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Tomorrow
 Foreign Minister AFM
 Mostafizur Rahman
 discusses all problems
 and issues facing the
 external relations of
 Bangladesh and the
 reorganisation of the
 foreign office in a con-
 versation with
 The Daily Star
 Don't miss it!

Ban on carrying arms in poll areas

Four killed in Union Parishad poll violence

Four persons, including a boy have been killed in Union Parishad election violence in the country since Tuesday night, reports UNB.

In Narshingdi, a Union Parishad member candidate's minor son has been slaughtered allegedly to restrain him from the electioneering race.

Police yesterday recovered the body of Asaduzzaman Babu (7) near the canteen of the Judge Court building. His throat was slit.

Babu had been missing since Tuesday night.

His father Ashraf Ali is contesting the ensuing election to Ohorashal Union Parishad in Palash upazila.

Family members suspected that Ashraf's rivals might have been involved in the killing of his son to foil poll victory.

In Chittagong unknown miscreants killed two supporters of a chairman candidate contesting ensuing election to the Daulatdia Union Parishad in Fatikchhari upazila.

Selmuhammad (28) and Jahangir Alam (30), both back-

ing Mohammad Dabirul Islam in the ensuing polls, were kidnapped Tuesday evening from an electioneering camp at Nazrat Bazar.

Meanwhile, the government banned movement of people with legal arms outside their houses between January 16 and February 10 in the areas where Union Parishad elections will be held within January 22 and February 6, according to an official handout here Wednesday.

The step had been taken under the Arms Act.

The ban will not be applicable to members and officials connected with law and order, security guards engaged in various public, private, semi-government departments and organisations and the owners of legal arms who would be depositing arms and licence to the concerned deputy commissioners.

The government expressed the hope that all concerned will abide by the ban duly. Arms of those who would violate this ban will be seized under Section 26 of the Arms Act, the handout added.



SIEGE WITHIN: Employees of Bangladesh Biman laid a siege to the headquarters at Motijheel yesterday demanding a separate pay-scale. —Star photo

Mostafiz hopeful about peaceful solution

Flag meet with Myanmar Jan 28

The government is hopeful about a peaceful solution to the problem with Myanmar arising out of latter's military attack on a Bangladesh border outpost last month, Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

The Foreign Minister's statement in the House came in the wake of the Opposition demand for discussion on Bangladesh-Myanmar border tension and influx of Muslim refugees into the country.

In his lengthy statement, the Foreign Minister said that his Myanmar counterpart is expected to visit Bangladesh in the first week of the next month.

The Myanmar government, the Foreign Minister informed the House, had meanwhile agreed to hold the third flag meeting somewhere in Myanmar on January 28. The first and second flag meetings were held on December 31, 1991, and January 4, 1992, in Myanmar and Bangladesh respectively.

The Foreign Minister said the Myanmar side in the next meeting would be led by the chief of the border security forces of the Rakhaine province. He is also the provincial Police Commissioner of Rakhaine, he said.

The Foreign Minister, however, said that the border problem with Myanmar was not new. The similar problem with Myanmar had surfaced in 1978 and it was resolved peacefully through mutual discussions, he said.

He urged all quarters, including the opposition political parties and the people working in the print media, to restrain from provocation. The most important thing to do now was to exercise patience in order to solve the problem peacefully, he said.

The opposition members, including Tofael Ahmed and Abu Hasan Chowdhury of the Awami League and Rashed Khan Menon of Workers' Party urged the Speaker to allow the parliament members general discussion on the issue as well as on the foreign policy of the government.

UNB adds: The Foreign Minister declared in unequivocal terms that the elected government of BNP will fight to the last drop of blood in protecting territorial integrity and national sovereignty.

He dismissed the Opposition charge and said the policy of peaceful coexistence pursued by the government cannot be termed as a subservient foreign policy. Peaceful coexistence — friendship with all and malice to none — is the principled foreign policy of Bangladesh since independence, he said.

In his written statement, the Foreign Minister touched upon the influx of Muslim refugees from Myanmar, estimated at more than 50,000, who have taken shelter in Myanmar and Bangladesh respectively.

