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Inside Today

Article

The Fallout of Demolition

Column : Between the Lines
 by Kuldip Nayar
 Page 4

International



US ready to place troops in Somalia under UN command

Missile attack on Iraq appropriate, says Clinton
 Page 5

Business

Saifur urges bank chiefs to help create entrepreneur class
 Page 7

Feature

Environment

The Operation of Sanitary Landfill Sites
 Page 8

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day



A Footwear for All
 Page 3

NEWS BRIEFS

Hasina goes to Dohar today

Awami League President and leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina will address a public meeting at Joypara in Dohar thana at 2 pm today. Meanwhile, a party press release said Prof Dewan Abdul Hye, founder Principal of Joypara College and former Vice-President of Greater Dhaka District NAP, yesterday met with Sheikh Hasina at her official residence and joined Awami League, reports UNB.

Ctg Shibir activist dies at clinic

CHITTAGONG, Jan 18: Nazrul Islam, a 3rd year student of Nazirhat College, succumbed to injuries this (Monday) morning at a local clinic. Nazrul, said to be an activist of Islami Chhatra Shibir, received bullet wounds on December 23 last year in a shooting at Mandakini in Fatikchhari thana, reports UNB.

Nine smugglers held in Ishurdi

RAJSHAHI, Jan 18: Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) personnel arrested nine alleged smugglers from different areas of Ishurdi on Sunday night. BDR also seized contrabands worth about Tk 13 lakh. The contrabands included Indian sugar, sarce, clothes and other goods, reports UNB.

Police Week begins tomorrow

The Police Week will be observed in the country from January 20 to January 27. Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will inaugurate the week on January 20 at Rajarbagh Police Line here. The Prime Minister will take the salute of a police parade and inspect it to be held on the occasion. Begum Zia will also address the police and decorate the recipients of gallantry awards on the occasion, reports BSS.

Babri Mosque discussion

House adjourned amid uproar

By staff correspondent

The Speaker last night adjourned the general discussion on the demolition of the Babri Mosque in India amidst a Pandemonium in the House over a Treasury benches interference in the speech of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

A total of 14 MPs belonging to both the Treasury and the Opposition benches deliberated on the issue for the second day yesterday.

Although the MPs addressing the issue invariably con-

demned demolition of the mosque and demanded its reconstruction on the original site, the Treasury benches concentrated on the communal outlook of the Indian government while the AL led opposition attached importance on the failure of the BNP government in tackling local situation arising out of the Babri Mosque incident in India.

The Treasury benches maintained that the people of Bangladesh virtually reacted to the heinous incident in

Ayodhya and the reaction was a mild one. Besides the government benches quick measures made it possible to control the situation, they added. The Opposition, on the other hand, claimed that more than two thousand temples of the Hindu community were demolished and about three thousand women belonging to the minority communities of the country were raped following the Babri Mosque incident. The government failed to

Dhaka flood project to be completed by 96-97

The Dhaka Comprehensive Flood Protection Project is expected to be completed by 1996-97 financial year, Irrigation, Water Development and Flood Control Minister M Majid-ul-Huq told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

Replying to a question from Alhaj Syed Abul Hossain (AL-Madaripur) the Minister said Asian Development Bank (ADB) would provide 92.50 million dollar for the comprehensive Flood Protection Project under an agreement signed with the government in 1992.

The Dhaka Comprehensive Flood Protection Project covers the western region of the Dhaka Metropolitan including Tongi-Rampura-Khilgaon-Saidabad upto Friendship Bridge and designed to control flood and drainage facilities. See Page 12 Col 6

PM under fire for Halihsahar speech

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's public statement holding the "defeated opposition forces" responsible for the recent incidents in Halihsahar in Chittagong came under sharp criticism from the Opposition members in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

They termed the statement "irresponsible". Awami League members demanded immediate formation of an all-party parliamentary committee to probe into the incidents to determine if the opposition was involved in it or not.

Opposition members also demanded holding a one-day general discussion on the incidents.

Demanding the all-party parliamentary probe, Leader of

the Opposition in parliament Sheikh Hasina, while addressing Speaker Shaikh Razaque Ali, said: "I request you to become the chairman of the committee and investigate the incidents thoroughly, including ascertaining if the opposition was involved in it or not, and then we want a one-day general discussion on the incidents".

The acting Deputy Leader of the House Major General Majid-ul-Huq (retd), while acknowledging that a discussion could be held on the incidents, pointed out that it would not be "proper" to hold the discussions when there was an ongoing judicial probe.

