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# The Daily Star

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## JMB foundation to be laid on Mar 20: PM

NAJIPUR (Naogaon), Jan 11: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today announced that the foundation stone of the much expected Jamuna Bridge would be laid on March 20, reports BSS.

"All decks have been cleared for the country's biggest multi-purpose bridge, to be built at a cost of over 700 million dollars. Insha Allah, we shall construct the Jamuna Bridge for the welfare of the teeming millions and overall development of the country," Begum Zia said.

The Prime Minister was addressing a huge public meeting here this afternoon at the thana maidan after opening to traffic the newly-constructed Taka 4.90 crore Nazipur bridge over the river Atrai.

Begum Zia said her pro-

people government was now on the track of balanced development to end poverty, create employment opportunities, raise the living standard and spread the light of education, throughout the country.

"We are constructing bridge after bridge and road after road, expanding the network of the Rural Electrification Board and setting up new schools and colleges all over the country without any discrimination," the Prime Minister told the cheering crowds.

Begum Zia listed the measures and policy decisions of the government and their salutary effects, saying the people of the country had already started getting the benefits of the massive development programmes.

She said the government has already undertaken a Taka 1500 crore road development project for the north-western part of the country, under the Ministry of Communications. Referring to the construction of the Nazipur bridge, the Prime Minister said the people of entire Naogaon district would benefit from this bridge which would provide them with better communication, trade, business and marketing facilities.

"Our politics is for production and development. We do not believe in the politics of rhetorics and tall talks. We work for the people. The politics of the BNP is based on the people, the villages and production," she said.

Pointing to the decision of See Page 12 Col 3

## Import control list will be shortened to 39 items

By Special Correspondent

The restrictions on imports will be relaxed further and the number of items in the controlled list of the Import Policy Order (IPO) will be reduced to 39 from the existing 112 by the end of the current financial year.

According to well-placed official sources, the government has agreed in principle to squeeze the controlled list of import items to fulfil the conditions of the Industrial Sector Adjustment Credit-2 (ISAC-2) of the World Bank.

The ISAC-2 agreement was signed with the World Bank a few years ago under which the bank would provide Bangladesh a 105 million US dollar credit on certain conditions including liberalisation of the import pol-

icy. In one of the conditions the World Bank advised the government to slash the controlled list and keep a maximum of 39 items in it.

Until February last year, the controlled list contained 193 items, of which import of some were totally banned while others remained restricted. Afterwards, number of items were withdrawn from the list and it stood at 112 in the IPO for 1993-95, effective from November last year.

Major items exempted from the controlled list includes edible oil, soap, detergents, PVC pipes, ceiling fan, tube light, cigarettes, matches, diesel, linen bed-cover and screens, and others.

Informed sources said the

relevant authorities in the government plan to bring down the number of items in the controlled list to 39 by June this year. All items, except only those which may have a negative impact vis-a-vis the religious, social and cultural will be allowed to be imported freely.

Meanwhile, withdrawal of some items from the controlled list which are also produced in the country, has already adversely affected the local industries. The industries producing tube lights, ceiling fans and some other commodities are facing crises and are unable to compete with imported goods which are often cheaper than See Page 12 Col 2

## Khaleda urges lawyers to help speed up justice

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday urged the country's lawyers to devise ways to ensure quicker dispensation of justice by helping the courts dispose pending cases.

"Through quick disposal of cases the law and order situation will stabilise, and the development process of the country will be geared up," she said while addressing the first national conference of the Nationalist Lawyers' Forum, Bangladesh, at the Institution of Engineers in the city yesterday evening.

With the convenor of the Forum Justice T H Khan in the chair, the conference was also addressed by the Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz, as the special guest, Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia, Information Minister Barrister See Page 12 Col 1

## Docs begin indefinite strike countrywide

By Staff Correspondent

The sufferings of the patients aggravated as the doctors across the country began an indefinite strike yesterday at the call of the Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) to press home their 21-point charter of demands.

However, some doctors performed emergency duties only in the eight government hospitals in the country.

Some BMA doctors ran voluntary outdoor units in the government hospitals. Many patients were seen leaving the hospitals in the absence of regular services of the doctors.

The BMA organised rallies and processions in the city and the districts demanding implementation of their demands. In the city yesterday, BMA central leaders including Dr Gazi Abdul Haq, Dr A B Bhuiyan, Dr Moinul Hasan Sadek, Dr Rafiq Chowdhury, Dr Moshata Hossain, Dr Azizul Haq and others addressed rallies at different places.

The leaders vowed to continue the strike unless the government accepted their demands.

