

Germany to recognise Croatia, Slovenia

DRESDEN (Germany), Dec 17: Germany will recognise Croatia and Slovenia as independent states on January 15, Chancellor Helmut Kohl said Tuesday, reports AP.

His announcement was in line with a European Community decision hours earlier to recognise on that same date the independence of those Yugoslav republics that meet several EC conditions.

For several weeks, Germany has been taking the lead in seeking the international recognition of Slovenia and Croatia.

Speaking to a convention of his Christian Democratic Union in Dresden, Kohl also said: "On that date (January 15), diplomatic relations will be established with Slovenia and Croatia."

He added that Germany also is ready to recognise other Yugoslav republics that meet the EC conditions.

The EC conditions for recognition include: a commitment to respect human rights, respect for the rights of minorities, acceptance of only peaceful border changes and a commitment to submit regional disputes to binding arbitration.

In Bonn, Foreign Minister

Hans-Dietrich Genscher praised the EC decision regarding Yugoslavia, saying it had exceeded Bonn's expectations and demonstrated the community's ability to act decisively.

Reuters from Washington says, US President George Bush on Sunday said he disagreed with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl's decision to recognize the breakaway Yugoslav republics.

"The United States' position has been that we want to see a peaceful evolution, we've been strongly supportive of the EC," Bush said of the opposition to recognition by the European Community.

"We've been strongly supportive of what the UN has tried to do," Bush said at the White House upon returning from a weekend at the presidential retreat at Camp David.

"Their advice has been to go slow on recognition, and I think they're right," he told reporters.

"The situation is in so much consternation there, so fraught with danger, that we fully accept the recommendations of the EC and of the Secretary-General of the United Nations," he said.



The children's rally in Dhaka Stadium in observance of the Victory Day Monday.

—Star photo

Pledge to protect democracy

From Page 1 Col. 5 morning. The President stood in solemn silence in front of the altar to pay his respects to the martyred heroes of the Liberation war as the bugles of the military bands tuned the last post.

Cabinet ministers, chiefs of the three services, members of the parliament, diplomats and high civil and military officials were also present.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia placed wreaths at the monument and paid her tributes to the martyrs.

Later, the Prime Minister who is the Chairperson of ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party also placed another wreath at the altar on behalf of the organisation. BNP Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukder, Ministers, MPs and Senior party leaders were also present. Leaders of different fronts of the BNP also laid wreaths.

Leaders of Awami League

placed wreaths at 9-35 in the morning. The Acting President in the name of the President, General Secretary Begum Sajeda Chowdhury and other central leaders were also present.

Near the foundation stone of the monument, the Awami League leaders renewed their pledge to continue the on-going struggle for a democratic country and to implement the dreams of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The other political organisations which also placed wreaths at the Smriti Shaudha include, Five-Party Alliance, Patriotic Democratic Front, CPB, NAP, Workers Party, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (Khalequ), Janata Dal, Jatiya Samik League, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Seraj), JSD (Mohiuddin) Jappa, and Gan Azadi League.

The Vice Chancellors of Dhaka University, Jahangirnagar University and

Engineering University also placed wreaths at the monument on the day.

Leaders of DUCSU, JUCSU, EUCSU and students unions of other educational institutions also placed wreaths. Teachers, officers and employees associations of different universities also paid their tribute at the mausoleum.

Engineers institutions, doctors association of Bangladesh Biman workers' employees unions, tax lawyers association, road transport workers unions, garments workers and employees unions, Dhaka electric supply authority workers union, Adamjee jute mills staff association and workers unions, lawyers' association, Dhaka WASA officers association and workers union, different workers-employees unions and CBAs of the scheduled banks and different lawyer groups also placed wreaths at the mausoleum.

Wreaths were also laid by the leaders and activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, Bangladesh Chhatra League (S-A), BCL (N-S), Samajtantrik Chhatra Front, Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal and Bangladesh Jubo League, Chhatra Motrice, Ganatantrik Chhatraoiyika, and Chhatra Shakti.

Organisations like Bangla Academy, Shilpakala Academy, Charukala Institute, Nazrul Institute, Bangabandhu Cultural Council, Television Performers and Playwrights Association, Kabita Kana, Osman Snriti Parishad, Amra Kajon Mujib Sena, Dhaka Youth Choir, Anra Ziar Sainik, Taru Bithi Sangsad, Mahila Forum, Probat Sangskritik Sangsad, Zia Snriti Parishad and Rashig Shilpi Gosthi, placed wreaths.

At about 9-35am the sanctity of the day was little marred when the activists of the Buxnagar unit of JCD and Chhatra Shakti, student wing of NDP, fought each other over the placing of wreaths.

