

# The Daily Star

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## EC may ask police to remove camps today

The Election Commission is expected to issue directives today to the Metropolitan Police and four city corporation authorities to erase the wall-writings and remove roadside camps of candidates contesting the January 30 polls, reports UNB.

The directives are being issued in pursuance of a unanimous decision at a meeting of the Chief Election Commissioner with the leaders of different political parties on January 13. The meeting had decided that the candidates would remove their election camps on the roads and pavements while the Chief Election Commissioner would ask the police to erase all wall-writings in the

metropolitan cities of Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi.

Despite the decision, wall-writings were yet to be erased, nor have the election camps been removed till yesterday.

Sources in the Election Commission told UNB last night that the commission is expected to send written instructions to the authorities to implement the decisions.

Meanwhile, Chief Election Commissioner Justice Abdur Rouf yesterday said all candidates in the upcoming elections to the city corporations should abide by the rules and warned that legal actions would be taken against violators.

"None is above the law, if

necessary, the law will be enforced with a strong hand", he told a meeting of youth representatives at the Youth Development Directorate.

Justice Rouf said adequate measures would be taken to maintain peace and check illegal activities around the polling stations.

Elaborating the measures, he said a first class magistrate will be deployed for every three polling centre for on-the-spot trial of those found disrupting the peace during balloting.

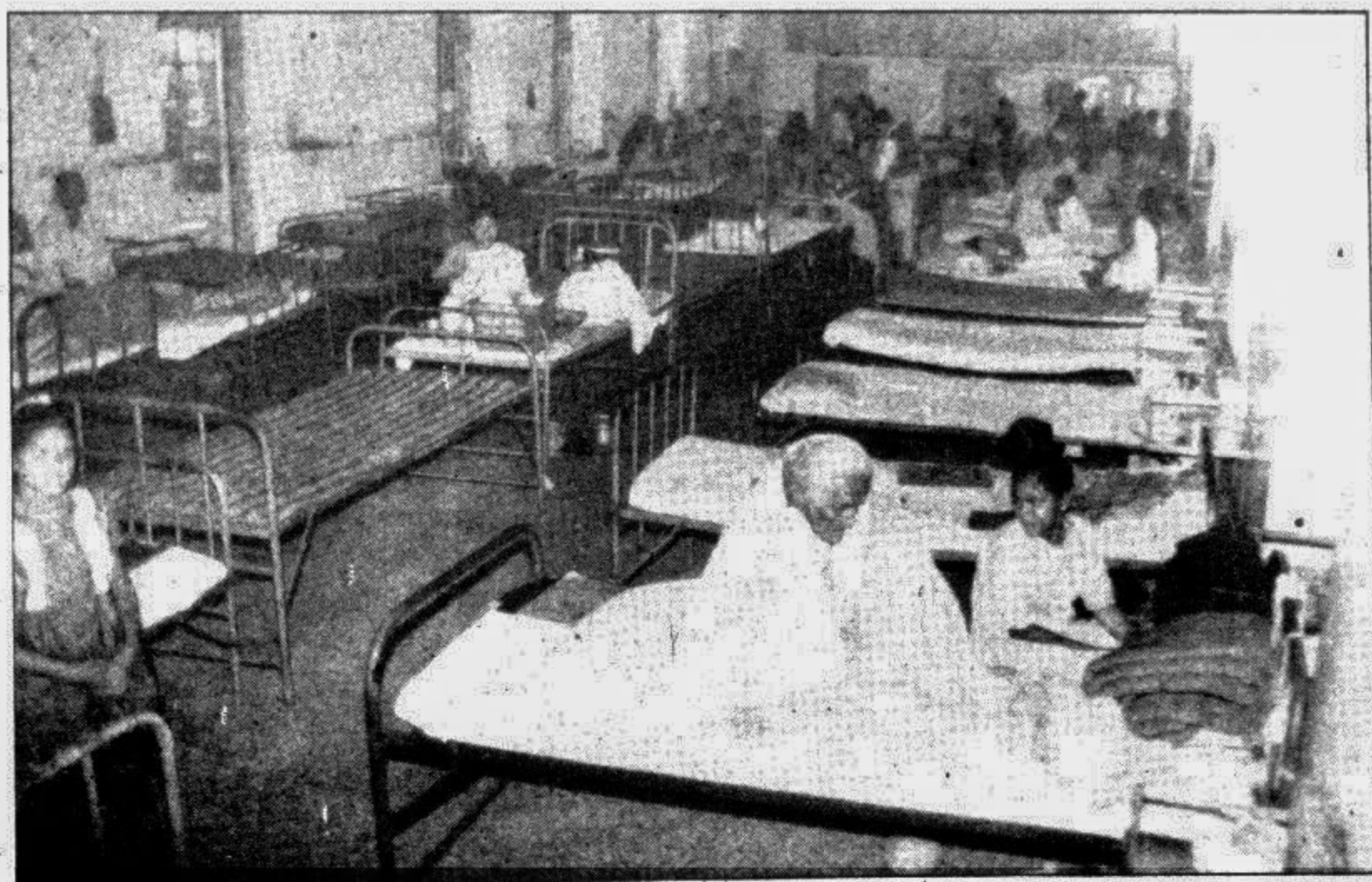
Votes will be taken from 7 am to 3 pm without any break so that counting could be started before sunset.

