CIS meets today to map out policies

MOSCOW, Dec 29 : With the Soviet Union dead and buried, leaders of the new 11-member Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) meet in the Belarus capital of Minsk tomorrow to try to map out common political, military and economic policy in what promises to be a tough task, reports AFP.

Despite a resolutely optimistic stance by the Russian leadership as regards the summit meeting -- being held on the anniversary of the founding of the Soviet Union, on December 30, 1922-- the negotiations are, as Tass News Agency commented today, expected to be "difficult" and "delicate."

The 11 states are very divided amongst themselves, with the Ukraine standing out particularly.

As regards military matters, they have been unable to agree on how a "defence council" they set up at their Alma Ata meeting earlier this month should work. Only the question of control of nuclear weapons deployed in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan seems settled so far.

Even on this, while Ukraine and Belarus have clearly stated their intention to become non-nuclear states, Kazakhstan is still allowing some doubt to subsist over its future possession of strategic nuclear weapons.

After the Alma Ata meeting, President Nursultan Nazarbayev indicated that Kazakhstan would only give up all such arms if Russia did likewise.

Their discussion of conventional defence matters threatens to be as thorny, after the failure of two-day marathon talks in Moscow last week, at which the Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldavia reiterated their determination to set up their own armed forces, firmly rejecting the idea of a unified military.

Since the Alma Ata meeting, the Ukraine has repeatedly refused to be part of any military bloc or to delegate the command of its troops, despite the conciliation efforts of Marshal Yevgeny Shaposhnikiv, who is effectively acting as interim Defence Minister of the Commonwealth.

"Marshal Shaposhnikov is the supreme commander of strategic forces, but not of all the armed forces," Ukraine's President Leonid Kravchuk has pointed out. "Ukraine," Kravchuk added, "has adopted laws for the training of its own military forces...which come directly under the present of the republic."

On the economic front, the signatories to the Alma Ata accord are also having great difficulty in drawing up a programme of reforms and cooperation. The determination of the Russian leadership to press ahead with its plan to free prices next Thursday.

Agrabad hotel chairman, eight others sued

Bureau of Anti-Corruption has instituted a case with Kotwali Thana Chittagong against nine persons for misappropriating about Tk 6 crore, an official handout said Sunday, reports BSS.

It said the alleged persons had misappropriated Taka 5,85,19,200 by opening, a Letter of Credit (LC) through a fake indent and submitted fake shipping documents to the Pubali Bank for importing eight thousand metric tons of rice.

The handout named the persons as A H M Khorshed Ali Chairman Hotel Agrabad Chittagong, Karimul Hasan Director Gulf Bangladesh Associates Ltd, Jasim Uddin Ahmed former AGM Of Pubali Bank CDA branch Chittagong, Sheikh Aminul Islam, former Managing Director Pubali Bank, M Rezaul Karim former General Manager Pubali Bank Chittagong, Taratani President Nansu Sanggiua Company of Japan, Amir Hossain proprietor Salma Traders, and Salimullah proprietor Stedmax Ltd.

Fresh taxes

From Page 1 Col 7

MCCI chief viewed that the revenue of earning of the government would further fall instead of the targeted increase. He said that the foreign currency reserve of the country had reached a staggering one billion dollar which reflects that import activities had already slowed down.

The President of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), Mahbubur Rahman, also termed the mid-term enhancement of tax after the annual budget as an unfair step of the government. He said this would cause import cut, leading to a fall in revenue earning. He said ultimately consumers would be the main sufferers of such tax hike.

Meanwhile, with the increase in taxes, prices of the items have already soared both in wholesale and retail markets. Powdered milk which previously sold at Taka 1610 each carton is now selling at Taka 1640. In the retail market, prices of tinned powdered milk earlier setting between Taka 262 and 265, now sells at Taka 275 a tin.

Concerned business circles view that the small sellers of powdered milk and other commodities would be affected as the demand of these products will fall. They observed, that, although the tax on powdered milk (up to 2.5 kg tin) has been increased from 20 per cent to 25 per cent and the tax on powdered milk in bulk has been increased from 40 per cent to 45 per cent, the retail price of these items would rise much higher than the increase in tax. They said that the cascading effect of the tax hike on different cost factors would make the items much costlier. They view that the such whimsical rise in taxes on the mass-consumed commodities would affect the people in every way - from the raise in the price of sweetmeat to even tea.

