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NEWS BRIEFS

Mujib's 'Homecoming Day' Jan 10
 The Awami League will observe the 'Homecoming Day' on January 10 marking the return of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from prison of Pakistan in 1972. In observance of the day, the party will hold a public meeting at the Bangabandhu Avenue at 3 pm. Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina will address the rally, reports UNB.

Sindh governor due today
 Governor of the Pakistan province of Sindh Hakim Muhammad Saeed arrives here today on a five-day visit to Bangladesh, diplomatic sources said. Saeed, who is the governing body member and life trustee of the Bangladesh Hamdard Foundation, will attend the annual general meeting of the foundation, reports UNB.

BPC concerned at Ittefaq situation
 A special meeting of the Bangladesh Press Council (BPC) was held yesterday at its auditorium with its Chairman Justice Sultan Hossain Khan in the chair. The meeting discussed suspension of publication of the Dainik Ittefaq and expressed their concern. It took a unanimous decision to request the owners and management to resume publication of the daily immediately, reports BSS.

Industries Minister terms it a 'major breakthrough' Pulp mills to use over 1 lakh tons of jute plants this year

By S Y Bakht

In a dramatic development certain to have a far-reaching impact on the country's socio-economy, the Industries Minister yesterday announced that all four public sector pulp and paper mills will be using over one lakh ton of green jute (plants) for making pulp starting this year.

Talking to The Daily Star, a visibly excited Industries Minister A M Zahiruddin Khan described the use of green jute for producing pulp as a "major breakthrough which will bring about a large-scale diversification in the uses of jute."

With a little balancing, he pointed out, the existing machinery in the mills, under the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC),

would be used for the purpose, which was not possible earlier when the use of jute fibre was being tested.

The Minister added that the BCIC would also carry out test production of rayon-grade pulp, laboratory tests on which have already been conducted, during the current year. If successfully tested, the BCIC has the capacity to produce two lakh tons of rayon-grade pulp, which would help substitute the annual import of about four lakh tons by the textile mills.

Under a pilot project last year, at the direct initiative of the Industries Minister, the BCIC successfully produced 6.5 tons of pulp from green jute at the Sylhet Pulp and Paper Mills (SPPM), which was later

used to make high quality industrial grade brown paper at the Karnaphuli Paper Mills (KPM).

The paper is extensively used in making envelopes, cardboard boxes, cartons and other packaging materials and the local demand is presently met solely through imports.

According to BCIC officials, the corporation is planning to use as much as 2.5 lakh tons of green jute to produce pulp in the four mills starting from June next, when the jute harvesting season begins.

A cabinet presentation of the project is scheduled for the middle of this month while a task force also has been instituted headed by the Director of Production and Technical

Development of the BCIC.

Using green jute the pulp production cost at the mills would be lowered by about 30 per cent, they said, compared to the use of wood and bamboo.

"It will be a golden-letter day in the history of Bangladesh as far as the farmers are concerned and the socio-economic ripple effect will be felt throughout the nation," the elated minister predicted.

The use of jute to produce pulp could not have come at a better time. Once proclaimed as the 'Golden Fibre of Bengal,' in recent years jute is increasingly facing a grim future due to stiff competition from synthetics in world markets.

The sharp decline in the

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Prime Minister Begum Khaleida Zia taking salute of the scouts at the inaugural ceremony of the 8-day 5th Bangladesh National and 14th Asia-Pacific Scout Jamboree '94 at the Mouchak National Scout Training Centre parade ground in Gazipur yesterday. — PID photo

2 killed, 20 hurt as police fire on Nusrat's march

LARKANA, Jan 5: Riot police fired bullets and teargas Wednesday on a procession led by the mother of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Two people were killed and as many as 20 injured, witnesses said, reports AP.

Ms. Bhutto's mother, Nusrat, was left unconscious briefly by the teargas, but was not seriously hurt, witnesses said.

Nusrat Bhutto was leading about 500 people, many shouting anti-government slogans, as they marched from the family estate to the grave of her husband, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, when the police shot.

In a telephone interview with The Associated Press, an outraged Nusrat Bhutto accused her daughter of behaving like military dictator Gen. Mohammed Zia-ul-Haq, who ruled in the 1970s and 1980s.