Earlier, rising on a point of order, Opposition Chief Whip

Biswa Ijtema concludes with call for Muslim solidarity

From Our Correspondent

GAZIPUR, Jan 18: The three-day Ijtema of the World Tablig Jamaat ended here at Tongi today with the Akheri Munajat (concluding prayers) for the peace, prosperity and greater solidarity of the Muslim world.

Lakhs of devotees, including 2500 foreign participants from 60 countries, took part in the munajat, conducted by the Amir of the World Tablig Jamaat Maulana Enamul Hasan (Hazratji).

An estimated eight square kilometer area of the Ijtema venue virtually turned into a human sea from this morning while thousands of people gathered along the Dhaka-Mymensingh Highway and on the roof-tops of the nearby houses. Hundreds of women also attended the munajat, but far away from the venue.

President Abdur Rahman Biswa offered munajat along with some of the cabinet members. On arrival, the President was given a hearty welcome and he warmly exchanged greetings with the devotees.

Among others, Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Religious Affairs Minister M A Mannan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Abdus Samad Azad, Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen

See Page 12 Col 7



Devotees offering munajat on the concluding day of Biswa Ijtema at Tongi yesterday. — Star photo



Women mourn Monday at the funeral of an Iraqi killed during an American air raid against Baghdad. — AFP photo

Daylight Allied raid kills 21 Iraqis

Dhaka's concern

BAGHDAD, Jan 18: Iraq said 21 people were killed today in the bloodiest attack in a week by Allied planes. They swooped over the north and south in broad daylight to bomb President Saddam Hussein into submission, reports Reuter.

US, British and French planes struck at Iraq's two no-fly zones in the twilight of President George Bush's administration which hands over to President-elect Bill Clinton on Wednesday.

Western military sources in the Gulf said that Iraq had responded by launching what appeared to be a Scud missile aimed at the Saudi Arabia oil city of Dahrhan. They later retracted the report.

Israel, hypersensitive to any

missile activity in the Middle East after becoming Iraq's main Scud target during the Gulf War, also said Baghdad did not fire any missiles towards Saudi Arabia during an Allied air attack.

A senior US Defence official said today's raid by 75 Allied warplanes in southern Iraq was to finish the job against anti-aircraft missile batteries and radar defence sites missed last week.

The official, who asked not to be identified, also said US F-40 attack jets fired missiles at an Iraqi radar in the northern no-fly zone and Allied jets bombed anti-aircraft gun sites in the area after the radar sought to target them.

See Page 12 Col 1

FM goes to UN tomorrow

Dhaka-UNHCR discord stalls Rohingya repatriation

Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman leaves for New York tomorrow (Wednesday) to discuss with UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali the deadlock in repatriation of Rohingya refugees, reports UNB.

Diplomatic circles here believe the discussion will take place against the backdrop of allegation by UNHCR and the United States about "coercive repatriation" of the Mayanmar Muslims sheltered in Bangladesh.

After the return of 14,561 out of some 2.65 lakh refugees under the provisions of bilateral agreements signed last April by Bangladesh and Myanmar, the repatriation was reported stalled amidst difference of opinion between the government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The Foreign Minister admitted the suspension of repatriation, but assigned the reason on camp readjustment after return of more than 14 thousand refugees.

The last batch of 2,361 Rohingyas crossed the Naf river on January 14 for their homes in Arakan from where the Mayanmarese minority had been evicted by Mayanmar's army troops.

UNHCR has unilaterally withdrawn from the October agreement which allowed its involvement in the repatriation process on the Bangladesh soil. Mayanmar was yet to agree to the proposal for involving the UN agency with the repatriation process on the Mayanmarese side.

Mostafiz is expected to proceed to Washington to discuss the situation with the US officials before his scheduled return home on January 28.

Portfolios of new Rao ministers

NEW DELHI, Jan 18: India announced portfolios for four new cabinet ministers today, putting Planning Commission head Pranab Mukherjee in charge of Commerce and giving Dinesh Singh External Affairs, the Press Trust of India reported, says Reuter.

Mukherjee, who was among four cabinet ministers sworn in on Sunday in a revamp of the council of ministers to deal with one of the country's worst-law-and-order crises, has served as finance minister

See Page 12 Col 6

Wages Commission submits report to Khaleda

The report of the National Wages and Productivity Commission was submitted to the Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday by the Commission Chairman M Mustafizur Rahman, reports BSS.

The report consists of two volumes — one relating to wage structure of workers of public sector enterprises and the other relating to national minimum wage for the industrial sector.

Nirmul body founding day today

By Staff Correspondent

The first anniversary of Ekattorer Ghatok Dal Nirmul Committee will be observed today at the Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB).

