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NEWS BRIEFS

Reception at
Bangabhaban

By Staff Correspondent
President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Begum Biswas hosted a reception at Bangabhaban Thursday afternoon to mark the 23rd Victory Day.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, ministers, members of Parliament, leaders of different political parties, editors and senior journalists of national dailies, leading industrialists, cultural organisers, university teachers and elite of the city attended the function.

Bhutanese envoy
hosts reception

The Bhutanese Ambassador in Dhaka T. Tobgyel yesterday evening hosted a reception at the Hotel Sonargaon here on the occasion of the National Day of Bhutan. Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Abdus Samad Azad, State Minister for Planning Dr. Abdul Moyeen Khan, editors and senior journalists, among others, attended the reception, reports BSS.

BDPA team
meets PM

A 25-member delegation of the Bangladesh Diploma Pharmacists' Association (BDPA) called on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her Sugandha office yesterday evening. During the meeting, the BDPA leaders put forward various demands and suggestions to the Prime Minister and requested her to consider those in the interest of the pharmaceutical industry. Begum Zia gave them a patient hearing and said that their logical demands would be looked into, reports UNB.

Fire at Khulna
jute mills

From Staff Correspondent
KHULNA, Dec 17: A fire broke out in the Eastern Jute Mills at Fulbari Gate at 3.30 am Friday. The fire gutted the jute wastes of the mill. The damage is estimated to be around taka two lakh.

Fresh vow to revitalise spirit
of Liberation War

People from all walks of life paying homage to the martyrs of the Liberation War at the Savar National Memorial (top) and school girls performing physical drills at the Mirpur Stadium in the city on the Victory Day Thursday (above). — Star photo

By Staff Correspondent

Amid great festivity, the nation Thursday celebrated the 23rd anniversary of the Victory Day with a fresh vow to revitalise the spirit of the Liberation War.

Political and socio-cultural organisations across the country organised rallies and cultural programmes to mark the day.

In the capital, the V-Day was observed with an added fervour and enthusiasm. Several colourful processions were brought out in the capital swarming with thousands of joyous people. Resounding salvos at the crack of dawn greeted the day. At the National Martyr's Memorial at Savar, the guns boomed for 31 times to herald the day.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas was the first to lay a wreath at the memorial at 6:14 am. The President stood in solemn silence for a while to pay his tribute to the heroes of the war.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia was next to pay homage to the martyrs whose sacrifices brought victory for the nation after a bloody war. Ministers, government officials and foreign diplomats were present during the paying of homage by the President and the Prime Minister.

Soon after the departure of the President and PM, hundreds of people poured into the mausoleum complex, some 33 km from the capital, to pay tributes to the war heroes.

The main wreath laying altar was heaped with garlands and bouquets even before the wintry fog could fade away.

Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina went to the memorial at about 9:30 am accompanied by her party colleagues.

A momentary agility was witnessed when the supporters of deposed president Er- See Page 12 Col 4

BRRI to introduce
flood, salinity
tolerant rice

By Inam Ahmed

The country's high-profile agriculture research institution — the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) — hopes to introduce salinity and flood tolerant varieties of rice over the next few years.

"These varieties would be a major breakthrough in rice cultivation," Nur Mohammad Miah, head of plant breeding at the BRRI said. "The annual crop loss because of the floods could be substantially brought down with the new varieties."

Two deep-water varieties of rice are now under test cultivation at Gazipur, Habiganj and Mirzapur. These varieties grow in up to five meters of water and are resistant to the 'ufra' disease.

The new deep-water varieties have been invented through cross breeding with local varieties. The local deep-water vari-

eties are susceptible to the 'ufra' disease, but the improved varieties have been made immune to the virus. These also yield about half a ton more rice per acre than the local varieties, scientists at BRRI claimed.

The new deep-water rice plants are seen as very important because two million hectares of the country's rice growing area out of a total 10.4 million hectares is susceptible to floods.

