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by Prof Jayadeva Uyangoda
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Dhaka Day by Day



Sultan of an Elusive World

NEWS BRIEFS

BNP leader expelled

Advocate Enamul Haq of Rajshahi has been expelled from the BNP for violating party discipline, according to a party press release in Dhaka last night. His primary membership has also been cancelled. BSS.

Youngman stabbed to death in city

A youngman was stabbed to death by a gang of unidentified miscreants at Kawran Bazar in the city yesterday. The assailants stabbed Abul Bashar, 32, supervisor of the Hossain Garments, was returning home through Kawran Bazar at about 7 pm, hospital sources said. Bashar was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where the attending doctors declared him dead, reports UNB.

Arafat arrives in Cairo

CAIRO, Dec 29: PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat arrived today in Cairo, where he was due to discuss with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak problems in the talks with Israel. Egyptian presidential adviser Osama el-Baz told Reuters, "We will be meeting Chairman Arafat tonight and we will inform our Israeli friends of the results of the discussions."

Govt move to end Prokrichi agitation 50 pc Scale 9 posts upgraded

By Staff Correspondent

The government, in a bid to end the long-drawn on-going agitation of the Prokrichi-BCS, late last night issued a press note stating that it had decided to transform 50 per cent posts of the national pay Scale-9 (Tk 2850-Tk 5150) to Scale-7 (Tk 4100-6500) as selection grade.

It also decided to upgrade the posts of nine cadres, including five engineering cadres, at the district level and its equivalent to Scale-5 from Scale-6.

The press note recalled that the government had set up a seven-member Cabinet committee on December 7 last with a view to establishing an efficient, accountable public administration based on justice. The committee would submit its full report within six months.

The government expressed the hope that all BCS cadres would extend their cooperation "considering the good intention of the government, so that the committee could work smoothly."

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Mirza Abbas resigns

By Staff Reporter

The Mayor of Dhaka Mirza Abbas MP, yesterday resigned his post prior to filing his nomination for the upcoming DCC polls January 30.

The resignation letter was signed at the Secretariat office of the LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder at 10 in the morning. Later, Abbas publicly announced his resignation at a rally near the Pirjangi mazar in Motijheel in the city just before going to submit his papers to the Returning Officer to contest the Dhaka City Corporation mayoralty as a nominee of the ruling BNP.

Addressing the rally at 11 am, Mirza Abbas said: "To me, it is all the same, whether to

26 file nominations for DCC mayoralty

By Staff Correspondent

Twenty-six candidates filed nomination papers to contest the post of mayor and 916 others for the posts of 90 ward commissioners of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) yesterday.

The Returning Officer, assisted by other Election Commission officials, received the forms at the ground floor of the Divisional Commissioner's office at Segun Bagicha in the city from 10 am to 5 pm amid tight security.

Yesterday was the last day for filing nominations, which will be scrutinised today to prepare a primary list of the candidates for the January 30 polls

of the DCC. The last day of withdrawal of candidacy is January 5.

The 26 mayoral candidates include Mirza Abbas of the ruling BNP, Mohammad Hanif of the Awami League, Col (Retd) Abdul Malek of the Jatiya Party, A T M Azharul Islam of the Jamaat-e-Islami and Manzurul Ahsan Khan of the 10-left party alliance.

Mirza Abbas resigned from the post of mayor yesterday morning before submitting his nomination paper.

The BNP, AL and JP are contesting in all the 90 wards of the DCC while the Jamaat is

Industrial workers call half-day hartal Jan 24

By Staff Correspondent

Several thousand industrial workers converged yesterday at the Bangabandhu Avenue where their leaders announced a half-day hartal on January 24 to press home a nine-point charter of demands.

The workers, wearing red belts and carrying banners and festoons, belonged to the five workers' federations which have been campaigning for a common charter of demands. The demands include implementation of a previously signed agreement between the workers and the authorities, implementation of minimum wages in all mills and factories, stopping the retrenchment of workers and

PM addresses BIT convocation

Apply science for rapid change in our condition

KHULNA, Dec 29: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today emphasised on proper application of appropriate technology to accelerate the country's economic development, reports UNB.

