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VOL. III NO. 8 REGD. NO. DA 781

# The Daily Star

MAGH 8, 1399 BS,

DHAKA THURSDAY JANUARY 21, 1993

RAJAB 27, 1413 HIJRI

12 PAGES: PRICE TAKA 4.00

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## NEWS BRIEFS

### Clinton thanks Hasina

US President Bill Clinton has thanked Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina for her support to his election to the Presidency of America. Thank you for your message of support upon my election as President of the United States. I appreciate your kind words of support as I prepare for the challenges ahead," said the new US President, a Democrat, in a message to Hasina. The message came yesterday (Jan 20) when William Jefferson Clinton, 46, took over from George Bush as the third youngest President of America, reports UNB.

### Bangladeshis in Baghdad safe

All the 14 Bangladeshis working in Hotel Al-Rashid in Baghdad were unhurt after the hotel was hit by the US cruise missile on Sunday, officials here said. The US missile struck the five-star hotel located in the centre of the Iraqi capital killing two staff and causing extensive damage to it, reports UNB.

### ICFM confce in from April 24

The 21st Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) will be held in Karachi from April 24-29. Foreign Office sources said here yesterday.

### Justice Jalil operated upon

Justice M Abdul Jalil of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court was operated upon yesterday, family sources said. His prostate gland operation was done at the Specialised Hospital at Dharmad, where he is under treatment of Prof Benazir Kamal, reports UNB.

## President Clinton for 'American renewal'

WASHINGTON, Jan 20: William Jefferson Clinton solemnly swore an oath as the 42nd US President Wednesday with a call for a bold "season of American renewal." Tens of thousands gathered in Washington to witness the transfer of power to a new generation of leadership, writes AP.

"To renew America, we must meet challenges abroad as well as at home," Clinton said.

"There is no clear division today between what is foreign and what is domestic—the world economy, the world environment, the world AIDS crisis, the world arms race affect us all," he said.

With a hand resting on a King James Bible given to him by his grandmother, Clinton pledged to "preserve, protect and defend the Constitution."

And by those words—uttered by every incoming president since George Washington—the new democratic chief executive assumed responsibility for the nation's

economic woes, its awesome nuclear arsenal and the management of world trouble spots from Iraq to Bosnia to Somalia.

"There is nothing wrong with America that cannot be cured by what is right with America," Clinton said in his inaugural remarks, the climax of a ceremony that blended pomp and poetry. His was the first Democratic administration in a dozen years.

Clinton's emotions were near the surface as his assumption of power drew close. A tear rolled down his cheek as he sat in a front-row pew at an early morning church service and listened to a soulful rendition of "Holy Ground."

The speech echoed his long campaign for the White House, using the word "change" nine times. "The urgent question of our age is whether we can make change our friend and not our enemy," he said.

Close by was his wife, Hillary, daughter, Chelsea, and in a visible display of the orderly transition of power,

members of Congress, the Supreme Court and the outgoing and incoming administrations.

The Marine Band signalled the transition, playing "Hail to the Chief" one final time to the outgoing president shortly before noon, and again to the new president a few minutes after.

Hours before mounting the inaugural stand, Clinton declared himself prepared for the responsibilities ahead. Asked whether he felt ready, the 46-year-old president-to-be said simply, "I do."

The ceremony began on time with a prayer by the Rev Billy Graham. Bush bowed his head, Clinton, standing a few feet away, did likewise.

In his remarks, Clinton began with a tribute to his predecessor for his "half century of service to America."

A few moments later, he signalled unmistakably his determination to change the country of the nation.

"We pledge that the era of See Page 12 Col 6



Bill Clinton joins singers Stevie Nicks (right) of the group Fleetwood Mac and Michael Jackson in singing "Don't Stop" at the conclusion of the televised inaugural gala at the suburban capital centre, Maryland, Thursday.

— AFP photo

## JS condemns Babri Mosque demolition

By Staff Correspondent

Parliament last night adopted a resolution strongly condemning those involved in the demolition of the historic Babri Mosque in India and demanding reconstruction of the Mosque at its original site.

The resolution was adopted following a four-day general discussion on the issue with a total of 47 MPs of both the Treasury bench and the Opposition participating in the deliberations.

Out of a total of eight resolutions moved in Parliament January 17, the House passed, by voice vote, the one moved by the Acting Deputy Leader of

the House and Minister for Agriculture, Irrigation and Flood Control Major General (retd) Majid-ul-Hoque.

Three resolutions rejected in the voice were moved respectively by the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina, the Jamaat Parliamentary group leader Matur Rahman Nizami and the Jatiya Party leader Monirul Hoque Chowdhury.