However, these two million hectares of low land have been reduced only to 0.9 million hectares under rice cultivation currently because the farmers in most places, have stopped planting deep-water local varieties. Instead, they have switched over to irrigated high-yielding variety (HYV) rice.

But with the introduction of See Page 12 Col 8

Prokrichi-govt talks
yield no results

By Staff Correspondent

The government yesterday held talks with the leaders of the country's professionals and urged them to end their agitation, insiders said.

Meeting sources said three members of the Special Cabinet Committee held a meeting with the central leaders of the Prokrichi-BCS Central Action Council.

The nearly three-hour meeting, held at the residence of the Establishment Minister Barrister Aminul Haque late yesterday night, however, ended inconclusively, they said.

Post and Telecommunications Minister Tariqul Islam and Labour and Manpower Minister Abdur Mannan Bhuiyan were also present.

Meeting sources said that

the government side, during the meeting, sought for a "breathing time" from the professionals so that the Special Cabinet Committee could assess the demands of the professionals.

The ministers also called for creating an environment in which the issues could be resolved.

Engineer Ruhul Matin, Secretary of the Prokrichi-BCS Central Action Council, told The Daily Star that the leaders of the professionals, during the meeting, urged the government to implement four of their demands "as a reflection of the government's goodwill."

The government earlier had accepted four of the 17 de- See Page 12 Col 7

No polls can be fair under
BNP govt: Hasina

JAMALPUR, Dec 17: Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina today reiterated her demand for caretaker government for future national elections, reports UNB.

"No elections can be free and fair under the BNP government," she told a huge public meeting at the outer stadium here this afternoon.

Presided over by district Awami League President Matinur Rahman Talukder, the meeting was also addressed by Tofael Ahmed MP, Matia Chowdhury MP, Mozaffar Hossain Paltu, Shamsur Rahman Khan Shahjan, Sultan Mohammad Mansoor Ahmed, Asim Kumar Ukil and Advocate Fazlur Rahman.

The Awami League chief said BNP has miserably failed to run the country. "The whole economy is on the verge of collapse due to wrong policy and inefficiency of the present regime," she alleged.

Hasina said not a single industry was set up during the two and a half years rule of BNP. Instead, several thousand mills and factories were closed down and lakhs of workers

terminated from their jobs, she added.

She demanded arrangement of alternative employment for the retrenched industrial workers and setting up of new industries.

The rural people are facing untold miseries due to exorbitant prices of essentials and low prices of agri-products, the opposition leader said.

She said the Finance Minister had admitted that a huge amount of foreign aid was left unutilised.

If Awami League is voted to power, it will ensure an exploitation-free society by fulfilling the basic needs of the commonman, Hasina told the meeting.

"Awami League has announced its economic policy for the betterment of the people," she said, assuring that it will ensure education, and health for all by formulating people-oriented programmes.

Blaming the government for unleashing terrorism, the Awami League chief said the government has enacted the anti-terrorism law for repres- See Page 12 Col 7

Indian, Bhutanese
teams due today

Contingents of India, Bhutan and the rest of the teams from Sri Lanka and the Maldives will arrive in the capital today to take part in the seven-nation 6th SAF Games beginning December 20 at the Dhaka National Stadium, reports UNB.

A four-member advanced Nepalese team headed by its Chief De Mission and NOC Secretary General Raj Bahadur Singh arrived here yesterday. The remaining contingent of Nepal is expected here tomorrow.

President of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) Ahmed Al Sabah will arrive here on December 23. The Director of See Page 12 Col 7

Improve investment
environment: PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday laid paramount importance on further improving the environment for investment, both foreign and domestic, the boost production, create more employment and accelerate the pace of industrialisation and development, reports BSS.

"We must have to maintain a very congenial climate for attracting huge foreign investments into the country to create more job opportunities, raise output, set up more industries and enterprises and help increase income and alleviate poverty," Begum Zia said.

