

All set for Barisal Divn from tomorrow

From Aroop Talukdar

BARISAL, Dec 30: All necessary arrangements have been made for the inauguration of the fifth divisional headquarters at Barisal on Friday.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is scheduled to inaugurate the country's fifth divisional headquarters ceremonially at Barisal January 1.

M Abdur Rashid has already taken over the charge of the Divisional Commissioner here at Barisal on December 17.

Prior to his joining this new assignment he was the Additional Commissioner of Chittagong Division and the Chairman of the Barisal Division Implementation Committee.

The newly formed fifth division of the country will start functioning with 14 divisional offices from the scheduled date at Barisal.

A range has been formed with 840 police personnel for this new division.

Ziauddin Ahmed has been posted as DIG while M Nurul Alam as additional DIG on promotion.

Prior to their joining these new assignments they were working as Director, National Board of Revenue (NBR) and Special Police Superintendent of Special Branch respectively.

The Barisal division has been formed comprising six districts of Barisal, Patuakhali, Bhola, Jhalakathi, Barguna and Peropur with an area of 12,749 square km.

There are eleven pourasavas having a population of 75,43,180 in these six districts.

Eleven pourasavas are - Barisal, Banaripara and Bakerganj pourasavas in Barisal district, Charfasion, Bhola and Lalmoan pourasavas in Bhola district, Jhalakathi and Nalchhity pourasavas in Jhalakathi district, Peropur pourasava,

Barguna pourasava and Patuakhali pourasava.

According to census of 1991 the population in Barisal is 22,92,160; in Bhola 14,76,328; Jhalakathi 6,97,108; Peropur 10,63,087; Patuakhali 12,50,620 and in Barguna 7,63,877.

There are ten thanas - Kotwali (Sadar), Bakerganj, Muladi, Babuganj, Mehendiganj, Uzirpur, Agaljhara, Gornadi, Hiza and Banaripara in Barisal; six thanas - Kotwali (Sadar), Baufal, Galchitpa, Kalapara, Dashmina and Mirjaganj in Patuakhali; five thanas - Kotwali (Sadar), Patharghata, Amtali, Bamna and Betagi in Barguna; four thanas - Kotwali (Sadar), Nalchhity, Kathalia and Rajapur in Jhalakathi; seven thanas - Kotwali (Sadar), Charfasion, Daulatkhan, Tajumuddin, Borhanuddin, Lalmoan and Monpara in Bhola and six thanas - Kotwali (Sadar), Bhandaria, Nazirpur, Swarupkathi, Kowkhal and Mathbaria in Peropur district.

According to the Bureau of Statistics areas included in Barisal is 2,569 square km, in Patuakhali 2,740 sq km, in Barguna 1,598 sq km, in Bhola 3,754 sq km, in Jhalakathi 799 sq km and in Peropur district 1,319 sq km.

It may be recalled that there were 5 divisions like Presidency, Bardwan, Dacca, Chittagong and Rajshahi in British India. After partition of 1947, in the then East Pakistan, Khulna Division was created comprising 16 districts of Khulna, Satkhira, Bagerhat, Barisal, Jhalakathi, Bhola, Peropur, Patuakhali, Barguna, Jessore, Magura, Jhenidah, Narail, Kushtia, Meherpur and Chuadanga.

Now, splitting six southern districts from Khulna Division, Barisal Division has been established.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia addressing a public meeting at Satkania High School ground yesterday. — PID photo

PM: Benefits

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into an export oriented nation and for this we have to increase production in all the sectors through united and sincere efforts.

Criticising the role of an opposition party against the present democratic government the Prime Minister said those who talk tall about democracy but do not believe in democratic process want that the present development process should stop. Once they made the country a bottomless basket and they want to do it again, she said.

Meanwhile: The tribal people of Pukurpara of Ruma thana gave a cordial and warm reception to Begum Zia when she came here for a brief visit.

Begum Zia came here on the concluding day of her two-day visit to hill districts to meet the local tribal people living along the Raikhaing lake.

The tribal women presented the Prime Minister with their hand-made works. They also garlanded her with their traditional chains made of puthi.

Speaking on the occasion the Prime Minister thanked the tribal people for their warm and cordial welcome.

Begum Zia said the government would do everything possible to solve the problems being faced by the tribals of the area. She also thanked the Murang VDP members for discharging their duties sincerely.

The Prime Minister returned to the capital in the evening.

Sharif offers olive branch to Benazir

ISLAMABAD, Dec 30: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has offered unconditional dialogue to opposition leader Benazir Bhutto, reports Xinhua.

In a letter to Benazir Bhutto in response to her letter on December 11 regarding the Babri Mosque issue, Nawaz Sharif said, "my doors are open for you to walk in any time. Please do so for a cause which is more important than individual predilections and personal prejudices, the cause of national unity and Pakistan's well-being and security."

