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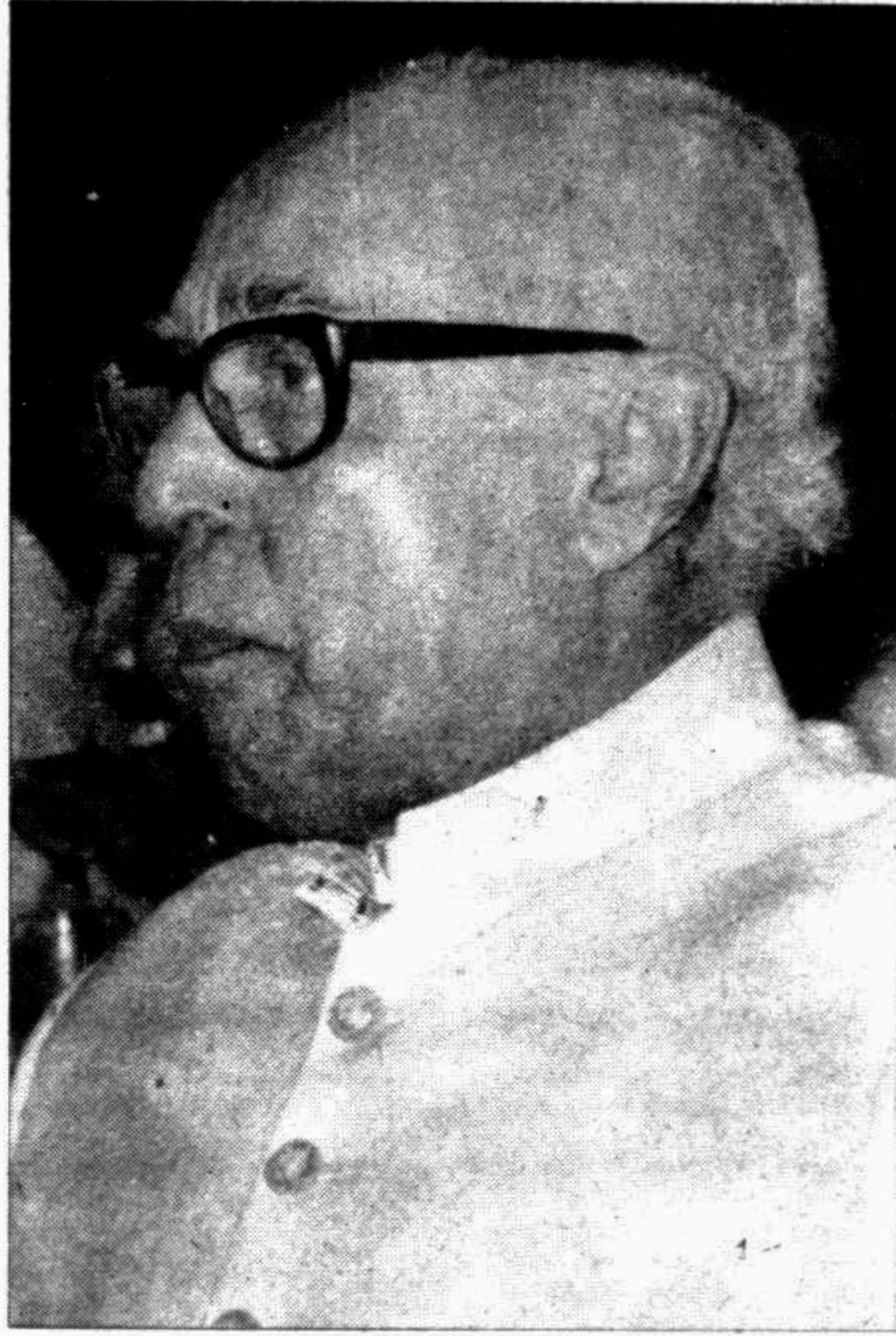
Metropolitan



Every individual, rich or poor, normally entertains dreams for certain materials. The rich have their ready means to get them. But it is also beyond their ken to conceive that such dreams also animate the less fortunate
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Ataur Rahman dead

By Staff Correspondent



Ataur Rahman Khan died yesterday. The veteran politician and former Prime Minister, suffering from cardiac problems, was rushed to the Suhrawardy Hospital in the early hours of yesterday where he died in the afternoon. He was 87.

