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Inside Today

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The Giants of Asia Come Together

The end of the Cold War ideological divide has led to new equations developing among old foes. The two Asian giants, China and India, are reassessing their relations to adapt to the changing times
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NEWS BRIEFS

Quake jolts Assam

NEW DELHI, Dec 20: An earth quake of moderate intensity today jolted the far eastern Indian states of Assam and Nagaland, but there was no immediate word on casualties. Tremors lasting up to 10 seconds rattled doors and windows in the two frontier states around 7.35 am forcing hundreds of people to run out of their homes for safety, reports AFP.

31 Shantibahini men surrender

RANGAMATI, Dec 20: A total of 31 members of the outlawed Parbatya Chattagram Jong Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) surrendered to the security forces here during the last two days. Official sources today identified them as members of Juba Samity and Gram Panchayat, front organisations of PCJSS. Shantibahini is the armed wing of PCJSS, reports UNB.

Transport strike observed

JHENIDAIL, Dec 20: A day-long transport strike called by the Road Transport Owners Association was observed here Thursday to press home its 19-point demand. The demands include reduction of fuel price and immediate actions against toll collectors, reports UNB.

Yeltsin honoured

ROME, Dec 20: Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin was awarded the highest state order of the Italian republic, The Cavaliere di Gran Croce Order, in a ceremony held at the residence of the Italian President, reports Tass.

Rules to ensure future meets may be discussed

SAARC summit today

COLOMBO, Dec 20: South Asian leaders began gathering in Colombo today for a one-day summit on Saturday to discuss regional cooperation, reports Reuters.

Nepal Prime Minister Prasad Koirala, Bhutan's King Jigme Wangchuk and Maldivian President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom were among the first to arrive.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia of Bangladesh also arrived later on the day.

India's Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao was expected on Saturday morning just before Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa is scheduled to open the meeting.

The seven countries form the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) formed seven years ago to raise the living standards of the one billion poor people in the region.

The meeting was originally scheduled for November, but was put off at the last moment

when the Bhutanese King was unable to attend due to security problems in his Himalayan kingdom.

The leaders were expected to discuss how SAARC rules could be amended to ensure that future annual summit meetings took place even if one of the seven heads of state of government was unable to attend, conference sources said.

The chairmanship of SAARC will pass from the Maldives to Sri Lanka at Saturday's meeting.

The summit was expected to set up a commission to recommend ways of alleviating poverty in the region, the sources said.

Some leaders are expected to hold separate informal discussions on bilateral problems, since contentious political issues are barred from the formal meetings of SAARC.

AP adds: Seven South Asian foreign ministers Friday reached agreement on 90 per cent of a declaration that will

be endorsed by their leaders at a one-day summit, officials said.

The declaration to be announced after the summit Saturday is likely to outline a preferential trade system in the region by 1997 and cooperation on environment, tourism and human resources.

The intensive efforts that had been made at official level within the very limited time available enable agreement on almost 90 per cent of work connected with the draft declaration, Sri Lanka's Foreign Secretary Bernard Tillekeratne told reporters.

During the summit, the leaders also are likely to discuss terrorism, drug traffic and arms trade in the region, but no decision on these issues will be made, said officials who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The ministers also were to consider a plan to create a food security reserved board and a scheme to facilitate

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Lanka accords red-carpet welcome to Khaleda

COLOMBO, Dec 20: A hearty and red-carpet welcome was accorded to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia when she arrived here tonight to attend the sixth summit of South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC), reports ISS.

Lankan Prime Minister DB Wijetunga received the Bangladesh leader at the Katunayaka Airport.

Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Harold Herat, Public Administration, Provincial Council and Home Affairs Minister Perera, State Minister for

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Sri Lankan Prime Minister DB Wijetunga receiving Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on her arrival at the Katunayaka Airport yesterday. — PIT photo

No headway in govt-SKOP talks

By Nurul Kabir

The government and the Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) yesterday failed to get out of the stalemate they reached on Wednesday as neither side agreed to compromise on their stance.

