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NEWS BRIEFS

DU reopens today

Classes of the Dhaka University will resume today after 8 days of winter vacation. The classes of DU remained closed from December 25 on account of Christmas day, winter vacation and new year's day, reports UNB.

Silwal takes office

KATHMANDU, Jan 1: A distinguished senior Nepalese diplomat Yadvav Kanta Silwal took office of Secretary General of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) from today. Silwal replaced Ibrahim Hussain Zaki of the Maldives as the fourth Secretary General of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, reports Xinhua.

Irish minister due in city Jan 10

Irish Minister for Defence and Marine David Andrews is expected to pay a four-day visit to Bangladesh, beginning January 10. Diplomatic sources said yesterday during his stay here, Andrews would meet Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman and other government leaders to discuss matters of common interest, reports UNB.

Ex-chairmen of Zila Parishads meet today

A meeting of former chairmen of Zila Parishad will be held today at the National Book Centre auditorium at 2 pm. Former prime minister Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury will attend the meeting as chief guest while former vice-president Barrister Maudud Ahmed as special guest, reports UNB.

Kashmir talks resume in Islamabad today

ISLAMABAD, Jan 1: Indian Foreign Secretary Jyotindra Nath Dixit arrived here late tonight for talks on the Kashmir dispute, hoping to bridge differences between the two rival neighbours, reports AFP.

The two countries have different perceptions. From these, we proceed to explore each other's attitude," Dixit said in a cautious statement at the Islamabad airport.

He said his delegation would try to reduce the distance between the perceptions on the basis of reason.

Recognising Kashmir as a dispute, he said, "Somebody who says it is not is not seeing things objectively."

Pakistan expressed pessimism on the eve of the talks, but the Indian diplomat refused to comment on 'unilateral statement' of the Pakistani for-

ign office.

About the outcome of his mission, he said he was neither optimistic nor pessimistic.

An earlier PTI report from Islamabad said: Pakistan has hardened its stand, setting certain preconditions, to keep alive the dialogue with India as the crucial Foreign Secretary-level talks between the two countries on Kashmir and other outstanding issues begin here Sunday amidst cautious optimism.

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The seventh round of talks, resuming after a 16-month interval, is significant from Islamabad's point of view as this is the first time that Kashmir has been included as a separate agenda item.

Islamabad has described the resolution of the Kashmir problem as the 'core' issue for

improvement of ties between the two countries.

Nuclear non-proliferation in South Asia, demilitarisation of the Siachen glacier, which has been linked to Kashmir by Islamabad, and other pending bilateral issues would figure in the negotiations.

Addressing a press conference here Friday night, Pakistani Foreign Minister Sardar Asseef Ahmed Ali said that New Delhi must stop 'repression' in Kashmir, reduce and ultimately withdraw security forces from the valley, and release detained Kashmiri leaders as 'minimum' pre-conditions for the talks to be held in future.

Dixit, who is expected to leave Islamabad on January 3, would call on the President Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari

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EMPTY KITCHEN: Caterers of the Mitford hospital yesterday went on strike demanding payment of arrear bills. As a consequence, no food was supplied to the patients. — Star photo

Jan 1 declared 'Nat'l Book Day'

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia inaugurated a four-night-long National Book Fair here yesterday emphasizing the need for waging a movement to develop reading habit and spread the light of education across the country, reports UNB.

Begum Zia declared that from now on the English new year's day will be celebrated as the 'National Book Day' and a book fair will be held in the first week of every year to be observed as the 'National Book Week'.

These programmes will be aimed at developing people's reading habit and increase their participation in the national educational programmes, she told the opening function of the 15th National Book Fair '94 at the city's Osmani Memorial Hall auditorium in the afternoon.

"Books are one of the main mediums of healthy culture. The more a nation reads books, the more it is developed, cultured and creative," she said, adding that alien culture could not develop in a healthy culture. And in a society having a healthy cultural environment frustration and terrorism would be reduced.

This is why all concerned should be sincere for development.