When contacted, a BMA leader informed The Daily Star that they had received news of successful strikes from Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Rangamati, Bogra, Pabna, Chuadanga, Khulna, Jessore, Jhenidah,

Barisal, Chittagong, Comilla, Sylhet and other districts.

The demands of the 8,000 doctors of the BMA include: increased budget allocation for the health sector; building up an infrastructure for primary health to ensure health for all by the year 2000; setting up hospitals; and recruitment of more manpower for the health sector.

The other demands are autonomy for all medical colleges and filling up vacant posts in the health service. Reports from Chittagong say: Some 56 patients left the Chittagong Medical College Hospital Tuesday during the strike hours.

A joint meeting of the BMA, Chittagong, will be held today (Wednesday) to discuss the overall situation and their next course of action.

UNB adds: 190 doctors of the Khulna General Hospital, 250-bed hospital, ID Hospital and 9 health complexes joined the strike. Some critical patients were still admitted in these hospitals while many were leaving the hospitals for private clinics.

In Sirajganj some 161 government doctors in the district began the strike at the call of the BMA. As a result, treatment of patients at the general hospital and nine health complexes has been disrupted.



A relative seen attending a serious patient at a city hospital yesterday, the first day of an indefinite strike called by the doctors of Bangladesh Medical Association. — Star photo

## Oil exploration in the Bay Cabinet body studies contracts today

By Sharier Khan

After much delay, the production sharing contracts (PSCs) of two foreign companies interested in oil exploration in the Bay of Bengal will be placed before the seven-member Economic Sub-Committee of the Cabinet for approval today.

Sources said, if the sub-committee okays the PSCs without any amendment of the clauses, the foreign companies — Cairn International and the Holland Sea Search of Scotland and the Netherlands respectively — can begin their ventures in the bay off the coast of Cox's Bazar-Sandwip from this month.

But if the sub-committee differs with any of the clauses of the PSCs, it will go to the Standing Committee of the Cabinet for final approval.

Cairn of Scotland and the Dutch company initialled contracts with the government on August 5 last. Due to bureaucratic tangles, the PSCs of these companies were approved by the Ministries of Law, Finance and Energy and the National Board of Revenue (NBR) only as late as December 1.

The next step required for the approval of the PSCs was to send those to the sub-committee. This process was again delayed, the sources added.

Meanwhile, the government is failing to adequately reciprocate the tremendous interest shown by a number of foreign companies to explore the on-shore and the off-shore areas of the country.

Representatives of two American companies, Rexwood and Oakland, who had been staying in the city since January 3, left for home yesterday. These companies expressed their interest to explore in the deep sea near the area where Cairn and Holland would dig for oil.

Another representative from Arco, USA, which had tried to explore oil in Bangladesh immediately after the country's independence, is also in the capital city. The Arco representative is presently gathering data from Petrobangla.

Yet another executive from the US company UMIC arrived yesterday for the sixth time. UMIC is interested in exploring the Chittagong Hill Tracts region. The government had earlier signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with this company.

Officials of US company Occidental, determined to sign initials with the government as soon as possible, will arrive on January 18. Occidental is in- See Page 12 Col 6

## Hasina launches door-to-door campaign

Sheikh Hasina yesterday began a door-to-door campaign in old Dhaka seeking votes for her party's Mayor candidate Mohammad Hanif, reports UNB.

In the unique electioneering, the Awami League president visited different houses in Bangshal, Malitola, Suritola, Alauddin Road and North-South road in the morning, urging the voters to vote for Hanif.

Hanif, president of City Awami League, is contesting January 30 polls with 'Fish' symbol.

As the Leader of the Opposition walked through the streets, enthusiastic people came out of their houses and shops and greeted her with clappings and slogans. Party central leaders Abdul Mannan, Begum Matia Chowdhury MP, Prof Abu Sayeed, H N Ashique Rahman, Monayem Sarker, Fazul Karim, Syed Ahmed, Rezauddin Ahmed, Foizuddin Mia, Mohammad Hanif and AL Commissioner candidates accompanied Hasina.

She also visited the houses of some senior party leaders in old Dhaka during the electioneering.

## Professionals, non-admn cadres strike work

By Staff Correspondent

The non-administrative civil servants and the professionals including engineers and agriculturists began their three-day countrywide strike yesterday.

Leaders of the in coordination council claimed that the first day of the strike was observed successfully.

Ruhul Matin, vice president of the council, while talking to The Daily Star last night said, all the concerned members of the 26 non-administrative cadre services abstained from work. Members of a few services, including the police and ansars, were, however, exempted from the strike.