Hundreds of well-wishers and mourners thronged the Dhanmondi residence of the veteran politician after his body was brought there to have a last glimpse of their leader and pay homage to the man who played a leading role in the nation's political life for over six decades.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, Deputy Leader in Parliament Dr Badruddoza Chowdhury, Deputy Speaker Humayun Khan Panni, Health and Family Planning Minister Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Dr Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain, Awami League leader Amir Hossain Amu and Rashed Khan Menon MP visited the residence of the late leader to pay their tributes.

They spent some time there and expressed deep sympathy to the members of his bereaved family.

Visitors signed a condolence book at the residence of the former Prime Minister noting that the country has lost a valiant personality and that it would take time to fill
 See Page 12 Col. 1

World Bank suggests closure of worst performing jute mills

Star Special

The World Bank (WB) has made various suggestions aimed at reviving the country's jute sector.

The suggested measures include closure of the worst performing mills, retrenchment of 45 per cent of the work force, reduction of loom capacity by 37 per cent and total privatisation of all existing mills.

The recommendations, contained in a confidential draft report on "Bangladesh: restructuring options for the jute manufacturing industry", include downsizing of the low performance mills, phased withdrawal of subsidies and a reduction of interest payments on loans and debt restructuring.

The WB report paints a grim scenario of the future of the jute industry as the staggering losses incurred by the sector reached a record level in 1991.

According to the report, the combined losses in the jute sector, including both the public and private sector mills, Bangladesh Jute Corporation, traders and spinners, totalled about Taka 700 crore this year, just under 20 per cent of the project aid disbursements for the year, and about one per cent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the report

points out.

The document singles out the heavy losses incurred by the public sector mills under the Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC). Financial losses in the 31 BJMC mills jumped from Taka 180 crore in 1990 to an 'alarming' level of Taka 230 crore this year and unit cost of labour and raw jute exceeded the export price by 55 per cent.

About one-third of the losses in the sector were covered by export and interest subsidies paid directly from the budget while the rest were financed through advances from the Nationalised Commercial Banks (NCBs), says the report.

The total outstanding debts of the jute sector to the NCBs stood at Taka 3200 crore as of December 1990, which constitute about one-fifth of their portfolio.

In a 'business as usual' environment, the report points out, prospects for the jute industry in the 90s appear to be bleak. WB financial projections for the financial years 92-98 indicate that the losses and outstanding debt of the mills would triple by 1998, if the present policies are continued.

The present policy environment of restriction on mill closure, financing by manda-

tory credit, export price control, rigid and highly politicised wage and employment policies and subsidies come under strong criticism in the WB report.

"The policy environment does not foster financial discipline and accountability, and provides no incentives to improve efficiency, reduce costs, expand markets, diversify products and adjust production according to market signals," the report adds.

The draft report warns about the serious implications for the rest of the economy particularly the financial sector. "Such a situation is clearly unsustainable," it adds. However, the report adds that although the task of restoring the viability of the jute industry is daunting, it is by no means 'hopeless'. Bangladesh still enjoys considerable comparative advantage in jute manufacturing over other leading producing nations, says the report.

WB financial work-outs also indicate that a streamlined jute sector could generate a 'fair amount of profit without subsidies', if the suggested reform programme is implemented.

The report points out that the main objective of the reform programme would be to
 See Page 12 Col. 4

BCS cadres merged

The government has approved the unification of BCS (Administration) and BCS (Secretariat) cadre and renamed the same as BCS (Admin), according to an official announcement here Saturday, reports BSS.

The unification proposal was placed before the government on November 21 in view of identical nature of work of the two cadres.

The seniority of the new defunct BCS (Secretariat) cadre will be determined on the basis of Bangladesh Civil Service Act 1973.
 See Page 12 Col. 3

Fresh autopsy of Mukhter delayed

By Staff Correspondent

Fresh autopsy of the body of Hafez Mukhter Hossain could not be done yesterday as the PG hospital does not have its forensic department.

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate court Saturday issued a fresh order to send the body of Mukhter to Sir Saimullah Medical College Hospital. It also extended the deadline for autopsy by another three days, according to police sources.

Earlier the Court, on a prayer by Mukhter's brother, Alhaj Raquibuddin, on Thursday,
 See Page 12 Col. 5

PM leaves for OIC summit in Dakar today

Dhaka to place 4 proposals

Bangladesh will put forward four proposals at the sixth summit of the Organisation of Islamic Conference beginning tomorrow in Dakar, Senegal for promotion of socio-economic condition of the peoples of the member-countries. Additional Foreign Secretary (Multilateral) Faruq Sobhan told UNB yesterday (Saturday).