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Resist BNP's 'misrule' unitedly: JP

Jatiya Party leaders yesterday urged the people and the opposition parties to fight unitedly to end the misrule of BNP and ensure democracy and development through fresh elections under a caretaker authority, reports UNB.

Speaking at a discussion at the capital's Ramna Baitul in the afternoon, the JP leaders also called on the people to express, through the upcoming city corporation elections, their anger and hatred against the BNP for its corruption failure and fascism.

Acting JP Chairman Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury presided over the meeting held in observance of the party's 8th founding anniversary. Barrister Maudud Ahmed, Kazi Zafar Ahmed, Shah Moazzem Hossain, Col (ret'd) Abdul Malek and Khaledur Rahman Tito spoke on the occasion.

JCD's 15th founding anniversary Study and help build nation: PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday gave a clarion call to the students to help lead the struggle for self-reliance and development, saying it was now the struggle of the students against illiteracy, poverty and terrorism, reports BSS.

"You have shown the nation the way at all the historic moments. The Language Movement, the struggle for independence and the anti-autocracy agitation. With the fall of autocracy and establishment of your democratic government, we now want to see you in the educational institutions with books, pens and paper in hand. Study first and then help the people to end poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and turn the country into a self-reliant one," Begum Zia said.

The Prime Minister was addressing a mammoth students gathering at the Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in the Dhaka University campus here marking the 15th founding anniversary of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), the student wing of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party founded by Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman.

Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman, BNP secretary general and LGD Minister Barriester Abdus Salam Talukdar, Dhaka City Corporation mayor candidate and Jubo Dal president Mirza Abbas MP, DUCSU vice president Amanullah Anan MP, BNP students' affairs secretary Mojibur Rahman, DUCSU general secretary Khairul Kabir Khokon, DUCSU AGS and JCD general secretary Nazimuddin Alam, JCD leaders Kamruzzaman Ratan, Abul Khair Bhuiyan, Moniruzzaman Monir, Shahiduddin Chowdhury Anny and Nasiruddin Pintu spoke. JCD president Fazlul Haq Milon presided.

Begum Zia, who led an uncompromising agitation against the autocratic Ershad regime, recalled the glorious contributions of the students in the ouster of the regime and called upon all students, irrespective of their political affiliation, to build themselves up as the future leaders of the nation.

Begum Zia recalled the contributions of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman and those who had laid down their lives

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Iranian embassy in Kabul hit

TEHRAN, Jan 1: The Iranian embassy in Kabul was hit today by mortar fire as heavy fighting erupted between rival Afghan forces, but no one was wounded, Tehran radio reported, reports AFP.

An Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman told the radio that

KABUL, Jan 1: At least eight people were killed and 250 injured when rockets and shells hit Kabul today in fierce battles between forces loyal to President Burhanuddin Rabbani and fighters led by a former communist general, reports Reuters.

ing President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

State-run Radio Kabul went off the air and sources said the city was plunged into darkness.

The jets in two sorties heavily pounded Hekmatyar's Charsalab base on the eastern fringe of the Afghan capital. Details of losses or casualties were not immediately available.

Afghan sources in radio contact with Kabul said tanks and armoured vehicles rolled out as streets were deserted and people were unable to come out.

In the heaviest shelling since May, rockets and mortar bombs hit most parts of the city, they said. Scores of people were admitted to hospitals, the sources said.

The attack was launched by the Uzbek militia of former communist general Abdul Rashid Dostam whose relations recently soured with Rabbani and his ex-defence minister Ahmad Shah Masood, they said.

Prokrichi defers its programme till April

By Staff Correspondent

Some 70 thousand professionals of the country have decided to take a respite, deferring their agitation until April 7, highly placed sources said Saturday.

However an official announcement deferring the en-masse resignation programme would be made at a press conference tomorrow, they said.

The programme for a renewed agitation in April would be declared at a grand conference of the professionals on April 8, the leaders said.

