



A large Palestinian flag is raised during the Latin Christmas procession in Bethlehem Friday for the first time since the start of the Israeli occupation in 1967. It is also the first year since the start of the Intifada that Santa Claus and another Christmas symbol can be seen all over Bethlehem. — AFP photo

### Bethlehem marks largest Christmas celebration

**BETHLEHEM.** (Occupied West Bank), Dec 25: Pilgrims, tourists and local Christians flocked to the town of Jesus' birth on Christmas Day for the first festive celebration since the Palestinian uprising began in 1987, reports AP.

The clamor of bells bounced off the stone walls of the 1,600-year-old Church of Nativity and across a sunny Market Square. Pilgrims were beckoned to join the traditional Christmas procession to a grotto where priests held Mass at the spot where Jesus was believed born.

The spirits were buoyant as Palestinian Christians donned their finest clothes and greeted foreigners, shopping for souvenirs and writing postcards.

Todd Johnson, an insurance agent for Chicago, said he had been planning this trip for over a year and was delighted he finally made it.

It's a great feeling celebrating Christmas in the town of Jesus," Johnson said.

George Hazboun's sweet shop was packed with shoppers and he was happy.

"Business is great. Christmas should be celebrated in this town everyday," he grinned.

Still, Israeli troops manned lookout posts on rooftops and patrolled the alley ways of this ancient town on alert to prevent attacks. A light over the display of a Palestinian flag over city hall, which threatened to quell the celebrations, was resolved when Israeli authorities allowed it to remain.

It was by far the largest celebration since the Palestinian uprising against the 26-year Israeli rule began six years ago. Previous festivities had been cancelled in protest over the occupation and tourists had stayed away.

But a peace accord signed between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation earlier this year has brought optimism to this town of 60,000.

"For the first time in 10 years we celebrated a true Christmas with joy and happiness thanks to the peace process," said souvenir shopowner Garris Freij.

Police estimated that over 20,000 visitors have come over the weekend. On Christmas Day, Market Square reverted to its role as municipal parking lot, overflowing with tourists buses.

Mayor Elias Freij said the last time he remembered more people in Bethlehem for Christmas was when Pope Paul VI visited in 1964.

At the Vatican in Rome, Pope John Paul II paid a special tribute to peace attempts in Israel and the occupied territories. The pope has said he is considering a trip to the Middle East, and the Vatican and Israel are due to open diplomatic relations next week.

### Indo-Bangla JEC meet

**From Page 1 Col 3**

New Delhi in 1982 while the second one was held at the same venue in May 1990. The third meeting was scheduled for Dhaka in December 1990.

Official sources indicated that the Indian side was likely to seek transit facilities through Bangladesh again. But Dhaka will press for a significant reduction in the trade deficit and a settlement of the water sharing issue before making any commitment on the transit issue.

Bangladesh and India first signed a general trade agreement in March 1972 which was subsequently replaced by another trade accord in 1973 for three years, which provided for a balanced trade payments arrangement.

The agreement was renewed upto September 1990 and later the same year the two countries concluded a third trade agreement, which was renewed for three consecutive years.

According to official figures, Bangladesh's exports to India was worth 9.85 million US dollars in 1992-93 while imports from that country was 34.198 million dollars during the same period. Exports to India was worth 10.9 million dollars in 1986-87 while it increased to 19.61 million dollars in 1989-90, reached a peak in 1990-91 to 31.06 million dollars and declined to only 2.07 million dollars in 1991-92.

On the other hand, imports from India increased steadily over the period with 44.81 million dollars in 1986-87, 149.48 million dollars in 1990-91 and 229.26 million dollars in 1991-92.

Bangladesh's exports to India is confined to only a few items including raw jute, fertilizer and hides and skin. It imports over 50 per cent of the country's total engineering goods from India. Bangladesh also imports a huge quantity of textile yarn for the local garment factories along with dyes, tanning and colouring materials, electrical items, pharmaceuticals, minerals, coal, fruits and spices from India.

At the JEC meeting, the Bangladesh side is expected to propose setting up of joint venture industries, with buy-back options for the northeastern states of India, to off-set the trade imbalance.

The JEC meeting is also expected to provide an opportunity to the two neighbours for discussing their outstanding bilateral issues, including sharing of water of the common rivers, repatriation of the Chakma refugees, demarcation of land and maritime boundary and determination of ownership of the South Talpatty island in the Bay.

During his scheduled stay in Bangladesh, Mukherjee is expected to call on the Prime Minister. He will also hold a meeting with members of the Federation of Bangladesh Chamber and Commerce and Industry and is scheduled to visit the Export Processing Zone in Chittagong. He will also visit Jessore, to meet his in-laws.