The Prime Minister was addressing the labour leader of the Jatiyatabadi Samik Dal, Tongi unit, here yesterday evening at her Sugandha office. Labour and Manpower Minister Abdur Mannan Bhuiyan, State Minister for Textiles Abdur Mannan, Samik Dal President See Page 12 Col 4

Top officials asked
to visit schools
during tours

The secretaries and high officials of all the ministries have been instructed by the Prime Minister to visit the primary and secondary schools during their tours to any place in the country.

The instruction has been communicated recently to all concerned by the Cabinet Division.

After the visits, the officials will report to authorities about the condition and problems of the educational institutions, sources in the government said.

According to an authoritative source, the visit of high officials will help the government to get feedback about the prevailing situation in the schools, particularly in the rural and remote areas.

The purpose of such monitoring is to promote and strengthen the mass literacy programme, he said.

The official statistics of 1991 show that the country has 45,917 primary schools while the number of secondary schools is 8,715.

Ahmadiyyas worried
over Friday's
congregation

By Staff Correspondent
Leaders of the Ahmadiyya community in the country yesterday expressed their grave concern over a planned religious congregation in the capital which plans to demand the government announce the Ahmadiyyas 'non-Muslims'.

Tension and a sense of insecurity has heightened among the members of the Ahmadiyya community — better known as the Qadianis — with the preparation for the international congregation organised by the International Majlis-e-Tahafuz-e-Khatme Nabuat, Bangladesh on December 24 at the Manik Mia Avenue.

In a statement, leaders of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, Bangladesh said the President's attendance at the congregation would put his dignified position into controversy.

The Constitution of the country guarantees freedom of expression as well as religious freedom, they pointed out. The Majlis is campaigning See Page 12 Col 6

BNP nominee for Ctg mayorship
Dispute ends as Khaleda intervenes

CHITTAGONG, Dec 17: In-fighting within the Chittagong chapter of the BNP over the nomination for the forthcoming mayoral election, has ended following intervention by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, party sources said.

The incumbent Mayor of Chittagong City Corporation Mir Md Nasiruddin secured the party nomination, overcoming the challenge posed by his rival Ekramul Karim, leader of a splinter faction of the BNP here and General Secretary of the party's Chittagong City Committee.

The BNP Chairperson, during her Wednesday visit to Chittagong, called Ekramul Karim and asked him to support Mir Nasiruddin as per party decision instead of vying for the post, the sources said.

A press release issued here by the BNP unit says Ekramul Karim has agreed to support Mir Nasiruddin in the January 30 mayoral election in line with the party decision.

Of the two BNP factions here, one is led by Minister Abdullah Al-Noman, president of

Varsity officers
begin 10-day
strike today

By DU Correspondent
The administrative officers of seven universities in the country will observe full-day strike for ten days from today demanding implementation of its two-point demand.

The officers demands include amendment of down graded pay See Page 12 Col 5

From Staff Correspondent
The Chittagong City unit of the BNP and the other by Ekramul Karim.

After the split in mid-1991, the splinter faction had formed a rival city committee with Humayun Kabir as the acting president. Kabir, husband of Rosy Kabir, the only lady MP from Chittagong, supported the opposite group led by Noman.

The Chittagong chapter of the ruling party split in 1991 following by the election in the Doublenmooring parliamentary constituency here, vacated by Begum Khaleda Zia.

However, the Ekram group is reportedly enjoying indirect support of Industries Minister Zahiruddin Khan and Communication Minister Oli Ahmed, party insiders said.

The race for the party ticket among the BNP leaders here reached such a stage that it became almost a bruising 'pre-election' primary. All the three aspirants from BNP including Mir Nasiruddin, Ekramul Karim and Advocate Badrul Anwar, the acting president of the BNP city committee representing the Noman group lobbied frantically for the party ticket.

Besides the supporters of Ekramul Karim frequently brought out processions in the city and organised rallies demanding nomination of Ekram instead of Mir Nasiruddin for mayor.

The other aspirant, Advocate Badrul Anwar, also held meetings with the leaders of the divisional Samik Dal to drum up support for his nomination.

Sources say, Ekram's failure to get the party nomination has caused simmering discontent among his supporters.

