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NEWS BRIEFS

DU confers degree on Prof Salam

The Dhaka University Syndicate yesterday decided to confer Doctor of Science degree on Prof. Abdul Salam, the Nobel laureate Pakistani physicist, for his outstanding contributions in science. Prof. Salam has been playing a key role in the development of science and technology in the 3rd world countries including Bangladesh, reports UNB.

Three judges off to Karachi

A three-member Bangladesh delegation of judges yesterday left Dhaka for Karachi to participate in the three-day second SAARC Law Conference which begins on Thursday. The delegation comprises Justice Mostafa Kamal, Judge of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court and two judges of the High Court Division, Justice Anwarul Karim Chowdhury and Justice Natunuddin Ahmed, reports BSS.

BSP poll: 35 nominations valid

Thirty five nomination papers out of 38 submitted for 17 posts of the Executive Committee of Bangladesh Sangbadpatri Parishad were found valid by the Election Commission of the Parishad. The Commission has already announced a list of the valid candidates, reports BSS.

Armenian govt resigns

YEREVAN, Feb 2: Prime Minister Khosrov Arutunian's government is resigning. President Lev Ter Petrossian announced today. Ter Petrossian told lawmakers that he was forced to sign a decree on the resignation after cabinet ministers said they opposed a programme of economic reforms currently under debate in parliament, reports AFP.

Battle for Mirpur JS seat today

By Staff Correspondent

The by-election to the Dhaka-11 constituency covering the entire Mirpur thana and Harirampur union of Uttara thana that fell vacant following the death of BNP MP Haroonur Rashid Mollah late last year will be held today.

The by-election battle, according to observers, would mainly take place between the BNP candidate Syed Mohammad Mohsin and Kamal Ahmed Majumder of the main opposition party, the Awami League. Fifteen other candidates are also in the fray.

Voting is scheduled to begin at 7 am and continue until 3 pm without any intermission. A total of 2,76,864 voters including 1,56,791 females are expected to exercise their right of franchise in electing their representative to Parliament.

The Election Commission has completed all necessary measures to ensure a free, fair

and peaceful balloting. Adequate numbers of police, ansars and paramilitary BDR will be deployed in the area to maintain law and order. The army would stay on full alert to tackle any law and order situation if necessary, sources said.

The EC has also increased polling centres from 84 to 117 at 70 educational institutions in the constituency. Five hundred and sixteen polling booths have been set up at 117 centres.

Ten vigilance squads of the EC would keep constant watch on the overall situation during voting. Besides, eight mobile courts, led by the Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate, would try election offenders on the spot.

The entire constituency has been divided into four zones with an Additional District Magistrate to oversee the law and order situation in each

zone. Every zone has been split into 12 sub-zones with a First Class Magistrate in charge of each.

A total of 1686 government officials including senior assistant secretaries would conduct the polling.

The by-election in Mirpur has meant drawn particular attention of all concerned as the two leading parties—BNP and AL—have put in their maximum efforts to win it. For the BNP, retaining the constituency has become a matter of prestige while the AL is trying its best to continue its success after winning in the past three consecutive by-polls.

Meanwhile, the Fifth Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) has set a record in the holding of by-elections.

By-election in the vacant JS Dhaka-11 (Mirpur) seat today would put the total of such

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16 killed in road accidents

By Staff Correspondent



A bus was set ablaze by a mob at Mouchak following an accident yesterday. — Star photo

At least 16 people were killed and 66 others injured in separate road accidents in Jessore, Bogra, Dhaka and Comilla yesterday.

Our Jessore Correspondent adds: Seven persons were killed and 30 others injured when a Khulna bound night coach rammed against a road side tree at Mandartala, 12 kilometers off here, on Jessore-Dhaka highway early yesterday morning.

Three out of seven killed have so far been identified. They are Elias, 28, Kohnoor Begum, 20 and Munnu 10.

Twenty five of the injured were admitted to the Jessore General Hospital and the other five to the Jhenidah General Hospital.

