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The Daily Star

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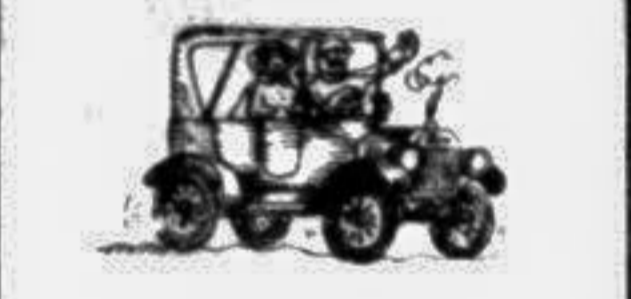
Much of Arab and Muslim
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Dhaka Day by Day



Of horns and honking
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Magazine

The Foreign Ministry
 is undergoing
 reorganisation



In his first-ever in-depth
 interview — an
 exclusive to The Daily
 Star — since he took
 office some ten months
 ago, Foreign Minister
 A S M Mustafizur
 Rahman discusses the
 whole range of issues
 and problems facing
 the country's relations
 with the outside world
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Write to Mita and
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NEWS BRIEFS

**US army general
 due Jan 19**

A US army general, Johnnie
 H Corns, arrives in Dhaka
 January 19 for a courtesy visit
 to Bangladesh. Lieutenant-
 General Corns is the Commanding
 General of the United
 States Army, Pacific, head
 quartered in Honolulu, Hawaii,
 reports UNB.

**Cold wave claims
 8 more lives**

PABNA, Jan 16: Cold spell
 claimed eight more lives in-
 cluding five women and a mi-
 nor boy in the district during
 the last 24 hours, reports
 UNB.

**2 more Sarbahara
 men surrender**

MAGURA, Jan 16: Two
 members of the outlawed
 Sarbahara Party surrendered
 here with two country made
 guns and ammunition to the
 Sadar Police Station today,
 reports UNB.

Dhaka looking forward to meaningful cooperation : Biswas

Both nations have gained from ties: Vajiralongkorn

That Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn yesterday lauded the cooperation at different levels between his country and Bangladesh, saying both nations have gained a 'great deal' of mutual benefits from this relationship, reports BSS.

Replying to the toast at a banquet hosted in his honour by President Abdur Rahman Biswas at the Bangabhaban, he said such cooperation, based on a continuous coordination and mutual advantages, had resulted in a mutual good understanding and friendship.

The Prince, who arrived here Wednesday on a six-day state visit, said the cooperation also stemmed from mutual respect for the proper dignity of each other, both in public and private sectors. Prince Vajiralongkorn said Bangladesh and Thailand had indeed long enjoyed friendly relations even before diplomatic ties were officially established in 1972.

Friendship and mutual goodwill have become increasingly consolidated all the time until it could be confidently said that the two countries and their peoples have communicated with the highest degree of smoothness, closeness and sincerity, he said.

Turning to Bangladesh, the Thai Prince said during many passing years up to now, the Thai people have watched with interest the continuous progress and prosperity of this country and added that his country clearly admired this progress.

The great efforts and firm determination of the people of Bangladesh to undertake every kind of sacrifice and activity for the sake of motherland are admirable, the Prince said.

"Besides, we also feel highly confident that under the guidance of Your Excellency and the present leaders, the people's republic of Bangladesh will be able to meet with flourishing success in all fields," he observed.

Referring to the international scene, the Crown Prince recalled the broad identity of views on many matters and said Thailand and Bangladesh possessed common desire to work together for the establishment of greater peace, progress and prosperity for the Asian region as well as for the world as a whole.

"We also both adhere strictly to the principle that mutual trust and peaceful co-



A little girl presenting a flower bouquet to the Thai Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn on his arrival at Zia International Airport yesterday. —PID photo

Govt to sue 16 defaulting textile mill owners

Defaulting new owners of 16 denationalised textile mills will be sued to realise more than Tk 20.72 crore they are not paying to the government, reports UNB.

