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NEWS BRIEFS

Khaleda opens 'Zia Mela' Jan 17

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will open a three-day Zia Mela at Bagbari under Gabtoli thana of Bogra district on January 17. The Bangladeshi Jatiyatabadi Samajik Sangskritik Sangstha organised the mela at the birth place of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman on the occasion of his 58th birth anniversary, reports BSS.

Senior AL leaders meet today

A meeting of senior Awami League leaders, who were given the responsibility of conducting campaign for the Dhaka city corporation election, will be held at 29 Minto Road at 6 pm today. Awami League Joint Secretary MA Jalil has requested the leaders concerned to be present in the meeting, reports BSS.

Keramat visits Ijtema site

TONGI, Jan 14: Religious Affairs Minister Md Keramat Ali visited the site of the Biswa Ijtema on the bank of the river Turag here today. According to an official handout, about five million mussels from sixty countries of the world including Bangladesh are expected to attend the three-day Ijtema beginning tomorrow, reports BSS.

Huda inaugurates Khokan's exhibition

Information Minister Nazmul Huda yesterday inaugurated a four-day photographic exhibition of photojournalist Abu Taher Khokan at the Shilpakala Academy here. A total of 73 photographs have been put on display at the exhibition titled 'Children and Bangladesh'. In his speech, the Information Minister called for combined efforts of all to ensure the implementation of the rights of children and their welfare in the society, reports BSS.

Move to speed up use of foreign aid

Govt plans changes in project administration

By Inam Ahmed

The government is considering bringing administrative changes in the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) for speedy utilisation of foreign aid, according to official sources.

The changes include giving more power to the PIU and appointing full-time project directors. The proposed changes will soon be discussed at a Cabinet meeting.

The government has no problem in providing counterpart funds or local currency for projects, a highly-placed Finance Ministry source said. 'We have a good forex reserve. But we need to galvanise the project administration.'

At present, the PIU does not have sufficient powers to take decisions independently which often leads to delays in project implementation, sources said.

They cannot take decisions independently. The bureaucrats often take a long time in solving the problems seriously hampering the project implementation.

"Besides slowing down the projects, there is also cost escalation and sometimes the projects cross the terminal time. This puts a lot of pressure on the Economic Relations Division (ERD) to get time extension for

the projects", the source said.

The proposed administrative changes will eliminate the bureaucratic tangles to a great extent, the sources said.

In addition to increasing the PIU's power, full-time project directors will be appointed to ensure smooth implementation of the projects.

At present, the project directors, appointed on ad hoc basis, are often assigned more than one responsibility. With full-time directors given more power, the implementation of projects will be expedited, the officials hoped.

"We do not have any pending projects. We are approving the projects as quickly as possible," an ERD official said. "Now, we need to implement them quickly for a speedy growth of the economy."



US President Bill Clinton (L), Russian President Boris Yeltsin (C) and Ukrainian President Leonid M Kravchuk (R) join hands yesterday in Moscow after the signing of an historic accord on nuclear disarmament.
— AFP photo

Accord to dismantle Ukraine's N-arms

MOSCOW, Jan 14: President Clinton and Boris Yeltsin agreed Friday to stop targeting nuclear missiles against any country by May 30 and signed an agreement with Ukraine to scrap the world's third largest nuclear arsenal, reports AP.

The accord on missile targeting was signed shortly after ceremonies sealing an agreement with Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk to dismantle all 1800 nuclear warheads in the former Soviet republic.

Yeltsin said the actions on nuclear weapons were taken to build up strategic safety and security between two nations forging a new relationship in the post Cold war era.

Clinton said Yeltsin has accepted an invitation to visit the United States this fall.

On economic issues, Yeltsin praised Clinton for US economic assistance to Russia as it works to create a free market economy. He said his country could greatly benefit from the opening of the American marketplace, whether it's raw materials or equipment.

Clinton said Yeltsin has been unfairly criticised for his relationship with the United States and said America does not want to chart Russia's future.