The 24-day agitation of the professionals, led by the Prokrichi-BCS Central Action Council, was stalled in view of the government's latest decision for Wednesday night to transform 50 per cent posts of the National Pay Scale-9 to Scale-7 as selection grade and upgrade the posts of nine cadres at the district level and its equivalent to

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Yunus invited to serve on UN body

By Staff Correspondent

The Managing Director of the Grameen Bank, Professor Mohammad Yunus has been invited by the United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to serve as a member of an UN Advisory Group.

The International Advisory Group of eminent persons is being formed by the UN Secretary General as part of the preparatory process of the Fourth World Conference on Women scheduled to be held in Beijing, China from September 4 to 15, 1995.

In his letter to the Managing Director of the Grameen Bank, Boutros Ghali said, "I am pleased to invite you to serve as a member of the UN Advisory Group and would greatly value your participation in this

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Govt orders curb on excess spending

By S Y Bakht

Alarmed at the cost escalation exceeding the budgetary allocations in a number of areas, the government has asked all departments to initiate immediate short and long-term non-development cost reduction and austerity measures.

In a letter, addressed to all secretaries heading different ministries, the Finance Secretary Nasimuddin Ahmed on December 5 expressed concern at the continuously bulging revenue expenditure account.

Referring to a government circular on reducing revenue expenditure, issued last October, he said, there should be 'significant' reduction of miscellaneous expenses and other costs and also outlined a number of decisions in this regard.

"In some cases, specially the expenses of entertaining foreign guests are far exceeding the

budget allocations," the Finance Secretary said in the demt-official letter. "Moreover, the expenditure on account of government telephone (bills) stands a number of times higher than the budgetary allocations."

He also noted that advances taken on account of foreign travel and transfers of government officials and employees are not being adjusted for months and, in some cases, even for years. "This is contrary to financial discipline," he said.

Advances taken for foreign travel are supposed to be adjusted after one month of the travel while in case of transfer, the advances are to be adjusted within six months.

According to the government decision, from now onwards 'strict control' has to be kept on all miscellaneous and enter-

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T&T bonds highly over-subscribed

By Inam Ahmed

The T&T bonds put on sale by the Bangladesh Bank have been over-subscribed in a sweeping rush by the commercial banks, according to central bank sources.

Eight banks have already submitted applications for purchasing the bonds and Bangladesh Bank will shortly issue the bonds to the applicants.

The Bangladesh Telephone and Telegraph Board (BTB) had floated bonds worth Taka 275 crore from December 29. The money acquired through the sale of the bonds will be used for installing 1.30 lakh new telephones next year.

"The eagerness of the commercial banks is understandable because of the

liquidity position of the banks," a high Bangladesh Bank official said. "They are all over stocked with cash which they have to invest. On the other hand, government securities have gone down."

The T&T bonds will bear five per cent interest for the buyers. According to sources, the banks have diverted their requirement for liquid assets to the bonds because of shortage in securities.

For a long time, the banks were being compelled to maintain their requirement with the Bangladesh Bank in cash for which they do not get any interest. If they maintain this deposit in securities, they get four per cent interest.

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3 students get 12 yrs' RI in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, Jan 1: The Anti-Terrorism Tribunal and Second Additional Judge here Sayed Enayeturrahman today sentenced three students to 12 years Rigorous Imprisonment and fined Taka 3,000 each in default to suffer more nine years' RI on charges of violence, assault and indiscipline in the examination hall, reports BSS.

The prosecution story, in brief, is that a group of angry students in protest against the expulsion of 22 students of the Anwara College ransacked the

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EC warns against premature start to campaigning

Candidates who have already started campaigning for the four city corporation elections will be deemed guilty of 'corrupt conduct,' says the Election Commission, reports UNB.

Such offence, under Rule 57 of the City Corporation Rules, entails two years' imprisonment at the minimum and seven years' at the maximum.