"A rapid change in our condition is possible if we can achieve progress in the field of science and technology," she told the first convocation of the Bangladesh Institute of Technology (BIT) here in the afternoon.

The Prime Minister said proper application of technology boosts productivity particularly in the agriculture, industry and service sectors, increases resources and accelerates the economic growth.

She pointed out that the

country's most valuable natural resources remained untapped as the human resources could not be utilised properly.

Begum Zia said poverty of pervasive nature can be removed if appropriate technology flourishes in the country.

"Let technology be the medium of our day-to-day affairs," she said adding that productivity will increase rapidly if technology is utilised successfully in agricultural sub-sectors like pisciculture, poultry and livestock, and in afforestation.

The Prime Minister distributed gold medals among 20 students for their outstanding performance in academic pursuits.

The function was also addressed by

Accord on Israeli pullout from occupied areas

CAIRO, Dec 29: Israeli and PLO negotiators said Wednesday they have agreed on a framework to resolve issues blocking their peace accord, but Palestinian leaders insisted Israel still isn't honouring prior commitments, reports AP.

"The two delegations have reached a meeting of the minds," Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres told a news conference after a joint meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

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He added that "there were issues that we couldn't achieve" that will be referred to other negotiating teams for more discussion.

One Palestinian official who insisted on anonymity said it could take another 10 days to iron out details.

Another cut in lending rates likely

By Isam Ahmed

Most banks in the country are likely to go for another reduction of their lending rates, possibly next month, in view of an excess liquidity situation and the stiff competition in the money market, according to banking sources.

"There is scope for about a two per cent cut in the lending rates," a high nationalised commercial bank (NCB) official said on condition of anonymity. "We will consider this and take actions next month."

Most bankers, however, are sceptical about any speeded up credit activities because of a possible cut in rates.

"Despite the recent slash in lending rates, the demand for loans did not show any significant improvement," Kazi Abdul Majid, Managing Director of the Pubali Bank, told The Daily Star.

However, sources said there has been an informal request

from the Finance Ministry to lower the rates because of the depressed demand situation. There has also been pressure from the business circles in this regard.

Lending rates of the commercial banks now range between nine and 15 per cent for the NCBs and between 11 and 15 per cent for private and foreign banks.

Lending rates were lowered last in October at the insistence of the Finance Ministry.

Prior to this refixation, the rates were between 12 and 18 per cent.

The NCBs and foreign banks are now offering lower rates than the private banks, which the private bankers feel has made them uncompetitive.

"To make ourselves competitive with the foreign and public banks, we have no option but to lower our rates," one high official of a private bank said.

Bankers said the past cuts had only resulted in some greater credit supply in the shrimp sector. Otherwise, other fronts remained rather quiet. "Even the garments sector, which always placed demands for large sums, was not so vigorous because of an oversaturation of orders, bankers reported.

The new cuts would be accompanied by a reduction in the banks' manpower to lower the cost of funds. "But we may ultimately go for cut in the deposit rates," another banker maintained.

"Again, this will affect the small savers." In that case savings certificates would help the savers very little because they would not be able to draw money at will by changing the certificates in small amounts, experts observed.

Saudi consultative body takes oath

RIYADH, Dec 29: King Fahd stressed the Islamic basis of Saudi Arabia when the 60 members of the country's new consultative council, holding its first meeting here today, took their oaths of office, reports AFP.

At the swearing-in ceremony on Tuesday, the King affirmed: "This country is attached to the Sharia (Islamic law), in the letter and in the spirit, and accepts nothing that is not in conformity with Islamic faith."

The official SPA news agency said the King added that the Sharia was "among the best systems in the world" in the economic, social and scientific fields.

It mattered little that some

people queried why there were no elections in the kingdom, King Fahd said.

The 60 councillors of the 'Majlis al-Shura' were named in a royal decree on August 20.

