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NEWS BRIEFS

PM indisposed

By Staff Correspondent
Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia became 'slightly indisposed' on Tuesday.
All appointments of the Prime Minister were cancelled on the day and her appointments scheduled for today (Wednesday) are also likely to be curtailed, according to a government source.

Hearing of writ petition

The hearing of the writ petition challenging the Presidential Election Act, 1991, will be held on January 22 to January 24 before a single-judge bench comprising Justice Anwarul Haq Chowdhury who is the third judge after split judgement of the High Court division bench, reports BSS.

Hasina leaves for Singapore today

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina leaves for Singapore today to see her ailing brother-in-law who will undergo a brain operation on Friday. Prof Shaifque Siddique, the husband of Sheikh Rehana, is under treatment at Singapore National University Hospital where he will be operated upon, party sources said, reports UNB.

Last date for surrender

The last date for surrendering of the members of Biplabi Communist Party, Purba Bangla Communist Party (ML), Purba Bangla Sarbahara Party and their different factions and all other such secret armed organisations to the nearest thanas with arms has been extended to January 25 from January 15, according to an official handout here yesterday, reports BSS.

Jatiya Sangsad may get independent secretariat

A bill providing for an independent secretariat of the Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) is expected to be moved in the Sangsad during the current session.
Titled 'the parliament act' it will ensure the formation of a secretariat with non-partisan people drawn from different services and will function under the direct control and supervision of the Speaker.
When contacted, Shaikh Razzak Ali, Speaker of

Parliament said that the draft of the bill has already been prepared and is expected to be placed in the House in about two week's time.
When asked about who would move the bill, the Speaker said that either the Leader of the House Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia or the Law Minister would do it.
Referring to the skill development of the employees of the parliament secretariat the Speaker said that there would

be a panel of consultants, to be drawn from different disciplines, who would provide services as and when necessary.
In addition, a research cell, funded by the donor agency the Ford Foundation, would be set up to assist the Members of Parliament.
Incidentally, the necessity of an independent parliament secretariat has long been felt.
The formation of the present secretariat of parliament is controlled by the

Establishment Ministry which also controls the transfers and posting of its employees.
The Rules of Procedure does not empower the Speaker the controlling authority over the secretariat.
It defines the secretariat as 'secretariat means the secretariat of parliament' and 'secretary means secretary to parliament and includes any other officer for the time being performing the duties of the secretary.'

The Rules of Procedure is also expected to be amended further during the current session of Parliament providing for measures to regulate the behaviour of the members while the House is in session.
This was indicated by the Speaker in the House yesterday in a bid to cool down Jatiya Party MP Manirul Huq Chowdhury who was insisting and haranguing to get a point through. The Speaker commented that rules were going

to be enacted against agitated speeches in the House.
Later, on a query, the Speaker said that the rules to be observed by members as laid down in the current Rules of Procedure would be amended for the smooth functioning of the House.
The Speaker observed that this had become essential to make the members more disciplined. This would further help them in consolidating the parliamentary democracy.

MPs allege interference in their rights

A government decision to associate the local MPs in project committees for implementation of schemes under the food for works programmes has been flouted, it was alleged in Parliament last night, reports BSS.
The allegation, raised by opposition Awami League MP Tofael Ahmed (AL), was also supported by Ansar Ali Siddiqi and Fatema Chowdhury of the Treasury Bench who said they were ignored in the project implementation process in their constituencies.

Sobhan of Jamaat.
The Speaker informed the House that Relief Minister will make a statement today (Wednesday) in this regard. He, however, advised the members to come up with specific instances of violation of government orders backed by documentary evidence. Allegation without factual support is unwanted, he ended.
BSS adds: Tofael referred to certain projects under food for work and other programmes under Local Government Ministry and Power Development Board and alleged that while the privileges of the MPs were being ignored, the ministers, in some cases, were found directly interfering in the rights of Parliament members.

Ansar Ali Siddiqi supported the contention of the opposition leader and said local MPs were not consulted even in the projects concerning the Education Ministry and Health sector. Another ruling party member Begum Fatema Chowdhury Paru from Sylhet supported the allegation, but did not substantiate her contention with specific instances.
Awami League member from Jamalpur Mirza Golam Azam alleged that all food for work projects and government allocations had been stopped in his constituency during last six months. Maudud Ahmed said since the issue was sensitive, it should be resolved for smooth functioning of the parliamentary democracy. Taking part in the discussion as the last speaker, Opposition Chief Whip Mohammad Nasim demanded a ruling from the Speaker as the allegation was supported from both treasury and opposition benches.