"I could not agree with you more that we should forego our personal interests and put Pakistan first. I may go a little further, let us have no personal interests. Let it be just Pakistan," the Prime Minister said in the letter dated December 28 and officially released on Tuesday.

The Prime Minister's offer of a dialogue with the opposition is considered as another bid to ease political tension in the country.

Meanwhile, Benazir Bhutto, former Prime Minister and co-chairperson of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), threatened Tuesday to resume her campaign against Nawaz Sharif if he fails to start talks on formation of a government of national consensus.

"We demand the government to immediately start negotiations with the opposition, otherwise we would

Minimum wages

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minimum wages for the workers would definitely affect the scope for new employment generation in the country.

The SKOP representatives, however, with only a few minor objections to the proposal, accepted the amount, sources in the SKOP told The Daily Star last night.

The SKOP had been struggling for fixation of the 1400 as the national minimum wage for both the public and the private sector workers.

Iskander Ali, President of the INP backed Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal and an influential SKOP representative in the Wage Commission body told this correspondent yesterday, "We have accepted the government proposed minimum wage for the workers and employees of the private and public sectors in principle".

Replying to a question, the SKOP leader said that a SKOP meeting held December 28 decided to accept the government proposed wages on the ground that there was no provision for national minimum wage in the country after 1969. They accepted the national minimum wage as a victory, specially over the public sector employees.

A concerned government official, requesting anonymity said that the minimum wages for the private sector workers had been proposed at Taka 900 per month in the light of the pay scale announced last July for the public servants.

According to the pay scale, the minimum wage for the workers and employees is Taka nine hundred per month.

According to Commission sources, the Commission would hand over its recommendation to the concerned minister today and the minister would announce the government position following consultations with his cabinet colleagues soon.

CHT problems Call to implement 5-point demands

By Staff Correspondent

A leading human rights committee on the Chittagong Hill Tracts has expressed the hope that a healthy, democratic environment can be created in the area in which the policy of applying military force can be discarded for all time to come.

In a statement yesterday, the National Committee for the Protection of Fundamental Rights in the CHT, welcomed the current round of talks between the government and leaders of the Parbatya Chittagong Jana Sanghati Samity.

The statement, made on behalf of Barrister Lutfar Rahman Shahjahan, Prof. Anu Muhammad, Barrister Sara Hossain, Advocate Adilur Rahman Khan, among others, called on the government to implement the committee's five-point demands "in order to solve this national problem and pave the way for the establishment of a democratic environment in the area."

The demands of the Committee include: End to army involvement in civic administration in the area; end to Shanti Bahini's military activities and legalisation of PCJSS's political activities; return of land taken from tribal people; resettlement of Bangladeshi settlers not willing to remain in the CHT; protection of the CHT's 13 tribes' existence as distinct cultural-national entities through constitutional recognition.

One slaughtered

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at Merajnagar at Demra and slaughtered him with a rezer at around 6:30 am Wednesday, witnesses said.

In another incident, Kotwali police recovered body of an unidentified man from the Sadarghat Launch Terminal late Tuesday night. The victim was about 40.

Confusion

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inscribed on the Martyred Intellectuals Memorial at Mirpur.

However, everytime somebody buys one of those stamps, the counter clerks at the post offices invariably detach the extension, throw it away and give only the stamp to the customer.

There does not seem to be any lack of appreciation on the part of the public about the Memorial and message, but, as one said to The Daily Star, there should have been clear instructions to the clerks.

In the absence of such instructions, a valuable piece of art and a great deal of taxpayers' money are just being thrown on the floors and into the dustbins of Post Offices, he complained.

The Midnight File

Collor convicted of misconduct

BRASILIA, Dec 30: President Fernando Collor de Mello was convicted of misconduct early Wednesday, hours after he resigned. Stripped of immunity, he now faces a criminal trial that could end with eight years in jail. Meanwhile, President Itamar Franco now was confronting the challenge of how to pull Latin America's largest country out of its worst economic crisis in decades, reports AP.

17 alleged coup plotters condemned to death

FREETOWN, Dec 30: Sierra Leone's military authorities today condemned 17 persons to death for their alleged role in a failed coup attempt Tuesday against President Valentine Strasser. It was announced here. The government did not identify the condemned. Their sentence, handed down by a special military tribunal, must be confirmed by the ruling junta, the supreme council of state, and cannot be appealed, reports AP.

Foreign assistance

From Page 1 Col 3

Ministry of Finance: The Daily Star in its December 23 issue published an interview of Toshio Saiki, Ambassador of Japan in Bangladesh wherein it was stated that US\$ 530 million of Japanese aid to Bangladesh remained unutilised. It was also observed that if the committed assistances could not be utilised speedily and effectively, government of Japan might be constrained to cutback economic assistances to Bangladesh. Subsequently, an editorial was also published in the same daily on December 25 highlighting the statement of the Ambassador and urging the government to ensure speedy utilisation of the foreign aid received from Japan and other sources.

