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# The Daily Star



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## NEWS BRIEFS

### 9 get life-term for murder

MYMENSINGH, Jan 25: The Additional District and Sessions Judge on January 19 convicted 9 people and awarded them life-term on charges of murder and dacoity. According to prosecution story, a gang of dacoits numbering 40 to 50 entered the house of a school teacher Nurul Islam of Valuka upazila on November 8, 1988 by breaking open the door and killed his cousin Tajul Islam and dacoity with the booty worth about Tk 55,000. The judge after examining the witnesses and records sentenced life-term to Fazlul, Dulal, Abul Hashem, Hafiz, Mokbul, Afaz, Abdul Helal and Mukter and acquitted 21 others, reports UNB.

### Shantibahini man surrender

RANGAMATI, Jan 25: A self-styled lieutenant of the outlawed Shantibahini surrendered today with arms and ammunition. Officials said Bikash Chakma (29) laid down two rifles, three magazines and 169 rounds of ammunition before the security forces at Kutchchari in the hill district, reports UNB.

### Two killed in road mishaps

By Staff Correspondent  
A young man and a minor girl were killed in accidents in the city Saturday.  
A 7-year girl Nurjahan died on the spot when she was run over by a Comilla-bound bus at Rayerbagh in Demra at about 12:45 pm yesterday.  
Demra police arrested the driver Yakub Mollah, 30, and seized the bus.  
Our DMCH correspondent reports: Kamal Hossain, 35, a security guard of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) died on the spot when a car of Sandhani, an organisation of the Sir Salimullah Medical College Hospital (SSMCH), knocked him down

## 50 injured, six arrested on third day of UP polling

# Police fire shots, voting postponed in 40 centres

By Staff Correspondent

Over fifty persons were injured on the third day of the countrywide Union Parishad elections Saturday.

The poll-violence led to postponement of voting in over 40 centres. Police fired blank shots and arrested at least six persons including an Assistant Presiding Officer in connection with the violence.

Police with clashes, snatching of polling materials, rigging and bids to illegally capture the polling booths.

Election Commission sources said that police arrested the Assistant Presiding Officer from Noapara College centre of Noapara Union under Raozan upazila in Chittagong

district on charges of rigging. Elections to 513 unions in 65 upazilas under 52 districts were held on the third day.

Barring the trouble-torn centres, polling in other centres were held peacefully.

According to our correspondents and the Police Control Room in the city, the

trouble-torn polling centres are as follows: 12 in Chittagong, 10 in Shariatpur, four in Munshiganj, three in Brahmanbaria, and one each in Rajshahi and Barisal. In the

poll violence, 35 persons were injured in Chittagong, two in Munshiganj and others in different districts.

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Late comers were caught off guard yesterday at the Bangladesh Secretariat as the Prime Minister paid a surprise visit and had the entry points closed after 8 am.

— Star photo

## 'Legal tangles' delay decision on BCCI

By S Y Bakht

Reopening of the scandal-hit Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) branches in Bangladesh is being delayed because of intricate legal problems.

According to a Finance Ministry official, some "complicated legal tangles" need to be sorted out before the local BCCI operations can be re-

started in any form. However, the government is considering all options to re-start the local BCCI branches by the second week of February, he added.

He said that four options were being actively considered by the government to initiate the process of forming a new institution using local BCCI op-

erations as a nucleus.

Earlier, setting up of a new bank with the three local branches of BCCI, including its total assets and liabilities, emerged as the strongest option before the government, banking sources said.

The four options being considered by the government in-

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## Specific policy for handicapped under consideration: PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said Saturday that the government was actively considering introduction of a specific policy for the welfare of the handicapped, reports BSS.

She said this government had already undertaken several programmes for welfare of the mentally retarded in the light of the United Nation's declaration on protection of their rights, particularly in the fields of education, training, health-care and property inheritance.

Begum Zia was addressing the ninth national conference of the Society for the Care and Education of Mentally Retarded, Bangladesh (SCMRB) in the city.

She also inaugurated the two-storied building of the National Institute for Mentally Retarded (NIMR) constructed at Eskaton Garden area with government financial sanction of Tk 1.60 crore.