"These things were happening in martial law days. I don't see any difference today. How could it happen with a democratic government?" she said, her voice trembling. "I want to ask her how she could be so ruthless."

The stone walls of the Bhutto family home in Larkana were pockmarked with bullet holes from the shooting, she said. Thousands of police in riot gear cordoned off the dust-clogged road leading to her home.

"We were under siege," Nusrat Bhutto said, claiming that the police fired without provocation. "Right in front of me, a bullet hit a young man and his brains fell out."

An official with the Sindh Provincial government, who declined to be identified, said police fired after the crowd, armed with clubs and sticks,

surged forward, grabbed a policeman and beat him.

Ms. Bhutto has been feuding with her mother and her brother, Murtaza Bhutto, and Wednesday's shooting is sure to intensify the family feud.

The Prime Minister was also in Larkana, some 300 miles (480 kilometres) north of Karachi. But neither she nor her government issued any immediate comment. She was staying at her own home, which is separate from the family estate.

Nusrat Bhutto said she has been trying to contact the Prime Minister to arrange for a shooting victim to be taken to Karachi, where the country's best hospitals are located.

"I am trying to get the Prime Minister, my daughter, to help," but she is not available, said Nusrat Bhutto. "She

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Scouts jamboree begins at Mouchak

MOUCHAK (Gazipur), Jan 5: Prime Minister Begum Khaleida Zia today inaugurated the 8-day 14th Asia Pacific and 5th Bangladesh National Scout Jamboree with a call to intensify the scout movement to serve the humanity and the nation, reports UNB.

The jamboree, with the theme 'Scouting for a better tomorrow,' is being attended by some 7,500 Scouts from home and four countries of the Asia Pacific region — Australia, India, Pakistan and Nepal.

Some 84 Scouts from abroad, including 30 girls, are participating in the jamboree at the scout camping centre at Mouchak, about 47 kilometres north of the capital. The scouts have pitched some 725 tents on the 300-acre camp area.

This is the second time that the Asia-Pacific Scout Jamboree is taking place in Bangladesh. The 5th Asia-Pacific Jamboree

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Contract for Barapukuria project finalised

By Special Correspondent

The contract between Petrobangla and a Chinese consortium for the implementation of the Barapukuria Coal Mine Project has been finalised and both sides initialled the draft contract in Dhaka Tuesday evening.

Following scrutiny and vetting by the ministries of Energy and Mineral Resources, Law, and Finance, the contract will be signed after Cabinet approval.

"We hope to sign the contract with our Chinese counterpart sometime next month in Dhaka and then we will begin the implementation process," said an official of Petrobangla.

The two sides agreed on the terms of the contract after negotiations in Dhaka that began early November. The negotiations were based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between Bangladesh and China in Beijing in December 1992.

The Chinese consortium,

consisting of three companies, will provide 124.84 million US dollars as suppliers' credit for the 227.52 million dollar turn-key project. The rest of the cost will be borne by the Bangladesh government. The project is expected to be implemented in five years.

Bangladesh will repay the loan in eight years with a five per cent interest with a grace period of three years.

The coal reserve, of about 303 million tonnes, within an area of 5.25 sq km at Barapukuria in Dinajpur district, was discovered by the country's geologists in 1985. Out of this deposit, 102 million tonnes are recoverable. It is estimated that one million tonnes of coal will be extracted from the mine every year.

According to the techno-feasibility report, the coal at Barapukuria is deposited at the depth ranging from 129 metres to 506 metres, consisting six seams.

Prokrichi leader Hena sent on retirement

Star Report

Mohammad Abu Hena, leader of the agitating non-administrative civil servants and the professionals including the engineers, agriculturists and doctors (Prokrichi), has been retired from service by the government yesterday.

Abu Hena had been serving as the chief of the Bangladesh Management Development Centre (BMDC). According to sources, he received the retirement letter at the BMDC office yesterday morning. The letter, signed by a concerned Assistant Secretary on behalf of the President, said that he was being sent on retirement under the Compulsory Retirement Act, 1974.

According to the act, the government can send any public servant on retirement after

completion of 25 years of service.

