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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.

VOL 1 NO. 19 REGD. NO. DA 781

MAGH 18, 1397 BS,

DHAKA FRIDAY FEBRUARY 1, 1991

RAJAB 15, 1411 HIJRI

12 PAGES: PRICE TAKA 3.00

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## NEWS BRIEFS

### Iraqi missiles hit Israel

TEL AVIV, Jan 31: An Iraqi missile hit Israel Thursday evening, army officials said, in the eighth attack since the outbreak of the Gulf War. There were no immediate reports of casualties, reports AP.

### Genocide of Iraqis by US

MOSCOW, Jan 31: A Soviet newspaper considered to be controlled by conservative forces, today condemned what it described as 'the real massacre, the veritable genocide of the Iraqi people' and said that the United States was using the war to establish a pro-United States regime in Iraq, reports AFP.

### Palestinian leader arrested

BEIRUT, Jan 31: Walid Khalid, spokesman for Palestinian leader Abu Nidal's group, was arrested at Beirut airport for travelling on a forged passport, police said Thursday.

Brig. Mchdi Hajj Hassan, head of airport police, said Khalid was arrested Tuesday evening upon his arrival from Tunis using a Jordanian passport that identified him as Elias Bashar Khalil, reports AP.

### Iraq admitted as observer

GENEVA, Jan 31: Iraq was among 34 countries admitted Thursday as observers at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament, which is negotiating a global ban on chemical weapons, reports AP.

### Indians held

SATKHIRA, Jan 31: Three Indian fishermen who intruded Bangladesh waters in river Ichamoti were arrested Thursday by BDR, police said. The arrested were named Shyamapada, Shyamal and Anil Mondol, all hailing from village Soladana in Bâshirhat sadar thana of West Bengal, reports UNB.

## Fighting inside Saudi Arabia continues

# Khafji recaptured



Allied troops being mobilised in the battle for Khafji

— TV photo

The Allies claimed victory Thursday in the first major ground battle of the Gulf War after more than a day of fierce fighting, and they were preparing for another Iraqi onslaught, reports agencies.

Saudi troops backed by US Marines on Thursday took back the coastal frontier town of Khafji, according to a spokesman for the Joint Command of Arab and Muslim members of the Alliance.

Reuters reports: Allied forces and Iraqi troops were fighting Thursday north of Khafji, the coastal town 12 km (eight miles) inside Saudi Arabia, a US military spokesman said.

Gen Pat Stevens said 160 Iraqi prisoners-of-war had been seized in Khafji and confirmed that Saudi troops, backed by US Marine helicopters, had cleared the town of enemy forces.

AP reports: The shift to ground fighting, which threatens higher casualties, also heightened concern in the United States about President George Bush's ability to maintain public support for the war.

Saudi forces advanced into central Khafji, a Saudi Gulf resort town just south of Iraq-occupied Kuwait, early Thursday after a night of assaults. The Saudis were backed by dozens of Qatar army tanks and armoured vehicles and US

Marine artillery. Eleven US Marines were killed, but there was no word on casualties among Saudi and Qatari forces. The Allies said 160 Iraqis were taken prisoner.

- ★ 160 Iraqi soldiers captured in Khafji: Allies.
- ★ US women soldiers taken prisoner: Iraq.
- ★ 2 US soldiers killed, 2 wounded.
- ★ US soldiers' death heightening Congressional debate.
- ★ Hundreds of Iraqi soldiers may have been killed: Allies.
- ★ 22 Iraqi tanks knocked out in early stage.
- ★ UK Jaguars pound Iraqi positions.
- ★ Iraqi chemical arms attack any time: UK.
- ★ Bush designates Sunday a 'national day of prayer.'

one and there were numerous Iraqi casualties, but provided no figures.

Iraq claimed Thursday it had captured a number of US men and women soldiers. The US military said that one fe-

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## Ershad's appeal to stay where he is

Former President Hussain Mohammad Ershad has requested the government to keep him where he is now detained for the sake of security of his life, reports UNB.

The request was made on Wednesday to Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, according to Jatiya Party Acting Chairman Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury.

Ershad, who stepped down from power December 6 in the face of mass movement has been detained for 120 days in cosy house at Gulshan since December 12 under the Special Powers Act.

All Party Students Unity (APSU) and major political parties have been mounting pressure on the government to shift the former president to jail. Newspapers Thursday speculated that a special cell in the Dhaka Central Jail was being readied to accommodate him.

Ershad's purported letter to the Acting President read out to the agency last night by Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury said, 'I apprehend attempt on my life if I am shifted to jail'.

In the letter, former President Ershad said he feared that a vested group planned to kill him failing to defeat him politically.

'This group earlier plotted to kill me where I have been lodged', Ershad said, 'I am grateful to you because you have arranged additional security for me'.