A sizeable plot for the construction of this building with foundation for six stores was allotted to the SCMRB by the government of late President Ziaur Rahman.

The Prime Minister said the government had already formed a trust for the welfare of the retarded and sanctioned Tk 50 lakh for this trust. She hoped this fund would be properly utilised for the welfare of the handicapped.

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# Indian navy abducts 67 fishermen

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Jan 25: The Indian navy intruding Bangladesh waters on Friday morning kidnapped 67 fishermen with eight trawlers from near Talpatti, about 30 kilometres off Heron point near the Sundarbans.

Two Indian navy gunboats intruded into the Bangladesh territorial waters and kidnapped them while they were fishing, law enforcing agency sources said.

Two of the eight trawlers and its 13 fishermen were, however, released late Friday. Those two trawlers were owned by the Bangladesh Fish Development Corporation, the source added.

The freed fishermen reported the matter with Patharghata police under Patuakhali district at dawn Saturday.

The fate and whereabouts of the kidnapped fishermen could not be known.

UNB adds: The six trawlers taken away by the Indian navy is worth about Tk 50 lakh, according to the crew released.

Three of the trawlers were from Patharghata upazila of the district. These are FB Kuddus, FB Taiyub and FB Rexona. Name of three other trawlers which were from Chittagong could not be known.

A case has been lodged with Patharghata police in this connection. Our staff correspondent adds:

A flag meeting between Bangladesh and India is likely to take place on February 7 on the kidnapping of 24 Bangladesh fishermen by the Indian navy forces last month.

Colonel Anwar Hossain.

Khulna sector commander of the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), told the Daily Star today that the Bangladesh side would confirm with its Indian counterpart the Border Security Forces (BSF) on its participation in a day or two.

The BSF proposed the battalion commander-level flag meeting of the two countries at Basantapur BDR outpost in Sathkhira district. Col. Anwar added.

According to him, the proposal for flag meeting came from the BSF three days ago following release of the fishermen.

The Indian Navy kidnapped the 24 fishermen while they were fishing in the Bangladesh river in Royamangal on December 15 last year. Four of them sustained wounds in firing by the Indian naval forces. Most of the fishermen hail from Sathkhira and the coastal areas of Chittagong.

## DU Syndicate election today

By DU Correspondent

The Dhaka University Syndicate election will be held at the Teachers Students Centre (TSC) today (Sunday) from 8 am to 1 pm. Around 900 teachers of the university will cast their votes. The three groups of the teachers known as White, Blue and Pink will contest the poll. Six members from the teachers will be elected for the 18-member syndicate, the highest policy making body of the university.

Talking to the Daily Star over telephone Saturday night, General Secretary of Bangladesh Bidyut Samik Karmachari Union (BBSKU), said the government's intransigence had forced the power employees to go ahead with the strike programme.

The government was completely indifferent to the long standing demands of the power sector employees, he said.

Resenting Friday's press note, he said that the government should play a more responsible role in addressing to

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## Indemnity Repeal Bill Split decision likely

By Nurul Kabir

The Special Parliamentary Committee on Indemnity (Repeal) Bill is likely to submit its report within January 31, the revised deadline.

The decision on the bill, however, is unlikely to be unanimous, said sources close

to the committee members representing four parties — BNP, Awami League (AL), Jatiya Party (JP) and Jamaat-e-Islami.

The 15-member committee, headed by Law Minister

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## Power workers divided over today's strike

By Staff Correspondent

A section of power sector employees begin their planned 24-hour strike across the country from 6 am today to press for their five-point demand.

The strike call was opposed by the Jatiya Bidyut Samik Karmachari Union (JBSKU), backed by the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party. JBSKU leaders said that their members would ignore the strike call as it goes against the national interest.

The strike called by the leaders of four labour unions of the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPPB) and the Dhaka Electric Supply Authorities (DESA), after a series of meetings with the government that ended without reaching any consensus.

The five-point charter of demands includes a separate pay-scale for the power employees, bonus, overtime, house rent and shift allowances.

The decision to go ahead with the scheduled strike followed a government press note Friday which strongly disapproved the call for strike.

The Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry press note expressed the hope that the planned strike would be withdrawn in the greater national interest.