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Thai Crown Prince arrives today

The Crown Prince of Thailand Maha Vajiralongkorn arrives Dhaka this afternoon on a six-day state visit to Bangladesh.

A 19-gun salute will welcome the Thai Crown Prince who will be received by President Abdur Rahman Biswas at the Zia International Airport.

This will be the first visit of Maha Vajiralongkorn, heir to the Thai throne, to Bangladesh. The Crown Prince represents King Bhumibol and goes on state visits under his directions. The King of Thailand visited the then East Pakistan in 1962.

The Crown Prince will lay a wreath at the National Mausoleum at Savar Friday morning. During his stay in Bangladesh, the Crown Prince will visit Paharpur monastery in Rajshahi, an archaeological site at Mahasthangarh in Bogra, Kamalapur Buddhist temple in Dhaka, the Export Processing Zone (EPZ) and the Air Force base in Chittagong. The Crown Prince's programme also includes a meeting with the Thai community here.

The Crown Prince will be accompanied by a 20-member entourage which includes Thai

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4 lakh cases pending in civil courts

About four lakh cases are now pending in the civil courts of the country.

This was stated by the Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz while replying to a supplementary question in the Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) Wednesday.

The Minister told another questioner that the government was appointing new Judges in the Civil Courts to settle the pending cases.

Answering to a similar question, the Minister told the House that a total of 681 cases were lying in the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court. Six hundred were civil and 81 criminal cases, he added.

The government is actively considering disposing of the cases against undertrial prisoners in different jails of the country as quickly as possible, the Law Minister told a questioner.

He said that steps had been taken to increase the number of criminal courts and separate the executive from the judiciary.

During the question-answer hour, the Law Minister also said that the government had decided to shift the upazila Assistant Judge Courts to the district headquarters gradually.

He told the House that the shifting of 75 such courts were complete and that the rest of the upazila courts would soon be shifted.

The government promulgated an ordinance this month providing a time-limit for the disposal of criminal cases, the Law Minister told the House adding that according to the provision the accused would be freed and their cases would be suspended on expiry of the given period. He, however, said that there were also provisions to revive the cases.

Employees lay siege to Biman headquarters

The employees of Bangladesh Biman had been laying a siege to the Biman headquarters at Motijheel since Wednesday afternoon confining the top management officials till the writing of this report at midnight.

The employees said they were demanding the implementation of a separate pay scale for Biman personnel as recommended by a committee constituted by the government. The siege was organised by Bangladesh Biman Sramik Union, the CBA, with support of other unions.

When contacted, a leader of Sramik Union said that several rounds of talks had been held between the CBA representatives and the management side, but, there had been no positive outcome. However, negotiations are continuing, they said.

The agitating employees put all the exits from the building under lock and key at around 4 pm yesterday.

This, correspondent who visited the Biman office at midnight found large contingent of police deployed around the building while hundreds of employees were chanting slogans inside.

16,650 loanees seek interest rebate

A total of 16,650 borrowers with overdue loans have applied to their respective banks to avail of the interest rate remission within the December 31, 1991 deadline announced by the government earlier.

State Minister for Finance Mujibur Rahman told The Daily Star on Wednesday that the applicants together owe a total of Taka 327.47 crore in overdue loans to eight nationalised, commercial banks and development financing institutions (DFIs).

The applicants have deposited a total of Taka 10.55 crore as down-payment to qualify for the interest rebate, he added.

Mujibur Rahman said the respective boards of directors of the eight nationalised banks and the DFIs will now examine the applications and decide on the terms of repayment and interest rebates, as per their matrices.

The eight nationalised banks and DFIs are — Sonali Bank, Janata Bank, Rupali Bank, Agrani Bank, Bangladesh Shilpa Bank, Krishi Bank, Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Corporation of Bangladesh.

Earlier, the State Minister informed the Parliament on Tuesday last that the time for repayment of overdue loans without interest would not be extended.

Replying to a call notice, he said development of the country was not possible without the realisation of the overdue loans, estimated at Taka 1,250 crore.

In some cases the applicants would be eligible for even hundred per cent waiver of penalty interests.

Indemnity Bill report: JS gives two more weeks

Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) yesterday (Wednesday) granted another two weeks' time to the Special Parliamentary Committee to finalise its report on the Indemnity Ordinance (Repeal) Bill, 1991, reports UNB.