Brawl in UP Assembly leaves
fifty MPs injured

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: A wild brawl on the floor of the assembly of the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh left at least 50 legislators injured, newspapers reported Friday, says AFP.

MPs from the ruling Socialist Party-led alliance battled members of the Hindu opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on the floor of the House for about 20 minutes on Thursday, they said.

Legislators hurled microphones, water glasses and shoes at one another and a number of MPs were dragged bleeding from the chamber, the Hindustan Times and other newspapers said.

Police were called in and eventually restored order but not before 50 MPs and three security guards had been injured. Twenty persons suffered injuries that required hospitalization in the state capital, Lucknow.

Both parties accused the other of starting the brawl.

"It's a black day, something never seen in a legislature anywhere in India," former BJP Speaker Kesarinath Tripathi said from his hospital bed.

"The Governor should dissolve the assembly. The ruling partymen have behaved like criminals," said Tripathi, who suffered a head injury.

The Socialist Party-led alliance upset the Hindu revivalist BJP in state assembly election held in Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, last month.

The BJP had ruled the state until December 1992, when the BJP government was dismissed by Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao for failing to prevent the destruction of the Babri Mosque, located in the Uttar Pradesh town of Ayodhya.



Injured BJP MP Ram Prakash Tripathi. — AFP photo

'Shraddhanjali'
misspelt

By Staff Correspondent
The devil of wrong spelling haunted the National Martyrs' Memorial at Savar on the Victory Day.

Most of the wreaths, offered as tribute to the martyrs of the Liberation War, carried the wrong spellings of 'Shraddhanjali', including those of the President and the Prime Minister.

On December 5, ahead of the V-day, the government in a handout had requested all concerned to write the word 'Shraddhanjali' (homage) correctly in wreaths, posters, banners, and festoons.

AL, Sangskritik
Jote bring out
processions

By Staff Correspondent
The capital witnessed two huge and colourful processions on the nation's Victory Day Thursday.

The Awami League (AL) and the Sammilta Sangskritik Jote, an alliance of 22 cultural organisations, brought out separate processions to mark the 23rd anniversary of the nation's victory against the Pakistani occupation forces.

The occupation army of Pakistan surrendered to the joint commands of the country's freedom fighters and its allied Indian troops on December 16, 1971 after a nine-month Liberation War waged by the people.

The AL brought out its procession in the afternoon while the Sangskritik Jote rally paraded through the street in the morning.

Sheikh Hasina, the AL chief, See page 12 Col 1

5 murdered in
city in 2 days

By DMCH Correspondent
Five people including two young girls were murdered in the capital during the last two days.

Three murders were committed in the areas under Labagh Police Station while two others at Cantonment and Demra.

A 17-year-old girl, Yeasmin See page 12 Col 1

SOSB congress begins in city

'Develop surgery to reduce
rush for treatment abroad'

President Abdur Rahman Biswas yesterday stressed the need for further developing different branches of surgery to reduce exodus of patients for treatment abroad, reports UNB.

"Expertise in different branches of surgery, including bone, heart and plastic surgery, should be further developed in our country so that people do not rush to foreign countries for treatment," he told surgeons while inaugurating the Fourth International Surgical Congress at the Osmani Memorial auditorium in the afternoon.

The three-day Congress, organised by the Society of Surgeons of Bangladesh (SOSB), is being participated by some 500 surgeons, allied professionals and experts from Japan, Pakistan, India, Singapore, United States and Bangladesh.

Health and Family Welfare

Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, SOSB President Prof M Kabiruddin Ahmed, Secretary General Dr Shaquat H Khundker and Chairman of the Congress Reception Committee Prof A S M Fazlur Karim also spoke on the occasion.

Referring to the government priority to the health and family welfare sector, President Biswas said despite numerous constraints, an amount of Tk 1330.35 crore has been allocated during the current fiscal year in the development and revenue budgets for health and family welfare in the country.

He said the government is also trying to further strengthen the health services, particularly in the rural areas where more than 80 per cent of the population live.

Health and Family Welfare See Page 12 Col 8