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The Daily Star

Let us devote our efforts to ensure free and fair polls on February 27. Cast your vote judiciously and allow others to exercise their rights.

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Inside today

Metropolitan

Delightful dresses



A colourful show of Batik dresses, organised by Dharma Wanita in city, was covered in Dhaka Day by Day. Page 3

Editorial

Priorities for elected govt

Justice Badrul Haider Chowdhury discusses aspects of priorities of an elected government. Page 4

Feature

Children and Environment



Deforestation and desertification cut food production and increase childhood malnutrition. Pollution of water and air affect children more severely than adults. Page 6

International

Troops poised to drive Saddam out

Deadline for withdrawal from Kuwait passed yesterday and troops said they were tired of waiting and ready to drive Saddam. Page 5

NEWS BRIEFS

Iraq shuts border with Turkey

Jan 16: Iraq has shut its border with Turkey, thwarting evacuees hoping to escape a likely Gulf war, a foreign ministry spokesman said today, reports Reuters.

Some Biman flights suspended

Biman Bangladesh Airlines has suspended all its flights to Doha, Bahrain, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Jeddah and Muscat from January 15 until further notice in view of the present situation in the Gulf. Earlier, Biman's flights to Riyadh have also been suspended, reports BSS.

Shab-e-Meraj February 13

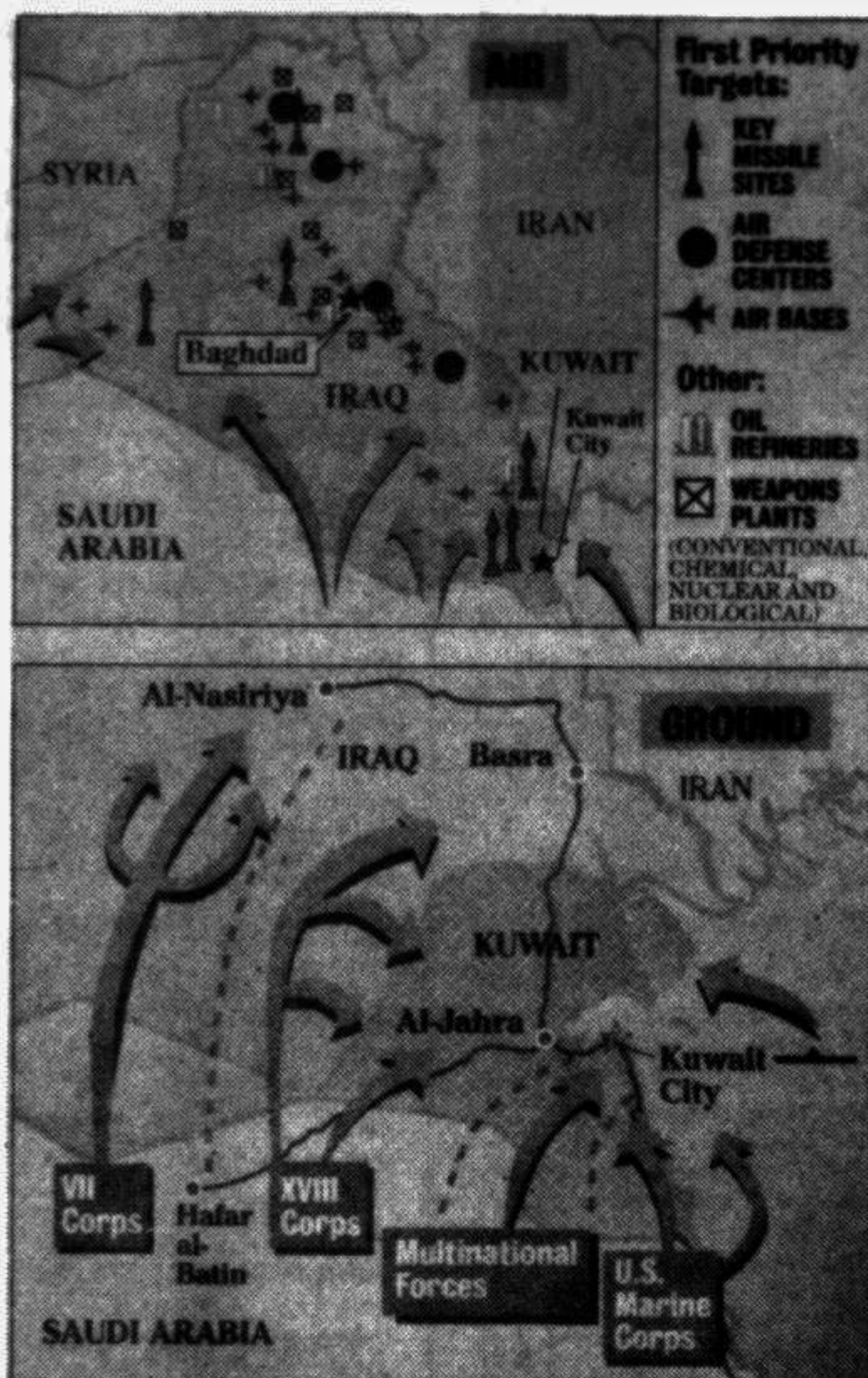
The sacred night of Shab-e-Meraj will be observed on Wednesday night, February 13, (Rajab 26), according to a press release of the Islamic Foundation, reports BSS.