The Speaker granted the extension of time sought by Opposition chief Whip Mohammad Nasim who moved the bill, seeking removal of legal bar for holding trial of the killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Raushan granted bail

A High Court Division Bench Wednesday granted bail to Begum Raushan Ershad, after more than a year of her detention.

However, Raushan was not released because of post-bail procedural problems.

The two-member Bench comprising Justice Anwarul Huq Chowdhury and Justice Mohammad Abdul Karim granted her bail in two cases after a long hearing with bonds of Taka 6,00,000 each.

The charges against her were the using of the red telephone and an office in the President's Secretariat claiming herself as the first lady and making several foreign trips spending public money.

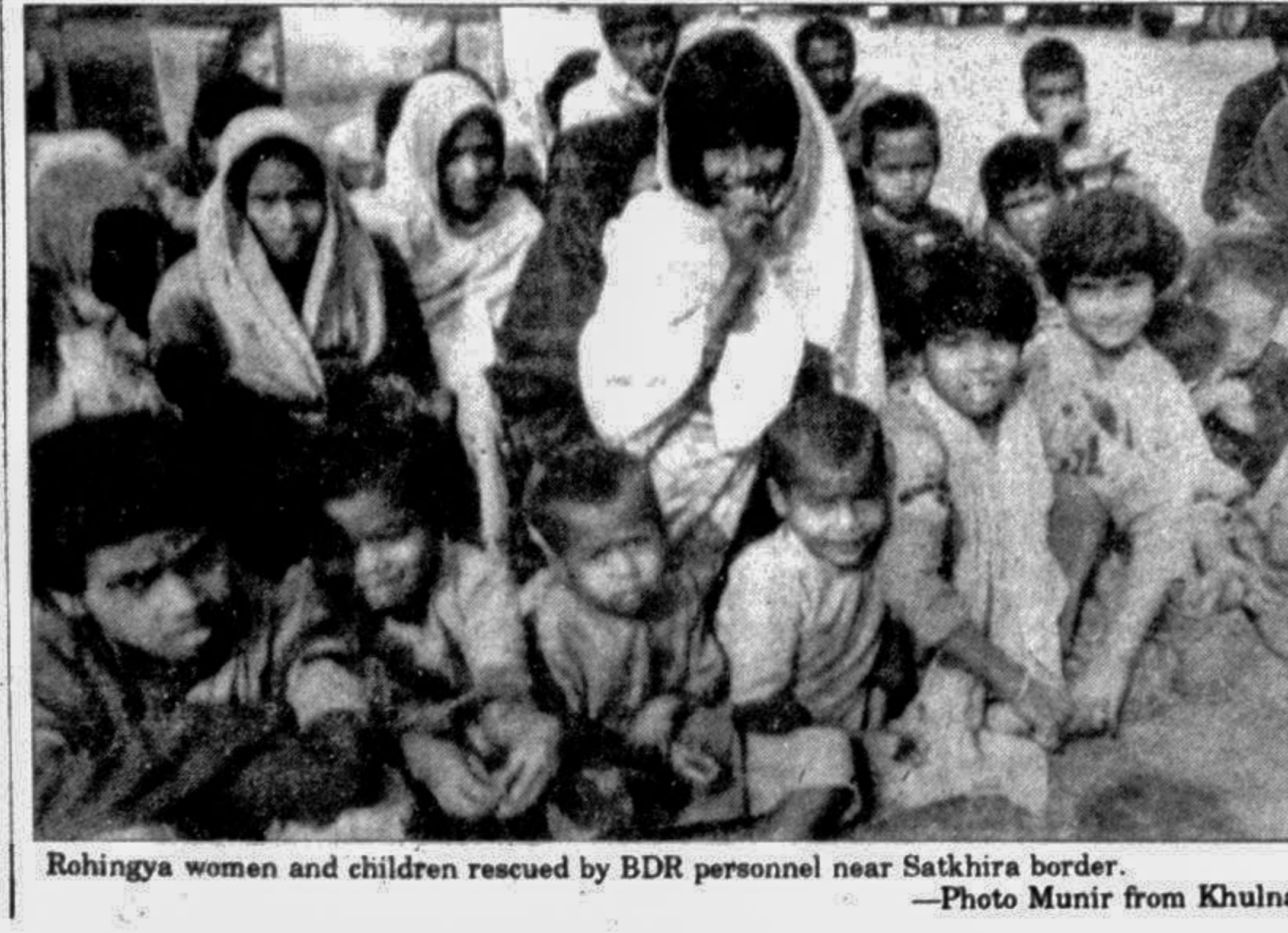
She was arrested December 12, 1990 with her husband former president HM Ershad following his stepping down December 6 in the face of a mass upsurge.

