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NEWS BRIEFS

Sub-Registrar post upgraded

Government has recently upgraded the post of Sub-Registrar under the Registration Department from Class-II to Class-I status with immediate effect. This post has been upgraded with the approval of the Establishment Ministry, Finance Ministry, NICAR and Bangladesh Public Service Commission, said an official announcement yesterday, reports UNB.

CU closed Jan 10

CHITTAGONG, Jan 8: The classes and offices of the University of Chittagong will remain closed on January 10 on the occasion of Shab-e-Meraj, a university press release said here today, reports BSS.

Hason festival ends

From Our Correspondent

SYLHET, Jan 8: The week-long 'Hason Folk Festival' came to an end in Sunamganj town last night. Thousands of enthusiastic people were present in the concluding functions. The concluding day's discussion was addressed by Suranjit Sengupta, MP, Nazir Hossain, MP, Abdul Majid, MP, former minister Dewan Farid Gazi, Hasanul Haq Inu, Mainuddin Khan Badal, Hasan Shahriar, poet Assad Chowdhury, Moshtaque Qureshi, chairman, Sunamganj pourashava, member-secretary of the festival committee Dewan Mumtaz Moudin, and Deputy Commissioner Md Kamal Uddin.

STOL air service in Khulna soon

KHULNA, Jan 8: The government plans to introduce Short Take Off and Landing (STOL) air service to Khulna. Foreign Minister A. S. M. Mostafizur Rahman, Planning Minister Moyen Khan, Air Force chief Air Vice Marshal Altaf Hossain Chowdhury and high officials of Civil Aviation Authority today visited the runway site at Digraj, 38 km off the town on the Khulna-Monga road, reports UNB.

Privatisation Board strengthened

## 15 public sector units to be sold this month

By S Y Bakht

In a bid to accelerate the floundering privatisation drive, the government has recently reconstituted the Privatisation Board, giving it greater autonomy.

"The Board now has been given a separate budget and the power to independently deal with all privatisation matters," said a top official of the Privatisation Board, formed under a government directive in March, 1992. "We are working in full swing now and we are about to finalise the privatisation of 15 public sector units within this month," he added.

To attract more private investors, the Board, meanwhile, has lowered the amount of the minimum bid money from five per cent of the quoted value to 2.5 per cent and has also withdrawn the condition requiring the new private owners to retain all employees of the divested units for a period of at least one year.

A World Bank-funded technical assistance project of about Tk 10 crore for the Privatisation Board has also been recently approved by the Planning Ministry.

However, one government source pointed out that the Board is still facing problems with the valuation of the units to be divested, labour militancy

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in targeted units, opposition from some of the line ministries and inadequate response from private investors.

Under the new changes instituted late last month, the Privatisation Board has now been placed directly under the high-powered Council Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs in the Cabinet Division under the Prime Minister's office.

It was earlier placed under the Planning Ministry and all initiatives had to be approved by the ECNEC.

The recent changes come after repeated prodding from the donor community, specially

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Code of conduct for forex dealers soon

By Staff Correspondent

Governor of the Bangladesh Bank Khorshed Alam Saturday stressed the need for training up the foreign exchange dealers of the country to make the forex market competitive and vibrant.

The governor was speaking as the chief guest at the opening ceremony of a two-day seminar on Fundamentals of Treasury Operations organised by the American Express Bank Ltd (AMEX) at Hotel Purbani.

Alam said the functioning of individual forex dealing rooms should be improved and the Bangladesh Bank will soon formulate a code of conduct for the forex dealers.

Ahsanul Haque, Managing Director of Sonali Bank and chairman of the Bangladesh Foreign Exchange Dealers' Association (BAFEDA), speaking on the occasion, said that the

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## City polls candidates come out in the open

By Staff Correspondent

Official campaigning for the January 30 city corporation elections in Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi began yesterday.

Supporters of the mayor and commissioner candidates in all the four cities took to the streets carrying poll symbols, placards and banners, seeking votes.

Nearly 30 lakh voters are expected to exercise their franchise to elect four mayors and 144 commissioners in the country's first-ever direct balloting in the four metropolitan cities.

In the capital, the Left-parties alliance candidate for the mayoralty, Manzurul Ahsan Khan launched his campaign through a public rally at the Purana Paltan crossing in the afternoon.

Other candidates, backed by the major political parties, are scheduled to address their opening public rallies today and tomorrow.

The ruling BNP and the Jamaat-e-Islami are due to hold separate rallies in the city to project their candidates for the mayoral posts today while the Awami League will project its candidate at a public meeting marking the 'home-coming day' of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman tomorrow.

However, the Jatiya Party yesterday cancelled its inaugural projection rally, scheduled for this afternoon.

Supporters of the mayoral candidates and the ward

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## Candidates asked to submit statements on assets

Candidates contesting the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) elections have been requested to submit statements on their sources of income, property, accounts of annual income and expenditure and other sources of funds, if any, to the returning officers by January 12 under Election Rules of the DCC, an Election Commission press release said, reports BSS.

If the candidates are income tax payees, they have to furnish a copy of their latest income tax

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## Police refusing to accept GD, alleges Manzur

By Staff Correspondent

Mayoral candidate of the left party alliance Manzurul Ahsan Khan yesterday alleged that 15 police stations in the city have refused to accept his GD entries on violation of election rules.

The Sutrapur, Kotwali, Sabujbagh, Motijheel, Tejgaon and Gulshan thanas refused to give me their signature, date, time and GD number while the Mohammadpur, Dhanmondi, Ramna, Cantonment, Mirpur and Uttara thanas accepted my letter of complaint but refused to give me the GD number, he said.

In a press release, the left party alliance candidate said, the police officials of these thanas had told him that they could not give him the GD number without the permission from the higher authorities.