Election officials will fill up

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Make-shift election camps erected on the roads and pavements for the upcoming January 30 city corporation polls remain in place despite the Election Commission — political parties' decision on January 13 to remove them immediately. — Star photo



Inside a ward of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday — the sixth day since doctors went on an indefinite strike. — Star photo

### No progress in talks on Chakmas' return

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 16: The tripartite talks on the repatriation of Chakma refugees held today at the Rangmah rest house ended inconclusively, an official source said.

A 13-member refugee delegation, including three Indian officials, was led by Upendralal Chakma, chairman of the Refugee Welfare Association. The 10-member Bangladesh team headed by Rashed Khan Menon included four other MPs and administration officials.

The four MPs are Mostaque Ahmed Chowdhury and Kalparanjhan Chakma of the Awami League, Shahjahan Chowdhury of the BNP and Shahjahan Chowdhury of the Jamaat.

The refugee delegation, which will stay overnight at the Rangmah rest house however, has agreed to sit again with the Bangladesh team tomorrow. They will try to reach an accord on the repatriation of around 50,000 Chakmas now sheltered

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### Doctors stop private practice from today

By Staff Correspondent

Government doctors have decided to stop private practice from today to intensify the indefinite strike of the Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) to press home their 21-point charter of demands.

Meanwhile, the talks between the Health Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf and BMA leaders, led by its president Dr MA Majed, held yesterday, failed to yield any result.

"The Health Minister endorses all our demands. In fact, the government agreed to all our demands at a meeting with our leaders two years ago," a BMA leader told The Daily Star last night.

"But we told the minister that we will not withdraw our strike unless the government issues official orders accepting our demands," he added.

He disclosed that the BMA had submitted to the government proposals on the basis of their demands — including in-

creased budget 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 — two years ago, but the files had hardly moved.

Some of the files, according to BMA leaders, were shelved at the ministries of Finance and Establishment or at the ECNEC.

"We urged the Health Minister to take action on the files so that ultimately the government issues orders," the leader pointed out.

After the talks with the Health Minister, the executive committee of the BMA held a meeting which resolved to continue the strike.

The meeting also decided to involve all non-government medical institutions in the work stoppage programme.

Reports say the doctors' strike across the country has

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## Akheri Munajat today

From Our Correspondent  
GAZIPUR, Jan 16: The 'Akheri Munajat' (concluding prayer) of the 29th Biswa Ijtema, which began at Tongi Saturday, will be held tomorrow (Monday) at 11:30 am. President Abdur Rahman Biswas is expected to attend the munajat.

Anir of the Would Tablig Jamaat Maulana Enamul Hassan (Hazrat) will conduct the prayer. Lakhs of Muslim devotees will seek divine blessings of Allah.

Meanwhile, on the second day of the Ijtema today, streams of thousands of devotees were still pouring into Tongi from different parts of the country. The Dhaka-Mymensingh highway was

### Another firm gets STOL licence

By Staff Correspondent

Another private firm has received a provisional licence to operate the STOL (short take-off and landing) aircraft services in the country.

Falcon Air, now renamed as Air Parabat, was given the permit yesterday, raising the number of licensed private aviation companies to three.

Earlier, the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) issued licences to Borak Air and Royal Bengal Airlines for operating STOL services to six domestic destinations where the national carrier, Biman Bangladesh Airlines does not operate.