The proposals relate to setting up of Islamic common market, Islamic reinsurance cooperation, state of children in the Islamic world and women and development. The fourth one will be cosponsored by Bangladesh and the host country Senegal.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia leaves here today (Sunday) to lead the country's delegation to the summit to be attended by 44 heads of state

and government. Foreign Minister A S M Mustafizur Rahman, now in Dakar attending a three-day preparatory ministerial meeting, will join the delegation there.

Among others in the delegation are Farida Hasan, MP, Salahuddin Kamran, MP, Dr Afzar Hossain Mollah, MP, Secretary of the Economic Relations Division Enam Ahmed Chowdhury, Director General (IO) at the Foreign Office Ruhul Ameen, Additional Secretary at Prime Minister's Secretariat Kamal Uddin Siddiqui, and Faruq Sobhan, Additional Foreign Secretary.

Begum Zia is also expected to discuss with leaders of the Muslim world bilateral, regional and international issues of common concern.

She is due to return home on December 12.

Diplomatic sources here said the issue of Mideast peace would figure high in the agenda of the OIC summit.

The Dakar conference will also discuss implementation of the UN resolutions on the Gulf and Iraq, they added.

It will also deal with Afghan and Kashmir issues and consider security of Muslims in the non-Muslim countries.

Situation arising out of the Hindu fundamentalists' move to construct temple in place of the centuries-old Babri Mosque in Ayodhya in India and the eviction of Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar (Burma) may come up for discussion at the summit, the sources indicated.

See Page 12 Col. 2

AL calls 8-hr hartal today

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League has called an eight-hour hartal from 6 am in the city today in protest against Friday's attack on the party meeting.

An AL public meeting convened to make the first anniversary of the fall of Ershad's autocratic regime at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city ended in a fiasco following firing and shelling of tear gas by police and armed attack allegedly by the ruling partymen.

Vehicles belonging to the press, hospital and fire-brigade have been exempted from the parvay of the hartal call.

After hartal, a public meeting of the party will be held at the Bangabandhu Avenue at 3 pm.

Awami League also called upon all its party offices across the country to stage demonstrations.

DU classes resume

BCL students damage vehicles in city

Pro-Awami League Chhatra League activists yesterday damaged more than a dozen vehicles in the city in a rowdy protest against Friday's violent incidents, reports UNB.

The BCL workers went on rampage while returning from a rally held in front of the National Press Club at noon to condemn what they said BNP supporters' attack on their processions.

BNP formally started autocratic rule on Friday through an armed attack on the Awami League meeting, the Chhatra League (A-L) leaders alleged.

Other student organisations also brought out processions and held rallies on the DU campus, as the classes of the University resumed yesterday

after 40 days' unscheduled suspension of classes.

Awami League and BNP supporters clashed during public meetings in Gulistan area on Friday, which was followed by police action, leaving some 100 injured.

Acting President of BCL Ahmed Hossain and General Secretary Ashim Kumar Ukil addressed the rally.

They warned they would not be off the street and resist such autocratic activity. They also called upon the people to stand against undemocratic practices of BNP.

The rally demanded immediate release of Juba League leader Liaqat Hossain and withdrawal of 'false' case filed
 See Page 12 Col. 7

AL in cahoots with JP, say BNP leaders

By Staff Correspondent

The central leaders of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) have accused the Awami League (AL) of hatching conspiracy in collaboration with the ousted autocratic forces to dislodge the democratically elected government.

They were addressing a rally at "Ganatantra Square" near Gulistan Cinema Hall in the city on Saturday.

Held in protest against Friday's incidents that led to the disruption of BNP public meeting arranged to celebrate the first anniversary of the fall of Ershad. Presided over by BNP city president Lt Gen (Retd) Mir Shaukat Ali, the rally was addressed by Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Mia, Minister for Environment and Forestry Abdullah Al Noman,
 See Page 12 Col. 3

Commentary

OIC needs a shake-up

By S.M. Ali

The participation of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at the sixth summit of the 42-member Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), starting at the Senegalese capital of Dakar on Monday, underscores the seriousness of the new democratically elected government attaches to the country's place in regional and international organisations. In our view, such a participation should not be a case of waving the flag. On the contrary, we should be well prepared to play a substantive — and even an assertive — role in their deliberations, in the context of the changed international climate in the post-cold war era.

