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NEWS BRIEFS

Biswas greets Sharma

President Abdur Rahman Biswas has felicitated his Indian counterpart Dr Shanker Dayal Sharma on the occasion of Republic Day of India. In a message yesterday President Biswas hoped "the existing bonds of friendship and cooperation between the two neighbouring countries would further be strengthened", reports UNB.

Khaleda, Hasina felicitate Rao

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday felicitated PV Narasimha Rao, Prime Minister of India on the occasion of his Republic Day. In separate messages to Rao, they expressed their confidence that the existing friendly and cordial relations between the two countries would be further strengthened to the mutual benefit of the two peoples, report BSS, UNB.

Nasim Khan hospitalised

The chief patron of the Stranded Pakistanis General Repatriation Committee (SPGRC) Muhammad Nasim Khan was admitted to the Rabita Medical Hospital Sunday with old-age ailments. All stranded Pakistanis and well-wishers have been requested to pray for his early recovery, reports BSS.

Former Russian embassy official, 2 others held

Two maunds of gold seized at ZIA



Lankin (left) and another along with the smuggled gold at ZIA yesterday. —Star photo

By Staff Correspondent

Customs officials Monday afternoon seized nearly two maunds (75 kgs) of gold worth about Taka 4.5 crore from a 'diplomatic' consignment at the airfreight godown at Zia International Airport (ZIA) in the capital.

A Russian national and two Bangladeshis were arrested at the ZIA in connection with smuggling the gold, said police.

According to a customs source it was the biggest ever gold haul at the ZIA.

The three persons arrested, a Russian Vladimir I. Lankin and two Bangladeshis Ambrose Gomes and S M Ratan, were detained at the Dhaka Cantonment Police Station.

Lankin, a former information officer at the Russian Mission in Dhaka is now a South and South East Asian representative of an export-import firm, Poliserice-Orient Limited, while the two Bangladeshis Ambrose and Ratan were employees of two clearing and forwarding agents, Nasir Alam and Co. and Ms Shahjahan and Co.

The Customs source said that on suspicion Customs officials opened the consignments in presence of officials of the Russian embassy in Dhaka and the Bangladesh Foreign Ministry and recovered 640 gold bars each weighing 10 tolas.

The gold bars were hidden under black plastic adhesives and sponges in the two consignments of video cassette recorders, the source added.

The consignments were sent to the Russian embassy. See Page 12 Col 4

Partial hartal in Ctg: None nabbed for Sunday's firing

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 25: Normal life was partially disrupted in the port city today during a half-day hartal.

The partially observed hartal was called by Chittagong chapter of the Awami League to protest against the alleged attempt on party Chief Sheikh Hasina by unidentified, masked gunmen at Sunday's public meeting at Laldighi Maidan.

However, today's hartal was unlike previous ones as party picketers or activists were hardly seen active at different places of the city.

Many shops and markets stayed open while most of the offices, both private and public, functioned during the hartal period.

A large number of rickshaws were seen plying defying the hartal though most of the other vehicles stayed off the roads.

Train services and flight operations were as usual, control room sources said.

Cargo handling at Chittagong Port was carried out normally while transportation of goods to and from the port was hampered as trucks did not ply.

Most of the mills and factories at Nasirabad industrial belts, Sjakundu industrial area and Kalurghat operated normally, sources said.

No untoward incident was reported during the hartal period.

Meanwhile, none has so far been arrested in connection with the rampage at the Sunday's public meeting organised by Awami League at the Laldighi Maidan.

However, police said an investigation into Sunday's incidents of violence at the public meeting, was underway to nab the trouble makers. See Page 12 Col 2

'I didn't blame any party for Ctg firing' Unruly partymen to be punished, says Hasina

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 25: The Leader of the Opposition in parliament Sheikh Hasina said today that she would punish those of her party activists who had violated discipline 'and gone on a rampage before her address at Sunday's public meeting at Laldighi Maidan here.

Briefing pressmen this evening at the local BGMCC rest house where she was staying, Hasina said that an enquiry committee on behalf of her party would be formed immediately in this regard to take action against those activists responsible.

"I will spare none in my party, found responsible for the trouble at that public meeting organised by the AL to mark the commemoration of mass killing here January 24, 1988", she added saying that "the guilty people in my party must face punishment".

However, the Leader of the Opposition blamed a group of "masked unidentified gunmen" for the shoot out after her address at the Laldighi meeting.

She alleged that the masked terrorists had come to the meeting venue in a microbus after her address from the western side dodging patrol police posted outside and made an attempt on her life by opening indiscriminate fire at her vehicle.