The council - the first of its kind since the Saudi kingdom was set up in 1932 - will discuss policy and planning, serve an initial four-year term and take decisions by majority vote.

According to terms laid down by King Fahd, it will submit decisions to the monarch who will judge if there is disagreement. The council will also be able to question the ministers.

The body is made up of academics, businessmen and religious figures, some of whom are reputed to be liberals.

Four killed in train accident at Darshana

From Our Correspondent

CHUADANGA, Dec 29: Four people were killed and 13 others seriously hurt in a train accident at Akundabaria near Darshana this morning.

Two of the dead were identified as Nurjahan, 50, and Hashem Ali, 80.

All victims were killed on the spot. The injured persons were taken to the Sadar Hospital. Conditions of three, were said to be critical.

The incident occurred when a luggage van fell off the tracks, damaging other vans of the same train. The mail train (25 Up) was coming from Khulna and was heading towards Goalundo station.

The District Commissioner visited the spot soon after.

Marathon debate in Parliament over bank scam

Opposition asks Rao to quit

NEW DELHI, Dec 29: The Indian opposition today demanded the resignation of Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao because of a 1.3 billion-dollar banking and securities fraud that has already caused the Finance Minister to quit, reports AFP.

The main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) asked Rao to step down for failing to prevent the scam, which erupted last year and wiped out thousands of stock investors.

The Prime Minister must resign to keep the honour of

the country, whose image has been tarnished by the scam," party leader Murli Manohar Joshi said in Parliament during a marathon debate.

Hari Kishore Singh of the centrist Janata Dal backed the demand, saying the 72-year-old Rao should resign on moral grounds following the completion of a parliamentary investigation into the scam.

The opposition demands followed the resignation last week of India's respected Finance Minister, Manmohan Singh, after he was blamed for the scandal by a Joint Parlia-

mentary Committee (JPC) following a 15-month probe.

Rao has not acted on the resignation despite widespread appeals from the industry and media to retain the former World Bank economist, the architect of the country's radical economic liberalisation.

Manmohan Singh, 61, attended Parliament today and heard opposition MPs berate him for the scam in which a coterie of bankers and brokers artificially jacked up stock prices using public funds.

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Mirza Abbas of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (third from left, top) and Mohammad Hanif of the Awami League (fourth from left, above) submitting their nomination papers to the Returning Officer in the city yesterday for the Dhaka City Corporation mayor election scheduled for January 30. — Star photo

Reactions of 4 aspirants

The mayoral candidates of different political parties yesterday promised to resolve the problems of Dhaka, the capital, and enhance civic amenities for the city dwellers, reports UNB.

Mirza Abbas, MP of the BNP, Mohammad Hanif of the Awami League, Col (Retd) A Malek of the Jatiya Party and Manzurul Ahsan Khan of the 10-party Left front gave their instant reactions after filing nomination papers for the post of mayor of the Dhaka City Corporation.

Mirza Abbas told newsmen he had become a mayor candidate to sustain the trend of development in the metropol.

To a question, Abbas expressed his optimism of winning the election scheduled for

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Rival BNP panels for Ctg city polls

From Nurul Amin

CHITTAGONG, Dec 29: The Chittagong chapter of the ruling BNP has run into fresh problems over the nomination of candidates for the commissioner posts in the Chittagong City Corporation polls, party insiders said.

The trouble began as a faction of the BNP here fielded a counter panel of candidates to contest the posts of ward commissioners in the January 30 elections.

With tomorrow being the last date for the withdrawal of candidature, the leaders of the BNP city committee here, led by minister Abdullah Al Noman, held a marathon meeting at the party office on Tuesday night to break the stalemate by

fielding consensus candidates for ward commissioners. But most of the candidates supporting the splinter faction were reportedly absent from the meeting, which continued till 2 am, Wednesday.

Party insiders say, in-fighting in the Chittagong chapter of the BNP has become a 'chronic problem' here despite efforts made by the party leaders on several occasions to remove the irritants.