Moreover, a court may declare the election of a candidate committing such an offence null and void, the EC

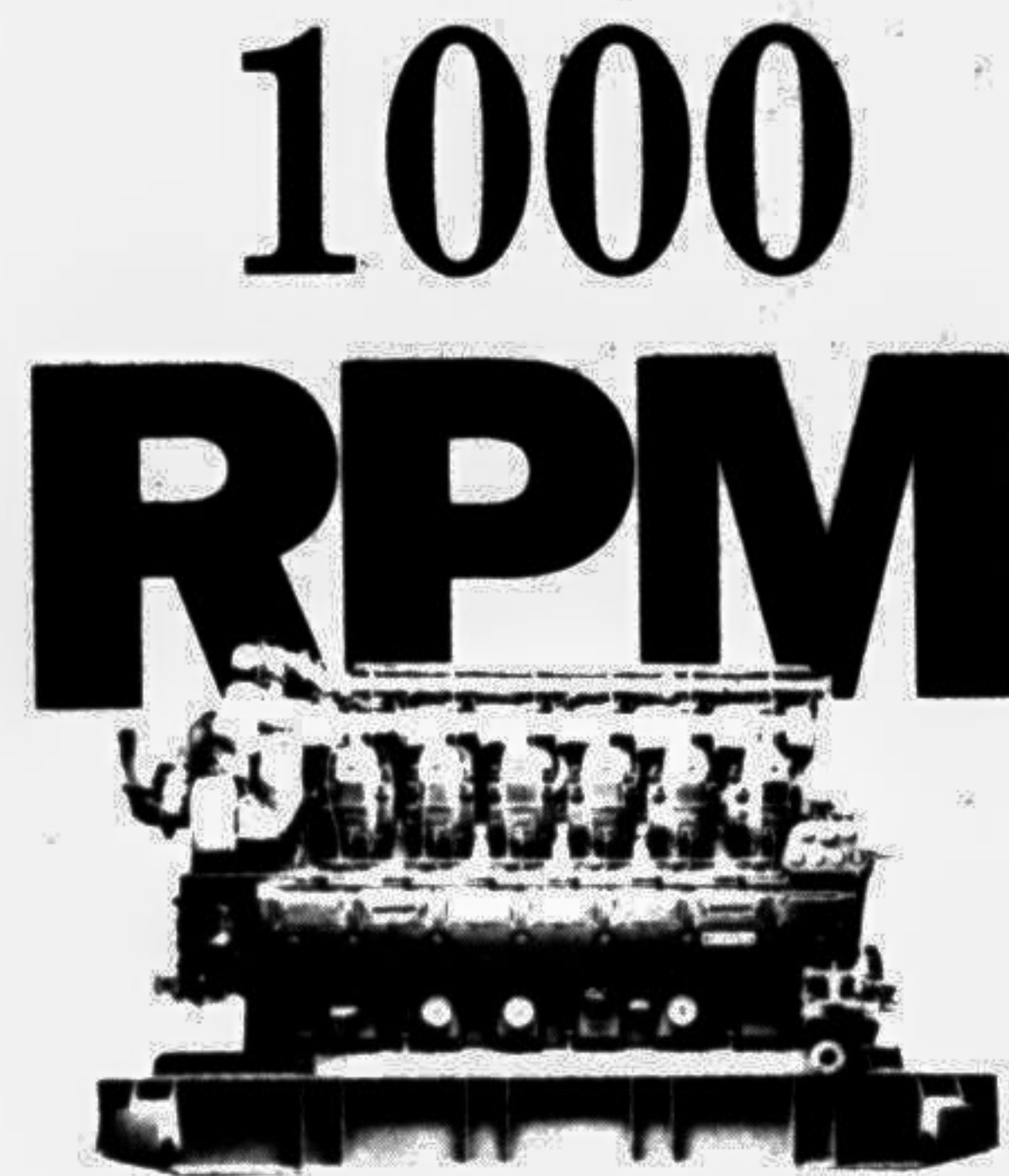
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Siraj Sikder's anniversary of death today

By Staff Correspondent
 Different socio-political organisations will observe the nineteenth anniversary of the death of Siraj Sikder today. Siraj Sikder, founder chairman of the underground Sarbajit Party, was killed on January 2, 1975, while under police custody. Meanwhile, Shamim Sikder, a sister of the late Siraj

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