Related story on page 7

China to join NPT

BEIJING, Dec 29 : China's parliament agreed today the country should join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the New China news agency said, reports Reuter.

China, the last major nuclear power to become a signatory to the NPT, had come under increasing international pressure to accede to the treaty, which sets guidelines for the transfer of nuclear weapons technology.

The National People's Congress' Standing Committee, China's highest legislative body, approved of joining the NPT, the agency said.

Western countries, led by the United States, have voiced fears China may have helped other countries, including Algeria and Iran, with nuclear weapons programmes. Beijing has denied this.

'Former Soviet republics still making N-arms'

WASHINGTON, Dec 29 : Defence Secretary Dick Cheney said Saturday that the former republics of the Soviet Union are still producing and deploying nuclear weapons despite their commitment to reduce those arsenals, reports AP.

"That's unacceptable behavior in the long term," he said.

Cheney also said the republics have not accepted a US offer to help dismantle some of their 27,000 nuclear missiles.

"We have not received specific requests at this point," he said Saturday on the CNN television network.

A team of American experts, led by Undersecretary of State Reginald Bartholomew, will leave next week for the four republics

Georgian rebels

From Page 1 Col 5

serve national agreement, peace and defence of human rights in Georgia, must submit his resignation," the statement said.

The local Iprinda news agency said a statement by the armed groups, saying all Garsakhurdia's powers had been transferred to the parliament, was read out on Georgian television in the early hours of this morning.

This report, issued by the agency's Moscow Bureau, could not be confirmed. All telephone lines to Georgia have been cut.

Gamsakhurdia told reporters before the communique was issued that the armed groups wanted "power without elections."

He added "they have created some kind of junta and this military junta wants to have power in Georgia."

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Published by the Editor on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd., 52 Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000 and printed by him at Offset Printing Dialogue Publications Ltd., 19 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1215. Editorial, News & Commercial offices: 28/1, Toynbee Circular Road, Dhaka-1000. Tel: Editorial & News: 863036. Commercial: 863035. PABX-246023-4. Fax No. 88-02-863035. GPO Box No. 3257 GRAM: DAILY STAR, DHAKA.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia addressing the Air Force officers at the Jessore Air Force Academy Auditorium yesterday. — PID photo

Cyclone, diarrhoea killed 1.43 lakh in Bangladesh in '91

UNDATED, Dec 29 : Mother nature was especially cruel to the Asia-Pacific region in 1991, unleashing frequent disasters including the year's worst in the world — the April 29 cyclone in Bangladesh, reports AFP.

The region also suffered many disasters of the kind that are an unfortunate and often preventable part of modern life — such as explosions and airplane crashes — including the May 26 Lauda air crash in Thailand.

Up to 139,000 people died in the Bangladesh cyclone, the worst to hit the impoverished country in 20 years and the worst disaster in the world in 1991 in terms of sheer scale. Millions were left homeless and property damage was estimated at about 1.8 billion dollars.

The country also suffered its worst diarrhoea epidemic, largely attributed to the cyclone as well as to frequent flooding in northern and western Bangladesh. More than 4,000 people died of the disease the first 10 months of the year.

Flooding was rampant in much of the region.

China's breadbasket saw its worst floods since 1954. Relentless rains battered the eastern and central provinces, especially Jiangsu and Anhui, with the Yangtze river overflowing in several places.

The floods caused 64,000 casualties, killing 3,074 people by the official count and caused a grain shortfall of some 25 million tonnes according to the bleakest estimates. More than 10 million people were left homeless.

Monsoon flooding caused at least 600 deaths in India, while Burma's worst floods in 50 years affected more than 280,000 people in the Irrawaddy delta in July. Flash floods claimed 16 lives in northern Thailand in September.

In Indonesia, floods accompanied by landslides left more than 100,000 people homeless in central Sumatra in December after a year plagued by a nation wide drought which caused massive crop failures and forest fires.

The Philippines had a string of natural disasters notable as much for their drama as for their frequency.

The Mount Pinatubo volcano, sporadically active for several months starting in March, had its biggest eruption on June 15, coinciding with typhoon Yunia and a moderate earthquake.