State Minister for Textiles Major (Retd) Abdul Mannan told parliament Thursday the government had asked the Law Ministry to make laws for filing cases against the defaulters.

Replying to Awami League MP Md Asaduzzaman, he also said after repeated reminder, the government could realise only Tk 5.09 crore from the mill owners.

The Minister produced in the House a list of the defaulters: 1. Afsar Cotton Mills Ltd, Owner: Zahurul Islam, Amount: Tk 245.47 lakh, 2. Bogra Cotton Spinning Company Ltd, Owner: Arifur Rahman Bhandari, Amount: Tk 232.25 lakh, 3. Calico Cotton Mills Ltd, Owner: Abdul Hannan, Amount: Tk 51.05 lakh, 4. Cowsiya Cotton Spinning Mills Ltd, Owner: Sultanuddin Bhuiyan, Amount: Tk 203.53 lakh, 5. Gwalunda Textile Mills Ltd, Owner: Alhaj Nizamuddin, Amount: Tk 133.22 lakh, 6. Halima Textile Mills Ltd, Owner: Mokbulur Rahman, Amount: Tk 137.62 lakh, 7. Habibur Rahman Textile Mills Ltd, Owner: Habibur Rahman, Amount: Tk 431.38 lakh, 8. Jabbar Textile Mills Ltd, Owner: Abul Hashem, Amount: Tk 9.32 lakh, 9. Kushtia Textile Mills Ltd, Owner: Afkhaluddin, Amount: Tk 328.88 lakh, 10. Muslin Cotton Mills Ltd, Owner: Sultanuddin Bhuiya, Amount: Tk 120.08 lakh, 11. Raj Textile Mills Ltd, Owner: Shamsul Alam, Amount: Tk 33.51 lakh, 12. Sarajganj Spinning Mills Ltd, Owner: Abdul Majid Talukder, Amount: Tk 4.32 lakh, 13. Eagle Star Textile Mills Ltd, Owner: Sultan Rashid, Amount: Tk 1.09 lakh, 14. Jalil Textile Mills Ltd, Owner: Barrister Sultan Ahmed Chowdhury, Amount: Tk 88.15 lakh, 15. Mynamati Textile Mills Ltd, Owner: Hasan Jamil, Amount: Tk 36.63 lakh, 16. Kashem Cotton Mills Ltd, Owner: A K M Motinul Islam, Amount: Tk 35.75 lakh.

Darshana Sugar Mills will be privatised

Industries Minister Shamsul Islam Khan told parliament Thursday that the government plans to divest the Darshana Sugar Mills, reports UNB.

Replying to Khan Tipu Sultan of Awami League, he said the present government attached importance to denationalisation and encouraging the private sector for implementation of the market economy.

He told Matia Chowdhury of Awami League that the C&F price of per ton sugar is 318 US dollar (Tk 12,380) while the sale price of locally produced sugar is Tk 25,000 per metric ton.

Speaker pulls curtain as Law Minister scolds treasury MP

By Staff Correspondent

A ruling party MP's bid to introduce a bill in the Jatiya Sangsad failed Thursday because of stiff opposition from the Law Minister, Mirza Golam Haft.

The bill to be introduced in the name of Abdur Rab Chowdhury, an MP from Lakkhipur belonging to the BNP, was the first item of the legislative business on the private members' day. The bill sought to raise the retirement age of government servants to 60 years from 57.

When Rab Chowdhury took the floor and sought leave of the House to introduce the bill, sharp came the resistance from the Law Minister. Amid a battle of words between the Minister and the Treasury Bench MP, Speaker Shaikh Razaque Ali, presiding over the sitting, abruptly adjourned the House for five days' until January 22.

The sudden adjournment left another bill proposed by the same BNP member and five other private members' See Page 12 Col 3

No KAFCO project under present terms, JS told

The Karnaphuli Fertilizer Company (KAFCO) project under joint venture will be implemented if foreign shareholders reconsider certain provisions of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), reports UNB.