Govt college teachers' strike Jan 20

The BCS General Education Association has called for a day-long strike on January 20 across the country to protest the Tuesday's killing of a teacher of the Sunamganj Government College by a degree examinee, reports BSS.

Joyanta Kumar Dey, a teacher of the physics department of the college, was stabbed to death by the degree examinee whom he had earlier not allowed to adopt unfair means in the examination.

The decision of the day-long strike by the government college teachers was taken at the emergency meeting of the BCS General Education Association held yesterday with Association president Dr Q A T M Habibur Rahman in the chair.

The meeting strongly condemned the killing and demanded punishment to the identified killer and adequate compensation to the victim's family.

Khaleda, Hasina campaign for candidates

By Staff Correspondent

With the two top national leaders — Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina — joining the hustings, electioneering for the January 30 city polls received new impetus over the past couple of days.

Yesterday both leaders toured parts of the city and talked to cross-sections of people, seeking votes for their respective mayoral candidates.

Prime Minister and BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia paid a surprise visit for the second time to BNP nominee Mirza Abbas' Shahjahanpur residence and election camp.

During her 20-minute stay there from 7:50 pm, Begum Zia inquired about the campaign and directed the BNP leaders and activists to work harder to project the party norm.

"We will have to keep in mind that the BNP government is pledge-bound to work for the welfare of the people."

Expressing her gratitude to

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Japan looking forward to Khaleda's visit

Japanese Parliamentary Vice Minister for International Trade and Industry T. Endo has assured Bangladesh's special envoy M. Morshed Khan of Tokyo's full support and cooperation saying Japan was looking forward to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's visit to Tokyo, reports BSS.

The assurance came when the Prime Minister's special Envoy Morshed Khan, now on a week-long visit to Japan at the invitation of the Japanese government, met Endo in Tokyo Thursday afternoon, according to a message received here yesterday.

Khan hoped that the Japanese investors would come forward to utilise the GSP facilities, cheap labour and cheap energy available in Bangladesh.

The special envoy referred to the recent trends in world economy and requested the government of Japan to open the door for further Japanese investment in textiles energy and telecommunication sectors.

Khan suggested that if 30 composite textile mills of Japan are relocated in Bangladesh, these can enrich the garments industry of Bangladesh with a wide scope for export to the world market.

PAMS begins today

The 18th Pacific Armies Management Seminar (PAMS) begins in the city today at the Sonargaon Hotel, reports BSS.

150 delegates from 35 Asia-Pacific nations, including Bangladesh, will take part in the week-long seminar co-hosted by the Bangladesh Army and the US Army, Pacific Command (USARPAC).

Chief of Army Staff Lt General Muhammad Noor Uddin Khan will deliver the welcome address at the opening ceremony.

The Commanding General, US Army Training and Doctrine Command, General Frederick M. Franks, Jr and the Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Mufleh Rahman Osmany will present the keynote address.

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By Staff Correspondent

The indefinite strike of the Bangladesh Medical Association is likely to intensify today with doctors working in the semi-government and non-government hospitals reportedly set to join the agitation for realisation of a 21-point charter of demands.

The BMA Secretary General Dr Gai Abdul Haq last night informed The Daily Star that many more of the country's 20,000 doctors would join the strike today.

The demands include increased budgetary allocation for the health sector, building up an infrastructure for primary health care, setting up new hospitals and recruitment of more manpower in the health sector.

Our DMCH correspondent says, at least 37 patients left the Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday. While all scheduled operations were postponed, four emergency operations were carried out by voluntary doctors.

From today, doctors in the Shishu Hospital, the Holy Family Hospital, the Ibrahim Memorial Hospital (BIRDEM), the National Hospital and the Islamia Eye Hospital will offer

3-day Biswa Ijtema begins today

From Our Correspondent

GAZIPUR, Jan 14: The three-day Biswa Ijtema, the second largest congregation of the world Muslims after the Hajj begins today on the eastern bank of the river Turag in Tongi.

The highest number of foreign participants are from Pakistan, India and Malaysia. They number 450, 360 and 270 respectively.