The Labour and Manpower Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and the SKOP leaders sat for dialogue yesterday at 6 pm and continued it through 7.30 pm. The meeting will resume at 3 pm today.

The five-point SKOP charter is virtually a combination of 78 separate demands. But the

negotiations for the last few days have been revolving around three major demands which include a written government announcement for a halt to denationalisation of public sector businesses and industries, fixation of a national minimum wage for both public and private sector workers at Taka 14 hundred and repeal of certain clauses of the labour laws that go against the interest of the workers and employees.

The discussion on the rest 75 demands is yet to begin. On the question of stopping

disinvestment, the government was ready to make a written commitment that it would not go for further privatisation unless both the government and the SKOP reached a consensus on the issue.

About the fixation of minimum wage, the government side maintained that they would form a wage commission within a week under the obligation of two separate agreements it signed with the Patkal Sramik Karmachari Sangram Parishad and Cotton

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Sramik Karmachari Oikya Federation brought out a torch procession in the city yesterday in support of their hartal call. — Star photo

Pakistan recognises Russia, six Muslim republics

LAHORE (Pakistan), Dec 20: Pakistan announced today its recognition of the Russian Federation and the six Muslim-majority Central Asian republics, with which it wants to forge close economic and cultural links, reports AFP.

Foreign Ministry secretary general Akram Zaki announced the government decision, which marks Islamabad's recognition of 10 of the former Soviet republics. Pakistan had already recognized the three Baltic republics of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania.

Azerbaijan's independence was recognized automatically when it was admitted to the Organization of Islamic

Conference (OIC) at the Islamic summit this month in Dakar, Senegal.

The government recognized Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kirghizstan, Tadzhikistan and Turkmenistan on Friday.

The announcement coincided with talks here Friday between visiting Russian Vice President Alexander Rutskoy and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, which officials said lasted nearly two hours.

Rutskoy, who arrived here late Thursday for a three-day visit, was to meet President Ghulam Ishaq Khan in Islamabad on Saturday and later hold talks with leaders of the Pakistan-based Afghan resistance.

He is a veteran of the Afghan war, which began with the Soviet invasion of 1979, and was at one stage a prisoner of war.

Zaki said the decision had been taken in the light of a report submitted by an official Pakistani delegation that returned home Wednesday after a three-week tour of Russia and the Muslim republics.

The delegation, led by Minister of State for Economic Affairs Sardar Asif Ahmed Ali, met with leaders of the republics and had intensive discussions, officials here said.

An official said Pakistan was keen to establish the closest

possible economic, cultural and trade relations with what he called the "rediscovered world of Islam" in the wake of the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Zaki said the Prime Minister had invited the presidents of the Central Asian republics to visit Pakistan.

Ishaq Khan, addressing parliament in Islamabad on Thursday, called for an Islamic bloc in Asia comprising Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Central Asian Republics.

He said the day would come when "the chain of friendship binding together Turkey, Iran

and Pakistan will extend through Afghanistan to the Muslim republics."

An earlier report says, Rutskoy confirmed here late Thursday that differences existed within his federation's leadership, but denied there was any absence of democracy.

"We have democracy in Russia, but some people say that (there is no democracy), because they don't understand what democracy is," said Rutskoy on his arrival in Lahore from Tehran.

Of course President (Boris) Yeltsin has his own opinion. "We support his view, but there are some who do not

Bangladesh-UAE joint commission meet today

By Staff Correspondent

Strengthening the existing economic relations will be the main focus of the Bangladesh-United Arab Emirates Joint Commission meeting due to begin in the city today (Saturday), according to a Foreign Office source.

A 15-member UAE delegation led by Mohammad Khalifa Bin al-Sowaidi, chief of Economic Relations and International Cooperation of the Foreign Ministry, arrived Friday to take part in the bilateral talks.