Earlier, the internal feuding in the BNP here emerged over the nomination of candidates for the mayoral post. The matter was settled with the intervention of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia during her

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Delhi to discuss Kashmir with politicians

Amanullah Khan released

ISLAMABAD, Dec 29: A top Kashmiri militant leader Amanullah Khan was freed in Brussels today after nearly two and a half months' detention, a Foreign Ministry official said here, reports AFP.

Khan, chairman of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), one of several groups waging a campaign for freedom in Indian-controlled Kashmir, was detained in the Belgian capital on October 18.

The official said the Belgian authorities had informed Pakistani ambassador in Brussels, Rifaat Mehdî, that Khan was being

involved in some murders. He said it was not yet clear whether Khan had been released as a free man or he was being deported. "We are trying to ascertain the basis for his release," he added.

The JKLF chairman was detained in Brussels while attending an international conference on Kashmir organised by the socialist group of the European Parliament.

The arrest, strongly condemned by Pakistan and Kashmiri parties here, was made on an Interpol warrant issued on Indian charges of his

involvement in some murders. Meanwhile, the Indian government has called a meeting of political parties to discuss the future of Kashmir, as 12 people died in violence linked to the Muslim separatist campaign in the northern state, officials said in Delhi today.

Local leaders of various parties will meet in the state's summer capital, Srinagar, in the second week of January in a bid to initiate a political process in Kashmir. Internal Security Minister Rajesh Pilot said.

It would be followed within

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580 tolas of gold seized, one held at ZIA

By Staff Correspondent

Customs surveillance team seized 580 tolas of gold worth Tk 34.80 lakh from a passenger who came from Dubai at the Zia International Airport (ZIA) yesterday.

The passenger — Sulaiman Hudaib — who came by an Emirates flight (EK-610) in the morning was caught and sent to the Cantonment police custody for carrying the gold illegally.

A customs source said that 58 gold bars each weighing ten tolas were found hidden inside two electric irons in a shopping bag of the passenger.

DUTA will resist amendment to Varsity Ord'n '73

By Staff Correspondent

Teachers of Dhaka University have planned fresh actions to resist the government's bid to amend the University Ordinance 1973.

The teachers will hold a protest procession in the first week of January and finalise other programmes, including submission of memorandums to the Speaker, the MPs, the Prime Minister and the President, at a meeting on Friday.

The Dhaka University Teachers Association (DUTA) at a meeting yesterday also said the government initiative would spoil the academic atmosphere.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee has almost finalised amendments to the University Ordinance for Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chittagong, and Jahangirnagar Universities.

Yesterday's meeting at the teachers' club was chaired by DUTA president Prof Saeedur Rahman and addressed among others by Prof A M M Shahidullah, Prof A K Azad Chowdhury, Prof Mustafa Chowdhury, Dr Mahfuzur Rahman, Prof A K M Saduddin, Prof Syed Ahmed Khan, Prof Rangsala Sen, Ferdous Hassan and Arif Billah.

Zhirinovsky back home as Bonn refuses visa

By Staff Correspondent

SOFIA, Dec 29: Russia's ultra-nationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky flew back to Moscow today, an international pariah after being expelled by Bulgaria and refused a visa to Germany, reports AFP.

Russia's ambassadors to Sofia and Bucharest were both summoned this afternoon to hear complaints about remarks made by the far-right Liberal Democratic leader during his tumultuous visit.

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In Australia, Jewish groups outraged by Zhirinovsky's stance on anti-semitism lobbied to have him denied entry on learning that he planned to visit his niece in Sydney.

Zhirinovsky was given his marching orders on Tuesday by the government in Sofia for "insulting" President Zhelio Zhelev and "inadmissible interference in the domestic affairs of a sovereign state," which the Interior Ministry said "could complicate relations between Bulgaria and its neighbours."

He immediately announced his intention to fly to Berlin, but plan was scotched this morning when the German government made it clear he was not welcome.

Government spokesman Dieter Vogel said it was "not in German interests" that Zhirinovsky, known for his xenophobic and anti-semitic remarks, should be allowed to make them on German soil.