But the Prokrichi officials felt that the government had removed Hena for his direct involvement in the non-administrative government officials' struggle for administrative reforms.

Hena is the secretary general of the coordination council of the non-administrative civil servants and the professionals.

Dr. Mustaqe Hossain, a central leader of the agitating professionals, told The Daily Star that the government had deliberately sent Hena on retirement with a view to weakening the administrative reforms movement.

Abu Hena, while expressing

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24 remain in DCC mayoral race

By Staff Correspondent

The number of mayoral candidates for the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) election now stands at 24 following the withdrawals of nomination by two persons yesterday, the last date for pulling out of the race.

The number of commissioner candidates for the 90 city wards also came down to 648 following withdrawal of 248 candidates.

This was announced by the Returning Officer Syed Ehtesham Rasul yesterday evening.

Mirza Abdul Halim of Bangladesh Janata Dal and Maulana Sheikh Mohammad Obaidullah-bin-Sayeed Jalalabadi of the Islami Biplobi Parishad withdrew their candidatures by the deadline yesterday.

The party affiliations of commissioner candidates who withdrew from the fray could

not be known. However political sources said most of them belonged to the ruling BNP and the Jatiya Party.

From both these parties, more than one candidate filed nomination papers for each of the DCC wards. Although most of the candidates withdrew following instructions from their respective party high command, yet some insisted on contesting the polls as independent candidates.

On December 29 last, 26 candidates filed nominations for the DCC mayoral post and the Returning Officer had cancelled the nomination of one Shaikh Mohammad Ali the next day on grounds that his name was not on the voters' list.

Later, the authorities declared his candidature valid following an appeal. Ali's name

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Gamsakhurdia commits suicide

MOSCOW, Jan 5: Former Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia who rebelled against his successor Eduard Shevardnadze has committed suicide, his wife Manana was quoted by Interfax as saying today, reports AFP.

Gamsakhurdia's wife, who was in the Russian Caucasus republic of Chechnya, said he killed himself on December 31 in a west Georgian village that was surrounded by government troops.

Gamsakhurdia, 55, was ousted in January 1992 after a

brief civil war and was replaced three months later by former Soviet Foreign Minister. The fugitive leader spent 18 months in exile in the capital of Chechnya, Grozny, before returning to lead a rebellion against Shevardnadze on September 1993.

Georgian government troops managed to quash the rebellion in western Georgia last fall, capturing Gamsakhurdia's main stronghold of Zugdidi, and Shevardnadze issued a warrant for his rival's arrest.

Gamsakhurdia, a human rights activist and former Soviet dissident, rode a wave of nationalism in May 1991 to become Georgia's first democratically elected president.

But opposition forces charged that he was leading the country towards dictatorial rule with his tight control over the media and a controversial law that prohibited 'insulting the president.'

AP said. ITAR Tass quoted Mrs. Gamsakhurdia as saying Georgian authorities were aware of her husband's death, but had been thoroughly concealing it and continue to do so until the present."



Zviad Gamsakhurdia

AL to go for door-to-door campaign

By Staff Correspondent

The Central Working Committee members of the Awami League (AL) yesterday decided to ask all the party candidates in the city corporation polls to emphasise on the door to door campaign to win the hearts of the voters.

The central committee members, attending the emergency meeting unanimously observed that there was no scope for forging political unity among the opposition parties especially in the Dhaka city elections, this time because all the major parties were determined to conduct the polls independently.

"In such a situation, we have to be serious about developing direct contacts with the voters, all AL office bearers who attended the meeting told The Daily Star last night.

Different central leaders of the party have been assigned to monitor the election activities in all the 15 thanas of the Dhaka city.

According to yesterday's decision, these leaders while

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Interview series with DCC mayoral candidates I'll make the DCC service-oriented: Hanif

By Staff Correspondent

The Awami League nominee for the January 30 mayoral election in Dhaka, Mohammad Hanif, wants to reduce the tax-load on the citizens and cut unproductive expenses of the city corporation.

Hanif said, "If elected, I will take realistic steps to solve the communication, transportation, water supply, electricity and housing problems of the city. Necessary measures will also be taken to improve recreation and other civic amenities."

Speaking about his plans, the AL candidate pledged to rid the DCC of partisan politics with a view to making the city-based local government body completely service-oriented.