This was stated by Industries Minister Shamsul Islam Khan in parliament Thursday during the question hour.

The minister made it clear that the 435 million dollar project would not be implemented under the existing terms and condition which go against the national interest.

Replying to Nurul Islam Moni (Ind), he said a high powered committee is now reviewing the MOU signed with foreign shareholders, including those from Japan, at the end of the Ershad regime.

Certain provisions of the agreement including pricing of gas at 75 cents and guarantee by Bangladesh government against foreign loans to the project were found contrary to the national interest.

The Minister informed the House that the project would be implemented only if the foreign shareholders agreed to change the anti-national provisions.

The original agreement signed in 1981 stipulated gas price at 1.7 dollar per 1000 cft to be supplied to the proposed factory from Bakhrabad gas field. But the price was slashed to only 75 cents in the MOU signed in November 1990.

Replying to Rashed Khan Menon (Workers Party), the Minister said an enquiry committee has been set up to fix up the responsibility of signing the MOU.

In reply to a supplementary from Ataur Rahman Khan of BNP, he said shareholders of the export-oriented fertilizer factory were mainly from Japan and Denmark.

Identifying Rohingya refugees becoming difficult

From Our Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, Jan 16: At least 50 Rohingya Muslims were either gunned down or starved to death since Monday in different frontier areas of Myanmar, reports from across the border said today.

A high official of the Rohingya Samaj Kalyan Samity here said today that at least 50 people died in captivity due to a lack of food or were shot dead while attempting to escape from different godowns in which more than 100 Rohingya Muslims were kept locked.

The official, who demanded anonymity, said that those people were earlier arrested See Page 12 Col 6

Raushan bailed out 'I'm not interested in politics'

Asiuzzaman

Begum Raushan Ershad released on bail after a year's detention Thursday said that she was not interested in politics.

"I am not interested in politics but I want to devote myself to the welfare of the down-trodden people," she told The Daily Star at the residence of her sister Mamata Wahab in Uttara.

She was released from the Gulshan sub-jail at around 8 pm Thursday and driven straight to the Uttara residence in a Pajero jeep.

Acting Jatiya Party Chairman Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, Vice-Chairman Maudud Ahmed and several hundreds of party workers and relatives greeted Raushan at the sub-jail gate with bouquets.

A two-member High Court Bench granted her bail in two cases Wednesday but post-bail procedural problems caused a delay in her release.

Talking to The Daily Star correspondent she said "I am sick but at the same time feeling well in the company of my relatives after more than a year." See Page 12 Col 3

Workers resist expediting of formalities Disinvestment of industrial units may slow down

By Inam Ahmed

Disinvestment of 40 public sector industrial units may slow down because of workers' resistance to the formalities required to expedite the process, concerned sources said.

The government plans to sell 26 units to the highest bidders while 100 per cent shares of eight units and 49 per cent shares of the rest of the six units will be sold to members of the public.

The Investment Corporation of Bangladesh (ICB) has shown interest in buying the 51 per cent shares of the seven holding companies out of the total of eight.

To divest the holding companies, some legal procedures like diluting the groupings in the share structure are needed. The holding companies, partly disinvested earlier have three groupings in shares — Group A involving government shares of 51 per cent, Group B-1 involving public shares of 34 per cent and Group B-2 involving workers' shares of 15 per cent. The dilution of the groups needs the holding of an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) of the existing shareholders.

To implement an agenda in the EGM requires the support of 75 per cent of the shareholders which, in this case, may come if the group B-1 shareholders representing the public do not oppose. But it is still uncertain whether Group B shareholders will support the dilution of the groupings as the government plans to sell the shares to the ICB at an average market price.

The Industry Ministry instructed the relevant corporations in December last year to dilute the groupings in order to offload government shares.

Sources said that Bangladesh Steel and Engineering Corporation reported to the ministry that it had faced resistance from the workers and staff in holding the EGM.

The EGM has not yet been held for the same reason.

The Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) and the Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation have also asked the government for time till the end of March to hold the EGM.