At the Dakar conference, leaders of the Muslim world will be looking at the challenges — and prospects for peace — produced by the end of the superpower rivalry between Washington and Moscow, the collapse of social-

ism and the gradual disintegration of the Soviet Union. However, their more immediate concern should be — indeed ought to be — with such current issues as the Middle East Peace Conference, the aftermath of the Gulf War, a possible long-term security arrangement for the Middle East and the Indo-Pakistani conflict over Kashmir. On many of these issues, consensus may prove elusive, while the Summit may also come under pressure from countries close to the United States for increased concessions to Tel Aviv on Arab-Israeli conflict. During such a contentious debate, Bangladesh should work with other like-minded nations towards reaching at least broad measure of agreement that leaves the avenue open for further discussion and, if possible, strengthens this framework for co-operation among Islamic nations.

This framework for co-operation can be strengthened only when the Organisation itself is strengthened. This is the crux of the matter. Let us hope that the meeting of foreign ministers which has preceded the two-day Summit has done some solid work in this respect to enable the leaders to face the unpleasant fact that OIC is, by any standard, a poorly managed and badly funded Organisation that does little credit to the image of its members, individually and collectively. For instance, over the years, the Organisation has set up as many as eight centres in different fields, including one in Bangladesh, the Islamic Centre for Vocational Training and Research. The consensus among experts is that none of these centres, all facing financial difficulties to varying degrees, has made any impact. The same goes for the Islamic
 See Page 12 Col. 2

Govt toing path of confrontation, says Samad Azad

By Staff Correspondent

Acting president of the Awami League Abdus Samad Azad Saturday warned the people against what he said, fresh conspiracy to replace democracy with autocracy.

"Friday's armed attack on the AL meeting in the city without any provocation indicates such an intrigue", he told a public rally in front of the party central office at Bangabandhu Avenue in the afternoon.

The metropolitan unit of the party organised the rally to protest police action and armed attack by the government-backed terrorists, foiling the AL public meeting, being held in observance of the first anniversary of the fall of the autocratic Ershad regime.

Addressing the rally Abdus Samad Azad accused BNP government of choosing the path of confrontation instead of co-operation. "People will not accept your (Khaleda's) policy of
 See Page 12 Col. 6

Language holds them back in Britain

From Mostafa Kamal Majumder

LONDON, Dec 7: Language problem, inadequate learning facilities at home and absence of adjustment with the local community are obstructing education of ethnic Bangladeshi children in the UK.

Competent sources say Bangladeshi students are generally shy as they cannot communicate well with teachers and fellow students, mainly because they are weak in English. Result: high percentages of failures.

Catherine, a secondary school teacher who deals with Bangladeshi students for some

years, says: some of the students do not speak or understand English, others speak and understand but cannot write well.

In the past some schools used to take separate remedial classes for such disadvantaged students, but the practice has been given up because it allegedly has potentials of creating racial hatred. It is also felt that the children of ethnic communities will be able to learn English quickly if they remain in classes with their English mates.

Ethnic Bangladeshi children do not have a good education environment at home because they come mostly from large families living in very small houses. Most of their parents are poor, uneducated and cannot give them proper guidance.

A secondary school teacher told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity that parents of some children simply cannot buy books for their wards. Some others prefer enjoying video shows at home rather than encouraging their wards to concentrate on learning. Primary education is compul-

sory and free in the UK. There are also expensive privately managed primary schools.

Education at the secondary level begins at age eleven. A survey has, however, shown that the average starting age of Bangladeshi students is 13. The student is placed in a grade in keeping with his age rather than knowledge.

Barbara, another secondary school teacher working in the Tower Hamlets area which has the highest concentration of ethnic Bangladeshis in London, says Bangladeshi students are
 See Page 12 Col. 3

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NEWS BRIEFS

Section 144 imposed

BOGRA, Dec 7: Authorities Saturday afternoon imposed Section 144 in Sherpur upazila after local units of ruling BNP and the opposition Awami League called public meetings at the same venue today, reports UNB.

RU VC gheraoed

RAJSHAHI, Dec 7: The examinees of Honours final 1989 of the Rajshahi University Saturday gheraoed the Acting Vice Chancellor, demanding extension of examination dates till March, now scheduled to begin from February 10. Only last week, the University authorities announced the fresh schedule after the examination was deferred from December 20, reports UNB.

Strike by shopowners

Shopowners in Dhaka city will be observing two-hour token strike everyday from Tuesday in support of their five-point demand. The shopowners have been protesting the government decision to search shops at different Super Markets and city centres from December 15 as part of the anti-smuggling campaign, reports UNB.

PCCI calls off strike

PABNA, Dec 7: Pabna Chamber of Commerce and Industries Saturday called off their indefinite period strike scheduled to begin from today (Sunday) protesting an attack on some of their members, reports UNB.