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NEWS BRIEFS

Confce on population

A national conference on 'population and development' will begin tomorrow at the Osmani Memorial Hall. Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is expected to inaugurate the conference at 10 am. The conference has been organised on the occasion of the observance of 'Bangladesh Family Planning Fortnight '93', reports UNB.

PS Gopalan dead

BOMBAY, Dec 9: Former editor of the PTI, PS Gopalan, died of old age here today. He was 85. A fond reporter of Mahatma Gandhi, Gopalan was known for his professionalism, sense of discipline, punctuality and courtesy, reports PTI.

Eight held in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, Dec 9: A special team of the detectives of the Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) in a drive arrested eight persons for their alleged involvement in procuring forged licenses of the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) from its office here yesterday, reports BSS.

Two JCD leaders held in Pabna

PABNA, Dec 9: Police arrested two student leaders from the town today and recovered arms and ammunition. The arrested are Hasan Ali, 25, and Jahangir, 24, district committee leaders of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD). They were picked up from near Sadar Hospital at about 7:30 pm. They also recovered a sophisticated shutter gun and some ammunition from the possession of Hasan Ali, reports UNB.

Ivory Coast govt resigns

ABIDJAN, Dec 9: The Ivory Coast government of Prime Minister Alassane Ouattara has resigned with immediate effect, an official statement said today, reports Reuter.

Japanese support for JMB still uncertain

By A Special Correspondent

With the question of Japanese support for the Jamuna Bridge Project still up in the air, the seven-member fact-finding Japanese mission left Dhaka yesterday afternoon after holding extensive talks with officials here.

The team, which had arrived last Saturday to take a closer look at the project, participated in a wrap-up meeting at the Economic Relations Division (ERD) just prior to its departure. The wrap-up discussions were originally scheduled for Wednesday afternoon but had to be shifted at short notice because the Japanese sought more time to study the answers provided by the Bangladesh authorities in response to some of their questions regarding certain technical and financial aspects of the multi-million dollar project.

In the wrap-up meeting the Japanese said that they had received answers to the questions they had about the project. But they still had some doubts about the adequacy of institutional arrangements to implement the resettlement plan which looked fine in principle. The team, however, pointedly refrained from making any statement that will belie support or lack of it for the project. This has left officials in Dhaka, anxious for immediate confirmation of Japanese assistance, baffled. They will now have to wait until the team returns to Tokyo and the Japanese government reaches its final decision. There is no clue about when this will be.

During its five-day stay in Dhaka the Japanese team had intense discussions with Bangladesh officials. Immed-

ately upon their arrival they requested for information from the Bangladesh authorities on a very wide range of subjects. The mission's nine-page questionnaire on economic issues alone contained close to sixty questions. The questions related to the project's economic viability, present economic condition on the west bank of the Jamuna and the government's plan to improve it, the government's ability to carry the fiscal burden of resettlement and maintenance cost of the project and why investment is depressed in Bangladesh.

The government of Bangladesh was given very short notice to prepare answers to these questions. Besides, as one observer pointed out, most of these questions have already been considered by experts be-

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Human Rights Day today

By Staff Correspondent

The Human Rights Day will be observed in the country, as elsewhere in the world, today to commemorate the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations.

The declaration, adopted in 1948, proclaimed a "Common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations." In a message on the occasion, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros Ghali said, "human rights belong to each and every person... human rights reflect our common humanity."

"Only by strength of will and wider political and imaginative vision, we can create an even greater legacy for those who come after us," he added.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, in her message on the occasion said, Bangladesh was firmly committed to promoting human dignity.

The Prime Minister said the people of Bangladesh have a

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Resist those trying to impede nat'l development: PM

ULLAPARA (Sirajganj), Dec 9: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today expressed her determination to carry forward the politics of production despite obstacles created by vested quarters through hartals and destructive programmes, reports BSS.

"They do not think of progress of the nation or solving the problems of the people. Their only concern is to go to power by any means, even at the cost of hampering the progress of the nation," Begum Zia told a huge public meeting here at the government Akbar Ali College ground.

The Prime Minister called upon all to create resistance against those bent on destroying the on-going process of development and increasing production through negative programmes.

Begum Zia said the BNP was the party of the people. It would continue to work for ensuring the welfare of the people on the one hand and furthering the politics of production and development on the other.

The Prime Minister said, "We are confident to implement our programmes as we have full support of the people, which is the vital force for our party," she said.

Begum Zia said the people had already started deriving benefits for electing the nationalist force to power. She said production in every sector had increased sufficiently during this short period of the present democratic government.

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Govt to build memorial at Rayer Bazar

The government has decided to build a memorial for the country's martyred intellectuals at Rayer Bazar in the city, reports UNB.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will lay the foundation stone of the memorial on December 14. On that day in 1971, the Pakistani occupation army and their collaborators had brutally killed many of the country's top intellectuals.

