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NEWS BRIEFS
 Sec 144 in Barisal Municipal area

Train derailed
 NARSINGDI, Dec 26: Seven bogies of a train were derailed here early today disrupting the capital's rail communications with Sylhet, Chittagang and Noakhali for more than 10 hours. Railway sources said the Ashuganj-bound goods train met with the accident at about 5.30 am between Amritganj and Khanabari stations. Train services resumed at about 3.30 pm, reports UNB.



KEEPING WARM: Day labourers in the city taking hot tea in the cold and damp weather yesterday. — Star photo

Supreme Soviet votes itself out of existence CIS defence ministers sit to map out military policy

MOSCOW, Dec 26: Defence ministers of the new Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) met today to map out a joint military policy and the old central parliament formally voted the Soviet Union out of existence, reports Reuters.

Within hours of President Mikhail Gorbachev's resignation on Wednesday evening, problems began to pile up for his republican successors as they squabbled over the way Soviet power was being carved up among them.

In the southern republic of Georgia, there was a lull in fighting between government and opposition forces which has claimed at least 40 lives since Sunday. But both sides said they were ready to fight to the end.

Defence chiefs at the Moscow meeting have to overcome an impasse over what kind of army to create and what to do with the Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal of 30,000 warheads.

Kazakhstan has objected to the original plan, under which it, Ukraine and Byelorussia would destroy their nuclear weapons and leave Russia as the only nuclear republic.

Tass news agency said ministers would take new proposals being worked out today to a commonwealth summit in the Byelorussian capital Minsk next Monday.

The Minsk summit could also face a row which is brewing between Ukraine and the vast Russian Federation.

Foreign governments including the United States on Wednesday recognised Russia as the Soviet Union's legal successor.

US President George Bush said Washington would move quickly to establish diplomatic ties with five of the other former Soviet republics. It would do likewise with the remaining six when they committed themselves to 'responsible security policies and democratic principles.'

Washington's recognition of Russia and other republics was echoed by a number of countries including the 12-member European Community, Australia and Canada. Japan said it would recognise Russia tomorrow.

Ukrainian president Leonid Kravchuk has spoken of his state's dismay at the apparent transfer of power from one Moscow government to the next.

He said this was at odds with commonwealth agreements at inaugural meetings in Minsk and the Kazakh capital, Alma-Ata.

"Kravchuk is clarifying those agreements that were reached in Minsk, and Alma-Ata," his press secretary, Vladimir Shlyaposhnikov.

The republics decided that Russia was to take the Soviet Union's place on the United Nations Security Council. But that does not at all mean that Russia is the legal inheritor of the Soviet Union. There is no centre in Moscow," he said.

Kravchuk faces possible trouble closer to home. Miners at the vast Donbass coalfield sent him a telegram demanding a promised pay rise be handed out and spoke of 'unforeseeable consequences' if strikes broke out in the region, Tass said.

The Soviet parliament, meeting informally for the last time, went through the motions of voting the Soviet Union out of existence as the former empire's last offices were wound up.

About two dozen deputies from the parliament's higher chamber — which once numbered 173 people at all strength — voted by show of hands for the resolution.

The commonwealth had already declared the Soviet Union defunct and today's vote had only symbolic significance.

Colder days ahead

By Staff Correspondent

Almost all the districts of central and southern Bangladesh experienced winter rain for the third consecutive day Thursday with further fall in temperature.

Meteorological sources said. The present rainfall under the influence of Westerly disturbance from Arabian Sea, will continue today (Friday), the Met office said. Weather will be colder when the sky became clear, the sources said.

Mercury may fall to 7 degree Celsius in northern parts of the country during the cold spell this week. Temperature during the time will be 8 to 10 degrees elsewhere over the country. After a brief break another cold wave may sweep the country, Met office sources added.

A Met office source said that the present rainfall, first in this season was heavier than the previous years.

Met office had earlier forecast 6 mm rainfall over the country in December this year.