Govt-workers

From Page 1 Col. 7 ran into fresh trouble as the government negotiators, according to the sources close to the labour leaders, backed out from certain concessions they offered earlier.

A leader of the Patkal Sramik Karmachari Sangram Parishad told The Daily Star yesterday that the government representatives in the bilateral draft committee yesterday raised some objections on certain issues already worked out in the meetings with the Jute Minister earlier.

Jute Minister Brig Hannan Shah (Retd), talking to this correspondent last night, however, said that government would not back out from its already agreed promises. "I am optimistic about signing the bilateral agreement within next twenty four hours, the Jute Minister said.

The negotiation process between the Textile Ministry and the leaders of the textile workers also received a blow as the government negotiators retreated from certain already agreed points, said sources close to the Textile Workers and Employees Federation. Although the government earlier agreed to withdraw charges labelled against some federation leaders in connection with the last 48-hour barricade programme, any effective is yet to be taken by the government in this regard, a textile workers leader said. The Textile Minister, however, was not available for comment till midnight yesterday.

According to reliable sources, the workers of jute and textile sectors are unlikely to withdraw their 72-hour blockade of roads and railways starting from December 22 unless the charges against the leaders are withdrawn unconditionally.

Drug policy

From Page 1 Col. 7 the people have a lot to expect from the present democratic government and asked the surgeons to contribute to fulfilling the aspirations.

She expressed her satisfaction over the achievements of local surgeons in conducting complicated operations like open heart surgery and neurosurgery.

Referring to the use of laser technology in advanced surgery in developed countries, Begum Zia urged the local surgeons to identify the obstacles in application of innovations in the field.

She also called upon the well-to-do persons and physicians to take personal initiatives in medical research which will help medical scientists in their profession as well as render service to the suffering people.

In his address, the Health Minister said that the government's main objective was to solve the problems of basic needs and alleviate the sufferings of the commonman.

Presided over by SOSB President Prof A S M Fazul Karim, the function was also addressed by the organisation's Secretary General Dr Shaqukat H Haider, Prof M Kabiruddin Ahmed and Prof S A Ashraf.

The Midnight File

Soviet Union will cease to exist by year end

MOSCOW, Dec 17: The Soviet Union will cease to exist by the end of the year, a spokesman for Boris Yeltsin said Tuesday after the Russian president met with Mikhail Gorbachev, Soviet media reported.

Spokesman Pavel Voshchanov said the fate of the central government was the focus of the two-hour Kremlin meeting, the independent Interfax news agency said. The red Soviet flag, bearing a gold hammer and sickle, will be taken down from atop the Kremlin on the eve of the new year, Interfax quoted Voshchanov as saying, reports AP.

20 tribesmen killed in Colombia

BOGOTA, Dec 17: Dozens of assailants stormed a house occupied by tribesmen and began shooting indiscriminately, killing 20 people, police said Tuesday. It was the worst reported massacre in Colombia this year. The killings, apparently touched off by a land dispute, took place late Monday in the southwestern Colombian state of Cauca, police told local radio. All the victims belonged to the 80,000-member Paez tribe, which in recent years has taken over several ranches from wealthy landowners in the region, reports AP.

Optimism follows bitter exchanges in ME talks

WASHINGTON, Dec 17: The Middle East peace talks resumed Tuesday with an Israeli delegate somewhat more optimistic than his Syrian counterpart over the possibility of settling the deep differences between the two countries. Arriving at the State Department, Israeli representative Yoosi Ben-Aharon said the exchanges over the previous four days of talks, are helping the two sides to understand each other. "Therefore they are conducive towards bridging over some of the differences," he said. But Syrian Ambassador Muwaffiq al-Alfai said the Israeli side has refused to discuss its commitments under the peace process. He said the Israeli attitude was "the real obstacle" to progress. He added that the Syrian delegation was willing to continue the talks here as long as it is needed. Monday's session of the three way talks produced mostly sharp rhetoric, reports AP.

Smuggled cigarettes

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July '91. Cigarette manufacturers argue that, unless smuggling is drastically curtailed, the public exchequer will continue to lose a huge amount of revenues and the industry profits and jobs.

A leading manufacturer has estimated the revenue loss from 'untaxed' smuggled cigarettes to have been around Taka 1040 million in 1990 alone, in which year about 790 million sticks were allegedly imported into the country illegally.

A recent study conducted by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) on illegal trade notes that after 1972, the volume of cigarette smuggling increased alarmingly. One of the main reasons for this, the study pointed out, was the unavailability of locally manufactured filter-tipped cigarettes as the BTC plants did not have the required machinery.