142 more freed

More 142 prisoners at Dhaka Central Jail were released yesterday under a government amnesty, reports UNB.

Deadline passes with Baghdad standing fast

Countdown to war



WASHINGTON, Jan 16: White House spokesman Martin Fitzwater today issued a personal appeal to US journalists to leave Iraq, saying that war "could begin at any time," reports Reuters.

"I advise all who can leave Iraq to do so at once," he said. Asked why he was making the unusual appeal, Fitzwater said: "These are people that I know and like... my little part here is to let you know this is a serious situation."

The deadline for Iraq to pull its forces out of Kuwait passed with Baghdad standing fast Wednesday and more than 680,000 US and allied troops ready to begin a new countdown to war.

Barring an Iraqi attack, the start of a Gulf war after the deadline of midnight New York time (0500 GMT Wednesday) lay in the hands of US President George Bush and allied leaders.

In Baghdad, the authoritative Iraqi army daily "Al-Qadisiya" said in an editorial that the Iraqi soldiers were prepared to go to the most honourable war in history.

President Saddam Hussein will directly command the Iraqi forces in battle against the US-led multinational forces in the Gulf, National Assembly Speaker Sadi Mehdi Saley said today.

The newspaper earlier declared that a "furnace of hell" awaited anyone trying to dis-

lodge President Saddam Hussein's 545,000 troops from Kuwait. Facing Iraqi forces were thousands of combat aircraft, scores of warships and some of the world's most sophisticated weapons, spearheaded by 415,000 US troops.

The US Defence Department said Iraqi forces in Kuwait were continuing to dig in against the multinational force, which included 35,000 troops from Britain, 10,000 from France, 150,500 from Saudi Arabia and 38,500 from Egypt.

The US television network NBC said Tuesday night that 24 B-52 bombers had been moved to bases in a Gulf country, it did not identify.

'Baghdad's shouts of defiance combined with a worldwide clamour of last-minute appeals to Saddam and anti-war protests. Despite that residents are fleeing both Baghdad and Tel Aviv.

Perez's last appeal

At a packed news conference six hours before the deadline expired, UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar made a final appeal to Saddam to withdraw his troops and avert war. He assured Iraq that once it begins a decisive withdrawal, its forces would not be attacked.

He said he also had promises from the highest

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Vote to avoid one-party rule, says Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP Chief Khaleda Zia called upon all patriotic forces to join her party for ensuring multi-party democratic system in the country.

Addressing her first election campaign meeting yesterday (Wednesday) at the Sylhet Alia Madrasah premises the BNP Chief said that the patriotic and nationalist forces should be elected to establish democracy in the country. Otherwise, she said, the countrymen would have to face oppression of one-party rule and strangulation of freedom of speech, as it was experienced in the past.