### Kuwait Palli to be set-up at Rupganj

RUPGANJ, Narayanganj, Dec 25: A "Kuwait Palli" will be established with the financial support of Kuwait government at Rupganj thana of Narayanganj district where about one hundred homeless families will get shelter, reports BSS.

### Christmas

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Claus, bringing gifts to children while members of the community exchanged greetings and sang traditional Christmas carols.

Some of the main city hotels also organised special programmes and were decorated with lights, trees and Father Christmas in celebration of the biggest occasion of the Christians.

The day was a national holiday.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, in their separate messages, wished merry Christmas and sought the co-operation of the Christian community in building the nation.

The Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina also gave a similar message.

Radio and the television broadcast special programmes while most national dailies carried special write-ups on the significance of the day.

Yesterday, Christmas Mass was held in the morning at the St Mary's Cathedral at Kakrail, the Holy Cross Church at Luxmibazar, Holy Rosary Church at Tejgaon, National Major seminary in Banani, the Catholic Church at Kafurl, Catholic Church at Nayanagar and the Asad Gate Church.

The city's biggest festivity was observed at the Holy Rosary Church at Tejgaon where around 10,000 devotees attended the Christmas programmes, according to the church authorities.

Father Abel D'Rozario, Father Christopher Rozario and Father Pintu Palma conducted the prayers at the Tejgaon Church at 6:15, 7:30, and 9:00 in the morning yesterday.

Members of the church also gave presents and donations for distribution among the poor. All the churches of the country received similar gifts, which will be sent to Archbishop Michael Rozario at the St Mary's Cathedral who will afterwards distribute the gifts among the poor and the needy.

"We should remember God more frequently as the world has become more and more restless," the priests told the masses. "Through prayers there will be more peace and sympathy in this rude world."

"Nowadays, there are more hungry people in the world. The rich nations should make greater contributions to salvage the distressed in the Third World countries. Let us wish that there will not be any hunger in this world," they prayed.

**Hosts**

**From Page 1 Col 4**

day swept all but three of the 12 golds at stake.

But India finished the sixth day of the meet as the untouchable top medal contenders. Their tally stood at 121 with 53 gold medals.

Shri Lanka are in the second position with a haul of 74 medals, including 21 golds.

Yesterday also marked the completion of two disciplines. The curtain came down on athletics, the piece de resistance of the Games with India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan sharing the 10 golds up for grabs on the concluding day at Mirpur.

### Trucks are the killers

**From Page 1 Col 4**

cent of the passengers felt it was exorbitant while 16.01 per cent said that the government should take steps to control fare hike.

Forty per cent of the passengers emphasised harsh punishment for drunken driving and suggested that the government should place fare charts at all bus stoppages.

On the objective and achievement of the 'traffic week' being observed by the Dhaka Metropolitan Police every year, 28.88 per cent of the passengers observed that the programme succeeded in increasing awareness of the people while 28.88 per cent believed that it was only a token publicity.

However, 8.88 per cent felt that the observance of the traffic week was a means to 'extra earnings' of the administration and police.

When asked if they were happy with their present mode of transport, 72 per cent of the respondents replied in the negative.

### Doctors in Sirajganj tender resignation

**SIRAJGANJ, Dec 25:** All doctors of different government hospitals and clinics in the district tendered their resignation to local BMA leader as part of their mass resignation programme to press for democratisation of administration, reports UNB.

A total of 61 doctors from nine hospitals and health complexes led by Civil Surgeon Dr Mattur Rahman tendered their resignation to Dr Zahurul Huq Raja, the General Secretary of the district unit of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) this morning.

### ADP

**From Page 1 Col 7**

ertes and Livestock and Forests and Environment, only 23 per cent of the annual investment target has been realised. In case of the Ministry of Irrigation, 23 per cent of annual investment target has been achieved.

Sources say that the key constraint to faster utilisation of foreign aid and quicker implementation of the ADP is inadequate delegation of financial and administrative authority. The Prime Minister had instructed for greater delegation of authority more than a year ago. But the committee that was appointed to bring about necessary procedural changes to implement this instruction is yet to complete its task. Senior cabinet members are known to have expressed their deep dissatisfaction over this delay.

Concerned over the slow pace of aid utilisation, the ERD has started ringing the warning bell. A series of review meetings with all aid utilising ministries and agencies was launched last week. Prior to that, Finance Minister Saifur Rahman held a meeting to review ADP implementation in the agriculture, fisheries and livestock, forests and environment and irrigation sectors. In this meeting the Ministers for Agriculture and Irrigation, Fisheries and Livestock and the State Minister for Planning were present.