In view of the problems, the government has issued directives to the corporations for the dilution setting March 31 as the deadline. The earlier month for the EGM was set in January.

If the corporation fails to complete the formalities to dilute the groupings of the holding companies, the government might come up with an ordinance suspending the existing Memorandum and Articles of Association.

In a recent circular issued by the Controller of Capital Issues (CCI), the previous requirements to sell public limited company shares at par was modified so that shares of the companies could be sold at a premium or discount.

The order was issued to readjust the prices of the units with their shares in the market.

Meanwhile, concerned sources said that the uncertainty in the corporations have affected the efficiency of the units. The employees are already trying to get transferred to units not in the disinvestment list.

Privilege body to look into MP's allegation on FWP

By Staff Correspondent

Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali Thursday referred the issue on involving MPs in local development programmes to the Standing Committee on Privileges due to meet tomorrow.

Earlier, a heated debate between the Treasury Bench members and the Opposition MPs ensued over their participation and involvement in development programmes in their respective constituencies under the Food for Work Programmes administered by different ministries.

The 45-minute debate began immediately after the question hour when Mostafa Rashidi Suja (AL) drew the attention of the Chair to the issue. See Page 12 Col 4

US, Bangladesh joint disaster relief exercise tomorrow

American and Bangladesh air force and army personnel will begin a joint disaster relief exercise in the country on Saturday, reports UNB.

The training teams will work in Jessore area using two Bangladesh Air Force AN-32 aircraft and an American C-130 transport plane, said a US Information Service press release in Dhaka Thursday.

The training exercise is being launched in continuation of earlier cooperative efforts in disaster preparedness, it said.

A small group of US army and air force personnel will work with their Bangladesh counterparts to perfect techniques for providing aid to those stricken by natural calamity, the release said.

In the first such bilateral exercise, in 1990, the crew worked on techniques which were successfully utilised by the Bangladesh Air Force after the April 29 cyclone last year.



Tests for admission into city's government schools began yesterday (top) and anxious mothers waiting outside school premises (above). —Star photo

India, Pakistan both can make N-arms, says CIA chief

WASHINGTON, Jan 16: Central Intelligence Agency Director (CIA) Robert Gates has said both India and Pakistan have nuclear weapon and ballistic missile programmes and are now going chemical as well, reports PIT.

While they may not have assembled the weapons for stockpiling for safety reason, they have all the parts for a nuclear weapon and the means to deliver them, Gates yesterday told the Senator John Glenn's sub-committee on non-proliferation.

He said "in South Asia, the arms race between India and Pakistan is a major concern. Not only do both countries have nuclear weapon and ballistic missile programmes, they have recently pursued chemical weapons as well."

"These programmes are particularly worrisome because of constant tension and conflict in Kashmir."

Gates expressed concern of a Soviet nuclear 'brain drain' to countries like India.

He also said he had heard rumours that Pakistan was aiding Iran in nuclear matters but the CIA had not independently verified these reports.

Xinhua from Delhi says, Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao reiterated that India would not be browbeaten by anyone of the issue of supplying a nuclear reactor to Iran. 'The Hindustan Times' reported today.

Replying Wednesday to a specific query by Jaipal Reddy on India's proposed sales of reactor to Iran at the Consultative Committee of Members of Parliament attached to the Department of Atomic Energy, the Prime Minister said, "We are not browbeaten. I can assure you that there is no such thing."

Asked about the progress in regard to the sale of the reactor to Iran, Rao said "what is to be done in principle is under consideration. We will take our own decision." The Department of Atomic Energy Secretary Dr P K Iyengar said that Iran had been advised meanwhile to complete the infrastructure.

Local press reported in last September that the United States had strongly urged India and other potential nuclear supplier countries to avoid any form of nuclear cooperation with Iran, even under safeguards.

AP says: France sold Pakistan two nuclear power plants Thursday in a 367-million-franc (dhs 70 million) deal that Paris insisted would be limited to peaceful purposes.