The opposition members said ministers were interfering in sanctioning wheat for the food for work programme ignoring the local MPs - thus undermining their privileges. They alleged that the ministers were trying to politicise the administration.
The unscheduled discussion that lasted for more than an hour was taken part among others by Mohammad Nasim, Sajeda Chowdhury, Abdur Razzak, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim of Awami League, Moudud Ahmed and Sardar Amjad Hossain of Jatiya Party, Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury of NDP and Maulana Abdus

Treasury Bench member
The Speaker assured the members that if the allegations are found adequately supported by proofs and documents, he would certainly refer it to the Special Privilege Committee for solution.

Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman will make a statement in parliament today on the present tension along Bangladesh-Myanmar border triggered by the Burmese troops buildup, reports UNB.
The Burmese border security forces made a surprise attack on the BDR outpost at Rezupara in Bandarban district on December 21, killing one BDR personnel and injuring seven others. Intruders took away all arms and ammunition from the camp.
Soon after the incident, Dhaka protested to Yangon against violation of the international border by the Burmese troops, killing and



Police officials displaying arms and ammunition recovered from a DU residential hall yesterday. —Star photo

Sick tea estates likely to get interest remission

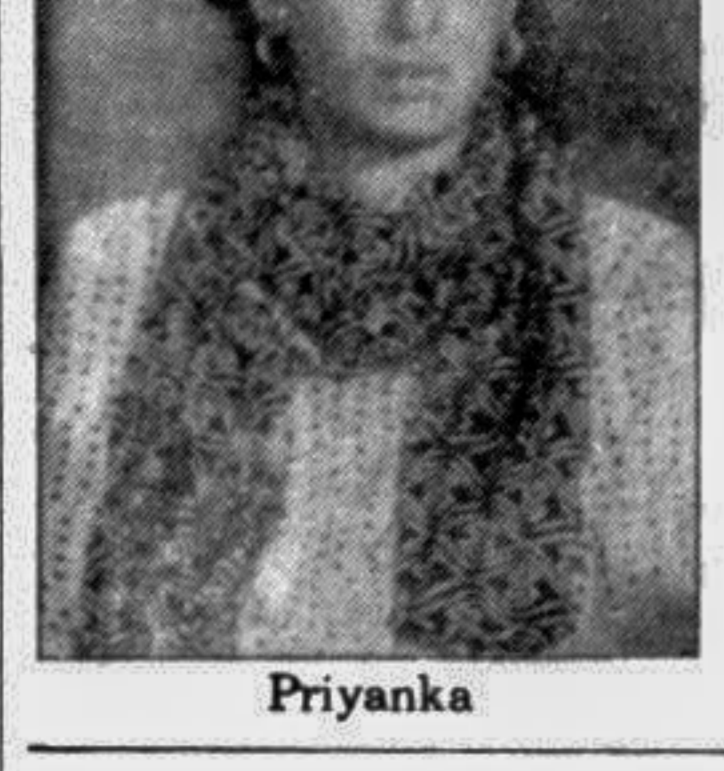
The government is likely to exempt 30 per cent to 75 per cent normal interest and 100 per cent penal interest to recover the overdue loans of about Taka 15 crore from the owners of the sick tea estates, a source close to the Bangladesh Tea Board said.
It was suggested by a body formed last year by the tea board authority to prepare recommendations for stimulating the sick tea estates. The body headed by S A Hasib, Director of Project and Development Department of the Board, also suggested the government to improve the management of the tea estates by enacting a new law like that of India's Acquisition and

Transfer of Sick Unit Act 1985.
According to the source, the tea estates having overdue development production loan and willing to repay entire dues will be given the chance to apply for remission of 75 per cent normal interest and 100 per cent penal interest by repaying 10 per cent of the present overdue loan. The body also suggested fixation of a time-limit up to March 31 for the garden owners to apply for the remission of interest.
The tea garden owners who at present are unable to repay the entire dues at a time were suggested to apply for 50 per cent exemption of normal interest.
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Mustafiz makes statement on Dhaka-Yangon tension today

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Priyanka's 'no' to Congress party post



Priyanka

NEW DELHI, Jan 14: Priyanka Gandhi, the 19-year-old daughter of assassinated Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, on Tuesday declined an elected political post with her late father's party, a family spokesman said, reports AP.
Miss Gandhi "is a student whose first priority and preoccupation is to complete her education," said the spokesman, Vincent George. "She has therefore expressed

Seen from the Gallery

By Mahfuz Ullah
The tug of war, metaphorically speaking, between the Speaker and the members of Parliament is a pleasant event to witness. In most cases it centres around the members' insistence to speak and the