Donor representatives in Dhaka are watching the emerging picture in the field of ADP implementation with a great degree of concern. Major donor representatives are saying that ADP implementation in the previous year was particularly bad. But, the outlook is that it can be even worse this year. In the backdrop of this outlook, the donors are pressing the government to undertake serious administrative reform to remove bureaucratic inefficiency.

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The Bangladesh Fly Weight boxer Mozammel Haque won the gold medal in the Sixth SAF Games by defeating a Pakistani boxer at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday. — Star photo

### Trucks are the killers

**From Page 1 Col 4**

Giving instant reaction to the survey, Christopher Gomes, president of the Bangladesh Truck Owners Association, said drivers, owners, people and police were equally responsible for the road accidents.

"We never want an accident and we're sympathetic to those who lose their kith and kin," he said, "but consider the conditions of some of our roads and highways, lack of training of the drivers, poor maintenance by some of the transport owners and regular pay-off to the policemen."

Gomes pointed out that driving became particularly hazardous when the roads were full of pot-holes, no resting facilities for the truck drivers and pedestrians.

He pointed out that there were no facilities for the training of those who became drivers from the position of helpers.

There are some 35,000 trucks now in operation across the country, he informed, and added: "Some 60 thousand people were involved in the bus and truck transport."

### Politicians pay last respect to Tanaka

**TOKYO, Dec 25:** Politicians paid last respects on Saturday to former Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka, the "Shadow Shogun" who was one of Japan's most powerful post-war leaders until he was brought down by the Lockheed Bribery Scandal, reports Reuter.

Tanaka, suffering from diabetes, died at the age of 75 in hospital on Thursday last week after contracting acute pneumonia.

**Excess liquidity**

**From Page 1 Col 7**

crore paid-up capital. But the necessity of maintaining a five per cent paid-up capital reserve is often becoming difficult, banking sources said.

High management cost has again been identified by bankers as a reason for the profit cut resulting in the poor capital adequacy. They now feel that if there had been a strong capital market, the banks could be relieved from the pressure of retail banking to a great extent. This, they observe, could lower the management cost and make the banks more active in their business.

Bankers now view the situation as a liability management problem, and feel that only investment activities can bail out the situation.

### Mizan: BNP

**From Page 1 Col 4**

incompetent. During the two and a half years of BNP in power, country's economy neared a collapse. About 4,500 mills and factories across the country have been closed down retrenching thousands of workers and employees.

Terminating the now-defunct Upazila the focal point of development of the country, he said BNP abolished the Upazila system, introduced by the JP regime, out of rivalry.

Kazi Zafar blamed the BNP government for terminating lakhs of industrial workers on the prescription of World Bank and IMF.

"BNP had promised if voted to power, it would scrap the Special Powers Act within 24 hours. But even after two and half years in power, they did not fulfil their promise, rather enacted another black law - Anti-terrorism Act - to harass the opposition," he said.

Former BNP leader and Kalliganj Poura Chairman Abdul Mannan and two ward commissioners with a large number of supporters joined Jatiya Party at the meeting.

### Sugar mill workers' 8-hr strike today

The Bangladesh Sugar Mill Workers' Federation has called for an eight-hour token strike today. In all sugar mills demanding withdrawal of the government decision to sell out the Shyampur Sugar Mills, reports UNB.

There are 19 Sugar Mills in the country.

Labour leaders of the jute, textile and sugar mills in a joint statement last night extended support to the strike call and asked the workers to make it a success.

### Concern over move to amend varsity ordn '73

**By Staff Correspondent**

University teachers expressed their concern over the proposed amendment to the University Ordinance of 1973. Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education in a meeting today is expected to bring the changes in the Act.

Teachers' Associations of Dhaka and Jahangirnagar University and Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers' Association (FBUTA) in separate statements yesterday felt the proposed changes would pose a threat to the democratic rights of the teachers as provided in the University Act.

The DUTA statement, issued by its general secretary Badrul Alam, said that the Act of 1973 epitomises the conscientiousness achieved through the education movements from 1962 to 1964, mass movement of 1969 and the Liberation War of 1971.

The camouflaged anti-democratic forces in the government have never liked the autonomy in the universities," the statement said, adding, "over and again these forces indulged themselves in demeaning the autonomy of the highest educational institutions."

The JUTA statement, jointly issued by its president Prof Khandaker Mustahidur Rahman and general secretary Prof Sharif Enamul Kabir, described the proposed changes as an attempt to establish government's control over the universities.

The FBUTA in a statement signed by its general secretary Dr Abdul Rahim expressed determination to resist any such amendment. FBUTA was campaigning for democracy.