The four other resolutions, put to vote by the Speaker, secure no support of the MPs including the movers them-

The Treasury bench resolution accepted by the House termed the demolition of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya and erection of a temple at the site an act of unprecedented disgrace and shame in history.

The act had hurt the religious sentiments and faith of the entire Muslim world along with those of the Muslims of Bangladesh, the resolution added.

The resolution found the reconstruction of the demolished mosque at its original site the only way to restoring communal harmony, peace and stability in India. It called upon

the Indian government to reconstruct the Mosque, as promised by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao earlier, at the original site.

The resolution, expressing deep concern over the communal situation in India following the Babri Mosque incident, also called upon the Indian government to take all possible steps to restore communal harmony and protect the life and property of the minority Muslim community.

The resolution also called upon the government of India to make all arrangements to rehabilitate the victims.

The resolution adopted by the House thanked the people of the country for their restrained and patient reaction to the demolition of the historic Mosque.

The resolution also thanked the government and the people of the country for immediate resistance to the instigation for communal disharmony by identified quarters and miscreants. It also called upon the people to remain vigilant against any provocation in future.

The resolution moved by the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina, that

was rejected by voice vote, proposed that legal action be taken against those government-patronised fundamentalist political organisations, communal organisations and individuals for launching attacks on the life and property of the minority communities and demolishing their temples.

The Hasina-moved resolution also called for adequate compensation to and rehabilitation of the families affected during the communal trouble and demanded reconstruction of the damaged temples.

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## Rohingya issue: FM leaves for NY to talk with Ghali

Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman yesterday stressed the need for quickening the repatriation of the Myanmar refugees who are putting pressure on the Bangladesh economy, reports BSS.

Before leaving for London on way to New York to have discussions on the problem with the UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali he said "how best the refugees could be repatriated in shortest possible time would be the concern."

He called for understanding of the UNHCR for quickening the process of repatriation.

Bangladesh, he said, "is keen for the understanding with the UNHCR."

The process of repatriation has been reported suspended after the return to Myanmar of 14,561 out of some 265,000 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar amid differences between Bangladesh officials and the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).

## Jamaat asks BNP not to give more concessions to AL

Leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday (Wednesday) said the ruling BNP should not give any more "concession" to Awami League and its allies for the sake of maintaining peace and discipline in the country, reports UNB.

Addressing a rally in Dhaka Wednesday afternoon, they blamed Awami League and its allies for unleashing violence and anarchy across the country in the name of movement to discredit the BNP government.

The Jamaat leaders alleged that these forces were trying to create instability in the country, oust the BNP government and resist Islamic advancement, and warned that any more concession to them will ruin the country.

City Jamaat-e-Islami organised the rally as part of its country-wide "protest day" at the north gate of of Baitul Mukarram mosque against the second time extension of detention of Golam Azam. It also demanded unconditional release of the Jamaat leaders.

Presided over by city Ameer ATM Azharul Islam, the rally was addressed, among others, by Naye-e-Ameer Abul Kalam Mohammad Yusuf, Matur Rahman Nizami MP, Mohammad Kamruzzaman, Shaikh Ansar Ali MP and Prof Mohammad Yusuf Ali.

Abul Kalam Mohammad Yusuf alleged that the so-called See Page 12 Col 1

## Shaheed Asad Day observed

By Staff Correspondent

Shaheed Asad Day was observed yesterday marking the 24th anniversary of his martyrdom during the anti-Ayub movement.

Asaduzzaman, a student leader, was killed in police firing on this day in 1969 while he was leading a procession near the present Dhaka Medical College Hospital. His death evoked a mass movement in the erstwhile East Pakistan that led to the downfall of Ayub Khan's dictatorial rule.

In observance of the day, wreaths was laid at the grave of Shaheed Asad in Shibpur and the Asad Memorial Monument in the capital and discussions organised by different socio-political-cultural organisations in the city and its outside.

## Nurses go on strike today

By DMCH Correspondent

Nurses of the government hospitals and health complexes all over the country go on strike for indefinite period to realise their 14-point demands from today.

Leaders of Bangladesh Diploma Nurses Association (BDNA), Diploma Student Nurses Association (DSNU) and Assistant Nurses Association (ANA) in a joint meeting at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday announced the strike-call.

Kohinur Begum and Mofizullah, President and General Secretary of the BDNA, respectively were present in the meeting.

## Pourashava polls EC launches motivational campaign

By Nazmul Ashraf

Strict security measures apart, the Election Commission has undertaken a motivational campaign among officials, people and political leaders to ensure smooth holding of the municipal polls scheduled for January 30.

The EC has formed six teams comprising its senior officials which would meet the poll conductors, law enforcing personnel, social and political leaders and the candidates to discuss how best the elections to the 91 municipalities across the country could be free and fair.

