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 VOL. III NO. 17 REGD. NO. DA 781

The Daily Star

MAGH 17, 1399 BS.

DHAKA SATURDAY JANUARY 30, 1993

SHABAN 6, 1413 HIJRI

12 PAGES: PRICE TAKA 4.00

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Announcement
 Due to unavoidable circumstances, the publication of the Rising Stars page is being delayed by one day. Our young readers will be able to enjoy their favourite page on Sunday, January 31. We apologize to the Rising Stars Club-members and other readers for this inconvenience.
 — Editor

NEWS BRIEFS

- Section 144 in Barisal town**
 From Staff Correspondent
 BARISAL, Jan 29: Section 144 was imposed on some areas near Central Shahid Minar in Barisal town from 6 am to 10 pm tomorrow (Saturday). District administration took the decision to avert clashes between the supporters of BNP-backed Jubo Dal and Jatiya Party. Both the organisations earlier announced to hold rallies at the same place tomorrow afternoon.
- Patuakhali district sub-judge suspended**
 Sub-Judge of Patuakhali district Md Azizur Rahman has been put under suspension in consultation with the Supreme Court on charge of misconduct and corruption, reports BSS.
- 12 AL, BCL leaders held in Jamalpur**
 Police arrested 12 leaders and workers of Awami League and Chhatra League in Jamalpur and issued warrants of arrest against many party workers in Tangail Friday. The Awami League office sources here last night alleged that the police actions were designed to refrain the party workers from taking part in today's pourashava elections, reports UNB.
- Baul Music Festival ends**
 SONARGAON, Jan 29: The three-day national Baul Music Festival '93' ended tonight with State Minister for Cultural Affairs Prof Jahan-ara Begum as chief guest on the occasion. Speaking on the occasion the State Minister said that the government had undertaken various programmes to revitalize the traditional culture. She called upon the private organisations to come forward in this regard, reports BSS.

Muslims barred from juma prayers Police ring Delhi Jama Masjid

NEW DELHI, Jan 29: Police barricaded New Delhi's largest mosque today, barring Muslims from juma prayers in the curfew-bound old quarter of the city where Hindu-Muslim rioting left two people dead this week, reports AFP.

But the capital and other major Indian cities such as Bombay, where clashes between Hindus and Muslims left nearly 700 people dead this month, were calm today, official said isolated clashes were reported in western towns.

In New Delhi, thousands of policemen and border guards ringed the Jama Masjid mosque to prevent Muslims from attending juma prayers, prompting resentment among members of the faith.

About 80 faithful managed to defy a curfew and showed up for prayers.

It is shameful and unfortunate, Syed Abdullah Bukhari, the Mosque's influential Imam, said of the curfew and prayer ban.

"Only 80 people were present today when hundreds of thousands pray here every Friday," the Imam said.

Police slapped an indefinite curfew on the entire walled city Wednesday following Hindu-Muslim clashes that left two people dead, a mosque and a Hindu temple damaged and a dozen shops or homes torched.

"We had orders to keep the zone free of crowds, and we did it," said area police chief Bhimsein Bassi after soldiers surrounded the Moghul-Built Jama Masjid, the chief mosque of India's 100 million Muslims.

Federal officials said the western metropolises of Bombay were calm Friday following renewed clashes three days ago which left two people dead.

They said clashes were reported in Surat, but there were no reports of casualties from the violence in the western Indian town.

Nearly 2,000 people have died in communal violence across India since the December 6 razing of the Babri Mosque last month in the town of Ayodhya.

Pourashava polls today

More than 25 lakh urban voters go to polls today to elect chairmen and ward commissioners of 89 pourashavas out of a total 106, reports BSS.

The elections to Comilla and Narsingdi pourashavas have been postponed yesterday for four weeks by a directive of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

This will be the fifth pourashava elections in the country where a total of 439 candidates are contesting for the post of 89 chairmen while 3890 for the post of 870 ward commissioners. Polling begins at 7 am and it will continue till 3 pm without any break. The voting hour has been fixed to facilitate casting of votes during light.

The Election Commission has completed all arrangements to ensure free and fair polls.

The commission has set up 1264 polling centres under 89 pourashava areas where 17,023 presiding officers have been appointed to conduct the election.

UNHCR gets right to visit would-be Rohingya returnees

By Farid Hossain

The UNHCR returned to the process of the repatriation of quarter of a million Rohingya refugees on Friday after the government granted its officials free and exclusive access to the would-be returnees.

The UNHCR's demand for free access to the would-be returnees has been the main dispute between Bangladesh and the UN body since Dhaka began the repatriation in September last year.

The government conceded the demand in response to UNHCR chief Sadako Ogata's letter last month to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. High Commissioner Ogata raised the allegations of 'coerced repatriation' and urged Begum Zia to grant UNHCR officials free access to the transit camps, where would-be returnees are housed.