Meanwhile, intermittent rainfall disrupted the normal life in the city on Thursday. The city dwellers, mostly office goers, had to brave strong and cold breeze with light rain after the Christmas holiday yesterday.

Rickshaw pullers demanded relatively high fare as the

BNP makes move to ease ties with AL for smooth JS session

Negotiators from the ruling BNP and the opposition Awami League, against the backdrop of strained relations between the two major parties, are trying to mend the fences before the coming parliament session.

Highly placed sources told UNB Thursday such initiatives had been taken for making parliament more effective through cooperation and understanding between the government and the opposition.

Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali is learnt to have initiated the dialogue. He has already contacted Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad and proposed a meeting between the two sides to forge understanding in conducting the House smoothly and effectively.

A meeting of the Special Parliamentary Committee on Indemnity Ordinance (Repeal) Bill convened today (Friday) in a bid to settle the crucial question in parliament is said to be a fallout of this rapprochement move.

The friction in the government-opposition relations was deemed to have been caused by recent incidents like violence during the celebration of first anniversary of fall of autocracy on December 6 and some steps taken bypassing parliament such as dissolution of the upazila system by an ordinance.

In their talking, Abdus Samad Azad, also President member of Awami League, Jatiya Party leader Barrister

Dhaka asks Burmese envoy to visit spot of attack

The situation along Bangladesh-Myanmar (Burma) border is contained and efforts are continuing to further defuse the tension, a foreign office spokesman said here Thursday, reports BSS.

He said Dhaka had offered to put a helicopter at the disposal of Myanmar ambassador in Bangladesh to travel to the spot, where the Bangladesh border outpost was attacked last Saturday leaving one BDR jawan killed and several others injured.

Bangladesh has also proposed for a flag meeting of the two sides along the border and

Construction begins soon World Bank finds Jamuna bridge project viable

Construction of the Jamuna bridge will start shortly as the final assessment of the World Bank found it economically viable, reports UNB.

The bank has given the go-ahead signal after reviewing the economic return of the multipurpose bridge which will connect the northern region of the country with the east.

A message received from the World Bank today said "economic return from the investment on the bridge can be expected 9-12 per cent."

The final review on the economic aspect of the bridge was done by the World Bank which is expected to contribute 100 million dollar to the bridge project which will have rail line and gas interconnector.

The Asian Development Bank and Japan have agreed to provide 150 million dollar each. The government has already raised Tk 400 crore by way of Jamuna surcharge.

Official sources said the entire project would cost about 500 million dollar excepting the rail line and gas interconnector.

The World Bank said besides 9-12 per cent economic return, the bridge would provide some other unquantifiable direct and some important indirect benefits to the people.

The proposal for construction of the multipurpose bridge has been under review of the World Bank for quite some time and the government was expecting a favourable decision.

ERD Secretary Enam Ahmed Chowdhury said the next step should be for the World Bank to issue tender documents for the project. However, the Bank will now submit findings of their favourable economic review to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Japanese government, the co-financiers of the project.

So far, Japan and ADB have taken a supportive role in the proposal of the project.

Construction of the bridge will commence within a few months, said an official hand-out. Its completion may take 4 to 5 years, it added.

Various technical studies on the project started in early 1980s, and the government has already spent Tk 50 crore to pay off the consultants.

Construction of link roads on both sides the Jamuna has also started.

Transport strike in Chittagong

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 27: Road Communication with the port city snapped off on Thursday as the transport workers went on indefinite strike demanding appointment letters.

The Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation called the strike in support of truck drivers' of the Chittagong Port who have been on strike since December 16.

Buses, trucks, minibuses and tank lorries of 29 routes from Chittagong went off the road stranding hundreds of passengers in the city. The strike also hampered shipments in the port.

A Workers Federation source in Dhaka told The Daily Star that most of the bus and minibus owners had issued appointment letters earlier, but the truck owners were adamant on not issuing the appointments, which had forced the workers to go on strike.

Meanwhile, the workers leaders held talks with the Mayor of Chittagong City Corporation, Wednesday but the talks ended without any fruitful outcome.