The FBUTA hoped that the Parliamentary Standing Committee would seriously consider the teachers' views to avert any unfortunate situation.

### 6 killed in separate mishaps

**By DMCH Correspondent**

At least six persons were killed and one received explosion injuries in separate incidents in the city and its suburb areas yesterday.

One auto-rickshaw driver Mujibar Rahman instantaneously died when a loaded barrel from another three-wheeler crushed his windshield and broke in.

Witnesses said, Mujibar's vehicle rammmed onto the other vehicle carrying some barrels near the crossing of the Sangsad Bhaban at around 11:00 am yesterday.

Another ageing man Osman Ali, 60, was crushed under the wheels of an auto-rickshaw near Dhakeshwari temple in Bakhsibazar area of the city. Doctors declared him dead at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) when he was taken there.

A body of an unknown person, who reportedly died from a road mishap, was sent to the DMCH by Gulshan police. Details of the accident, however, were not available.

Railway police recovered the crushed body of a young girl from Nakhla para level crossings in the city. The victim was reportedly killed by a running train.

Meanwhile, outside the city at Hemayetpur on the Dhaka-Aricha highway a milkman Faruq, 18, was killed by a speeding minibus. A minor boy Biplab, 7, succumbed to his head injuries yesterday. He fell down from a house top of Mohammapur.

At Sayedabad, Abdul Bareq, 50, was injured when a cracker exploded near him. All the bodies were sent to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

### Assaduzzaman

**From Page 1 Col 8**

He left behind his wife, five sons, two daughters and a host of relatives and friends to mourn his death.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali, Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina and leaders of different political parties expressed their deep shock at the death of the veteran parliamentarian and expressed their heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family while praying for the salvation of the departed soul.

The Finance Minister was addressing a meeting at Kamar-chara here yesterday.

Outlining various steps undertaken by the government to develop education, including female education, the Finance Minister said since women constitute half of the population, no nation can prosper leaving them uneducated. He said the government had also introduced Food for Education programme to encourage primary education.

### Tk 3500 cr for education next year: Saifur

**RAJNAGAR, Moulvi Bazar, Dec 25:** Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman has said Taka 3500 crore will be allocated for the education sector next year and total allocation in the Food for Education programme will be threefold of the current year, reports BSS.

He said necessary budgetary provision in the education sector will be made each year to ensure education for all by year 2000.

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### Hasina

**From Page 1 Col 3**

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"Text books are spreading false and distorted history about the Liberation War which is creating an adverse impression in the mind of the young generation," she alleged.

Later, Sheikh Hasina distributed prizes among the winners of the art competition organised by the Bangabandhu Shishu-Kishore Mela.

Earlier, it was announced that March 17, the birth day of Bangabandhu, will be observed as the national juvenile day by the mela's members all over the country from 1994.

Earlier, one-minute silence was observed as a mark of respect to the Shaheeds of the Language Movement and other subsequent movements, shaheeds of the Liberation War, Bangabandhu and others killed in 1975 and Shaheeds of the period between 1975 and 1993.

UNB adds: Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her party would continue the struggle for bringing about economic emancipation of the poor and deprived people in society.

Addressing a big rally of truck drivers at 29 Minto Road at night, she said basic rights of the common people to work, food, education, health and shelter have not been ensured even after 22 years of independence.

Awami League sources said more than 5,000 leaders and workers of Bangladesh Inter-District Truck Drivers' Union led by its President Abul Hossain joined the Awami League with a promise to materialise the ideals of Bangabandhu under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina.

## The Midnight File

### Kidnappers ignore Russian govt demand

**MINERALNYE VODY (Russia), Dec 25:** Four masked kidnapners ignored a Russian government demand to free their five hostages and surrender, announcing plans to take off Saturday night in a helicopter packed with explosives and 10 million dollar in ransom money. The demand followed hours of fruitless negotiations with the gunmen, who were unable to take off throughout the day because of clouds and fog. Later, as the weather began to clear, the kidnapners announced that they planned to take off after 10 pm local time (1700 GMT), apparently with the hostages aboard. Then they cut off all communications, reports AP.

### Trial of Russian chemical weapons expert opens Jan 6

**MOSCOW, Dec 25:** The trial of Russian chemical weapons expert Vil Mirzayanov, accused of revealing state secrets in a newspaper article, will open January 6 — behind closed doors, the Scientist said Saturday. Mirzayanov was arrested in the fall of 1992 after reporting in the weekly Moscow News that Russia has secretly tested a powerful binary chemical weapon in apparent violation of international agreements, reports AP.

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