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Ershad interrogated for 2nd day

By Staff Correspondent

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) personnel interrogated ousted President Hussain Muhammad Ershad for the second day yesterday (Wednesday) at the fortified Gulshan residence where he is detained.

"We interrogated him today (Wednesday) but I can't disclose anything for the sake of the case," a CID official told the Daily Star.

CID has been assigned to investigate into the case of possession of illegal arms recovered from Ershad's cantonment residence.

Another official said "ousted President Ershad is not now in good health, his hair is all grey," but he did not elaborate.

Four unlicensed pistols and four double bore guns were recovered from Ershad's house after he was arrested on December 12.

5 injured in Gulf-related clashes

DMCH Correspondent

Five persons were injured in clashes between pro-Saddam and anti-Saddam groups at Gulistan area on Wednesday.

Four persons were hurt near Golapshah Mazar when activists of pro-Saddam 'American Aggression Resistance Committee' attacked a rally of anti-Saddam Bangladeshis repatriated from Kuwait and Iraq at 3-30 p.m. The other person was injured near Jatiya Press Club.

One of the injured, Nasir, who received serious head injury is in critical condition at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Other injured persons were also admitted to DMCH.

Earlier, rallies of Bangladesh nationalists repatriated from Kuwait and Iraq demanded immediate steps for their rehabilitation.

Private sector may get priority

By Reazuddin Ahmed

Perestroika in the Soviet Union and democratic transformation in East European countries may influence the economic policies of country's major political parties. The changes are likely to be reflected in their election manifestos.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has already indicated that the party will follow market-oriented economy while Awami League will pursue a liberal economic policy within the framework of mixed economy. The left parties like Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), National Awami Party, Workers Party, BKSAL, and other left-leaning parties may retreat from centrally planned economy.

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina indicated yesterday that her party would encourage private sector within the framework of mixed economy. She told The Daily Star that her party would favour retaining the existing public enterprises under state control. But she made it clear that the already denationalised industrial units would not be taken over in future if her party was voted to power.

Sheikh Hasina said liberal investment policy would be followed and setting up of industries in rural areas would be encouraged by her party. "We can not follow the laissez-faire economy like the developed world as our infrastructure is poor," she said.

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Curfew in Gaza as 5 Palestinians shot dead in violent protest

TEL AVIV, Jan 16: As the UN deadline for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait passed today, Israel imposed a blanket curfew on 600,000 Palestinians in the Gaza strip, the army said, reports Reuters.

Israeli troops shot and killed five Palestinians and wounded more than 100 others in violent protest that swept the occupied territories after the murder in Tunisia of three PLO officials.

Mossad involved

The Israeli Intelligence Service Mossad was involved in the killings here late Monday of three officials of the Palestine Liberation Organization,

an initial PLO investigation has revealed.

Palestinian security forces, in a statement sent to AFP, said the inquiry had unmasked Israeli intelligence links with the murders of Abu Iyad, deputy leader of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's Fatah Movement, and PLO officials Abu Al-Hol and Abu Mohammad Al-Umari.

The three were gunned down at Abu Al-Hol's home near here by a man identified as a PLO bodyguard who had broken from and later returned to the mainstream Fatah group.

The assassin, according to the statement, had had "contacts in Cyprus with an Is-

raeli intelligence officer".

The exiled Kuwaiti governments and Saudi Arabia, at odds with the PLO for backing Iraq in the Gulf crisis, condemned on Tuesday the killing of three top PLO officials in Tunis.

They issued statements urging Palestinians to keep up their struggle until they achieved their "legitimate rights."

Iraq issued a similar call to the Palestinian people on Tuesday but directly accused "international imperialism and Zionism" of the assassination of the three PLO members.

Iraq has poured scorn on Saudi Arabia for inviting an international force to its terri-

tory after Baghdad invaded Kuwait on August 2 last year.

It has said that its action will champion the rights of Palestinian and that there can be no settlement of the Gulf crisis without a solution of the Middle East conflict.