Initially, airstrips in Barisal, Comilla, Shamsheeragar in Sylhet, Lalmonirhat, Thakurgaon and Ishurdi have been renovated for the STOL services, which are expected to begin on January 31.

The CAAB has, meanwhile, directed the licensed firms to place their aircraft for inspection before final licences are

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## NEWS BRIEFS

### SAARC Secy Gen in city

The new Secretary General of the SAARC Yadav Silwal arrived here yesterday on a three-day visit.

Silwal, who took over as the SAARC Secretary General on January 1, this year, was Foreign Secretary of Nepal till his new assignment.

During his stay here, Silwal will call on SAARC chairperson Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and discuss SAARC related matters, reports BSS.

### Anniversary of Zia's birth Jan 19

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) will observe the 59th birth anniversary of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman allowing the country on January 19 in a befitting manner, says a party press release. All units of the party have been asked to observe the day by holding milia mahfil, discussion, and cultural programmes, reports BSS.

### Hasina to address meetings in 3 cities

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina will visit Khulna, Chittagong and Rajshahi to campaign for her party's mayor candidates contesting in the upcoming city corporation elections. She will address meetings on January 21, 24 and 25 at Khulna, Chittagong and Rajshahi respectively. Hasina will also address the last election meeting in the capital on January 28 at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, reports UNB.

### French army chief due today

General Philippe Morillon, Chief of Staff of the French Army, arrives here today to attend the current Pacific Armies Management Seminar here. General Morillon will attend the seminar from January 17 to 19 as a guest speaker, reports BSS.

### Suicide bid

COX'S BAZAR, Jan 16: A young woman was rescued by fishermen while she tried to commit suicide in the bay at Labani point today. Bilkis Rahman Dulari, 20, confessed to the Cox's Bazar police that she attempted to kill herself as someone betrayed her, UNB.

## PM asks Rangpur people to support BNP

RANGPUR, Jan 16: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today made a fervent call for all to cooperate with her government and make sincere efforts to make the country self-reliant through increased production, employment generation and poverty alleviation, reports UNB.

"Let's all think about the country and its development. We have fought the war of liberation, shed streams of blood for our motherland. That country cannot be stricken by poverty. We have to attain self-reliance in every sector," she said.

Begum Zia made the call in two mammoth public meetings at the Haragacha College ground in the district and at the Thanahat AU Pilot High School ground in Chilmari thana of Kurigram district.

Thousands of people — men, women and children — from remote areas of the districts, the stronghold of deposed President Ershad who hails from Rangpur, thronged the meeting venues and waited since morning to have a glimpse of the Prime Minister and to listen to her.

Begum Zia told the gatherings that the autocratic regime

of Ershad had destroyed all institutions and introduced the policy of imports to get kick-backs, destroying the national economy and thus making the country aid-dependent.

"Ershad looted a lot and committed crimes and illegal activities. This is why he has been sentenced to jail as per the laws of the land," she said.

She asked the people of greater Rangpur to take decisions in light of the reality. "Development is not possible with emotion and falsification. You should support the BNP to ensure development."

Begum Zia said her government had taken large-scale development programmes for Greater Rangpur and called upon the people of the area to rectify their mistake and support the BNP to ensure development.

Although there is no BNP representative in Parliament from this district, yet the government has not let down Rangpur. It has taken a massive plan to develop the district. "Autocrat Ershad did nothing for the northern region," she said.

Ershad, who contested the last general elections from jail,

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### DCC polls diary

By Staff Correspondent

Although the Election Commission had asked all mayor and ward commissioner candidates not to deface walls, walls in the city continued to attract more and more graffiti-scribbles.

While most of the written slogans are an eyesore, yet some contain interesting sermons for the city dwellers. But

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### Benazir, Nusrat in same car

ISLAMABAD, Jan 16: The first signs of rapprochement between the Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and her estranged mother Begum Nusrat Bhutto surfaced today with both travelling to the National Assembly in the same car after attending a parliamentary party meeting of the ruling PPP, reports PTL.

Begum Bhutto, who had held the Prime Minister responsible for the police firing at 'Al-Murtaza', the residence of the Bhuttos in Larkana in Sindh on January 5 on the occasion of the 66th birth anniversary of late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, left the National Assembly midway through its session.

Reuter adds: Pakistani police raided the Karachi home of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's mother today and arrested two members of staff, a spokesman for Nusrat Bhutto, said.