Hasina however did not See Page 12 Col 1

'Hasina's statement travesty of truth'

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 25: Minister for Forest, Fisheries, Environment and Livestocks Abdullah Al-Noman today said that the statement of Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina claiming an attempt on her life at Laldighi Maidan here on Sunday was a travesty of truth and a calculated attempt to conceal the serious internal bickerings of her own party, reports BSS.

The minister said Awami League chief, true to her party's old tradition, had come out with a statement after Sunday's Laldighi incident, which was misleading as well as an attempt to divert the at-

ention of the people from the real happenings at Laldighi public meeting and its surrounding areas. Addressing a press conference at the city corporation conference hall here this afternoon, Noman categorically said that two rival groups of Awami League and its front organisations used cut rifles, pistols and crackers in their clashes during and after the public meeting, which was addressed by Sheikh Hasina. The rivalry between two groups of Awami League surfaced brazenly when Sheikh Hasina came to address the party See Page 12 Col 4

AL calls 6-hour countrywide hartal today

By Staff Correspondent

The Awami League has called a countrywide six-hour hartal today to protest the alleged attempt on life of its chief Sheikh Hasina in Chittagong on Sunday.

Several thousand AL supporters brought out a procession in the capital yesterday evening in support of the hartal from 6 am to 12 pm. Before the procession started the party leaders, in a meeting at the Bangabandhu Avenue, urged its workers and supporters to make the hartal a success.

Hasina was caught in cross-fire by unidentified gunmen during a meeting at the Laldighi Maidan on Sunday during which at least 50 people were wounded.

AL alleged that agents of the government tried to kill Sheikh Hasina but government said rival groups of AL fought the gunbattle during the meeting.

Restriction on use of electricity

From Staff Correspondent

The cabinet yesterday approved certain steps restricting the use of electricity during peak hours of consumption for minimising loadshedding in the country, reports UNB.

Power pumps used for irrigation cannot be operated during the peak hours from 6 to 10 pm and all shops, excluding those of medicines, kutchha bazars, wholesale markets thereof and food shops, are to be closed after 8 pm.

There will, henceforth, be no illumination in social functions during the peak hours at night.

However, the meeting approved, initially, some loadshedding during the peak hours. See Page 12 Col 8

Baghdad turns over list of its N-arms suppliers

From Staff Correspondent

BAGHDAD, Jan 25: After months of balking, Iraq has turned over a list of most of its nuclear weapons programme suppliers, a top UN weapons expert said Monday, reports AP.

Maurizio Zifferero, deputy chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said Iraq submitted what it said was a list of 90 per cent of the foreign suppliers and agreed to answer questions about the list.

"As usual, we will press them" for the remainder, Zifferero said of the disclosure that has been a central UN demand.

Tim Treven, a spokesman for the UN Special Commission overseeing the weapons inspections, said at UN headquarters that if the list is not 100 per cent complete Iraq is not in compliance.

Zifferero's eight-man team of nuclear experts and team of ballistic weapons inspectors arrived Monday at a time when Baghdad is seeking better relations with Washington and a halt to US air attacks.

Their treatment by Saddam Hussein's government was considered a test of Iraq's compliance with Gulf war ceasefire terms and its attitude toward UN teams. Baghdad has accused inspection teams of harbouring US spies, a charge denied by UN officials and teams.

Iraq had maintained that turning over the list of suppliers would violate its sovereignty over trading relationships. That is the argument it repeatedly cited when denying information on suppliers to the UN Special Commission.

Baghdad's sudden cooperation could be a last-minute bid to persuade the UN Security Council to lift sanctions. The council was meeting late Monday to decide whether to renew sanctions. It reviews the sanctions every 60 days.

On Sunday, US Defence Secretary Les Aspin said on the CBS network's "Face the Nation": "The object is to comply with the UN resolutions. I personally believe that also means that Saddam Hussein has to go."

Meanwhile, Iraq's deputy prime minister, Tariq Aziz, said Monday his country had "never targeted" an Allied See Page 12 Col 6

Dhaka may react to Delhi's statement today

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi

The Bangladesh Government today is expected to issue a strong rebuttal of the Indian government statement, released Friday, on the Jatiya Sangsad resolution condemning the Babri Mosque resolution.

Official sources indicated that the Dhaka statement had been drafted yesterday but the government decided to delay its release until today due to the Republic Day of India.

The sources did not give the contents of the Bangladesh government statement.

India yesterday celebrated the Republic Day and Bangladesh President and Prime Minister sent messages of felicitation to their counterparts. Both the messages See Page 12 Col 1

Steps to attract foreign investors in EPZ

From Staff Correspondent

The sixth meeting of the board of governors of Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) was held at the International Conference Centre (ICC) here yesterday with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair, reports BSS.

The meeting took a number of decisions to attract foreign investors in the export processing zones.