The points raised by the Ambassador and the Editor have been carefully reviewed. It was found that at present Japanese-committed loan to Bangladesh amounted to US\$ 488 million, out of which US\$ 172 million had since been disbursed which is 36% of the committed loan. This ratio is above the internationally accepted utilisation level in a particular year. According to contractual stipulations this amount will be available for utilisation within a period ranging from one to five years.

In the same paper it was further stated that nearly 46% of US\$ 440 million Debt Relief Grant (DRG) to Bangladesh remained unused. In fact the total amount of DRG was US\$

514.17 million. As per statement of Bangladesh Bank (upto 31.10.92) the balance amount of DRG with the Bank of Tokyo is only 24590.20 million yen i.e. US\$ 196.72 million. This means US\$ 317.45 million has already been utilised. The utilisation is 61.74% of the total DRG. It may be mentioned that the time limit for using 86% (US\$ 168.19 million) of the unutilised grant has not expired as yet.

Recently, the Government of Bangladesh has decided to import crude and refined petroleum using DRG. As a result, the balance of DRG is expected to be fully utilised within the stipulated time.

We feel that the ratio of the undischursed aid to the per capita income does not yield any meaningful economic interpretation because the nexus between the two is at best tenuous.

The government of Bangladesh appreciates the need for a speedy utilisation of the foreign aid and is making a determined effort to improve the present situation which is explained no less by a set of exogenous variables than the endogenous ones. The support of development partners is crucial to resolve the problem. For 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 sources of the aid itself.

Muslims plan namaz at Ayodhya site today

LUCKNOW, Dec 30: The All India Babri Masjid Action Committee leaders and its members will offer a symbolic namaz at the disputed place in Ayodhya tomorrow, a prominent leader of the AIBMAC and a former Uttar Pradesh Minister, Mohammad Azam Khan said this evening, reports PTI.

Khan said he had already addressed a communication to the state principal Home Secretary, Kalyan Kumar Bakshi yesterday asking him to make suitable arrangements for offering namaz.

The BJP today demanded that the Centre should immediately restore the interrupted darshan of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya to defuse the situation there.

In a statement, the BJP Vice President, K R Malkani said it was clear that the Centre which gave the green signal for the darshan had put a red signal now when it found minority opinion adverse.

Reuter from Islamabad adds: Pakistan said today that an ancient mosque razed by Hindu revivalists in northern India earlier this month should be rebuilt on its original site.

The martyred Babri Mosque must be reconstructed exactly on the site where it stood for over 400 years, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said, "any other solution would not be acceptable."

Exams without admit card

From Our Correspondent

PABNA, Dec 30: The examinations of diploma engineering of Pabna Polytechnic Institute appeared at the final examination without any admit card. The examination began December 29.

The Controller of Polytechnic Board when contacted informed that the admit cards had been sent through parcel but the postmaster of Pabna Post office denied receiving them.

The Principal of the Institute informed that seat arrangements were made as per telephonic information from the board.

Garments

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petition by AFL-CIO, the most powerful American labour union, asking discontinuation of GSP facility to Bangladesh in view of use of child labour in its garment industry, the country is under constant watch of the US government.

An AFL-CIO representative was recently in Dhaka to monitor the latest situation about use of child labour in garment industry here.

A dozen of leading garment manufacturers did not rule out the possibility of retrenchment of children workers. Cautious estimates say some 40,000 to 50,000 low-age workers would be driven out of the garment industry in such a probability, fuelling serious social problem in urban areas.

AAPSO conference

Ban on religion-based politics suggested

By Staff Correspondent

A ban on religion-based politics through a bill in the coming session of parliament has been suggested to maintain communal harmony in the country.

The suggestion came at a round-table conference organised by the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO) on "Present circumstances in Bangladesh and the way to maintaining communal harmony", at the Engineers' Institution auditorium Wednesday.

The use of religion for political gain almost turned Bangladesh into a communal country which was clear during the latest violence," a speaker at the round-table observed.

The process started following the changeover in 1975 that took a permanent shape through the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution and some other changes in the Constitution," said another speaker.

A remedy to the present dire situation is only possible through a consensus for which the government should play the pivotal role with the help of other non-communal parties and organisations, the speakers maintained.

The round-table was participated by nearly 100 intellectuals, politicians, educationists, journalists, members of parliament, teachers, and lawyers.