The government has also decided to acquire 3.5 acres of land at Rayer Bazar, the place where they were murdered. Designs for the proposed monument were invited from architects and already initially selected three designs.

The architects of the three designs will be awarded of Tk 25,000, Tk 15,000 and Tk 10,000.

Applications for Hajj to be received upto Jan 15

By Staff Correspondent

Minister for Religious Affairs M Keramat Ali announced yesterday that applications for performing the coming Hajj would be received upto January 15 next year.

At a news conference at the Islamic Foundation hall room in the city, the minister said the deadline had been relaxed to facilitate a large number of people to perform Hajj under the government management. The authorities received 2461 applications until the previous deadline of November 15 last, he added.

Keramat Ali told the journalists that Taka 16,000 was taken from each applicant (till November 15 as house rent in Makkah. However, he added, the rent would vary from Tk 12,000 to Tk 16,000 depending on the size and facilities of the houses.

As in previous years, the

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Order to shift Hasnat to Dhaka Jail

By Staff Correspondent

A High Court bench yesterday ordered that Jatiya Party leader Abul Hasnat be transferred to the Dhaka Central Jail from Jessore Jail, court sources said.

The bench comprising Justice Anwarul Huq and Justice Sirajul Islam also issued a rule asking the government to explain why Hasnat was served with a detention order on Jan 1, 1991 and why his subsequent trial by a special tribunal shall not be declared illegal.

The court's order came following a writ filed by Nasreen Begum, wife of Abul Hasnat, Barrister AR Yousof, appearing for the petitioner, sought the transfer to Dhaka Jail citing health grounds.

Hasnat, a former Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation under the BNP, joined the Jatiya Party at the fall of the Ershad regime and became a minister. He fled to India after the fall of the regime in December 1990.

Abul Hasnat was convicted in absentia and sentenced to jail for six months and a fine of Tk 25000/- in default to suffer imprisonment for another six months under the Special Powers Act.

He was arrested last month from the Benapole border while returning from India.

68 return home from Myanmar jail

From Our Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, Dec 9: Sixty-eight Bangladeshi fishermen have returned to Teknaf from Myanmar jail during last three days.

After several rounds of flag meetings between the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Myanmar Nasaka Force, the Myanmar authorities sent back the fishermen who were picked up by the Myanmar force in November last.

The returned fishermen are the inhabitants of different villages of Teknaf thana. In November last the Nasaka men picked up more than a hundred fishermen, seized fishing boats and nets from the Naaf river.

Hasina accuses BNP of dividing journalists

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Dec 9: Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina accused the BNP of creating division among the journalists again to building up its image as it has lost faith of the people.

The BNP took the same divide and rule policy to win the last election, she said.

She appealed to the country's journalists to reveal the truth through impartial and courageous writings in the interest of the nation.

"Newspaper should not belong to any political party or quarters. It belongs to the people and is the spokesman for the nation, she told a function marking the launching of a Bengali daily Dainik Pathaker

Kago. Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina also accused the government of curbing the freedom of press through various means. "Voice of the press is being gagged by using advertisement or by telephone advice."

UNB adds, referring to political scenario, she said the hard-won democracy has been crippled because of undemocratic decisions and enactment of new black laws like the Anti-Terrorism Act by the present government.

"Democracy is not safe under Begum Zia's government", Hasina said. "The country is again under a neo-autocrat."

She alleged that the BNP

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Prokrichi plans en masse resignation Dec 15

By Staff Correspondent

Some 70 thousand professionals, including doctors, engineers, agriculturists and members of 26 BCS cadres will sign their resignation letters en masse on December 15 to press home their 17-point charter of demands.

They would also go on 3 days leave from Dec 11 to 13 to protest the delay in implementation of four of their demands, organisers told a press conference in the capital Thursday.

The programme for an all-out agitation by the professionals would be announced on January 1, said Dr M A Majed, convenor of the Central Action Council of Prokrichi and 26 BCS cadres.

The 17-point charter of demands includes appointment of professionals to the function-based cadres, separation of the judiciary from the administration, transfer of the

executive powers to elected public representatives and restructuring the present bureaucracy.

The programme of en masse leave and resignation came after the long-drawn negotiation between the government and the leaders of the Action Council apparently bogged down on November 3.

The Prokrichi leaders accused the government of "unnecessarily delaying" the implementation of the government orders on selection grade and removing service anomalies.

The Central Action Council was formed with the members of four national associations of professionals — The Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) Coordination Council, the Engineers' institution of Bangladesh (IEB), the Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) and

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4000 BJP men held across India

NEW DELHI, Dec 9: Police arrested 4,000 Hindu demonstrators across India Thursday, as a strike called by a right-wing Hindu party evoked partial response in New Delhi, reports AP.