Poet Sufia Kamal will inaugurate the function at 10 am. The function will be presided over by Lt Col (Rtd) Kazi Nur-uz-Zaman and will be addressed, among others, by Rashed Khan Menon, Fayez Ahmed, Justice Debesh Bhattacharya, Air Vice Marshal (Rtd) A K Khandoker BU, Lt Gen (Rtd) KM Shafulah BU, Ataus Samad, Prof Kabir Chowdhury, Maj Gen (Rtd) Datta BU, and Maj (Rtd) Rafiqul Islam BU.

Fire on 5th floor of Secretariat building

A fire broke out in a room of Deputy Secretary Muklesur Rahman of the Agricultural Ministry at the Secretariat building yesterday morning. Fire Service sources said, reports UNB.

The fire originated from a tube light connection at room no 513 of the fifth floor of Building No 5.

Employees of the Ministry brought the fire under control by spraying dry powder extinguisher before the arrival of the Fire Service contingent. The firemen cleared the heavy smoke by smoke ejector from the room. None was injured in the incident.

Disinvested units Move for ultimatum to realise dues

By Inam Ahmed

The government has planned to serve an ultimatum to the owners of the 'disinvested units' to clear dues they owe to the government against the prices of the industrial enterprises they purchased.

The decision came at a meeting of the Disinvestment Board Sunday with Industries Minister Shamsul Islam Khan in the chair. The meeting viewed the performance of the disinvested industrial units and found that some units did not pay their dues without any valid reasons.

According to sources, the government will serve notices to these units asking them to clear all their dues within a period of 15 days.

If the units do not respond to the government plea within the given period, the government will take stern measures. Sources say government may even opt for retaking the units and putting them on auction again.

The stringent decision of the government came following the donors' willingness to see that the disinvestment

See Page 12 Col 8

64 more die of diarrhoea in three southern districts

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Jan 18: The diarrhoea situation deteriorated in Barguna, Pirojpur, Patuakhali and Jhalakathi districts which claimed 64 more lives in 24 hours until 7 this evening.

According to official sources, 1555 persons were attacked with diarrhoea today in these four districts.

Today's death figure raises the official death toll to 389 in the districts in 18 days, while the total number of attacked persons stands at 9783.

In Pirojpur district, 29 deaths were reported from five thanas in 24 hours which raised death toll to 184. Another 441 were also attacked with the disease.

See Page 12 Col 7

Delhi firm to consolidate regional ties thru' SAARC

NEW DELHI, Jan 18: India promised to further consolidate regional cooperation through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), reports Xinhua.

Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma and Prime Minister Narasimha Rao assured Shri Lankan President Narasinghe Premadasa of India's abiding commitment to cooperations in the South Asian region.

Premadasa held informal talks with the two Indian leaders respectively when he stopped over in New Delhi for a few hours yesterday after a four-day pilgrimage in East India of Buddhist centres.

The Indian President praised Premadasa for the "positive role" he has been playing

See Page 12 Col 7

Halihsahar people put forth 5 points

From Our Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 18: Halihsahar Potenga Auditor Purnoddar Committee (Halihsahar Potenga Rights Reestablishment Committee) has threatened a movement to press home its five-point charter of demands that includes trial of the Navy personnel responsible for the rampage in the Bandertilla area.

The other demands are shifting of Naval base from Halihsahar area, compensation for the loss of life and property and complete rehabilitation of the survivors, provision for interest-free loans to the affected people and massive reconstruction and development works at Halihsahar area to restore its pre-violence condition.

Addressing a press meet here, Akhter Kamal, the General Secretary of the new committee formed with leaders in the trouble-torn Halihsahar area, said that a hartal programme would be declared on February 1 if no assurance from the authorities was received for the fulfillment of the demands within January 31.

Kamal alleged that hundreds of people were living under the open sky in the affected Bandertilla area of Halihsahar due to a delay in the starting of rehabilitation programmes. Besides, the relief materials supplied so far were quite inadequate, he alleged.

AL calls hartal in Ctg today

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 18: Awami League, Chittagong unit has given a call for a half-day hartal tomorrow in Chittagong to protest the recent killings of two of its leaders here.

Rahmat Ullah, president of Sitakunda thana AL unit and Chairman of Barabkundu union, was gunned down by unidentified assailants last Tuesday night at a local bazar.

Another AL leader Akhter Hossain Raja, Chairman of East Gujara union under Roaman thana, was shot dead last Friday while he was holding a meeting inside union office.

Meanwhile, in support of tomorrow's hartal the AL organised a rally and later brought out a procession here.