The death toll attributed to the eruption, consequent mudflows and outbreaks of disease at evacuation centres was upwards of 600, and hundreds of thousands of people were displaced.

Other volcanoes to erupt in the region were Japan's Mount Unzen, killing 43 people, and Indonesia's Mount Lokon, which claimed the life of a Swiss tourist.

But it was typhoon Thelma that unleased the most lethal disaster to hit the Philippines this year, claiming up to 7,000 lives in early November. Thelma struck a week after typhoon Ruth claimed 44 lives in the northern Philippines.

An earthquake measuring 6.8 on the Richter scale hit northwestern Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan on February 1, claiming 1,500 lives in Afghanistan and 200 in Pakistan.

Another massive earthquake struck October 20 in India's northern Uttar Pradesh state near the Tibetan border, killing some 1,500 people and injuring 3,000. It measured 6.5 on the Richter scale.

The Asia-Pacific region also suffered a number of man-made disasters in 1991.

The highest-profile disaster to hit Thailand in 1991 was the crash of a Lauda Air Boeing 767 in which all 223 passengers and crew died. The crash of the Vienna-bound flight was Thailand's worst air disaster.

In the region's second largest air crash of the year, 136 people died when a military transport plane crashed in eastern Jakarta on October 5.

In India on November 5 some 200 people, mostly slum dwellers, died in New Delhi after drinking a liquor substitute while celebrating a Hindu festival. Poisonous bootleg liquor in two southern 'dry' states claimed 35 lives on November 30.

On February 15, a dynamite truck overturned while taking a sharp curve on a busy road in southern Thailand, then exploded after hundreds of local residents had gathered to see the accident, leaving 171 people dead.

In a similar accident in India, a chemical tanker overturned and exploded in Dhanu village near Bombay, killing 70 people.

In southern Pakistan's horrific collision in June between an express train and a stationary freight train left about 100 people dead and 200 injured.

Labours ahead of Conservatives in opinion polls

LONDON, Dec 29: Britain's opposition Labour Party swept to a new opinion poll lead today, vowing an election due in 1992 would end more than a decade of Conservative rule, reports Reuter.

Labour has not held office since Margaret Thatcher won power in 1979. But John Major, who replaced her as the Conservative Prime Minister 13 months ago, is contending with an economic recession and a slide in the value of the Pound Sterling.

Burma agrees

From Page 1 Col 5

quoted Burmese authorities as saying a partial list would enable them to start repatriation process.

In official count, about 20,000 Rohigyas have taken refugee in Bangladesh, alleging repression by the Burmese troops. Unofficial reports, however, put the number of refugees over 50,000, as the influx continued.

During Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman's tour to Yangon (Rangoon) last month, Burma agreed to take back its citizens.

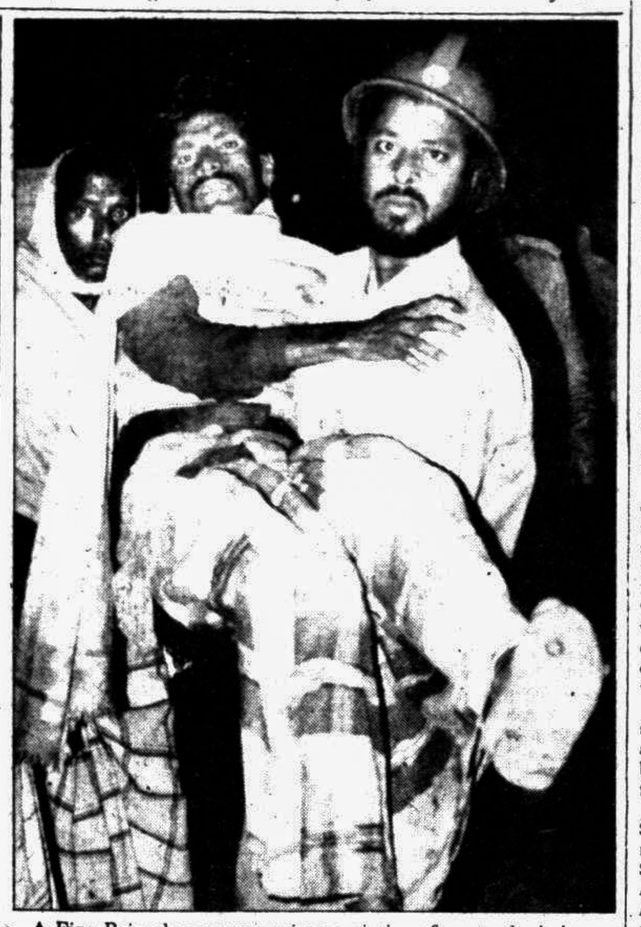
BSS says : The Myanmar authorities deployed five brigades of army personnel in Duchigdong and Maundaw in Myanmar, about 20 km (12 miles) from Teknaf in Bangladesh.