The AAPSO president Prof Anisuzzaman chaired and conducted the discussion in which Foyez Ahmed, Farida Hasan MP, Tofael Ahmed MP, Shawkat Osman, Aysha Khanam, Nurul Islam Nahid, Justice Kemaluddin Hossain, Dr Kamal Hossain, Advocate Gazful Huq, Syed Shamsul Huq, K M Sobhan, Noorjahan Morshed, Jamil Chowdhury, Shameem Akter, Khan Sarwar Morshed, Abdur Razzak MP, Mohammad Afzal, Sudhangshu Shekhar Halder, Barrister Amirul Islam and Purabi Dutta participated.

Haider Akbar Khan Rono, Ahmedur Rahman Azmi, Pir Habibur Rahman, Ajoy Roy, Rahmat Ali MP, Dr Hamida Hossain, Prof Aktaruzzaman, Hayat Morshed, Borhanuddin Khan Jahangir, Abdul Monayen Sarker, Prof Ali Anwar and Prof Rashidul Huq were also present at the conference.

Speakers said that the encouragement to a particular religion by successive governments and silence of the opposition parties on religious is-

sues gave the religion-based parties the advantage to "spread seeds of communalism" among the people.

The non-communal forces failed to make clear one thing that anti-communalism did in no way mean anti-religion or atheism, they said.

The speakers said that the role of both the government and the Opposition was disappointing after violence erupted early this month following the demolition of the Babri Mosque.

The Opposition took to the streets late but failed to resist the violence while the government was still trying to convince the people that "nothing major happened."

Most of the speakers accused the law enforcing agencies of inactivity that encouraged the rioters.

The round-table suggested introducing a bill in the coming session of parliament banning religion-based politics to dispel fear from the minds of the minority groups.

They also said that a permanent communal harmony committee should be formed irrespective of parties that would work round the year to tackle any emergency situation.



Sheikh Hasina yesterday visited sacked female employees of Women's Affairs Directorate who are on hunger strike. — Star photo

Hasina

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to power by bluffing the electorate and betraying with legitimate demands of the working people and professionals," said Hasina in a statement.

She called for immediate reinstatement of the sacked employees of the project.

Striking women burst into tears by hugging Hasina when she went to see their condition on the pavement outside the Press Club. Hasina stayed there for a while and arranged saline for the strikers.

a memorandum was given to the opposition leader on behalf of the striking women.

The Awami League chief yesterday also asked the government to immediately pay the salary-allowances to the workers and employees of the Machine Tools Factory.

Employees of the factory have been passing days in utter misery without having salary for the last six months, she said in a statement.

The leader of the Opposition alleged the government was conspiring to close down this big industrial unit at a time when the country should speed up industrialisation.

Working people are being forced into movement by the BNP government's failure to solve their problems, she said. "This government has no moral right to remain in power by keeping workers and employees unled."

Myanmar: Clearance

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more repatriation personnel at the reception centres to step up the repatriation, said the Chittagong Divisional Commissioner adding that "after completing it we want to maintain a border of peace with Myanmar."

With today's clearances the number of refugees cleared so far by the Myanmar authorities totalled 67,896 out of 2,31,202 refugees listed to date, Faruk announced.

During today's meeting Bangladesh side handed over to Myanmar officials another list of 14,925 refugees, he also announced saying that in the next batch scheduled for January 3, 1993, a total of 1154 refugees, the highest number so far, would be repatriated.

Moreover, 11,362 refugees were awaiting repatriation in three transit camps at Teknaf, Faruk informed.

The repatriated refugees in the last 17 batches totalled 5,962 and of them 932 persons went back between September 22, the date of commencement of the repatriation, and November 25 in four batches while 5030 persons returned between November 26 and December 28, said the Divisional Commissioner who claimed that repatriation had recently picked up.

Faruk further said that the Myanmar team had agreed to let a Bangladesh journalists' team visit Arakan state soon to inspect the repatriation of Rohingya refugees who fled into Bangladesh to escape the military crackdown there.

Foreign journalists would also be allowed to inspect the same if they applied for permission from the Yangon government, Faruk said.

The 13th round of talks will be held in Myanmar next month, he added.

Losing units

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In addition to these problems, the BTMC is also paying Taka two crore every month as additional wages and salaries, to its surplus manpower.

At the same time, most units becoming obsolete are now not able to meet their production targets.

Sources substantiated the fact by the example that while Sundarban Textile Mills, a comparatively modern one could produce about four ounces of yarn per spindle in a shift, the Olympia and the Dhaka Cotton Mills could hardly produce half the quantity.

Sources further said that full-swing smuggling of cloth and yarn had again started putting the local products in an uncompetitive situation.

The sale of both yarn and fabrics of BTMC has now come down to 50 per cent of its previous records on an average. The Corporation now sells about 7,000 bales of yarn and cloth per month as against 12,000 bales previously.

Sources said that during the "push in" and Babri Mosque incidents, smuggling halted temporarily and as a result, BTMC's sales picked up by about 1,000 bales a month.

At present, the BTMC is facing stagnation with its huge stock of yarn and cloth worth Taka 185 crore as of December 15.

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