Meanwhile, a rally of the engineers, working in the city, was held at 11 am yesterday at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) premises.

More than 200 engineers attended the meeting addressed by central leaders.

The leaders observed that the government had now be- See Page 12 Col 8

## Justice Chowdhury passes away

Justice Abdul Rahman Chowdhury died at the Combined Military Hospital here yesterday afternoon. He was 67, reports BSS.

A patient of heart ailments, Justice Chowdhury was operated upon at a Singapore hospital recently. He returned to Dhaka on January 6, and since then was at the intensive care of the CMH.

Born in Dhaka in 1926, Justice Chowdhury was the son of late Khan Bahadur Abdul Latif Chowdhury of Barisal. He graduated from the Presidency College, Calcutta, and obtained Masters and Law degrees from the University of Dhaka later.

Involved actively in students' politics, Chowdhury was the vice president of the Sir Sahmullah Muslim Hall Students Union in 1948-49. Chowdhury was the founder-member of the All Party State Language Action Committee in See Page 12 Col 6

## Mangrove afforestation showing declining economic return

By A Special Correspondent

A recent assessment of the project for mangrove afforestation of the coastal belt has shown that the economic return from mangrove plantations has declined to less than 6 per cent.

The assessment was made by the World Bank upon completion of the Second Forestry Project. The Second Forestry Project was launched in 1986 as a sequel to the Mangrove Afforestation Project implemented during 1980-1986.

About 20 per cent of Bangladesh's three million hectares of forest land is under mangrove cultivation. The mangrove forests are located in the deltaic zone of the Sundarbans

and in small areas of the Chittagong region's coastal belt. Since 1965 the Forest Department has established around 100,000 hectares of mangrove plantations in coastal areas along the Bay of Bengal and on offshore islands.

The mangrove belt along the Sundarbans is considered to be of critical importance by experts for protection of wildlife there. The Bangladesh Wildlife Preservation Act of 1973 has designated 32,386 hectares of the Sundarbans area as wildlife sanctuaries. The sanctuaries are managed under a plan drawn up with assistance from the Smithsonian Institution of

the USA. The World Bank criticised the implementation of this plan as 'poor'. The sanctuaries are not protecting the wildlife species.

The Mangrove Afforestation Project, which was funded by a 1.1 crore dollar World Bank credit, was judged as successful upon its completion. During 1980-1986 the project established 40,000 hectares of mangrove plantation and introduced remote sensing for better management of forest resources. After the project was completed it was judged that investment under the project enjoyed an 18 per cent economic rate of re- See Page 12 Col 7

## 20-yr forestry plan drafted

By Staff Correspondent

A 20-year master plan has been drafted for sustained development of the country's forest sector.

A meeting to finalise the Forestry Master Plan was held in Dhaka yesterday with Forests Minister Akbar Hossain in the chair.

The draft aims to augment the country's forest resources by enlisting people's participation and involvement.

The preparation of the plan has been funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the UNDP.

The Environment Minister underscored the need for making appropriate provisions in the master plan for developing forestry as a resource base and also as a disaster prevention sector.

## Mostafiz invites diplomats to see desertification

Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman yesterday invited the heads of foreign missions in Dhaka to visit the western part of the country which is facing desertification and rapid ecological degradation due to external withdrawal of international waters, reports UNB.

Initiating a new process of briefing the envoys at the state guest house Padma, Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman recommended the plan a visit to the areas in late April and May this year.

"Seeing is believing. See for yourself what is happening to our environment," he told the envoys.

Mostafiz focussed on the serious environmental prob-

lems facing Bangladesh and said some of these problems are within the capacity of Bangladesh to solve. "But much of it is caused by external harnessing of shared international water resources".

"He also told the diplomats that the present government was committed to the democratic process and the rule of law. "Our economic priorities place special emphasis on poverty alleviation, structural adjustments, market economy and trade liberalisation."

"We have opened our market at a rate faster than our competitors. Consequently, our exports encounter enormous trade barriers," he said.

The Foreign Minister said See Page 12 Col 1

## US bombers to join if NATO goes for strikes in Bosnia

BRUSSELS, Jan 11: President Clinton and his 15 NATO partners Tuesday threatened Bosnian Serbs with air strikes if they block the opening of a major airport for relief supplies or prevent the rotation of besieged UN peacekeepers, reports AP.

Clinton said US bombers would participate in the assault if it is ordered by the North Atlantic Council. "What happens depends on the behaviour of the Bosnian Serbs," he said at the windup of a two-day North Atlantic Treaty Organisation summit.