Our Staff Correspondent from Chittagong adds : Reports received from across the border said that normal life in the bordering villages in Burmese territory had come to a halt because of the continued Burmese military build-up. The influx of Burmese Muslims into Bangladesh continued till Sunday.

In the port city several political and professional groups expressed their grave concern over the amassing of troops along the Bangladesh border.

Chittagong Bar Association and the city unit of Awami League held separate meetings at their respective offices Sunday where speakers condemned the Burmese attack on the BDR outpost.

They also urged the government to raise the issue in the international forum including the United Nations, SAARC and the OIC. Chittagong Bar Association also sent a note of protest to the Burmese embassy in Dhaka resenting the attack.



A Fire Brigade man rescuing a victim of yesterday's bus mishap. —Star photo

Miss Venezuela crowned 1991 Miss World

ATLANTA, Dec 29 : Miss Venezuela Ninbeth Beatriz Leal Jimenez, a 20-year-old industrial engineering student, was crowned Miss World 1991 on Saturday night, reports AP.

Miss Jimenez competed against 78 other beauty queens from around the world.

"I thought I would be among the finalists, but winning is like a dream come true," said Miss Jimenez, who is from Maracaibo. "I fell very privileged to be Miss World and, I wish everyone around the world peace and goodwill."

First runner-up was Miss Australia Leanne Buckle, 21; second runner-up was Miss South Africa Diana Tilden-Davis, 22.

The other finalists were Miss Jamaica Sandra Foster, 21, and Miss Namibia Michelle McLean, 19.

20 injured as buses collide

From Our Correspondent

GAZIPUR, Dec 29: At least 20 people were injured, four of them seriously, as two passenger buses collided and then one skidded off into a ditch on the Dhaka- Mymensingh highway near Targas area of Tongi this afternoon.

The accident occurred at about 5 pm as one of the buses tried to save a pedestrian on the highway, witnesses said.

Of the two buses, one bearing number Dhaka—Cha-2636, was coming to Gazipur from Dhaka and the other of the BRTC Dhaka Metro-Cha-8137, was going to Dhaka from Bhuapur. The BRTC bus skidded off the road.

The seriously injured four of the BRTC bus are Rafiqul (25), Dabir Uddin (45), Abdul Hafiz (40) and Motahar Hossain (40). They were sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital while Lehaz Uddin (20) and Mostafa Jaman (21) admitted to Tongi Hospital.

Air Force

From Page 1 Col 4

ernment, the Prime Minister said it (the government) wanted to attain self reliance in all sectors. She mentioned the ongoing canal digging programme for attaining food auterky.

She also underscored the need for curbing smuggling for speedy industrial growth.

Begum Zia said the government would expand the airports at Chittagong and Cox's Bazar. She said the Shaheen School at Chittagong would be given assistance for its development.

Earlier, on her arrival at the BAF base Matiur Rahman the Prime Minister was received by the chief of Air Staff Air Vice Marshal Altaf Hossain Choudhury while she was received at the parade ground by commandant of Bangladesh Air Force academy Group Captain Fakhrul Azam.

Voter list

From Page 1 Col 5

no fresh voters' list of the region was prepared after the cyclone.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission (EC) sources said that elections to the UPs would be held from January 22 to February 6, 1992, with the voters' list prepared in mid-February this year. The cyclone victims and even those who died elsewhere in the country could not be excluded from the voters' list, the EC sources said that they received no report from the concerned persons regarding the exclusion.

Before announcing the schedule of the UP polls, the EC requested that people at the unions to report to the local authorities about any mistake in the voters' list of their respective areas. Following the announcement of the EC call through television and radio, the EC received only some reports on the inclusion of people in the voters' list. But no report for exclusion of voters was received, the EC officials said.