Russia to reduce scholarships

By Inam Ahmed

Russia may drastically reduce the amount of scholarships to foreign students, high placed Russian diplomats said here Thursday.

However, Bangladeshi students presently studying in Russia will continue to get their portion of committed scholarships. "They will not be affected," a Russian diplomat told this correspondent on Thursday while commenting on foreign students. "Russia will provide them the money. Those studying in Ukraine will get their money from the Ukrainian government. But this is not the final decision."

Sources said there are about 900 Bangladeshi students presently studying in different republics of the now defunct USSR who hold scholarships. The majority of these Bangladeshi students are studying in Russia, while many others are studying in Ukraine.

Most for the students enroll in engineering, medicine, computer science and agriculture.

Foreign office sources said that the quota for USSR scholarships dropped by about 30 per cent from last years due to financial crisis. These scholarships were awarded through government channels. However, a number of scholarships were also awarded through party and other channels. The Russian government may now reduce the financial amount of the scholarships by half, providing that the rest will have to be financed by the students themselves.

Sources said, although the financial amount of scholarship already awarded to the foreign students will remain the same, students may face severe financial hardship due to an

Take part in uplift, PM urges youths

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia Thursday called upon the youths to take part in the movement of fulfilling the basic needs of rural people living below the poverty line, reports BSS.

She said "in the present autocracy-free atmosphere each of us has to become a soldier of development and our youths should get involve in the voluntary programmes for uplift."

The Prime Minister was addressing the opening ceremony of the 20th national convention of Bangladesh Junior Chambers at a city hotel. Dhaka City Mayor Mirza Abbas, Amanullah Aman, MP, and the convention chairman and national president of JCI K M Mujibul Haq also spoke.

The Prime Minister said the key to progress and prosperity remained with full utilization of innumerable possibilities of youths. "With this erid in view, we want to ensure the

BADC employees protest decision on Barind project

By Staff Correspondent

The Employees Union of the Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) gheraoed the 'Krishi Bhavan' for about five and a half hours Thursday.

The employees were protesting the government decision to conduct the 'Barind Development Project' under a separate body, releasing its control from BADC.

The action was taken also to press home the 11-point demand of the BADC Employees Union that include implementation of the new wage scale, providing group insurance facilities after retirement, promoting the employees to all the vacant posts, cancellation of the Enam Commission report, withdrawal of the decision to lease out the godowns of BADC to private entrepreneurs, reorganisation of the corporation and abandoning the policy of squeezing the role of BADC.

48.37 pc pass Jessore Board HSC exam

By Staff Correspondent

The results of the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations of 1991 under the Secondary and Intermediate Education Board of Jessore were announced Thursday. The percentage of the students who passed in the examination is 48.37.

A total of 47,423 candidates appeared in the examinations held in August and September last, out of which 22,942 came out successful. The percentage of successful male candidates is 48.58 against 47.84 of the female candidates.

The total candidates include 13,119 women. Of the successful candidates, 2,626 were placed in the first division, 9,117 in the second division while 11,199 were placed in the third division.

The percentage of those who passed in the Science group is 62.27, in the Humanities group — 44.38 (regular) and 30.73 (private) and in the Commerce group — 50.93 (regular) and 25.82 (private).

In the Agricultural Science group the percentage of success is 50 while in the Home Economics group the percentage is 83.33. There were no private candidates in the Science group.

Khan Wasuiddin Mahmud of Barisal Cadet College (Roll No Barisal Cadet-4) stood first in the combined merit list of all the groups, securing 951 marks with distinction in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Statistics.

Parvez Rayhan of the same college, (Roll No Barisal Cadet-11), obtained the second position in the combined merit list getting 944 marks and letters in English, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Statistics while the third place of the list was secured by Mohammad Quamruzzaman of

Garment workers postpone strike

By Staff Correspondent

Garments Sramik Karmachari Sangram Parishad has postponed its proposed 48 hour work stoppage on December 27 and 28 in all the garments industries following a negotiation between the Government and garments workers leaders yesterday.