The court ordered that before her release, bail bonds have to be furnished to the satisfaction of the Deputy Commissioner, Dhaka.

The judges also ordered that the surrender whatever passport she had in her possession, be it international or diplomatic, if she has not already done so or if not lost.

She would not leave the country without the permission of the court and be released on bail if not wanted in connection with any other case.

Flesh trade flourishes giving lie to security dragnet



Rohingya women and children rescued by BDR personnel near Sathkira border. —Photo Munir from Khulna.

Trafficking in women, despite vigilance by members of the law enforcing agencies and border guards, continues unabated with most of the unfortunate women being sold to the flesh market abroad.

Investigations reveal, hundreds of women including minors are taken out of the country every month. The law enforcing agencies, in most cases, fail to intercept these traffickers and in some cases, it has been alleged, collaborate with them.

Of late, a new dimension has been added to the problem with the influx of Rohingyas into Bangladesh.

The trade, as old as the civilization, was detected in Bangladesh way back in 1975. The dimension of the problem was small at that time.

Until recently the traffickers followed two routes, one originating in Cox's Bazar and the other in Dhaka, to run the trade and take women out of the country. In both cases the destination is Karachi of Pakistan with stopovers in India.

The traffickers who begin the journey from Cox's Bazar reach Chittagong first and then move to Dinajpur. From Dinajpur they cross over to Balurghat in India. From Balurghat they go to Orangi, a satellite town in Karachi via Shahrapur, a place in Rajasthan of India.

Others, starting from Dhaka reach Dinajpur border via Sayedpur. After crossing the border they take shelter in Balurghat and from there reach Orangi in Pakistan.

In both cases, some of the women are sold to traders in Balurghat who take them to brothels in Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi and Kathmandu. The lucky ones are rescued by Indian police but languish in jails without any course open for a journey back home.

According to a survey done by one of the voluntary agencies working in Dinajpur, a total of 421 women and 213 children were taken out of country from 1975 to 1991 through two points of Dinajpur border, Biral and Ranishangkail. Of them only 29 persons — 18 women and 11 children — were rescued by members of the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) from the same points.

As the Rohingya influx continues, the traffickers have opened a new route via Khulna.

Our Khulna Correspondent reports, the Rohingyas women are lured by the traders promising better living abroad.

A group of five Rohingya women who were recently rescued by BDR from Khulna while being taken to India en route to Pakistan disclosed to him harrowing tales of the refugee camps and admitted the life there compelled them to opt for leaving the country.

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NEWS BRIEFS

US army engineers due Friday
 A team of 25 United States Army engineers arrives Dhaka on Friday to assist Bangladesh Army engineers in the construction of three school buildings cum cyclone centres in Chittagong, reports UNB.

7 projects worth Tk 420 cr okayed
 The executive committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) Wednesday in Dhaka approved seven projects involving an outlay of taka 420.98 crore with a foreign exchange component of Taka 151.51 crore. The approval was given at an ECNEC meeting under the chairmanship of Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman at secretariat cabinet room here, reports BSS.

BCS officers threaten strike
 Bangladesh Civil Service (Economic) Officers Association has threatened to go for a work-stoppage programme from February 5 if their 14-point demands are not met by then. In a press release today it said that a memorandum to this effect was handed over to the Planning Minister on January 14 (Tuesday) urging him to meet the demands by the set deadline, reports UNB.

RU employees demonstrate
 RAJSHAHI, Jan 15: The administrative function of Rajshahi University was disrupted today as workers of 12 dining halls of the university staged demonstrations on the campus, reports UNB.