born out of the Great October Revolution. Boris Yeltsin is in charge.
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Dhaka Day by Day



There is no denying that a large number of women smoke. But why so fuss in not accepting it? Even in cosmopolitan Dhaka?
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NEWS BRIEFS

Mongla dockmen on strike

KHULNA, Dec 28: About 250 dock workers of Mongla port went into an indefinite strike today demanding payment of their wages, port authority sources said. Tally workers, Assistant Supervisors, Deck Foremen, Deck Inspectors and paper workers joined the strike as their wages were not paid till today, the dates of payment of wages being 10 and 25 every month. The sources said 19 foreign ships now anchored in the port will have to give compensation of about 60,000 US dollars every day due to the strike, reports UNB.

Smallest Quran

Another small copy of the holy Quran was found in Dhaka Saturday. The Quran weighs 2.4 gm and it is 2.7 cm in length, 2 cm in width and 4 cm thick. It has all the features of a complete Quran, said owner of the copy Badul Kabir, a businessman. Earlier in the month, a UNB report from Jamalpur said the world's smallest holy Quran was traced there. The weight of that copy is 2.4 gm, length 2.25 cm, width 1.7 cm and height 5 mm, reports UNB.

Gazi Shamsur hospitalised

Bangladesh Press Institute Chairman Gazi Shamsur Rahman Saturday suffered a heart attack and was admitted to the emergency ward of Suhrawardy hospital, reports UNB.

Ukraine, two other republics refuse to join military bloc

MOSCOW, Dec 28: Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova have refused to take part in a 'military bloc' of former Soviet republics, creating a major rift among members of the new Commonwealth of Independent States ahead of their summit on Monday in Minsk, reports AFP.

The three republics want to set up their own armed forces and have rejected a compromise — proposed during two days of talks between senior military officials here — which called for 'joint' rather than 'unified' commonwealth armed forces. In addition, Ukraine, which wants to become a nuclear-free state, has objected to Russian President Boris Yeltsin having sole control of the former Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal.

Ukraine is one of four republics, along with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, holding strategic nuclear arms on its territory.

At their meeting in Alma Ata last weekend, where they agreed to set up the new commonwealth, leaders of the 11 participating republics set up inter-republican presidential and inter-republican government councils, but failed to agree on a common defence council.

Their summit Monday in Minsk, the capital of Belarus, aims notably to hammer out a compromise on defence policy.

But a member of the Ukrainian delegation attending

the military negotiations here said Saturday that "Ukraine believes that it must not be part of any military bloc and must be nuclear free."

"Ukraine can only take part in defence council of states on matters concerning the destruction and non-use of nuclear arms," Stepan Khmara told AFP.

Khmara, a member of the Ukrainian parliament's defence committee, said that Ukraine's 'commonwealth partners' were 'beginning to understand that Ukraine does not want to take part in any kind of empire.'

He added that the republic wanted to have the same status in the commonwealth as France in the North Atlantic

Treaty Organisation, "which is to say, being a member of the political council but not of the military organisation."

CIS military Commander-in-Chief Yevgeny Shaposhnikov, who visited Kiev on Thursday to try to overcome outstanding obstacles, said on television Friday that "we moved from a concept of united armed forces to one of unified armed forces. Even this alternative did not suit everyone."

Vassil Durdanets, the head of the Ukrainian parliament's defence committee, said Shaposhnikov had "tried to convince the Ukrainian President of the need to maintain unified armed forces, which would include national

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Plan to set up trade links with all 11 Dhaka recognizes Russia, 10 states

Bangladesh Saturday recognized Russia and ten other members of the new Commonwealth of Independent States, reports BSS.

The Bangladesh government also welcomed the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Commenting on the subject a Foreign Office spokesman said that the government looked forward to mutually beneficial relationships between Bangladesh and each of the 11 newly independent republics.

The decision has been conveyed separately to the governments of each of the republic through their representations in Moscow, the spokesman said.

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The republics are Azerbaijan, Byelorussia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Moldavia, Russian Federation, Turkmenia, Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Tadzhikistan.

UNB adds: The government is planning to contact soon the breakaway republics of the Soviet Union individually to resume business with them, official sources said Saturday.

Importers in the erstwhile Soviet republics, who had trade with Bangladesh, will be traced out and offered to re-establish business, they said.

Against the backdrop of severe cash crisis faced by the newly independent republics, now under a loose-knit commonwealth, bilateral business

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Coldwave claims 2 more

PAUNA, Dec 28: Two people died today after failing to sustain the bitter cold weather that has been sweeping through the district during the last few days, reports UNB.

The victims are Romesa Khatun (60) of village Hasapur at upazila Chatmohor and Abdul Harek Molla (75) of Ramkantapur village in Sadar upazila, official and hospital sources said.

The three other victims who died Friday night are Morium (5) of village Kaliya in Iswardi upazila, an unidentified woman (50) and Tomizuddin (40) a worker at the Iswardi railway station, unofficial sources said.

The coldwave that hit the district as elsewhere in the

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VIPs FIRST: Authorities have decided to redecorate Abdul Ghani Road near Secretariat when many other city streets need urgent repairing. — Star photo

Attack on Tanbazar brothel leaves 15 injured

From Our Correspondent NARAYANGANJ, Dec 28: At least 15 prostitutes were injured as outsiders attacked at Tanbazar brothel here Saturday evening.

Police immediately rushed to the spot, arrested 10 persons and brought the situation under control, police said.

Narayanganj police brought the arrested persons to police station for interrogation.

Of the arrested persons, Anwar Hossain, 13, was caught by the prostitutes and handed over to police when he reportedly attacked a prostitute in her room, brothel inmates alleged.

