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VOL. II NO. 335 REGD. NO. DA 781

The Daily Star

POUSH 17, 1399 BS,

DHAKA THURSDAY DECEMBER 31, 1992

RAJAB 6, 1413 HIJRI

12 PAGES: PRICE TAKA 4.00

BANGLADESH EXPRESS
 BANGLADESH EXPRESS CO. LTD.
 95, Montserrat C. A. Dhaka 1000
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FEDERAL EXPRESS
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NEWS BRIEFS

2 dist judges get forced retirement

The government has ordered forced retirement of two district judges in view of various complaints against them. They are Abdul Jalil, district judge of Sirajganj who is current Chairman of Chittagong Labour Court and S M Abdul Rahman, district judge of Kushtia, officials said. The retirement order, issued under Section 9 (2) of 1974 Public Servant Act, will come into effect from January 2, 1993, reports UNB.

AL nomination seekers' interview

Interview of the Awami League candidates who sought party nomination to contest by-election to Dhaka-11 (Mirpur) constituency will be held on January 1. AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman has requested the intending candidates to appear before the interview board at the party central office on Friday at 9:30 am, reports UNB.

Dist level body to check transport

A five-member permanent committee in each district and metropolitan area will be formed to check carrying of excess passengers and goods on road transport, according to an official handout. The committees will be headed by a magistrate in the districts and the DC (Traffic) in metropolitan areas, reports BSS.

Commission finalises report

Minimum wages for public, private sectors recommended

By Nurul Kabir

The Wage Commission yesterday finalised its recommendation on the national minimum wages for the public sector workers at Taka 1000 and the private sector workers at Taka 900 per month.

However there was strong dissent from Commission members representing owners of the private sector industries and enterprises over the recommendation, commission sources said.

The Wage Commission comprising an equal number of representatives from the government, employers associations and SKOP (Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad) was formed following a bilateral

agreement signed between the government and the SKOP last July.

According to the agreement, the government was obligated to finalise the Wage Commission report within three months from the date of its signing.

The government was also obligated, under the agreement, to implement the Wage Commission recommendations with retrospective effect from July 1, 1991.

The government, however failed to finalise the Wage Commission report within the stipulated time and sought, in the face of the SKOP announced countrywide work

stoppage scheduled for November 29 and 30, a fresh deadline.

The Prime Minister while talking to the SKOP leaders on the issue in the last week of November assured them of finalising the Wage Commission report by December 31, 1992.

Discussing the issue in the 24-member Wage Commission, the government representatives proposed a national minimum wage for the public sector workers at Taka 1000 and for the private sector workers at Taka 900 per month, sources in the Wage Commission said.

The members of the Commission, representing Bangladesh Employers Association,

according to sources protested the government proposal.

They argued that in the last decade the wages of the workers engaged in the productive sector had been increased 4.4 per cent while the nation's per capita income had increased two per cent.

Nations that failed to fix the wages of workers in consistency with their productivity virtually failed to create increased employment opportunities, the representatives of the employers association argued, adding that the government proposal relating to the

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Thousands of bus passengers throng Aricha bus stand in Dhaka for yet another day. The photograph was taken at 9:00 am yesterday.

—Star photo by Selim Khan

Fog: Thousands stranded

MANIKGANJ, Dec 30: Heavy fog caused sufferings to thousands of passengers availing the ferries at Aricha, Nagarbari and Daulatdia ghats for the fourth consecutive day today (Wednesday), reports UNB.

Fourteen ferries with some 8,000 passengers and 54 night coaches, 190 trucks and 15 cars were stranded either midstream of Jamuna or at the three ferry ghats for nearly eight hours till 9 am today (Wednesday) due to dense fog.

BIWTC officials said Aricha-bound MV 'Shah Ali' with 20 night coaches and 2,000 passengers on board was forced to anchor in midstream of the Jamuna near Char Lalupur at 1 am. The ferry vessel from Nagarbari ghat could resume its journey at about 9 am.

Myanmar's clearance to 29252 more Rohingyas

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 30: Myanmar today agreed to expedite the Rohingya refugee repatriation process providing a fresh clearance to another 29,252 of them, the highest so far.

The response came at the 12th meeting held here between the officials of Myanmar and Bangladesh today, following Bangladesh's proposal to allow largescale repatriation.

An eight-member Myanmar delegation headed by U Maung Aung, Director General of Myanmar Manpower and Immigration Department, attended the two-hour talks that began at 11.30 am at Chittagong Court Building while Mohammad Omar Faruk, Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong and refugee repatriation coordinator, led the 10-member Bangladesh team.

Briefing newsmen after the talks Faruk said 'How to expedite the repatriation was the main goal of our discussion in today's meeting.'

'We emphasised at this meeting on maintaining a continuity in repatriation by obtaining rapid clearance to raise the number of returnees in the next batches,' Faruk added.

Besides, both sides decided to organise a workshop with the repatriation personnel of Myanmar in a bid to help them speed up the clearance process, Faruk said.