The past governments used the DCC to strengthen the ruling party in the capital. Hanif remarked and expressed his desire to use the organisation exclusively for the welfare of the city dwellers.

In an interview with The Daily Star at his Nazira Bazar residence in the older part of city, the AL city chief also expressed his views on the first ever direct balloting for the



Mohammad Hanif

mayorship, his main rivals in the election and the steps taken by the Election Commission (EC) to ensure fair polling.

Appreciating the introduction of direct elections to the

Hanif said the large-scale development activities undertaken by the DCC ahead of the elections were aimed at wooing the voters. "It's an old tactic to bribe the voters by launching development projects when any election nears."

The AL nominee thinks the voters will give their verdict considering the fact that a mayor, too submissive to the government, cannot serve the citizens better.

In a bid to defend the on-going election campaign on his behalf despite a prohibition by the EC, Hanif said, "I've asked my partymen not to do so. But the rivals, especially the BNP candidate, had begun their campaigns much earlier."

"How can I stop my people when others have started ahead of us?" he asked.

Welcoming the code of conduct for the candidates, he said, "I want the authorities to strictly implement the code and punish the violators."

KL to punish illegal workers' employers

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 5: Malaysia, which has a large population of foreign workers, is planning to jail employers for up to five years if they hire illegal immigrants, Human Resources Minister Lim Ah Lek said today, reports Reuters.

Employers found guilty of the practice under the proposed law can also be fined up to 50,000 ringgit (19,000 US dollar) Lim was quoted as saying by the national Bernama News Agency.

He said labour-short employers should seek the help of the Labour Department to recruit foreigners. The draft law would be presented in parliament in April.

Nearly 320,000 illegal immigrants were given work permits by the government in 1992 under an amnesty programme. Police are hunting for about 200,000 others, mostly Indonesians, who did not sign up under the programmes.

Prokrichi action 'illegal', says Diprokous

The Bangladesh Water and Power Diploma Engineers' Association (Diprokous) has called the agitation of the Prokrichi, the combine of engineers, agriculturists and doctors, as unethical aimed at capturing administrative powers, reports UNB.

See also page 3

The association also termed the agitation 'illegal' alleging that some highly ambitious professionals took to the street for their petty interests abandoning the greater interest of the nation.

There is no substitute to implementing the policy of 'proper man for proper job' for rapid development of the country through optimum use of the skilled manpower, the association leaders said yesterday.

They were addressing the inaugural function of the 8th National Conference and the 14th Council Session of the Diprokous, held at the WAPDA auditorium.

Saudi embassy in Kabul damaged

KABUL, Jan 5: The Saudi Arabian embassy was badly damaged today when planes belonging to rebel Afghan leader, Abdul Rashid Dostam, bombed Kabul as fighting intensified for the consecutive fifth day, a Saudi diplomat said, reports AFP.

In the first air strikes by forces of the ex-Communist warlord, who rebelled against President Burhanuddin Rabbani on New Year's Day, Russian-made Mig-21 jets dropped heavy bombs and hit a house adjacent to the Saudi embassy in the centre of the city, said diplomat Abu Yasar.

Sources said a 12-year-old boy was killed and five other children were injured, one of them seriously, when a 500 kilogram (1,100 pound) bomb was dropped by a jet on their home late today afternoon.

The explosion also damaged the embassy building and several vehicles parked inside.

India, Uzbekistan vow to fight fundamentalism

NEW DELHI, Jan 5: India and Uzbekistan on Wednesday vowed to fight religious fundamentalism, which is threatening the two Asian nations within and outside their borders, reports AP.

President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan and Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao discussed the issue and later signed six agreements on economic ties, trade and science and technology.

Both President Karimov and I stressed our commitment to counter religious fundamentalism, extremism and terrorism, which threaten our democratic and secular ideals," Rao told a news conference.

Uzbekistan, a predominantly Muslim nation, has felt threatened by Islamic hardliners since the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 and a civil war in neighbouring Tajikistan in 1992.

The current pro-Communist government in Tajikistan defeated a loose coalition of democratic reformers and Muslim fundamentalists in the civil war, which took an estimated 20,000 lives.