It was the strongest threat yet to use NATO's military power to intervene in the conflict that has claimed 200,000 lives in the former Yugoslavia. The communique reaffirmed

NATO's readiness to carry out air strikes to prevent the strangulation of Sarajevo, the safe areas and other threatened areas of Bosnia Herzegovina.

Clinton said that under the new NATO policy, there are more instances where air power can be used now.

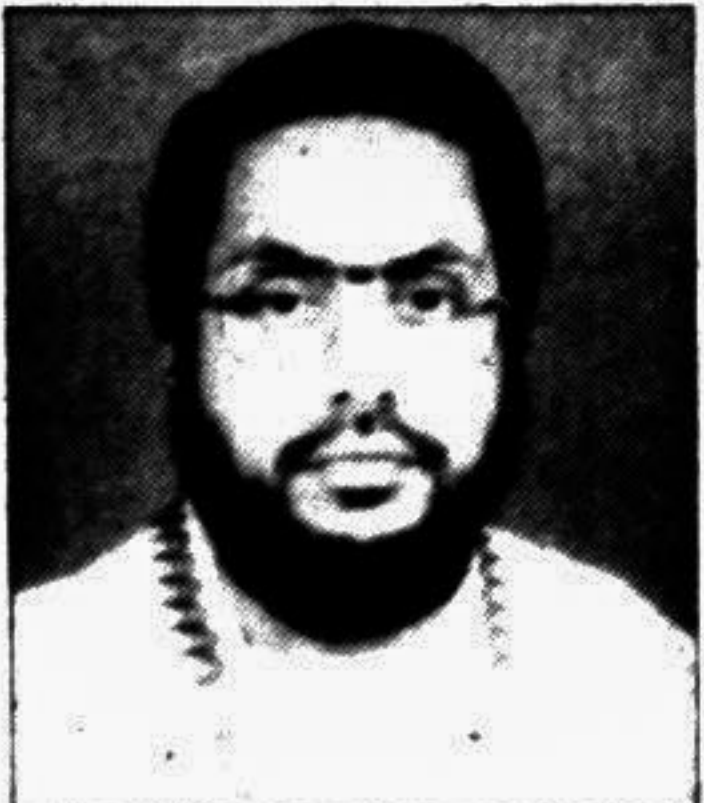
NATO Secretary General Manfred Woerner called the NATO meetings a historic turning point for our alliance. We are now well on track for the 21st century. We fully reached our objectives. New missions have been clearly defined.

The NATO countries adopted a US proposed Partnership for Peace Plan that opens the way for Eastern European, former Soviet and neutral countries to establish ties to NATO and eventual membership.

The new specific language on Bosnia added after late night debate, urges the UN peace-keeping force to urgently draw See Page 12 Col 8

## Interview with CCC mayor candidate I'll rid Ctg of terrorism: Afsar

From Nurul Alam



Afsar Chowdhury them with dedication, akin to prayer in the eyes of Islam.

The Jamaat candidate, who is the nayab-e amir on number two of the party's city unit, said, "If elected I will under-

take development plans to ensure improvement in communications, trade and commerce, education, medicare service, residential facilities, gas, electricity, and raising the status of Chittagong airport to international standard."

He said "We want to establish the rule of honest people in the light of the laws of the Almighty Allah in order to alleviate hunger, poverty and unemployment and to uproot corruption and terrorism from the society as well as the state."

Afsar observed that if the available resources of the Chittagong City Corporation could be utilised through an honest and efficient administration the city dwellers would See Page 12 Col 8

CHITTAGONG, Jan 11: The Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh nominee for the January 30 mayoral election here, Afsar Uddin Chowdhury has pledged to work relentlessly for turning Chittagong City Corporation into a service-centre by providing relief to the city dwellers from the burden of taxes and terrorism.

The Jamaat candidate also pledged to develop Chittagong into a modern port city and commercial capital of the country.

In an interview with The Daily Star Afsar said "my main objectives behind contesting the election are to ensure overall development of the Chittagong metropolitan city, establishing the rights of the city dwellers and to serve

## AL committees meet today

A joint meeting of the Awami League Central Working Committee (ALCWC), executive committee of the city unit and presidents and secretaries of different thana units in Dhaka city will be held at party central office today. Awami League president and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina will chair the meeting at 4 pm, reports UNB.

## Film-maker Nazrul Islam dead

By Staff Correspondent

Nazrul Islam, a well-known film director of the then East Pakistan, died of a heart attack at a hospital in Lahore, Pakistan yesterday, according to a message received in Dhaka. He was 60. Kar Bou, Ali Baba, Swarajipi are some of the Bangla feature films he directed.