'I came to know that the killer group plotted ahead to see Page 12 Col. 6

## Deadline over

By Staff Correspondent

The deadline for surrender of the absconding ministers of ousted president Ershad's government was over Thursday midnight. So far, four of the 11 former ministers, who were wanted by the administration, could be detained.

Ruhul Amin Howlader and Kazi Feroz Rashid were arrested on January 26 while Sheikh Shahidul Islam was arrested in January 28. Another former minister Lt Col (Retd) Zafar Imam surrendered to the Dhaka Central Jail authorities on January 29. Former prime minister Kazi Zafar Ahmed and other former minister Nazim Rahman, Anisul Islam Mahmud, Ziauddin Ahmed Babu, Abul Hasnat, Anwar Hussain Manju and Sardar Anjad Hussain did not surrender till writing this report late last night.

According to a Press Note issued on January 24, the absconding former ministers, on whom detention orders for 120 days under the Special Powers Act were served, were asked to report to authorities of Dhaka Central Jail within seven days. It was mentioned in the Press Note that these persons would be sentenced to suffer one year rigorous imprisonment or pay fine or both if they fail to report within the period.

Meanwhile, former vice-president Maudud Ahmed and former home minister Mahmudul Hasan have been transferred to Dhaka Central Jail. Former deputy prime minister Shah Muazzam Hussain was also sent to the Central Jail earlier.

Ousted President Ershad and Begum Raushan Ershad, who are now detained in a Gulshan villa are likely to be transferred to Dhaka Central Jail. According to a government source, preparations have been taken to accommodate the former president and his wife in the jail. A room of the old building of the jail has been renovated for Ershad while another room close to the female ward is ready for Begum Ershad.

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## Electoral anarchy rules election scenario

By Reazuddin Ahmed

The electoral alliance between Awami League (AL) and smaller partners of the Eight-party combine is yet to work smoothly. Duplication of candidates from the Eight-party Alliance in many constituencies despite AL's offer of 36 seats to smaller partners has partly paralysed the electoral understanding.

Although AL has directed its candidates in 36 seats to retire in favour of the candidates of BKSAL, CPB, NAP, Ganatantri Party and Janatamukti Party, the candidates from these parties have not been publicly directed to give up in favour of AL nominees all over the country. This

has happened due to pressure by Five-party Alliance which formed Ganatantri Oikya Jote (GOJ) with breakaway faction of the Eight-party Alliance.

Meanwhile, BKSAL, CPB, NAP, Ganatantri Party, Ganaazadi League and Janatamukti Party have not officially severed relations with GOJ although Five-party combine failed to bring them to a meeting. The Five-party combine made several attempts to organise a meeting of GOJ to discuss AL's offer of 36 seats. But the beneficiaries of AL's offer did not turn up for a meeting jeopardising the existence of GOJ.

Awami League scored at least one victory by giving up 36 seats — that is GOJ which could be a big embarrassment for AL during the hustings has collapsed.

However, in doing so AL invited some trouble within the party. Party nominees in some of those 36 seats challenged party's decision to give the symbol 'boat' to other parties. At least one Awami League member Mahbubur Rahman Bhuyan from Shibpur, dared to challenge the party's decision in the Supreme court. The decision is pending whether Election Commission could give his symbol 'boat' to NAP

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## Ekushey programmes begin today

By Staff Correspondent

Ekushey programmes to commemorate the sacrifices of the martyrs of the historic Language Movement will begin today in an atmosphere free from autocracy after a long interval.

With a new hope for democracy to be further strengthened through the February 27 election, the nation will recall the challenge to the Pakistani colonial rulers who tried to impose Urdu, discarding Bengali, as the only state language in 1952.

The nation salutes Salam, Barkat, Rafiq and Jabbar in this month, whose sacrifices inspired the people of

See Page 12 Col. 5

## Officials asked to ensure fair polls

Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed asked the officials to ensure strict application of law for the purpose of peaceful, free, fair and impartial parliamentary polls on February 27, reports BSS.

Addressing the Deputy Commissioners (DC) and Superintendents of Police (SP) of the districts of Dhaka division and those of greater Barisal at the International Conference Centre in Dhaka, he reiterated his government's firm determination to fulfill its mandate by holding free and fair elections.

'We are committed on only to ourselves but also the outside world that this time the elections will be free and fair,'

he said. 'If we fail to give full protection to all political parties and candidates the coming election will also be regarded by the whole world as another farce like those of the last several years,' added Justice Shahabuddin.

Cabinet Secretary Siddiqur Rahman, Principal Secretary to the President Khorshed Alam, Secretaries of different Ministries, Inspector-General of Police and other senior government officials were present.

The Acting President urged the officers to be absolutely neutral while discharging their duties and said they must act in accordance with law.

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## Steam power plant will be set up near Barapukuria

Star Report

The Power Development Board (PDB) has taken up scheme to set up a steam power plant near Barapukuria coal mine in Dinajpur. From the extraction of coal from the mine is yet to start and a feasibility study on the mine project continues.