To ease the supply problem, import of cigarettes at a fixed rate of duty was allowed. But smuggling of the item continued, the BIDS study found.

Import was again banned in 1976. The BTC introduced their Gold Leaf brand in 1980 to cater to the growing demand for filter-tipped cigarettes but, despite the ban on imports smuggling continued unabated, the BIDS draft report added.

The ban on imports was again lifted in 1982 only to be reimposed a year later. The spate of restricting and liberalising the cigarette trade appears to have only helped the smugglers in the long run as the market became flooded with foreign cigarettes and, unlike in the past, started to be displayed openly at street corner shops, the report noted.

"At present, foreign brands like Benson and Hedges and 555 brand cigarettes are quite freely sold all over the country", the report pointed out. According to a research study done by a leading manufacturer, the price differential between local premium brands and smuggled cigarettes is di-

rectly related to the demand of the former. If the price differential rises so does the sale of local premium brands, and vice versa, the study showed.

The main factors determining such price differentials are identified as the degree of government control on the entry and sale of smuggled cigarettes and the level of excise duties imposed on domestically produced cigarettes. The retail price of foreign cigarettes in greatly influenced by the control on smuggling, which adds a risk factor to their landed cost.

Calculations made during the above research showed that if excise duty could be charged on foreign cigarettes at the same rate levied on the local brands, they would sell at Taka 122 per packet instead of the current market price of around Taka 60-65. The landed price is estimated to be around Taka 26 per packet.

This would greatly reduce the demand for foreign cigarettes and push up sales of the local premium brands like 555, which are sold at Taka 40 per packet, the research showed. The ex-factory price before paying the excise duty is Taka 12 per packet for the above brand.

However, the BIDS report pointed out, the price differential between foreign and local brands has actually declined in recent years due to increased duty on local brands and relative ease with which smuggled cigarettes are being openly sold in the market.

The BIDS report said that discussions with local manufacturers revealed that the best way to reduce, if not totally eradicate, cigarette smuggling is to decrease the rate of excise duty on the local brands. This would make them cheaper and more competitive.

At the same time, the report noted, the government should take a stricter attitude towards the entry and open sale of smuggled cigarettes in the country. This would add to the risk factor and increase the price differential between the local and foreign brands, thereby reducing the demand for the latter.

'New medical colleges wont solve problems'

By SSMC Correspondent

The setting up of more multi-disciplinary general hospitals and improvement of the standard of the existing hospitals should be given preference, instead of going for new medical colleges, for solving the problems of the public health sector, according to professor A S M Fazul Karim, president of the Society of Surgeons of Bangladesh.

The plan for four new medical colleges demands further evaluation, he said because four thousand medical graduates are still unemployed.

The government plan to set up new colleges may be withheld for the time being until the problems faced by the existing medical colleges are solved, Professor Karim said while delivering his presidential speech at the Third International Scientific Conference of the Society of Surgeons at a local hotel. The existing ones should be well-equipped first, he said.

AL slates BNP for attack in Sylhet

Awami League Acting President Abdus Samad Azad and General Secretary Begum Sajeda Chowdhury yesterday blamed the ruling party for what it said resorting to terrorism to thwart the opposition voice in the guise of democracy, reports UNB.

They made the allegations in a statement after some armed activists of the BNP allegedly attacked the party's Victory Day function in Sylhet Monday, resulting in injuries to two Chhatra League workers.

Kawsar Majumdar, a Chhatra League leader of Sylhet MC College, was seriously stabbed and another student leader Millat shot and wounded during Monday's attack allegedly by the ruling party activists.

BNP activists also ransacked the Awami League and the Muktiyoddha offices in Sylhet, they said.



Sammilito Sangskritik Jote organised Victory Day procession in the city Monday.—Star photo

Student killed as JCD-BCL clash in Sylhet

SYLHET, Dec 17: A student was killed and several others were injured in a clash between two rival groups in Sylhet Polytechnic Institute early Monday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said Mahub (19), a first year student of the Institute, was gunned down by a group of unruly youths who lashed attack on the Institute, hostel at about 2-30 am.

Local administration imposed Section 144 in the area as tension was mounting in the town.

Police arrested six persons in connection with the killing.

15 injured as transport workers clash

PAHNA, Dec 17: At least 15 people were injured, six seriously, in separate clashes between transport workers and supporters of a bus owner at traffic crossing here today, reports UNB.

Witnesses said transport workers attacked a passenger bus driven by its owner Abdur Razzak (38) who violated the on going transport strike.

The injured included Razzak, four of his supporters, four transport workers and two passengers.