Rita Khanom, a leader of prostitutes of the brothel, alleged that a group of workers of Anti-Islamic Activities Resistance Committee here, numbering about 20, attacked her brothel inmates with lethal weapons at about 7.30 pm.

But some members of the committee, when contacted, denied the allegation.

Jahangir Alam, secretary general of the committee, claimed that prostitutes and some other people attacked his office near the brothel.

Police said that they were not informed of the attack on Alam's office. But when they raided the brothel during the incident some of the attackers

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Burmese youths coming in to avoid drafting Bangladesh makes fresh talks offer

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Saturday made a fresh offer for flag meeting with the Burmese military commanders stationed across the border of Cox's Bazar district to defuse the mounting tension through discussion.

On the same day in Dhaka, the Foreign Ministry summoned the Myanmar (Burma) ambassador U Soe Myint for the third time to register strong protest and concern over the continued Burmese apathy in solving the crisis peacefully.

Sources said the Myanmar envoy met the Foreign Secretary at the Foreign Ministry Saturday morning where Bangladesh's reaction over the mounting tension along the Burmese border was conveyed.

An official at the Burmese embassy also said that the ambassador had gone to the Foreign Ministry and called on the Foreign Secretary.

However, details of the talks were not available.

Our Chittagong Correspondent reports: BDR officials Saturday offered a fresh date for a flag meeting on December 30 with the Burmese commanders, according to a source.

The official source, who

preferred anonymity said the proposal, third since December 21, was conveyed Saturday morning after Burmese side had earlier reported that the commander was physically indisposed.

Bangladesh proposed for a flag meeting on December 22, the day after a cross border swoop by Burmese border guards on a BDR out post left two people killed and another 22 injured.

In response, the Burmese side had said that it was not possible to hold the meeting hurriedly.

Bangladesh put forward another date on December 24 and requested a meeting within 11 am Friday. But the meeting could not take place as Burmese officials expressed their inability to sit for talks.

In a letter to Bangladesh authorities, the Burmese officials reported that their commander was physically indisposed and would be unable to take part in the proposed flag meeting.

The source said "we will continue our efforts to sort out the problem on the table and hope that the Burmese government will respond to our call."

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Pakistan, China to sign nuclear power plant deal

ISLAMABAD, Dec 28: A Pakistani delegation is currently holding negotiations in Beijing to finalise a deal to buy a 300-megawatt nuclear power plant, officials here said today, reports AFP.

An agreement in principle for the supply of the plant was reached during the visit of Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng to Pakistan in November 1989.

A Foreign Office spokesman said the plant from China would be subject to International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.

10 killed, four missing as boat capsizes

SIRAJGANJ, Dec 28: Ten bodies have been recovered since Thursday night's boat capsized in river Jamuna with 14 people on board, police said, reports UNB.

All the 14 passengers were feared drowned after the boat was overturned midstream by a cyclonic storm.

The victims, including seven children and three youths, were returning to their village at Juktighacha from Gudabagchar after harvesting

Act without fear, PM asks DCs

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia Saturday directed the deputy commissioners to implement various government programmes aimed at attaining self-reliance at all levels, reports BSS.

"The main objective of the present democratic government is to attain development at all levels and increase production in fields and factories," she told them while inaugurating the two-day conference of the deputy commissioners at the Cabinet Division conference room in Dhaka in the

morning.

Describing the conference as very important under the present democratic set-up, the Prime Minister said the deputy commissioners could play a major role in implementing the government plans.

She said "you must discharge your responsibilities without fear and favour, and I assure you there will not be any interference whatsoever."

Four divisional commissioners and 64 deputy commissioners, besides other senior officials, are attending the

conference, being held for the first since the present government took over.

Law and Justice Minister, Mirza Golam Hafez, LGD and Cooperative Minister Abdus Salam Talukdar, Home Minister Abdul Malin Chowdhury, State Minister for Establishment M Nurul Huda and State Minister for Relief Lutfur Rahman Khan, were present.

The conference, convened by the Cabinet Division, was conducted by Cabinet

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Experts like gold import liberalised

S Y Bakht

Gold prices in Bangladesh should be linked with international shadow and should reflect its 'shadow' market price to curb smuggling, a recent Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) report, says.

The BIDS study on illegal trade in Bangladesh points out that one of the ways to achieve the above twin objectives is to liberalize gold import together with imposition of import taxes just enough to fill the gap between the official and shadow or unofficial price of foreign exchange.

Even a casual observation, the draft report adds, shows that the domestic price of gold has practically no relationship with the international price. As the local price is always higher, it acts as an incentive to smuggle in gold into the country.

The price of Guinea gold in London, Dhaka and Calcutta as collected by the Bangladesh Bank showed that in January '88 when the price of gold per 10 gram was Taka 4848.95 in London, the prices in Dhaka and Calcutta stood at Taka 6172.80 and Taka 8905.60 re-

spectively. Similarly, in July '90, when the gold price was Taka 4262.42 in London, it sold at Taka 5144 in Dhaka and Taka 6753.60 in Calcutta.

The price differentials in these centres, the BIDS report notes, indicate the presence of considerable incentive to smuggle gold from London to Dhaka to Calcutta.

It is difficult to estimate the stock of gold in the country, the draft report points out, as import of the item remained banned since 1972 and the quantity of gold in private possession is under-reported

often by a large percentage in household surveys.

"Annual accretion to gold stock in Bangladesh remains anybody's guess," the report adds, as it is generally agreed that gold imported under personal baggage rule is too small in comparison with the gold illegally imported.

However, according to a rough estimate made by the Bangladesh Jewelers' Association the total gold stock held privately in the country is about 50 tonnes.

The BIDS report points out

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