Shamir 'satisfied', firm to go ahead with talks

JERUSALEM, Jan 14: Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir today voiced satisfaction over 'progress' at Arab-Israeli peace talks and pledged to carry on with negotiations despite resignation threats from ultra-nationalists in his coalition, reports AFP.
"I have firmly decided to pursue the peace talks," Shamir was quoted as saying by spokesman Ehud Gol, one day after Palestinian and Israeli negotiators met separately in Washington and exchanged agendas for future talks.
"Israel will not interrupt the negotiations despite the diffi-

culties' they are facing, the Prime Minister said.
He also told an Italian parliamentary delegation he was satisfied with the 'progress made at the peace talks in Washington' and noted that the United States had not intervened during the discussions.
Monday's session was seen as a modest breakthrough after an inconclusive round of talks last month in Washington during which both sides met in the corridors of the US State Department and argued about procedure.
The ultra-nationalist Tehiya and Moledet parties today re-

newed a threat to quit the coalition government amid reports that during Monday's bilateral talks Israeli negotiators submitted plans for Palestinian autonomy on the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
AP adds: Withdrawal of the far-right Moledet and Tehiya parties could bring down Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's cabinet and halt the peace talks while new elections are held.
Israeli delegation members insist that discussions in Washington have centered only on the agenda for the next round of talks. But Tehiya and

Police raid 4 DU halls, recover three weapons

By DU Correspondent
The Dhaka Metropolitan Police raided four Dhaka University halls in the early hours of Tuesday and recovered three weapons and around 100 bullets.
At least six shots were reportedly fired in front of the Vice-Chancellor's house in the DU campus and the Ziaur Rahman Hall area after the raid on 12 halls including the Zahurul Huq Hall, Jagannath Hall, Surjassen Hall and Salimullah Muslim Hall.
Police were deployed at some other halls but they did not search them, the source said.
Arms including a sawed-off rifle, a revolver and the bullets were recovered from the Zahurul Huq Hall. No weapons
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40 industrial units will be denationalised next month

The process of denationalisation will be expedited next month despite opposition from the labour front, Industries Minister informed the Industrial Development Council meeting in Dhaka Tuesday, reports UNB.
Minister Shamsul Islam Khan said 40 industrial units have been listed for denationalisation. The process will start on approval by NEC (National Economic Council) of the recommendations of the Committee for Denationalisation.
Of the 40 units, 26 will be sold to the highest bidders while 100 per cent shares of 8 units and 49 per cent shares of the rest 6 will be sold to the members of the public.
The 37-member council met for the first time at BCIC Bhavan since it was set up by

11 medical teachers ordered out of capital in one day

By Masud Hasan Khan
Eleven senior teachers of different medical colleges and institutes have been transferred to Mymensingh. They have been asked to join within 24 hours, violation of which would entail punitive action.
A Health Ministry directive dated January 13 ordered the transfer of the 11 teachers, from various institutions in the capital, to the Mymensingh Medical College and asked them to join by Tuesday afternoon.
The directive, by presidential order, cautioned that those who would fail to meet the joining deadline would be given a stand-release order.
The teachers transferred from Dhaka Medical College, Sir Salmullah Medical College (SSMC), IPGM&R, NIPSO, National Institute of Ophthalmology and the Centre for Medical Education include two professors, four associate professors, four assistant professors and a lecturer.
Speaking on condition of anonymity, a teacher transferred to Mymensingh said the order was conveyed to him over telephone by Health Ministry officials on Monday. "I received the letter Tuesday noon which asked me to join by the same afternoon."
Another recipient of the letter of the transfer order told The Daily Star that he could not join his new place of work because of such a short notice. Besides, he also took exceptions to the nature and the tone of the directive.
Meanwhile, SSMC authorities, Tuesday postponed its scheduled third professional MBBS Pathology examination today because of the surprise order.
The order virtually left no senior teachers in the Pathology Department of SSMC. The college authorities, when contacted, said it was impossible to conduct the examinations without the teachers who had taught the course.
Our SSMC Correspondent adds: On hearing the news of postponement, the examinees staged demonstration before the college authorities. They demanded prompt holding of examination.
The president of Leo district council Shafiqullah Bhuiyan in a statement protested the postponement of the scheduled exams at SSMC.

PM lauds WB gesture to Jamuna bridge project

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has appreciated the World Bank's green signal for assistance to the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Project, reports UNB.
"It will bring a revolution in the communication sector and accelerate the growth of industries in the country's northern region", she told the visiting World Bank Vice President Joseph Wood who called on her at her residence Tuesday afternoon.
The Prime Minister appreciated him of the steps for improving macro-economic management and speedy implementation of development programmes. The present democratic government is committed to ameliorating the lot of common man, she said.

Emergency, ban on FIS in Algeria likely

ALGIERS, Jan 14: The army-backed council that took control of Algeria may soon declare an emergency, allowing it to ban the Islamic fundamentalist party that had been poised to gain power, reports said Tuesday, reports AP.
The High Secretary Council, which includes Prime Minister Sid Ahmed Ghazali and three generals, took power Sunday and cancelled run-off elections set for Thursday that was expected to give the Islamic Salvation Front control of parliament. (Earlier story on P-6)

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