The decisions taken at the meeting include steps for the establishment of Offshore Banking Unit (OBU).

Permission for establishment of advanced telecommunication system in export processing zones and provision of facilities for uninterrupted and stable power supply.

The meeting decided to simplify customs clearance procedure for investors in export processing zones. Issuance of multiple visa for unlimited entry to the expatriates during the two-year work period and import of three duty free vehicles against the existing system of two for the investors were also decided.

Earlier, BEPZA Chairman Col (Retd) Shahabuddin briefed the meeting on the activities of BEPZA. He informed the meeting that by March this year Dhaka Export Processing Zone authority would start functioning.

Among others, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, Commerce Minister M K Anwar, Planning Minister Zahiruddin Khan, Energy Minister Dr Khondker Mosharrat Hossain, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister K M Rabbani, concerned secretaries and members of the board were present.

Indians spray chemicals in Andaman Sea

From Staff Correspondent

NEW DELHI, Jan 25: Indian Coast Guard vessels and aircraft sprayed chemicals Monday to disperse an oil slick from a burning tanker that was drifting toward a remote Indian island in the Andaman Sea, reports AP.

Pushed by slowwinds of 10 knots, the oil has moved up to 16 kilometers (10 miles) from the coral reefs of the Great Nicobar island, home to 28,000 aboriginal people.

The Indian coast guard sent two ships to the area a day after the Danish tanker, Maersk Navigator, collided Thursday with another tanker near Sumatra and caught fire.

A large amount of emulsion has been poured by the Indian coast guard ships and by two aircraft that joined the operation later, coast guard Commandant S.P. Sharma said without elaboration.

LTTE hit squad 'to kill top Indian figures'

From Staff Correspondent

COLOMBO, Jan 25: Shri Lankan Tamil rebels have organized suicide squads to strike top figures in New Delhi and Madras of India to avenge the recent death of their one-time deputy leader Sathasivan Krishna Kumar alias Kittu, reports Xinhua.

Colombo's influential newspaper 'The Island' reported today that the hit squads belonging to the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have already slipped into New Delhi and the rebels are reportedly getting assistance from Sikh extremists in the Indian capital to launch attacks.

Reports from New Delhi and Madras said that the Indian government has tightened security and a fresh operation has been started to apprehend Sikh extremists in the capital while the Tamil Nadu police has started to round up LTTE cadres in the state capital and other areas.

Kittu, the former deputy rebel leader, and eight other LTTE rebels died on January 16 when they blew up their ship which was taken into custody by Indian Navy in the waters off Madras, Indian and Sri Lankan authorities said.

A friend of Bangladesh passes away in Britain

By S M Ali

A good friend of Bangladesh has passed away in Britain. He is Sir Cyril Pickard, who served as his country's High Commissioner to Pakistan, ending his five-year term in Islamabad during the turbulent liberation struggle in what was then the eastern wing of the stricken country.

Sir Cyril died on December 26, aged 75, as reported in a delayed obituary just published by 'The Times', London.

Recalling the late British envoy's sentiments towards Bangladesh, the obituary says, "His extended five-year tour (in Pakistan) ended less happily (then when he arrived there). He openly criticised Islamabad's repressive treatment of what was then East Pakistan and was snubbed by the Pakistan government in consequence. When he left in 1971, not even a junior official See Page 12 Col 7

Mahathir arrives Feb 12

From Staff Correspondent

Malaysian Prime Minister Dato Seri Mahathir Muhammad would like to have a trip to the countryside for a glimpse of rural Bangla during his forthcoming visit, reports UNB.

Mahathir is due here for a three-day official visit to Bangladesh, beginning February 12.

The Malaysian Premier is likely to be taken to Dhansona, a hamlet in Savar thana, for his acquaintance with the simple lifestyle of the rural people. He will be accompanied by his wife Dato Seri Datin Paduka Doctor Siti Hasmah.

Dhaka-Yangon 13th round of talks tomorrow

From Staff Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, Jan 25: The 13th round of talks between Bangladesh and Myanmar for repatriation of Rohingya refugees will be held on Wednesday at New Circuit House here at 10:30 am, officials sources said today, reports UNB.

Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong Omar Faruque will lead the Bangladesh side at the talks while the Myanmar delegation will be headed by Director General of Immigration U Maung Aung.

Announcement

The inaugural Session of a 5-day Regional Seminar, jointly organised by the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, ESCAP and the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry on "INVESTMENT PROMOTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE ROLE OF PRIVATE SECTOR IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC" will be held on January 27, 1993 at 9:00 AM at NEC Building, Ministry of Planning, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka instead of January 26, 1993, for some unavoidable reason. Inconvenience caused is highly regretted.

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