The Bangladesh side also proposed that Myanmar deploy

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Bush-Yeltsin summit from Saturday

MOSCOW, Dec 30: A summit meeting between Presidents Bush and Boris Yeltsin to sign a nuclear arms-reduction treaty will be held in the Black Sea resort of Sochi on Jan. 2-3, a spokesman for the Russian leader said Wednesday, reports AP.

Anatoly Krasikov, a deputy spokesman for Yeltsin, confirmed the location and dates in an interview with The Associated Press.

Bush and Yeltsin are to arrive in Sochi on Jan. 2, and will sign the START II agreement the next day, followed by a joint news conference, Krasikov said.

Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev and US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger reached agreement on the treaty Tuesday in Geneva.

Krasikov denied Russian media reports that Yeltsin's security services had expressed concern about holding the summit in Sochi because of unrest in nearby Georgia.

Related Story on Page 5

Hasanuddin Sarker acting JP Secy Gen

Hasanuddin Sarker will work as acting Secretary General of Jatiya Party, according to the JP presidium decision taken yesterday, reports UNB.

Party Secretary General Khaleedur Rahman Tito has been arrested under the Anti-terrorism Act and sent to jail.

The JP presidium took the decision in a meeting held last night with acting Chairman Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury in the chair, party sources said.

In a resolution, the meeting condemned the arrest of Tito and demanded his immediate release. The resolution also demanded unlocking of the party central office at Kawan Bazar.

The meeting decided to observe the 7th founding anniversary of the party on January 1 through a function in the DDSA auditorium, JP will announce its next course of action on the day, sources said.

It also approved the re-constituted central body of Jatiya Mahila Party with Mariam Hashimuddin as Chairperson and Prof Toufique Karim as Secretary General.

Khulna motor workers call half-day hartal

KHULNA, Dec 30: A faction of the Khulna Motor Sramik Union has called a half-day hartal in the city tomorrow (Thursday) to protest 'politicisation' of the union office by the ruling party supporters, reports UNB.

Activists of the faction, led by Awami League Central Labour Secretary and Adviser of the union Begum Mannujan Sultana, brought out several torch processions this evening in support of the hartal.

Earlier, a group of leaders and workers of the faction continued their hunger strike up to death for the fifth day today in protest against the alleged politicisation. The fast began on December 26.

Meanwhile, some 40 basic trade unions, city Jatiya Party and City Mirmul Committee extended their support to tomorrow's shutdown.

Fisherman killing Hartal observed in Bajitpur

From Our Correspondent
 KISHOREGANJ, Dec 30: A dawn-to-dusk hartal was observed at Bajitpur thana headquarters in protest against the killing of a fisherman today (Wednesday).

The hartal call was jointly given by Matsajibi (fishermen) Federation and all the major opposition political parties.

Processions were brought out and several street corner meetings were held during the hartal hours to press home the demand for immediate arrest of the culprits responsible for the killing.

A case was registered with Bajitpur Police Station accusing 21 persons. Police so far took 18 persons into custody and seized one gun and 25 rounds of ammunition.

Stranded Pakistanis

Repatriation now starts from Jan

The repatriation of stranded Pakistanis scheduled to begin this month will now start from early next month, reports UNB.

A Foreign Office spokesman said yesterday the first batch of stranded Pakistanis is expected to leave for Pakistan in early January and the exact date of departure is to be confirmed by the Pakistan government soon.

He said the Bangladesh government had made necessary arrangements for the repatriation to commence by the end

of this month but the Pakistan government has now indicated that due to some logistic and practical problems, the repatriation process will start from January, 1993.

Pakistan agreed on the repatriation of the first batch of some 3,000 families of stranded Pakistanis by December, 1992 during Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's visit to Pakistan in last August.

The repatriation was to commence on completion of the first phase of construction of housing facilities in Pakistan.

Hasina visits striking women

'BNP is a govt of promise-breakers'

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday censured the government for its failure to reinstate 1,187 women terminated from the Socio-Economic Development Project, reports UNB.

Hasina visited the jobless women on hunger strike outside the National Press Club for the fourth day yesterday to press for their jobs back.

The Ershad regime closed down the project, leaving the women jobless after 12 years of service.

The Awami League

President said during the electioneering, ruling BNP had made commitment for reinstating the sacked women employees, but no step had yet been taken to fulfil its promise.

These hapless female employees were forced into fast after their repeated appeals to the government had fallen on deaf ears, Hasina said and regretted that no official from the concerned ministry visited the hunger strikers.

'BNP is a government of promise-breakers... It came

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Losing units eating up BTMC fund

By Inam Ahmed

Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation (BTMC) is facing an acute shortage of working capital due to continuous supply of raw cotton on credit to some low performing units, according to concerned sources.

The Corporation has supplied cotton worth Taka 120 crore on credit to 12 textile units. On the other hand, the chronic loss-making of the same units has contributed to the dwindling of working capital.

The liquidity crisis had also disrupted the normal supply of cotton to the units. However, none of the units had ever been closed as claimed by the

Bangladesh Suta-Bastrakal Sramik Federation, they said.