The Khulna bound night coach No. Dhaka Metro Chas

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Afghan gunmen ambush, shoot dead 4 UN staff

ISLAMABAD, Feb 2: Afghan gunmen have shot dead four UN staff, including a Briton and a Dutch water resources expert, in an ambush outside the eastern city of Jalalabad, United Nations officials said today, Reuters reports.

Three armed men opened fire on two UN vehicles on Monday afternoon at Surkhidwal about 15 km (nine miles) east of Jalalabad in the most serious attack on UN officials working in Afghanistan, UN officials said.

Briton Tony Bullard, who worked for the UN centre for human settlements, Dutch water resources expert J-A Van Hooft and two Afghan drivers, Abdul Hadi and Zia Al Haq, were killed.

Reinhard Wanrooy, a senior official of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees escaped unhurt by jumping out of his vehicle and hiding in nearby bushes. The gunmen left immediately after the attack.

"The gunmen had apparently been lying in wait," one UN official said.

He said it was not known

who was responsible for the attack, and two senior UN officials flew to Jalalabad from Pakistan today for talks with the Governor.

The UN officials were travelling from the Eastern Pakistan city of Peshawar to Jalalabad in connection with the UN programme of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan.

The bodies were flown back to Pakistan today.

Diplomats said the United Nations might suspend its operations in Jalalabad as a result of the attack.

Jalalabad has been a major centre of UN operations in Eastern Afghanistan since it evacuated all its international staff from Kabul during fierce battles between Mujahideen factions last August.

One western diplomat said the attack could have been carried out by a clandestine fundamentalist group opposed to an international presence in Afghanistan.

The United Nations today demanded Afghanistan to arrest gunmen who shot dead four UN workers.

Two killed in fresh Bombay riots

BOMBAY, Feb 2: Mobs of ghetto residents set fire to homes and exchanged gunfire with police in another outbreak of Hindu-Muslim riots that left two people dead, police said Tuesday, AP reports.

The violence occurred late Monday in the slums of Behrampada, a western suburb of Bombay.

More than 600 people were killed in the second round of violence January 6-18. But clashes are still taking place sporadically in the slums where Hindus and Muslims live side by side. About 25 districts are still under night curfews.

Police opened fire Monday night to control mobs of arsonists in Behrampada, killing one person. When the rioters fired back, another man was killed and a policeman was injured, police said.

PM, Opposition Leader have to collect passes to enter booths

By Staff Correspondent

The Prime Minister, her cabinet colleagues and the Leader of the Opposition will have to collect and show entry passes if they wish to enter the polling booths during today's by-election in Mirpur.

The Election Commission, with a view to ensuring security during the poll, yesterday announced that anybody wanting to visit the polling booths today must also collect entry passes.

The Election Commission yesterday issued passes to political leaders, journalists and diplomats. The EC also issued 70 passes to each of the two major parties BNP and AL. Those who were issued with passes included MPs and central leaders.

No passes were, however, issued to the PM and the Opposition Leader until last night.

These two leaders would, however, be allowed entry without passes as guests of the CEC or Returning Officers.

Gunbattle for salt-field: 2 killed

From Our Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, Feb 2: At least two persons were shot dead and 14 others received bullet injuries in a fierce gunbattle between two groups of people today over occupation of a salt-field in Moheshkhali thana of the district.

As many as 700 people took part in the battle with rifle, cut-rifle, stick, dao and other lethal weapons to establish authority on a 152-acre salt-field at Harighona. About 200 shots were fired during the four-hour gunbattle that began at 10 am today.

Zafar Alam 20, of Fakirghona village and Nurul Huq 32, of Jagirghona died on the spot while Nurul Shaha, Mohammad Sabir and Kabir Hossain were removed to the Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital

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UN urges Dhaka to send troops to Mozambique, Somalia

By Staff Correspondent

The United Nations has requested Bangladesh to provide two battalions to monitor the upcoming polls in Mozambique and to provide another battalion to join the UN Force in Somalia, Foreign Minister ASM Mustafizur Rahman told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

Replying to a question from Workers Party member Rashed Khan Menon, he said that a total of 1155 Bangladeshi military and civil police personnel were currently serving with the United Nations peace-keeping force in Cambodia.