For exclusion of a voter in the case of his or her death, the EC officials pointed out, a written report along with death certificate was a must as per the relevant provision of electoral rule.

PWD employees

From Page 1 Col 5

employees of the Department would start a two-and-a-half month long campaign from January 14.

The programmes which include procession, rally, sit-in strike and demonstrations in front of the office of the Chief Engineer will continue up to the first week of March.

"The government has set up engineering cells in many of its departments and as a result the PWD employees are becoming redundant," Abdul Mannan, convenor of the committee said.

He said that the abolition of these 'mini PWDs' would benefit the government financially.

The convenor said the action committee would organise a grand rally in front of National Press Club on March 4 to announce fresh programmes if their demands are not fulfilled.

Their other demands include cancellation of the new set-up of the Department described by them as incomplete, increase in promotional facilities, regularisation of the workers employed on 'no-work-no-pay' basis and transfer of all the master-roll employees to the working sections under the Department.

The employees' leader said that the Enam Committee and the Muyud Committee also backed their demand of abolishing mini-PWDs.

Among others, Member Secretary of the action committee Azizur Rahman, Joint Secretary Sultan Ahmed, Abdur Razzak and Khurshid Ahmed were present at the press conference.

Mishu released

By DU Correspondent

Chhatra Oikya Forum (COF) Convenor Moshrefa Mishu was released on bail from Dhaka Central Jail yesterday afternoon.

Moshrefa Mishu was arrested on December 13 last from her residence at Dhanmondi for her alleged involvement in a dacoity case.

COF workers held a rally infront of National Press Club after her release.

Addressing the rally, Mishu said she was sick at the time of her arrest on December 13 and alleged she did not receive any treatment in jail.

Hasina

From Page 1 Col 8

the left leg.

Awami League Joint Secretary Abdul Jalil told UNB that Hasina might again go to Singapore in the second week of January when Prof Siddique will have another operation in his brain.

The Midnight File

US army leaving Europe

WASHINGTON, Dec 29 : The US Army has quietly begun an exodus from Europe — a shift in recent weeks that's brought home 40,000 soldiers, 48,000 spouses and children, 10,000 pets and 15,000 cars. The reduction in forces, made possible by the end of the Cold War but put on hold during the Gulf War, is in full swing. Some days, as many as 500 military men and women leave their posts. No one replaces them. Gen. Gordon Sullivan, the Army's top general, said the move reflects the reduced Soviet threat and changed US military strategy, which relies more on forces based at home to deal with crises around the globe, reports AP.

Ghulam Ishaq's son-in-law acquitted of charge

KARACHI, Dec 29 : A Pakistani judge cleared President Ghulam Ishaq Khan's son-in-law of blame today in the alleged gang-rape of a friend of opposition leader Benazir Bhutto. An inquiry report by judge Abdul Rahim Kazi of the Sind Province High Court also ruled out any political motive in last month's alleged assault, which sparked widespread protests by opposition and human rights groups, reports Reuter.

25 killed in Nagorny-Karabakh bombardment

MOSCOW, Dec 29: Twenty-five people including a Russian journalist have died in the troubled Nagorny Karabakh region since Saturday, Tass news agency quoted Armenian officials there as saying today. Overnight reports by Radio Armenia spoke of 14 dead and 42 injured on Saturday as the Nagorny Karabakh capital Stepanakert came under fierce bombardment by Azeri forces during legislative elections, reports AFP.

Met Office forecasts a cooler day

By Staff Correspondent

The coldspell is likely to be more biting all over the country today (Monday) as the minimum night temperature may fall further by 2 to 3 degrees Celsius in the next 24 hours till 6 pm today.

Met Office said the minimum temperature in all the districts has gone below the average normal for this time of the year by 1 to 5 degrees Celsius from place to place.

The spell will continue for next 2-3 days, Met Office said. The day weather is likely to continue, the Met office says.

The cold and windy weather is forcing the people to spend most of their time at home.

Met Office said the weather is marked by dense fog at night and in the morning in the northern districts.

Cold spell is causing great sufferings to the poor who cannot afford warm clothes.

Those who have so far died are from this section of people.

The death toll from shivering cold rose to 26 with five more reported from Kurigram and Gaibandha districts on Sunday.