According to the negotiation the figure of minimum wage to be announced by the wage commission to be formed under the obligation SKOP—Government understanding will be applicable for the workers of the garments sector, the Sangram Parishad press release said yesterday.

The press release also said that the labour laws to be formulated by the government under its commitment made to the SKOP earlier will also be applicable for the garments workers. Apart from this, the Government will also take steps to implement existing labour laws in the garments industries.

According to sources the Government in yesterday's meeting maintained that any disputes arising in the garments units should be solved through tripartite negotiations. The three parties include the Government, owners of the industries and the representative bodies of the garments

Burmese junta rules out forging compromise with Suu Kyi

BANGKOK, Dec 26: Burma's junta today ruled out forging a compromise with detained opposition figure and Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, saying it viewed foreign pressure regarding her as a threat to the country, reports AFP.

The blunt message came in a speech by Major General Khin Nyunt, one of the most powerful leaders of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), the official name of the junta, broadcast on official Burmese television and monitored here.

"The SLORC government and the armed forces, for the good of the country, race a religion will never accept Aung San Suu Kyi," Khin Nyunt said.

The detention of Aung San Suu Kyi and the refusal by the junta to accept her was "solely an internal affair," he said.

"Any interference with regard to (her) will be considered to be bullying our country, threatening our country," he said. "We will not need anybody's threat."

Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of Burma's independence hero, has been under house arrest in Rangoon for almost two-and-a-half years.

She emerged as the country's principal opposition leader during massive pro-democracy demonstrations in Rangoon and other towns in mid 1988.

The protests were only quelled after the army repeatedly opened fire on demonstrators, killing thousands and subsequently reimposed military rule under a new name in September of that year with the founding of the SLORC.

The National League for Democracy (NLD) opposition alliance, which Aung San Suu Kyi co-founded, won more than 80 per cent of the seats in elections in May 1990 even though she was under house arrest at the time.

The junta has refused to hand over power to civilians and most opposition leaders have either been arrested or fled into exile.

Various foreign governments and human rights organisations have repeatedly called for Aung San Suu Kyi's release or for access to her.

Two senior Asian officials, Foreign Secretary of the Philippines Raul Manglapus and Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister Kunihiko Saito, made separate, but apparently successful, trips to Rangoon this month in attempts to persuade the junta to soften its stance towards the detained

unofficial opposition leader.

In the first lengthy official comment on Aung San Suu Kyi winning this year's Nobel Peace Prize, Khin Nyunt said that by showing her support foreign countries and organisations were assisting "terrorist insurgents" in Burma.

Before she was awarded the Nobel prize and various other human rights awards, Aung San Suu Kyi was "pushed... into becoming a great democratic hero" by foreign broadcasting stations such as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Voice of America (VOA), he said.

"The VOA and the BBC were continuously broadcasting news to mislead the Burmese people," from the day she was nominated for the Nobel prize to the day she was awarded it, he said.

"Some big countries, without realising whether it is fitting or not, are rendering support to the character of their choice," Khin Nyunt said.

"Some foreign organisations are not only boosting the morale of the terrorist insurgents, but they are giving material assistance," he said.

"There is evidence of (her) contacts with the insurgents," he said.

The state-run Doordarshan television said the assassins boarded a passenger train in Punjab and carried out the killing as the transport train stopped at Ludhiana, an industrial town, 300 kilometers (186 miles) northwest of New Delhi.

The motive behind the attack was not immediately known, but Sikh militants often carry out random attacks to dramatize their homeland demand.

Sikhs gun down 56

CHANDIGARH, Dec 26: Militants tonight shot dead 56 train passengers and wounded 30, 22 of them seriously, in Ludhiana district of Punjab.

An official report said 49 passengers were killed.

The state-run Doordarshan television said the assassins boarded a passenger train in Punjab and carried out the killing as the transport train stopped at Ludhiana, an industrial town, 300 kilometers (186 miles) northwest of New Delhi.

The motive behind the attack was not immediately known, but Sikh militants often carry out random attacks to dramatize their homeland demand.