Talking to the Daily Star over telephone Saturday night, General Secretary of Bangladesh Bidyut Samik Karmachari Union (BBSKU) said the government's intransigence had forced the power employees to go ahead with the strike programme.

The government was completely indifferent to the long standing demands of the power sector employees, he said.

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## Talks fail: Biman employees to continue agitation

By Staff Correspondent

The management and the employees of the Bangladesh Biman failed to reach an agreement yesterday to settle the dispute over pay rise.

Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury, Managing Director, Biman, led

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# National environment policy being 'softened up'

By Mahfuz Ullah

The Ministry of Environment and Forests is 'softening up' the national environment policy for its approval by the cabinet before the current month is out.

Earlier, the cabinet refused to approve the draft of the policy for being 'too harsh, difficult to implement and authoritarian' in nature, cabinet sources say.

The cabinet, according to sources, raised objection to the environmental action plan, which contains proposals for implementing the policy by different ministries. Some of the cabinet members termed the proposed action plan a weapon to supervise the activities of other ministries. Such an action plan, according to them, would give the Ministry of Environment and Forests a

'supra-ministry' status. People involved in different stages of the drafting of the policy claim the observation by a section of cabinet members 'unfounded'.

All ministries, they claim, were required to have environmental impact as a component before approving any development plan and the action plan concerned was nothing but a collation of all those measures.

Incidentally, the process of drafting the national environment plan was initiated in 1989 and the final draft prepared in 1990 after many deliberations at different stages and comments made by different ministries.

The objectives of the draft policy are: maintenance of the ecological balance and overall

progress of the country through protection and development of the environment, protection of the country against natural disasters, prevention of all types of activities related to pollution and degradation of the environment, ensuring environmentally sound development in all spheres and ensuring sustainable, long-term and environmentally congenial utilisation of all national resources.

The proposed action plan deals with measures for agriculture, industry, health and sanitation, energy and fuel, water development, flood control and irrigation, land, forest, wildlife and bio-diversity, fish and livestock, food, coastal and marine environment, communication and

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# BJP abandons march through Kashmir

SRINAGAR (India), Jan 25: A Hindu nationalist leader abandoned plans to drive through Kashmir to defy Muslim militants today and accepted an offer of an official airlift.

A senior official said Murlu Manohar Joshi, who has led an anti-separatist motorcade of his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) from the southern tip of India, accepted the offer some 240 km (150 miles) from his northern goal, the rebellious city of Srinagar.

Police and the BJP said Joshi's motorcade had been defeated by nature, in the form of landslides blocking the Himalayan highway to Srinagar, and not by militant vows to attack the convoy.

Joshi will take a military helicopter to Srinagar to hoist

the Indian flag on Sunday, re-public day in defiance of militants who have raised the flag of neighbouring Islamic Pakistan in past years.

Rumours swept Srinagar that Joshi had been arrested but both the BJP and Kashmiri officials denied this.

Joshi had already trimmed his cavalcade to about 500 people from 50,000 after militants struck the boldest blow in their two-year-old revolt on Friday, blasting the regional police chief's office as they discussed security for the BJP.

The bomb blast killed a police officer and seriously wounded at least four officers of the region's top security echelon.

Today a prominent militant leader told Reuters several groups had worked together to

plan the attack and that a volunteer had placed a time bomb in the office.

Javed Ahmed Mir, military chief of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), which favours Kashmir's independence from both India and Pakistan, said Joshi's flag-hoisting ceremony would be stopped because it would symbolically establish Indian rule.

"We have formed death squads and ordered them to stop the ceremony whichever way they can," he said in a telephone interview.

The army took control of the city's Lal Chowk (red square), where Joshi plans to hoist the flag, with troops commandeering several homes in the area and placing machineguns and rocket launch-

ers at street corners.

Indian authorities clamped curfews on Srinagar and other Kashmiri towns, to protect both the BJP and the security forces.

Reporters heard army officers with loudhailers telling residents cooped up in their houses that one bullet would invite instant and heavy retaliation.

Police reported five militant hit-and-run attacks in and around Srinagar this morning. The only casualty was a man, said by residents to have been unarmed, killed when paramilitary troops fired at their attackers.

Sporadic gunshots could be heard in Srinagar and Mir said: "There will be continuous action until Sunday evening."

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