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concentrated in Dhaka, making Chittagong a 'desert'.

Mohiuddin remarked that Chittagong was neglected and subjected to step-motherly attitude by the governments in the past which resulted in the backwardness of most of the areas under the Chittagong City Corporation.

"Most of the 41 wards under Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) still remain undeveloped and uncultured, like the remote villages. Those who became mayors of CCC only served their own purposes instead of improving the lot of the city dwellers," Mohiuddin also remarked.

"Besides, some incompetent people were picked up in the administration from Chittagong as mayors and ministers who

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are concentrated in Dhaka, making Chittagong a 'desert'.

Mohiuddin also said in the past, because of the absence of pragmatic policies and steps, most of the trade from this commercial city was not

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## Tk 240 cr to be released for JMB work soon

The government will release Tk 240 crore, equivalent to 60 million US dollars, shortly to initiate work of the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge (JMB) project without delay, reports UNB.

The money is being provided as necessary initial financing, pending finalisation of the loan agreements with the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and Japan — three co-financiers of the multimillion dollar project — in view of importance of the bridge over the Jamuna river that cut the country into two halves.

This was decided at a high-level inter-ministerial review meeting on the JMB held here yesterday with Finance Minister M. Saifur Rahman in the chair.

The meeting noted with satisfaction that negotiations on credit agreements with the WB concluded successfully and that

with the ADB would be held here January 12-14.

Credit agreements with World Bank and ADB are expected to be signed very soon. The signing of exchange of notes and the loan agreement with Japan, the other co-financier of the project, is also expected soon.

The meeting was informed that stages were set to initiate the JMB project work, and all parties, including all agencies of the government, are in close contact with one another for expeditious finalisation of all components of the project.

Finance Secretary M Nasimuddin Ahmed, ERD Secretary M. Lutfullah Majid, Chairman of NBR Akbar Ali Khan, Executive Director of JMB Muhammad Ali and Secretary, Roads, Rezaul Hayat were present in the meeting.

## Police-NDP gunbattle: 4 arrested

By Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 8: Police in a predawn swoop today arrested four National Democratic Party (NDP) activists from a hideout in hilly area of Raozan thana following a gunfight for several hours.

Md Iskander, alleged chief of 'Iskander-Bahini' and Bidhan Barua were held with bullet wounds and the other two were identified as Fazal Amin and Md Rafiq.

Police recovered two rifles and 66 bullets from their possession.

Police said the NDP activists fired over 2000 rounds of bullets during the battle from their hideout at Bedbedi under Kachupara.

Many NDP activists fled into deep forest.

Earlier, on Friday evening, an AL leader of Raozan thana named Nihar Kanti Biswas alias Mintu Biswas, 50, was gunned down by unidentified assailants at Fakirhat Bazar near the thana office, police said.

Mintu was in a tea stall during the attack.

All leaders blamed the activists of NDP for killing Mintu but NDP denied the charge.

## Housewife shot dead by BSF

FENI, Jan 8: Villagers demonstrated against the killing of a housewife in firing by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) when her body was brought to her village from hospital for burial today, reports UNB.

Dhanbia, 40, wife of one Ali Ahmed of village Baupather in Parshuram thana, was hit by a bullet when the BSF fired on the Bangladesh Rifles at nearby Muhurirchar at about 11:00 am on Friday.

BDR sources said the BSF men opened fire without provocation, triggering an encounter that lasted an hour.

The demonstrators demanded immediate measures to stop the recurring shooting by the Indian border guards over a dispute on the frontier land.

Bangladesh Rifles' 7 Battalion protested the firing to the Bilonia unit of the BSF, but they were yet to respond.

Meanwhile, about 2,000 people of Nizkallikapur and Dakkhin Kaotali villages are passing days in grave concern and have dug trenches to protect themselves from the cross-border firing.

They could not harvest their crops due to mounting tension because of the border trouble.

The BSF first opened fire on the Bangladeshi farmers at Muhurirchar on November 27. A flag meeting was held on November 29 between the BDR and the BSF, but it did not yield peace.

The Indian farmers trespassed into Muhurirchar on October 13, and started tilling the land for winter crops.

## Reaz presents credentials to Ghali

Ambassador Reaz Rahman presented his credentials to the UN Secretary General as the newly accredited permanent representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations on Thursday, reports UNB.

UN Secretary General Dr Boutros Boutros-Ghali accepted the credentials in a very simple but warm ceremony, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday.

Reaz Rahman recalled his various meetings with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, particularly during her visit to the UN General Assembly last October.

He praised Bangladesh's role and contribution to the peace-keeping process. He also praised its consistent support to the United Nations and the cause of multilateralism.

The Secretary General requested the permanent representative to convey his warm regards to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh.

Ambassador Reaz Rahman, in his brief statement on the occasion, reaffirmed Bangladesh's unequivocal commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN charter.

He also expressed the determination of Bangladesh to play a constructive and active role especially with the advent of a democratically elected government in the country.

Ghali also assured the permanent representative of all help and support in the fulfillment of his mission.

## BCCI scandal

## Ailing Abedi asked to face trial Jan 22

ABU DHABI, Jan 8: The Criminal Court on Saturday ordered the ailing founder of the collapsed Bank of Credit and Commerce International to appear for trial with co-defendants facing sundry charges in one of the world's most largest banking scandals, reports AP.

Agha Hasan Abedi, in his mid-70s, lives in his native Pakistan and is bedridden with paralysis. He is the only one at large among 13 former BCCI officers who have been on trial at the Abu Dhabi Criminal Court since Oct 9.

In a press release, the left party alliance candidate said, the police officials of these thanas had told him that they