The minister also sent the condolences of the Kuwaiti people and his Saudi-based government to the families of the dead.

The Saudi press agency, also monitored Cyprus, quoted an official source as saying the killings, "perpetrated by criminal hands, will not prevent the Palestinian people from gaining their legitimate rights".

Mobile security teams during election

The Council of Advisers yesterday decided that mobile security teams comprising personnel of armed police, BDR and Army would be formed at the union level to enforce discipline during parliamentary elections, as and when necessary, reports BSS.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Council of Advisers at Bangabhaban with Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed in the chair.

Such security teams will function under the supervision of the magistrate on duty as per the relevant provision of the penal code.

Observers

Our Staff Correspondent reports: Three more teams of observers are likely to be in

Bangladesh to monitor the parliamentary elections. The Commonwealth Secretariat is examining the possibility of sending a team, Fakhruddin Ahmed, Adviser for Foreign Affairs, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Jatiya Mahila Sangstha to get pay, salary

The Council of Advisers decided that national ad-hoc committee and district committees of Jatiya Mahila Sangstha would continue to receive pay and salary, but grants and development funds will not be released for two months.

The decision was taken in a meeting of the Council of Advisers held yesterday at Bangabhaban with Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed in the chair.

He said the European Parliament has also shown interest. Besides, a team of Japanese parliamentarians may also come as observers during the election.

The government has already received confirmation about the sending of a team by a United States-based organisation and a SAARC team to be organised by a Colombo-based organisation.

The Adviser said there had been exchange of ideas over the sending of teams of observers from the Commonwealth, the European Economic Community and Japan. There has, however, been no confirmation so far.

JP-police clash in Rangpur: 100 hurt

From A Correspondent

RANGPUR, Jan 16: Police clashed with armed Jatiya Party workers during a hartal in the district town today (Wednesday), police and hospital sources said.

The day-long clash sent at least one hundred persons including 9 police personnel injured, of whom two were admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

It was gathered that some upazila chairman allegedly hired several thousand people to make hartal call by local Jatiya Party a success.

The hartal call was given to press the release of deposed President Hussain Muhammad Ershad and allow him in the forthcoming parliamentary election.

Eyewitnesses and police said that the armed JP workers started gathering at Rangpur town from 8 in the morning and became unruly. They damaged at least 50 shops and tried to loot local Municipal Market and Kaccha Bazar.

The JP men also ransacked

the BNP office at Rangpur town.

But police remained silent during the ransacking eyewitnesses said.

The unruly elements attacked the Dhaka-bound Teesta Express, Dinagpur-bound Ekota express trains and damaged window panes.

However, the clash began when police intervened the unruly JP activists near at old Press Club, Police Line Road, Radio Station Road, Kukrul, Lalbag, Shapla Chattar, College Road and Alamnagar Rail Gate areas. Police fired rubber bullets and lobbed teargas shells to disperse the JP men. Most of the injured persons took private aid to avoid arrest, sources said. Police arrested

61 persons and recovered some conventional weapons from different parts of the city.

In the evening the JP workers were chased by the supporters of the All Party Students Unity (APSU) and three alliances.

Hasina's call to work for peaceful holding of polls

By Staff Correspondent

Sheikh Hasina, President of Awami League and leader of the Eight-party Alliance, yesterday called upon the people to work unitedly for peaceful holding of the February 27 elections.

"Vested quarters are conspiring to disrupt the process of transition to democracy", warned Sheikh Hasina saying "We have to face them and foil their conspiracy."

She was addressing a group of about 100 workers of Jatiyaatabadi Chhatra Dal and Juba Dal from Jhikatala area, who have joined Chhatra League and Juba League. The workers, who gathered at the Bangabandhu Bhavan premises, came there in a procession.

Sheikh Hasina said the autocratic rule over the last 15 years had strengthened the vested groups who destroyed national economy and brought the country on the verge of ruination.

She said during the rule of the autocratic government, the youths did not get any sense of

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