The Bangladesh team at the talks, to be led by Acting Foreign Secretary Faruq Sobhan, will include representatives of the Finance, Commerce and Labour and Manpower Ministries.

The four-day meeting, to be held after a pause of more than ten years, is expected to review all aspects of bilateral relations.

On the economic front, Bangladesh is likely to seek UAE funds for various projects and the increased employment of Bangladeshi workers in the Emirates, the Foreign Office source said.

According to a source at the External Resources Division of the Ministry of Finance, the talks may include the reactivation of funding for Bangladesh from the Abu Dhabi fund.

The meeting is also likely to discuss the BCCI issue, the Foreign Office source said. "But final decisions on the issue will be taken at a higher level," he added.

A long JS winter session likely

By Mostafa Kamal Majumder

The winter session of the Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) beginning on January 4 is likely to be a long one and continue well into the month of March so that the next budget session can be called by the end of May or early June.

Holding of a short session will force the convening of another meeting before the budget session, because under the Constitution 12th Amendment

Act the gap between two sessions should not exceed 60 days.

Reliable sources say long recesses are likely to be allowed between sittings of the House during the winter session, as the business to be transacted may not justify a continuous three-month meeting.

The session will begin
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Gorbachev may opt for social work

MOSCOW, Dec 20: Mikhail Gorbachev may play a public role in the new commonwealth but probably not in any formal government position, his chief spokesman told a news agency on Friday, reports AP.

Also Friday, Ukrainian lawmakers and Kazakhstan's president were insisting that the newly formed Commonwealth of Independent States must never infringe on their independence.

The comments came on the eve of a pivotal weekend meeting in the Kazakhstan capital, Alma-Ata, where six republics including Kazakhstan are expected to join the commonwealth that Russian President Boris N Yeltsin hopes to have

functioning by year's end. Both Yeltsin and Gorbachev have said the Soviet president will not have a formal position in the commonwealth. But Gorbachev's fate outside the new structure is still an open question.

Gorbachev's chief spokesman, Andrei Grachev, told the Interfax news agency that the Soviet leader had told German Chancellor Helmut Kohl in a telephone conversation that he "in all likelihood would concentrate on public activities."

Grachev said Gorbachev also had told a group of foreign business leaders that he "didn't exclude the possibility

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By-election in Bakerganj today

The by-election to the Jatiya Sangsad vacant seat Bakerganj-5 will be held today, reports ISS.

Polling will take place from 8 am to 5 pm without break, according to the Election Commission in Dhaka yesterday.

The seat has fallen vacant following election of Abdur Rahman Biswas to the office of President of the country.

A total of 2,49,287 voters will exercise their right of franchise at 474 booths in 90

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Russian flag atop Soviet embassy in Delhi

NEW DELHI, Dec 20: Diplomats at the Soviet Embassy switched allegiance to Russia Friday, hoisting the Russian tricolor instead of the Soviet hammer and sickle, reports AP.

"We are representing the Russian federation and the commonwealth of independent state as from today," said Alexander Charov, the embassy's information counsellor. "Now we are not under the jurisdiction of the Soviet Union."

He said the change was made in keeping with Thursday's decree by Russian President Boris Yeltsin taking over the Soviet Union's foreign ministry and other offices.

DUTA election tomorrow

By DU Correspondent

The election to the executive committee of Dhaka University Teachers Association (DUTA) for '92 will be held tomorrow (Sunday) at Dhaka University Club.

The 'Blue' and 'Pink' groups have jointly put up a panel against the 'White' panel in the year's election.

Dr. Mahtabuddin of Chemistry, Prof. Dr. Md. Shahadat Ali of Zoology, Prof. Abdul Mannan Chowdhury of Management, Prof. Dr. Md. Haroun-or-Rashid of Political Science and Dr. Tofiq Ahmed Chowdhury of Chemistry are the 'Blue-Pink' joint panel candidates for the posts of
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