The protests were called to condemn the arrests of Bharatiya Janata Party's President Lal Krishna Advani and seven other Hindu leaders on Tuesday in connection with the demolition of an ancient mosque one year ago, the latest crisis in India's Muslim-Hindu relations.

In New Delhi, party lawmakers interrupted Parliament for the second straight day Thursday to protest the arrest of their leaders.

United News of India reported arrest of 3,000 BJP supporters in the southern Andhra Pradesh state during street demonstration. In eastern Bihar state 500 Hindu protesters were taken into custody. Other arrests were reported from the north-central Indian state of Uttar Pradesh.

On Thursday in New Delhi, most schools, colleges and offices opened as usual and the streets, bustling with the usual traffic.

Tens of thousands of policemen, with their iron-tipped canes rested on sidewalks, lounged in the winter sun at street intersections or in front of shuttered shops. Businessmen in the capital have traditionally been BJP supporters.

Advani and the others were taken into custody after they refused to renew bail payments at a preliminary court hearing in Lucknow, the capital to Uttar Pradesh.

The eight leaders have been out on bail since late last year when they were first arrested following the destruction of the Babri Mosque by Hindu fanatics on December 6, 1992.

They have been charged with inciting the tens of thousands of Hindus who had gathered outside the 16th-century mosque in Ayodhya, a holy town in Uttar Pradesh. The destruction was followed by

two months of the worst Hindu-Muslim riots in four decades.

Many Hindus believe the mosque was built by a Muslim general on the site of an ancient Hindu temple that his soldiers leveled.

The BJP recently lost elections in Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, three of the four states where it had held power until last year. The governments in those states were dismissed after the Ayodhya demolition.

In New Delhi, the lower house of Parliament, or the Lok Sabha, was adjourned after BJP members surrounded the speaker's podium chanting "Delhi closed, Parliament closed." BJP members in the upper house, the Rajya Sabha, boycotted proceedings.

The BJP, India's largest opposition group, has emerged as a dominant political force in India in just four years by promoting Hindu nationalism, religion, and age-old anti-Muslim sentiments.

Indo-Bangla border talks end

From Our Correspondent

SYLHET, Dec 9: The 3-day border conference between Bangladesh and India ended here today.

An eight-member Indian team led by PK Pillai, Inspector-General of BSF for Tripura, Kachhar and Mizoram attended the conference. The team included Inspector-General of Shillong RS Mehta, Deputy Inspector-Generals of Tripura (North), Tripura (South) and Gwahati and three other staff officers.

The Bangladesh team was led by the Deputy Director-General of BDR Brigadier TU Iftakharul Bashar. The other members were Sector Commanders of Sylhet, Mymensingh, Comilla, Rangpur, Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban.

Trans-border problems like push-in, BSF firing on Bangladeshis at Muhurchar of Feni and other related matters were discussed.

Murtaza's supporters go on rampage in Karachi

KARACHI, Dec 9: Supporters of Murtaza Bhutto, the jailed brother of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, rampaged through the streets of this southern city Thursday, burning vehicles and stoning police, reports AP.

One boy was shot dead, apparently by a stray bullet fired by Bhutto's followers, police said.

The activists, operating in several small groups around the city, chanted anti-government slogans and demanded that Ms Bhutto's government release Bhutto, who has been jailed since he returned to Pakistan last month, ending 16 years of exile.

"The government should go," shouted one band of protesters, all of them young men. "Murtaza should be released."

Ms Bhutto and her brother are locked in a bitter family feud that has the potential to weaken her new government, which came to power following national elections in October.

The protesters burned at least eight cars and vans early Thursday morning by stopping drivers, forcing them to get out, and then dousing the vehicles with gasoline and setting them on fire, according to police and firemen.

The groups also set fire to a small post office, placed burning tire barricades in the streets and threw stones at police.

Police responded with tear gas in at least one instance. There were no arrests, police said.

Ms Bhutto, 40, and her 39-year-old brother both see themselves as the legitimate successor to their father, former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was overthrown in 1977 and hanged two years later.

Murtaza Bhutto has a core of militant followers despite fleeing the country shortly after his father's overthrow. He remained outside Pakistan until last month. He was elected to the Sindh provincial assembly in October, when he was still abroad.

Upon his return, Bhutto was placed in the Landhi jail near Karachi and faces a long list of criminal charges that prevent him from playing an active political role.

He is accused of masterminding the 1981 hijacking of a Pakistani airliner. The hijacking was seen as an attempt to weaken the martial law rule of Gen Mohammed Zia-ul-Haq, who died in 1988.

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A man on a bicycle hurries by a burning tyre in Karachi during a strike called by the supporters of Murtaza Bhutto, demanding his release. — AFP photo