In their independent interviews — minus the presence of Bangladesh officials — the UNHCR seeks to determine if the refugees are returning voluntarily. In mid-November the

Repatriation of stranded Pakistanis to be delayed

By Masud Hasan Khan

The promised repatriation of second batch of the stranded Pakistanis is likely to be delayed by several months as Pakistan is not yet ready to take the rest of its national back, officials said.

The second batch was scheduled to fly home sometime in April.

Foreign Ministry officials Friday said that the dates for airlifting of the 2939 Pakistani families could not be fixed because of no green signal from Pakistan.

An unspecified number of refugees in the second batch was expected to go home in two or three months after construction of their houses in Punjab province, they said.

The construction was disrupted because of rains. Islamabad conveyed to Dhaka recently.

In the first batch a total of 325 Urdu-speaking refugees, better known as the Biharis, went home on January 10.

The symbolic repatriation of the families followed a joint declaration by Premier Nawaz Sharif and his Bangladesh counterpart Begum Khaleda Zia during her Islamabad trip last year.

Officials of the Mecca-based Rabitat-al-Alam-al-Islami in Dhaka, which is funding the Biharis' return, said that further airlifting would take time because they did not want the returnees to live again at the camps in Pakistan.

"It is better if they go straight to their new homes," said the Rabita Director Mir Qusem Ali.

Meanwhile, the planned repatriation of an estimated 2.38 lakh Biharis has triggered protests in Pakistan's Sindh province where locals opposed



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia addressing a public meeting as part of her election campaign at Mirpur in city yesterday. — Star photo



Sheikh Hasina addressing an election campaign meeting at Mirpur in city yesterday. — Star photo

Vote Mohsin, strengthen BNP: Khaleda

BNP Chairperson Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said in Dhaka yesterday that BNP was successfully implementing its development programmes and bringing happiness and prosperity for the people, reports ISS.

Calling upon the people to strengthen the hands of BNP, Begum Zia said it had repeatedly been proved to the people that there was no alternative to 'Sheaf of Paddy' to further the politics of development and prosperity upholding the independence and sovereignty of the nation.

The BNP Chairperson was addressing a by-election rally at the 'Bangla Math' at Mirpur. The Prime Minister also addressed two election rallies at 'Lal Math' and Mirpur Section Number Two near Mirpur Stadium.

The Prime Minister said in the last parliamentary elections the people of Mirpur cast their votes correctly in favour of BNP candidate with a belief that BNP would work sincerely for their socio-economic emancipation. She said the government of BNP was working sincerely to live up to their expectations and had already had significant achievements in different development sectors.

Begum Zia said the present government had started from the ruination created by the autocrat. She said the people had fought together for the

Govt holiday in Mirpur Feb 3

The government has declared holiday for all government offices, courts, mills and factories, trading houses and educational institutions located in Mirpur constituency (Dhaka-11) on February 3 on the occasion of the by-election in the vacant seat of Jatiya Sangsad, reports BSS.

At the same time, advice has also been given to grant leave on the basis of applications to concerned controlling authorities of voters residing in the constituency (Dhaka-11) but serving in the government, semi-government, autonomous, semi-autonomous bodies, mills and factories and educational institutions in Dhaka metropolitan and adjacent areas for the convenience of exercising the right of franchise.

Hartal spree shattering Chittagong economically

From Nurul Alam

hartals were observed in Chittagong, reports said.

The same trend is again noticed in the Chittagong port city with the rise of acts of violence from the beginning of the new year, 1993, plunging most of the people here into a sea of frustration.

Consequently, many traders and entrepreneurs here are reportedly considering packing up their businesses, sources said.

The frequent hartals have caused severe dislocation in their business deals and contacts resulting in huge financial losses, sources added.

This month at least five separate hartals were observed in Chittagong disrupting normal life here.

According to reports, a hartal was observed here January 5 to protest the Haldighar incident that left about 18 persons killed during atrocities unleashed by a section of Navy

BTV adds new point to its credit

Star Report

Bangladesh Television, which has earned a reputation for not making impartiality its strong point, added a new point to its credit last night when it beamed reports of Mirpur by-election campaign rallies of both the ruling BNP and the opposition Awami League.

In the BTV coverage, the AL rallies did not find even a cursory reference, let alone a footage.

On the contrary, for more than four minutes, the newscasters in both Bangla and English bulletins gave commentary of what the Prime Minister, speaking at three

Those who voted BNP now repenting: Hasina

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday censured BNP for its 'misrule' in last two years and flagrant breach of its election promises made to the electorates in last parliamentary polls, reports UNB.

"Those who had cast vote for BNP now repent because of its failures and incompetence in resolving their basic problems", she said urging the people to cast their vote for her party candidate in the parliamentary by-election in Mirpur to address to their problems.

The Awami League President was addressing two election rallies at Balurghat and Harirampur on the first day of her three-day election campaign for Kamal Ahmed Mujumdar contesting in the February 3 by-election.

Listing failures of the government in domestic and external affairs, Hasina said the BNP government has sold out the country's interest to India.