Replying to a supplementary, the minister noted that another 83 Bangladeshis are also serving with the UN force in Kuwait, Western Sahara, Somalia, Mozambique and Yugoslavia.

In Cambodia, he said, there is an infantry battalion, consisting of 45 officers and 805 others, attached to the UNTAC.

In addition, there is a demining unit of 33, with six officers, 21 military police, 19 military observers, eight military

Gold smuggling case Swapon innocent: Russian Embassy

By Court Correspondent

A senior administrative officer of Russian Embassy in Dhaka Swapon Kumar Basa arrested in connection with the sensational gold smuggling case was sent to the Dhaka Central Jail after a three-day police remand Tuesday.

Swapon was produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka yesterday. Meanwhile the Ambassador of the Russian Federation in Dhaka Eduard S. Cheyevchenko and Head of the Consular Department of the Russian Embassy in Dhaka Victor N. Emychev in separate letters to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate certified that Swapon did not have any link with the gold smuggling.

Police-Jamaatmen clashes leave 50 hurt in N'ganj

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Feb 2: At least 50 people were injured in this port town Tuesday in clashes between police and Jamaat-Shibir-Freedom Party activists. Of the injured 15 were police men.

Police fired warning shots and lobbed several dozen tear-gas shells to disperse several hundred stick-wielding fundamentalist activists who tried to force their way to the Eidgah Maidan to listen to Delwar Hossain Saidee's "tafsir mahfil" (religious gathering) violating Section 144.

Police alleged that the fundamentalist activists fired pistol and cut-rifle shots and also hurled more than a dozen cocktails during the three-hour intermittent clashes.

The injured, most of whom were given first aid at the local hospital and clinics, included the officer-in-charge of Narayanjanj and Fatullah police

stations. Police arrested 10 Shibir-Freedom Party activists from the spot, thana sources said.

Witnesses said that the residents mostly children of the Jamtala area, the trouble spot, fell sick as tear-gas enveloped the area.

Tension has been generating in the town over a week following simultaneous announcements of the two-day tafsir mahfil by Jamaat-backed Islamic Janakallyan Majlis and a public rally by the Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Samanyee Committee at the same venue.

The district administration Monday enforced Section 144 banning public gathering at the maidan and deployed police around the venue, to avert possible clashes between rival groups.

On Tuesday the female students of Government Tolaram

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Bills to defer CHT councils' polls passed

Three identical bills were passed in parliament last night providing for extension by one year the time for holding elections to the Local Government Parishads of the hill districts of Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban, reports UNB.

The bills are Rangamati Hill District Local Government Parishad (Amendment) Bill, the Khagrachhari Hill District Local Government Parishad (Amendment) Bill and the Bandarban Hill District Local Government Parishad (Amendment) Bill 1993.

Earlier, as many as 22 members opposing the bills said deferring elections will not help resolve the problems of the hill districts. They called for political solution of the problems faced by tribal people.

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday also passed another amendment bill providing for disinvestment of Bangladesh Shipila Rin Sangstha (BSRS)

17,129 Rohingyas repatriated so far, JS told

By Staff Correspondent

Foreign Minister ASM Mustafizur Rahman told Parliament yesterday that the government had succeeded in "ensuring the right to life and property" of the returning Rohingyas refugees, during a series of meetings with the Myanmar side.

Replying to a question from Awami League member Mirza Azam, he said that as of January 29, a total of 17,129 refugees had been repatriated and that another 2,33,748 refugees were in the camps.

He added that 13 regular meetings had so far been held with the Myanmar side.

Through the dialogues at these meetings, the minister said, the government was able to ensure "recognition of the full religious rights of the Rakhain Muslims including

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30 Hare Road residence for official purpose, JS told

The under-construction residence at 30, Hare Road will be used for official purpose but not for any individual, Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia told the Jatiya Sangsad last night, BSS reports.

Making a statement in the House the Minister strongly denied having said in parliament that the Leader of the Opposition could not be allocated this residence.

What I had stated in parliament was that the Leader of the Opposition had also wanted this House to make her official residence, he said commenting on a press statement made in this regard earlier by Awami League leader Abdul Jalil.

Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia regretted that Jalil in his statement had made unkind remarks about him (minister).

He assured the House that in the future the best residence in the areas where the ministers reside would be allocated to the Leader of the Opposition.

The Works Minister said his ministry had taken prompt steps to renovate and repair the present official residence of the Leader of the Opposition where, he said, a snake was reported to have been found.

JU reopens today

By JU Correspondent

Classes of the Jahangirnagar University resume today (Wednesday) after a 21-day winter vacation.

Dormitories of the university reopened yesterday afternoon which were vacated on January 13 following a series of violent incidents in which the Jatiyabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists were involved.

The JCD members laid a total siege to the campus as they opened fire, ransacked teachers' rooms, held up examinations and detained varsity buses to press for withdrawal of punitive measures against two of its activists.

BCL worker shot dead in city

By DMCH Correspondent

A young man was killed when gunmen opened fire on a procession of the supporters of Awami League-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) near New Model Degree College at Shukrabad in the city Tuesday.

BCL worker Mosharraf Hossain Sikder, 20, died on the spot as he received a bullet in the head at around 1 pm yesterday.

BCL leaders alleged that workers of the BNP-backed students wing Jatiyabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) were responsible for the killing.

Some students of the College who witnessed the incident said that it was a sequel to quarrels between the workers of BCL and JCD of the col-

lege for several months. Following the bloody clashes between the two rival groups the college had also been declared closed several times during last few months, they said adding, "The authorities concerned are yet to take any stern measure against the terrorists."

On Tuesday gunmen opened fire when BCL activists brought out a procession in protest against the armed attack on their workers at the college last Saturday.

Asaduzzaman, a first year student of the college as well as a BCL worker and nine others were injured in Saturday's armed attack.

Following the armed attack

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Bangla Academy held a painting competition for children and juvenile at its premises yesterday on the second day of its Ekushey programme. — Star photo

Malaysia, India sign defence agreement

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 2: Malaysia and India signed today a defence agreement that analysts said could pave the way for Kuala Lumpur's purchase of Russian-built MIG-29 fighters, reports Reuters.

"The agreement will allow logistics support for aircraft that are common to both countries," Malaysian Defence Minister Najib Razak said after signing the pact with his Indian counterpart, Sharad Pawar, in Kuala Lumpur.

Malaysia is considering buying 30 MIG-29s, which have been offered at US dollar 24 million each, and has been looking to India to provide parts and service for the fighters.

India manufactures MIG-21 aircraft under licence from Russia. It has also bought MIG-29s and Hind helicopter gunships from the former Soviet Union.

Defence analysts said Malaysia's signing of the defence agreement took Kuala Lumpur a step closer to concluding its proposed deal with Russia.

"Malaysia cannot fully depend on Russia for logistical support if it decides to go ahead with the MIG purchase. This is where India can help," a defence analyst said.

"India has proven that the Russian aircraft can be operational without major hitches."

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Commentary

Is someone selling Bangladeshi passports to Rohingyas?

by S. M. Ali

An authoritative Hongkong-based regional journal has raised the possibility that out of some 250,000 Rohingyas refugees working in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries, some may be using "spurious" Bangladeshi passports.

In a despatch from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Far Eastern Economic Review says, "Burmese Muslims, deprived of their citizenship by successive governments in Rangoon, had to enter the UAE on spurious Bangladeshi or Pakistani pas-

ports." The report carried by the Review's latest issue is written by Bertil Lintner, an expert on the subject, who has travelled extensively on border areas of Myanmar to study the conditions of ethnic minorities of the troubled country.

The Review despatch provides little details about the use of the so-called fake Bangladeshi passports by Rohingyas. Nor is there any indication as to how many such travel documents might have been used. One is, therefore,

left to guess that the number may well range from 100 to 1,000.

However, Lintner describes what he calls "a typical example" about one Mohammad Sayed, a 56-year old school teacher, who fled to Bangladesh in 1985 where he stayed for four years before leaving for the Gulf. Now back to his old teaching profession, Sayed probably used a Bangladeshi passport for his travel to Sharjah where he was interviewed by the Review cor-

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