Bangladeshi in UN team for Yugoslavia

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 17: The United Nations is sending 21 military and civilian personnel to Yugoslavia on Wednesday to investigate the feasibility of a 10,000-member peace-keeping force, a UN spokesman said on Monday, reports Reuter.

It will include 12 military advisers, one each from Denmark, Kenya, Singapore, Venezuela, Nepal, Norway, Ghana, Sweden, Bangladesh, Spain, Ireland and Malaysia, drawn from other peace-keeping operations.

UN environment meet

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The preparatory meeting is the last opportunity to put specific proposals, if any, for the UNCED negotiations to take place in RIO, Brazil, in June.

Over ten thousand representatives of governments and NGOs, including over a hundred heads of state and government, are expected to attend the UNCED making it the biggest ever congregation held at the instance of the UN.

Environmentalists are skeptical about the outcome of the conference in so far as the safeguarding of the rights of the developing countries in respect of protection of the global environment is concerned. But there is no doubt in the mind of any that the conference will have a very important impact on the post-cold-war era of international relations, say experts.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is expected to lead the Bangladesh Government delegation at the conference and address the meeting.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests has by November 15 sent a country report as requested by the UNCED secretariat at Geneva.

The country report, reliable sources say, is basically a description of activities in the environment sector. It has been prepared in keeping with a format suggested by the UNCED secretariat.

In the three UNCED preparatory meetings held so far Bangladesh has taken a po-

sition which is basically similar to the one taken by the developed and the developing countries of the Group of 77. It, however, appears that there is no special Bangladesh stand. Scientists around the globe, and the international media, it may be recalled, state that the country will be among the worst hit by catastrophes caused by environmental degradation.

The developing countries have so far tried to drive home the point that (a) developed countries which are mainly responsible for degradation of the global environment should pay for arresting the trend; (b) the goal of sustainable development (development without depleting the resource base) should not be pushed too far at the cost of developing countries; (c) transfer of environment friendly technology should be smooth and not commercially oriented; and (d) a global environment protection fund be generated for helping poor countries pursue sustainable development.

The industrial countries on the other hand are trying to put the maximum emphasis on containing the rate of population growth in the developing countries. Third World experts allege, by doing so, the industrial countries are trying to shift attention from the global demand for a fairer share of the world's resources for all peoples, limiting over-consumption in the west, and better trade terms for Third World countries.

SAARC summit

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Rahman and Director General (SAARC) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ittefakur Ahmed Chowdhury are due to fly for the Lankan capital tomorrow to attend meetings of the drafting committee and the Council of Ministers, proceeding the summit.

Begum Ahsan Ullah MP, another member of the delegation, is expected to accompany the Prime Minister.

The one day-conference will have three sessions-opening and retreat and concluding sessions. This will be followed by signing of the "Colombo Declaration".

The proposed Declaration is expected to give priority to poverty alleviation and development of women to promote the socio-economic condition of the one billion people in the region.

It will review and analysis the developments fast sweeping across the world, particularly in Europe to determine future action programmes of the forum.

In Colombo, Begum Zia is also expected to have talks with the South Asian leaders on bilateral, regional and international issues.

Soviet embassy

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reigning superpower, the US, is also being trimmed.

The cultural department looks after a centre for teaching Russian language and boasts of a well-equipped lake-side auditorium in Dhanmondi. It hit headlines in 1983 when ousted president Hussain Muhammad Ershad closed it down along with expulsion of 14 Soviet diplomats on charge of meddling into Bangladesh's local politics.

Launch dacoity in Meghna

CHANDPUR, Dec 17: At least 30 launch passengers, including a police man, were injured today when a band of dacoits swooped on a launch in the midstream of Meghna, 2 km north-west of the town, reports UNB.

The dacoits decamped with cash and valuables worth about Tk 2.5 lakh.

Of the injured, seven were rushed to the Chandpur District Hospital with serious injuries.

They were identified as Mohammad Ismail, a police constable of Hajiganj thana, Rajon (18) Faiz Ahmed (50), Raja Chand (45), Manik Mia (12), Bahauddin Master (40) and Abdul Latif (40).

Police and witnesses said dacoits in the guise of passengers attacked the passengers of MV Jaltari launch at about 2.30 pm and beat them up indiscriminately.

The launch set out for Dhaleswari C & B Ghat in Shariatpur from the town at 2.10 pm with about 250 passengers aboard.

BCL leader

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of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD).

Liton, a student of Dhaka University, and Galib of Dhaka College were killed in an armed clash between BCL and JCD activists on the varsity campus last October 27.

Protesting the arrest of Raja, the Chhatra League (S-A) workers brought out a procession that processed towards the press club.

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