She mentioned the Prime Minister's visit to India last year and said Begum Zia who led a longmarch towards Farakka while in opposition did not even discuss the issue with Narasimha Rao in New Delhi.

On the contrary, she said, the Indian government started the 'push-in' operation following an agreement between Begum Zia and Narasimha Rao.

The opposition leader said

DMCH staff go on 4-hour strike today

By DMCH Correspondent

Doctors, nurses and other staff of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) will abstain from duties for four hours from 8 am to 12 noon today (Saturday) protesting storming of the hospital by armed men.

Hundreds of Dhaka University students assaulted doctors and staff of the DMCH and ransacked rooms in the hospital Thursday following death of a university student.

All the medical officers and employees in the DMCH wore black badge yesterday protesting the Thursday's incident.

They will hold a meeting in the hospital at 12 noon today and will announce their next course of action.

The DU students have threatened to launch a violent action programme if no action against the doctor 'responsible' for the death of Yusuf Ali Sheikh was taken by Sunday.

The students alleged Yusuf died unattended at the DMCH Thursday. Meanwhile a group of unidentified men fired two gunshots and hurled several crackers at the DMCH premises near the nurses' hostel Friday evening.

But no one was injured during the incident, witnesses said.

Tax fraud is rampant: Saifur

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday (Friday) called for efficiency and transparency in the country's tax administration to plug huge tax evasion, reports UNB.

"Tax fraud is rampant in Bangladesh ... a dynamic and technically qualified tax administration, capable of enforcing the rules, is the need of the hour," he said, addressing the annual general meeting of the BCS (Tax) Association at the Officers' Club yesterday evening.

The Finance Minister expressed his dissatisfaction in the poor logistics prevailing in the income tax administration.

Employers oppose wage increase

By Inam Ahmed

Employers from all over the country are expected to gather at a special meeting at Bangladesh Employers Association (BEA) office in the city on February 4 to express their strong resentment over the Wage Commission Report which proposes further wage hike.

The meeting is also expected to discuss the impact of the proposed wages and benefits on different sectors and also on industries of different regions.

Apart from the private sector owners, different donor agencies have shown their strong reservation over the recommendations of the report.

According to concerned sources, a World Bank (WB) team, earlier this month, met different private sector and government officials and expressed its reservation over the Wage Commission Report. The WB team observed that none of the public sector cor-

Gold-smuggling case Russian Embassy staff taken on police remand

By Staff Correspondent

A Russian Embassy staff Swapan Das who was arrested Thursday was taken on a three-day police remand Friday.

Swapan was arrested in connection with the sensational gold-case and was detained at the Mint Road office of Detective Branch (DB) for questioning.

So far four persons, one of them a Russian national, were arrested in connection with smuggling of two maunds of gold into Bangladesh from Singapore. They were being interrogated by DB police.

Earlier Vladimir I Lankin, former information officer of Russian mission in Dhaka, two Bangladeshis — Ambrose Gomes and S M Ratan, employees of a clearing and forwarding agent, were arrested.

Yeltsin advocates a Russia-China-India axis for stability

NEW DELHI, Jan 29: President Boris Yeltsin of Russia said Friday that friendship among Russia, India and China would lend new stability and balance to the world, reports AFP.

Yeltsin's focus on Russia's Asian policy in an address to the Indian parliament appeared directed at hardliners in his own country who have criticised his closeness to the United States.

"Peaceful relations between the three largest nations could be a stabilising factor, not only in Asia but in the world," said Yeltsin, who visited Beijing last year.

He praised India's attempts in the last three years to mend its ties with China, which he said paralleled Russia's own moves to end rivalries with Beijing. India and China fought a brief border war in 1962.

Referring to critics who call him pro-Western, Yeltsin said he had given priority to nuclear disarmament with the United States, but that he wanted to "strike a balance between West and East. It is my hope you will support this."

"We have neither a pro-Western nor a pro-Eastern foreign policy," Yeltsin told a news conference later.

"Russia will never play the so-called 'Indian Card' against other countries, as the Soviet Union did against the West during the Cold War," Yeltsin said, repeating his opposition to the 'bloc's' of countries that characterised previous East-West relations.

Like Yeltsin, Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao has come under fire for turning too quickly to the West in a search for foreign investment and financing from agencies such as the International Monetary Fund for the economic reform programme he launched in July 1991.

The Russian leader ended a two-day visit in which he reached a compromise agreement on India's repayment of debts, mostly for past arms purchases, and on co-production of spare parts for India's military.

Russia will build one or two factories in India to produce parts for India's Soviet-supplied arsenal that comprises about 80 per cent of India's military, Yeltsin said.

In his address to parliament that was repeatedly interrupted by applause, Yeltsin also gave India his support in its conflict with Pakistan over the Kashmir province, and said Moscow had no intention of giving military or technological aid to Pakistan.

At the same time, he said, Russia welcomed any step that would lead to a solution of the Kashmir dispute and would do whatever it could to help.

Explaining Russia's stand on Kashmir at a press conference following the speech to parliament