Two people died at Raumari upazila and one at Nageswari upazila, both under Kurigram district and two more deaths were reported from Fulchhari and Shaghat upazilas under Gaibandha district.

Earlier, 21 deaths were reported from Rangpur, Dinajpur, Pabna, Sirajganj and Sylhet since the cold wave started sweeping the country following three days of winter rain last week.

The lowest temperature yesterday was recorded at 8.4 degrees Celsius in Rajshahi which was followed by 9.2 degrees in Dinajpur and Barisal 9.5 degrees in Khulna and Sirajganj.

Minimum temperature in the capital fell to 10.9 degrees Celsius Sunday from the previous 11.8 degrees. And the maximum temperature in Dhaka rose a little to 20.3 degrees from Saturday's 20.2 degrees.

Percentage of humidity was 88 in the morning and 73 in the evening.

BCL activist

From Page 1 Col 8

Chhatra League leaders and activists have been visiting the Madhu's Canteen for the last few days. They stopped going the canteen, the centre point of student politics of Dhaka University, since AL chief Sheikh Hasina announced suspension of BCL activities on the DU campus.

BCL is yet to decide on the formal resumption of its activities on the campus.

A BCL (S-A) source said that the organisational activities on the campus would soon start probably by January 2 or 3.

BCL (S-A) leaders say that they are busy with their founding anniversary programme on January 4.

BCL is awaiting the approval of Sheikh Hasina for resumption of its activities. The AL chief is now in Singapore.

REB tender

From Page 1 Col 8

turers, they said.

The tender schedule categorically points out that all materials and equipment to be furnished under the contract must have their "source" and "origin" in countries which are members of OECD or in developing countries other than Bangladesh. It said any bidder, party or manufacturer of Bangladesh will not qualify for bidding.

The government officials concerned, when contacted, said the funds for procuring the materials and equipment have been received from Japan as debt relief grant meant for development of the rural electrification programme.

They say a portion of the foreign currency that Bangladesh pays to Japan as repayment of loans has been rechanneled as grant. Such grants are meant for import of commodities, they pointed out. The global rule for Japanese debt relief grant is that the money can not be spent for local procurement, the officials say.

Demonstration

By DU Correspondent

Ganatantrik Chhatra Oikkya (GCO) will held a sit-in demonstration today (Monday) in protest against unilateral arrest of terrorist and materialising the ten point demand of the student unity infront of the Secretariat from 11 am to 2 pm.

Indiawallas

From Page 1 Col 7

Bangladesh from India, raising demand for introduction of common market and common currency in the sub-continent, abolition of visa system in the sub-continent to ensure free movement of its people within Bangladesh, India and Pakistan etc.

Replying to a question, the leaders of the organisation told the newsmen that they were yet to build up contacts with the 'like-minded people' of India and Pakistan.

Golam Azam

From Page 1 Col 8

the party never made its public. Abbas Ali Khan, another leader of the party, having his Bangladeshi citizenship acted for him.

Golam Azam was formally elected Ameer on the first day of the party's five-day Majlish-e-Sura on Tuesday.

The Majlish-e-Sura also elected a 24-member central committee of the party and Matiur Rahman Nizami was re-elected its secretary general.

Abbas Ali Khan was elected as Senior Deputy Ameer.

The five-day national conference of the party concluded yesterday.

Drama festival

From Page 1 Col 7

and noted play actor Mohammad Zakaria will attend the inaugural function as special guests.

Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation Sunday urged the government for immediate repeal of the Performance Control Act 1876 in keeping with the country's new democratic system, reports UNB.

The demand was made at a press conference arranged jointly by the Jatiya Natyutsab '91 Preparation Committee and Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation at the Shilpakala Academy on the eve of a 29-day drama festival beginning in Dhaka today (Monday).

Organisers said, 33 theatre groups from all over the country are taking part in the First National Drama Festival.

Drama stalwarts of the country also stressed the need for building new theatres and renovating old ones across the country under government initiatives to accelerate drama performance.

Director General of Shilpakala Academy Kamal Lohani, Nasiruddin Yusuf, Mamunur Rashid, Ataur Rahman, Dev Proshad Dey, Mohsin and Saiful Islam Mahmud addressed the news conference.

They will hold a seminar and a symposium January 17 and 24 respectively on various aspects of drama.