PDB has the plan to use the extracted coal of the mine to use as fuel in the proposed power plant for generating 250 megawatt electricity.

A team of Japanese experts is now engaged in preliminary study of the power plant scheme and they have already

See Page 12 Col. 7

## Zia allowed free trade with India, says Hasina

RAJSHAHI, Jan 31: Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina today said, her party was in favour of parliamentary democracy where the people would hold the key to running the government, reports BSS.

She was addressing a series of election meeting at Natore, Mohanpur, Bagmara, Durgapur, Puthia, Charchat, Bagha and other places of Rajshahi district.

Refuting the propaganda of the vested forces that if voted to power Awami League would allow India to exploit the country Sheikh Hasina said although India had lost its 18,000 troops in 1971 war of liberation Bangladesh forced India to withdraw all allied forces from the soil of Bangladesh.

She said, after liberation, the Indian business circles wanted to make open trade with Bangladesh. But Bangladesh did not allow it and arranged trade officially under STC (State Trading Corporation) of India. But it was during the regime of Ziaur Rahman that free trade was introduced with India, she alleged.

Sheikh Hasina said, during Awami League rule 44,000 cusecs of water was ensured for Bangladesh under Farakka treaty. But Ziaur Rahman brought only 34,000 cusecs of water. While Ershad could not make any treaty whatsoever, she added.

Sheikh Hasina said, there was no difference between 'Bangladesh Zindabad' and

See Page 12 Col. 8

## Seven killed in bus accident

From Our Correspondent

MUNSHIGANJ, Jan 31: At least seven people, including two girls, were killed and 30 others injured when a minibus (Dhaka Ja 1584) fell into a roadside ditch at Kanakshahr under Lauhajang on Thursday morning.

The deceased: Abdur Rashid Talukder (30), Majibur Rahman (25), Helal Uddin (60), Ratna (8), Abdus Salam (18), Nur Jahang (60) and Rita Akhtiar (14).

Nine of the injured were sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital while the rest were admitted to the local health complex.

A passenger alleged that overloading and high speed caused the accident. Police seized the bus but the driver escaped.

## Number of candidates in race Jatiya Party, AL follow BNP

By Mostafa Kamal Majumder

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has fielded the highest number candidates (299) for the February 27 elections. It is followed by 270 candidates from Jatiya Party (JP) and 263 from Awami League (AL).

Reports reaching Dhaka from districts after the withdrawal of nominations on January 21 indicate that a total of 2,782 candidates including 2355 from 69 parties and 427 independents are now in the fray.

Election in Gaibandha - I constituency remains suspended following the death of one of the 17 candidates.

Like BNP, AL had also initially put up candidates in all the 300 Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) seats. But following the recent dramatic offer of 36 seats to other components of the Eight Party Alliance its number of candidates has fallen.

One nomination of BNP in Satkhira-3 constituency was rejected by the returning officer and the Election Commission. Upon an appeal filed by the candidate, Abdul Halm, the Supreme Court has asked the Election Commission to treat his nomination valid till the issue of verdict.

Zaker Party appears to have fielded the fourth highest number of candidates (247) followed by Jamaat-e-Islami with 221, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Rab) with 165, Bangladesh Krishak-Sramik Awami League (BKSAL) with 137, Muslim League with 82 and Freedom Party with 64 candidates.

Out of a total of 69 parties in the race as many as 14 parties have fielded one candidate each while another eight parties have fielded two candidates each.

Other parties which have fielded candidates include: See Page 12 Col. 1

## 5-party Alliance pledges exploitation-free society

By Staff Correspondent

Five-Party Alliance on Thursday announced its election manifesto with a pledge to establish an exploitation-free society in conformity with the spirit of the Liberation War. The manifesto also resolved to continue united movement in and outside parliament for upholding public cause.

Convener of the alliance and president of Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) Khalequzzaman Bhuiyan released the manifesto at the press conference at the Taher auditorium

of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Jnu) office.

Khalequzzaman said his alliance was participating in the February 27 polls with commitments to give democracy an institutional shape, protect fundamental rights of people, ensure freedom of judiciary, establish rule of law and repeal all black laws including the Special Powers Act of 1974.

He said his alliance considers its participation in the polls as a part of the movement agreed upon by the three mainstream alliances, which

toppled the autocratic government of Ershad.

'Although the autocratic regime of Ershad has fallen we are yet to materialise the objectives of the movement,' the alliance leader said adding that it could be done only through united participation in the elections and forming government on the basis of a national consensus. But, he regretted, the two major political parties were not paying heed to the hopes and aspirations of the people. See Page 12 Col. 2

## CEC firm to hold free, fair polls

Justice Mohammad Abdur Rouf, Chief Election Commissioner on Thursday expressed the firm determination of the Commission to materialise the long cherished goal of the people to have a free, fair and impartial poll, reports BSS.

He said the commission which functions with thousands of field level officials is of the opinion that given pro-

See Page 12 Col. 8