Meanwhile, the BTMC authorities have floated short tenders for local and international procurement of raw cotton.

Sources said that the tenders could not be floated earlier due to the fund crisis and also because of high international price of cotton. With the harvesting season, the price of cotton will be cheaper, they said.

Under the international tender, about 30,000 bales of different staple lengths of yarn would be procured to meet the immediate shortfall.

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Kidnapped JCD leader found dead in Isamati

MANIKGANJ, Dec 30: A Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader, kidnapped from his house December 23 night, was found dead today in river Isamati, reports UNB.

Police recovered the body of Harun-or-Rashid, a 2nd year Degree student of Pouri College in Harirampur thana and leader of the college unit of JCD. His hands and legs were tied.

A year ago, Harun's uncle Majid Mollah (50) and grandfather Ramji Mollah (70) were also killed in the same gruesome style.

Police said some miscreants kidnapped the JCD leader following past enmity.

Family sources said a group of terrorists stormed their house December 23 midnight and dragged Harun out.

People getting benefit of pragmatic steps: PM

SATKANIA, Dec 30: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said here today that people had started deriving benefits from the development programmes taken by the present democratic government, reports BSS.

She said her government had attained significant achievement in different sectors within a short span of time because of its sincerity and cooperation from the people.

The Prime Minister was addressing a huge public meeting at Satkania High School ground. The function was also addressed by Communications Minister Oli Ahmed, Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Mia,

Labour and Manpower Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Forest, Environment, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah al-Noman, Sirajul Islam, MP and local BNP leaders.

The Prime Minister said production in the agricultural sector had increased following the pragmatic steps taken by the government. She said programmes had been undertaken for the balanced development of the country.

She called upon all to join the development efforts of the government to give more pace in the progress of the nation.

The Prime Minister said 'We want to turn this country

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Utilisation of foreign aid

Dhaka urges donors to help tackle problems

By Staff Correspondent

The Ministry of Finance yesterday reaffirmed the government's determination to make 'speedy utilisation of foreign aid' and called upon development partners to help Bangladesh in tackling problems created by undisbursed financial assistance.

In a statement, the ministry noted as an example 'the convoluted procedural formalities that militate against speedy utilisation may be simplified only with the active participation of the development partners because many of these emanate from the sources of aid itself.'

The statement referred to

the exclusive interview given to this paper by Ambassador Toshio Saiki of Japan, published in the December 23 issue.

In the interview, the envoy had observed that if the committed assistance from his country could not be utilised, then his country might be forced to cut back economic assistance to Bangladesh.

The ministry clarification also touched on a number of points in an editorial of this paper on the same subject published last Friday.

Following is the full text of the statement issued by the

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শহীদ বুদ্ধিজীবী সিরিজ '৯১



বাংলাদেশ BANGLADESH



Why this confusion?

Star Report

A new set of stamps, commemorating Shaheed Intellectuals murdered by the Pakistan army and its local allies — the Al-Badars in 1971, seems to have created some confusion.

Each stamp has an extension of an equal size attached to it which bears the message

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50000 child labourers in garments factories may lose jobs

Horrified by a forthcoming United States law that prohibits import of goods produced with child labour, garment manufacturers here are planning to clean up low-age workers from their factories, reports UNB.

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) has already cautioned its members of the dire consequences of employing children in export-oriented garment industry.

BGMEA has also set up a

committee to constantly monitor the situation.

As a result, about half a lakh child labourers may be jobless.

The law titled 'Child Labour Deterrence Act 1992' prescribes serious punitive measures against foreign industries using workers under the age of 15. Punishment might range up to elimination of US markets for those industries.

According to the latest information, strong campaign is being carried out by the industrial and labour lobbies in the

US Congress to let the law go through in the next Congress session. With Democrats coming into power, prospect of its passage has become brighter.

Media campaign to mobilise support in favour of the law is also reported. National Broadcasting Company (NBC), a leading American television network, has recently telecast a programme focusing on the use and abuse of child labour in garment industry of Bangladesh.

'We are well aware of the

impact of the ensuing US law and we are discouraging employment of children workers in the industry so that our industry does not feel crunch of it', said Md Mosharrar Hossain, the President of BGMEA.

Hossain and members of the garment community turned down the allegation of use of children in the country's garment industry.

Manufacturers claim that workers under the age of 15 may constitute maximum 5 per cent of the total 600,000

workforce in the industry. Statistics of NGOs say the figure is much higher.

'It's a false and motivated campaign against the country... the issue is being overplayed by vested quarters to harm a tremendous prospective export industry of Bangladesh', the BGMEA President said.

Observers in the business circle foresee an immediate retrenchment of under-age workers from the garment sector as the garment people here will hardly take any risk

to be affected in the booming USA market by retaining any children workers.

About 52 per cent of export earnings from the garment sector come from the United States.

Garment manufacturers this time were found extremely cautious as there was several allegation in USA about Bangladesh's garment factories using and abusing child labour.

Although the US government has recently dismissed a

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