The Tongi congregation aims at promoting Islam through practise of 'Iman' (spiritual belief) and 'Amal' (spiritual practice). Islam can be restored truly when a Muslim establishes and practices the tenets of Islam and the ideals of Prophet Muhammad (SM) in his daily life.

Several lakh devotees from all parts of the country have converged at the sprawling site of the Ijtema.

More than 2,500 from 60 countries had arrived till 7 pm today. The countries include India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Indonesia, Turkey, Jordan, Singapore, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE, Kuwait, Sudan, USA, UK.

Russia, Uganda, Australia, and South Africa.

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More than 5000 volunteers are working tirelessly, making necessary arrangements to supply water and toilet facilities. Different government departments, social organisations and a unit of the Bangladesh Army are rendering all cooperation for the comfort of the devotees.

A large number of shanties and tents have been erected on the banks of the Turag. A separate tent has been set up exclusively for the

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Another killed in BSF firing

JESSORE, Jan 14: A Bangladeshi died when Indian Border Security Force (BSF) opened fire on a group of smugglers inside Indian territory early today, unofficial sources said, reports UNB.

The victim was identified as Moyejuddin, 35, son of Habibur Rahman of village Gheva in Sharsha thana of Jessore district.

Two of the four missing during the incident are Shajahan, 38, of Raghunathpur and Baitu, 28, of Gheva, both from Sarsha thana.

Commanding Officer 22 Battalion of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) Lt. Col Neazur Rahman said he had heard of the incident but has no knowledge about the victim's nationality.

A source on condition of anonymity said the victim was killed on the spot when the BSF men fired on a group of smugglers at village Ganger Math in Bongaon thana of 24-Parganas, about 200 yards from Bangladesh border.

Earlier on Wednesday, two more Bangladeshis were shot dead by the BSF. They were

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Ittefaq employee shot dead

A despatch staff of the Daily Ittefaq, Abdul Mannan Talukdar, who received bullet injuries while on duty Thursday night, died early yesterday at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, reports UNB.

Hospital sources said Talukdar succumbed to bullet injuries at 3:55 am yesterday at the DMCH. He was earlier admitted in a critical condition at 2:50 in the morning.

The victim received a bullet in his head when a group of miscreants opened fire and threw bombs at the Ittefaq office soon after the daily went to press at around 1:30 am yesterday, said a report in yesterday's Ittefaq.

The daily reappeared yesterday after remaining out of print since December 28.

The condition of Sirajul Islam, a press employee, who was also injured during the trouble at the Ittefaq, is improving at the DMCH hospital sources said.

Sirajul Islam was reportedly hit by the car in which the critically injured Mannan Talukdar was being taken to hospital.

BSS adds: The Bangladesh See Page 12 Col 4

Sarbaharam kill four in Khulna

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Jan 14: Activists of the Purba Bangla Sarbaharam Party allegedly killed four persons at Magurguna village under Dumuria thana of the district yesterday, police said.

Three of the victims were shot and another was slaughtered.

Earlier on Thursday, an armed group in a microbus, raided the house of Mahtab Morol at Magurguna village in Dumuria and abducted four people at gunpoint at about 2 pm, police said.

The victims were dragged to the nearby Tapiabab fish enclosure where three of them were shot by the miscreants while another was hacked to death.

Police could not say anything about the motive of the killings but local people said the outlawed Sarbaharam men were still active in the area.

Senior police officials from Khulna rushed to the remote village in Dumuria.

Hossain Ali's contribution recalled

By Staff Correspondent

The defection of 65 Bengali diplomats from Pakistan to the Bangladesh side, led by M. Hossain Ali in Calcutta on April 18, 1971 gave the Liberation War a new thrust and was a turning point in the freedom struggle.

Speakers at a discussion meeting on the 13th death anniversary of M. Hossain Ali, one of the first diplomats to defect from Pakistan, recalling his contribution, said his defection as the Pakistani Deputy High Commissioner in Calcutta gave the newly-formed Bangladesh government a secretariat and a communication centre.

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