One of the prime targets has been to ensure neutrality of the officials conducting the polls.

According to EC sources, mobile courts for instant trial of election offenders would be set up in addition to the deployment of police and Ansars at 1319 voting centres of 91 pourashavas to ensure free and peaceful balloting.

The six teams — led by the Chief Election Commissioner, the Election Commissioner, the Secretary and three joint secretaries — will visit 50 districts and hold dialogues with Deputy Commissioners, Superintendents of police, returning, presiding and polling officers, officials of the government, semi-government and autonomous bodies, political leaders and the candidates in the respective areas. The team members would also address public meetings to seek voters cooperation in this regard.

The first such team left Sunday for eight northern districts.

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## Commentary What we claim, we should prove

by Mahfuz Anam

Is it too much to expect our leaders to prove what they so vigorously claim in public? Freedom of speech and expression becomes meaningful only if it is used with responsibility and with respect to facts. Otherwise public debate is reduced to mudslinging.

Take some recent utterances for example. The Prime Minister during her belated visit to Halishahar and Bandartila in Chittagong said "the defeated forces", her code word for the Awami League, were behind the incident. This was quite in line with her repeated theme of attributing all evils in the country to only one source, the "defeated forces".

Not to be left behind, the leader of the opposition said that the participants in the so-called long march were "shot at, to please India." She has recently accused the ministers of Begum Zia's cabinet of all-out corruption. These are seri-

ous charges. But no attempt is made by either party to substantiate the grievous allegations that they so recklessly make. It is as if, being political leaders, gives them a licence for unsubstantiated and irresponsible utterances. Is there really no concern for credibility, reliability and public trust? What about respect for public opinion, if not for public intelligence?

Sheikh Hasina recently claimed that about 5,000 AL workers were now in custody under the Anti-terrorism Act. Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury of the Jatiya Party staked his own claim to fame in this competition by declaring that 5,000 workers of his own party were also in jail. Well, how about a list of those who were in custody? Since they are all party members, it should not be too difficult. Why not give the public a district-wise breakdown See Page 12 Col 1

## National folk fair begins We want to revive lost glory, tradition: PM

SONARGAON, Jan 20: This ancient capital of Bengal woke to a colourful festivity today with the Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, opening a week-long folk festival and craft fair, reports UNB.

Reminiscing the glory that was Sonargaon—the 13th century capital of Bengal—Begum Zia declared open the

National Folk Culture and Pous Mela organised by Bangladesh Folk and Craft Art Foundation in its premises.

The Prime Minister, addressing the inaugural function, urged all to bury their differences and work unitedly to build a better life for the people.

See Page 12 Col 3

## Police asked to discharge duty impartially

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday called upon the police to discharge their professional responsibility impartially to curb terrorism in the interests of democracy, continued development and production, reports BSS.

Inaugurating the Police Week at a colourful ceremony at Rajarbagh Police Line here, Begum Zia said peace and stability are the key to the suc-

See Page 12 Col 4

## Plea for delinking SAARC economic matters from politics

South Asian business leaders, seeking a leading role in the process of economic integration of their region, have asked politics to be separated from economic matters.

The call came from a regional seminar on "Fostering Business Co-operation among SAARC countries," held last week in the West Bengal capital Calcutta, according to meeting sources and reports of the Indian press made available to UNB.

Business community at the meet resolved that close and institutionalised co-operation among chambers of commerce of the region would be a right prescription for the economies of SAARC countries in their move to cooperate with each other in business.

To begin with, they planned to set up a SAARC cell. The modality of the proposed cell, according to meeting sources, would be worked out possibly in April or May in Dhaka.

Chiefs of leading trade bodies attended the seminar, organized by the Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Assocham), the apex body of the Indian chambers.

The Calcutta moot unanimously singled out intra-regional rivalry and distrust at the political level as the major barrier to closer economic co-operation in South Asia over the years.

Economic cooperation among the countries has been

hampered by historically derived apprehensions and distrust," said Latifur Rahman, new President of Dhaka's Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI).

Mumtaz Ahmed, a leading Indian entrepreneur and the immediate past President of Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry, went a step ahead. The Business Standard quoted Ahmed as saying: economic issues should immediately be delinked from the po-

litical ones if one were serious about business.

"It was no longer necessary to worry about government interference" was the general refrain of the Assocham meet, observed another reputed business daily.

The business community came out with these propositions in the wake of seventh SAARC summit in Dhaka, postponed following communal disturbances as a backlash of the December 6 demolition of

Babri Mosque in India. The postponement caused disappointment among peoples of the region as well as the business community as the summit was due to endorse SAFTA (South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement), which many see as a major breakthrough in economic integration of SAARC.

Meeting sources said SAARC business leaders unequivocally agreed that eco-

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