Police neither confirmed nor denied that the raid on 70 Clifton, the mansion from where Benazir Bhutto launched her struggle against military rule in late 1970s, took place.

Nusrat's spokesman said uniformed and plainclothes police broke into the home, arrested the two staff members and took away a portable telephone and some money.

## Govt fails to resolve issues with neighbours: Hasina

MODHUPUR, Jan 16: Sheikh Hasina today blasted the foreign policy of the government which she said miserably failed to resolve bilateral issues with neighbouring countries and protect the national interest, reports UNB.

The BNP government could not give anything good to the people during its rule other than 'corruption, terrorism, bluff and empty slogans', the Awami League president told a big public meeting at the Dhanbari College ground this afternoon.

She said the government failed to realise Bangladesh's due share of the Ganges water. On the contrary, country's interest was surrendered through the Khaleda Rao Joint Declaration signed in New Delhi in May 1992.

The Awami League government had realised 44,000 cusecs of the Ganges water while the BNP government was happy with only 10,000 to 12,000 cusecs of water, causing devastating effect on irrigation and environment in the north and western districts.

She said image of the country was also tarnished because of the defeat in the FAO election in which Bangladesh got only 2 votes out of 148.

Sheikh Hasina also Leader of the Opposition in Parliament refuted the government claim of development. She said the Prime Minister talks of the 'tide of development' during the BNP rule and at the same time accuses the Opposition of obstructing development.

"This 'inefficient' government has failed to run the country and now tries to shift the reasons of its failure to opposition. "We have extended our hands of cooperation but the inefficiency of the ruling party made a mess of democracy and development, she added.

The Opposition leader was critical of government run television and radio for dishing out 'falsehood' and said those were giving false news about the performance of the BNP regime. "It is better not to listen to news of radio-TV which have turned into 'boxes of Bibi-Golam' from 'Shaheb-Bibi-Golam'."

She said 4,000 industrial units were closed, thousands of workers lost their jobs, prices of agricultural produces have gone down rendering farmers poorer.

The ruling party in Parliament has rejected the

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## Syria wants to normalise ties with Israel: Clinton

GENEVA, Jan 16: President Bill Clinton said today that Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad had given a clear, forthright and very important commitment of Syria's intention to normalise relations with Israel under an eventual peace deal, reports Reuter.

Clinton, at a joint news conference with Assad after more than 5-1/2 hours of talks in Geneva, was asked if he felt he had a firm commitment from Assad to normalise relations with Israel, including open borders, free trade and diplomatic relations.

"The short answer is yes," Clinton said. "I believe that President Assad has made a clear, forthright and very important statement on normal peaceful relations.

"In order to achieve those

relations, a peace agreement has to be negotiated in good faith and carried out but this is an important statement, the first time that there has been a

**Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad, after more than five hours of talks with US President Bill Clinton Sunday said normal relations with Israel would be possible under a peace agreement, according to late night Reuter report.**

clear expression that there will be a possibility of that sort of relationship," Clinton said.

Assad, asked to confirm that Syria could open normal diplomatic relations with Israel, including open borders and tourism, avoided a direct reply.

"We will respond to the requirements of peace, this

will hinge on the negotiations and is not to be discussed in a press conference," he said.

Talks between Israel and Syria are to be resumed next week in Washington, Clinton said.

An AFP report said: Presidents Bill Clinton and Hafez Al-Assad both called for a peace of the brave this year and agreed peace would only last if there a comprehensive Arab-Israeli settlement.

Clinton said that Syria was "the key to an enduring and comprehensive peace in the Middle East."

The US President also said Assad gave him a forthright statement on normalising relations with Israel, but the Syrian President gave no clear commitment when challenged by reporters.

### BDR nails Indian media propaganda

The Bangladesh Rifles sources yesterday termed the recent sensational propaganda in a section of the Indian press and media about alleged activities of Pakistani intelligence agencies in collaboration with Bangladesh authorities from bases within Bangladesh as "totally false, malicious and motivated," reports BSS.

Commenting on the Indian media propaganda, the sources said these insinuations and malicious publicity were the efforts of some Indian quarters to confuse the Indian public and distract international attention from the fact that some Indian authorities were actively providing support and assistance to the Chakma insurgents in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. These elements are bent on preventing India from

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## Apartment loan programme HBFC asks ministry to lower instalments

By Nurul Kabir and Inam Ahmed

The newly launched apartment loan programme of the House Building Finance Corporation (HBFC) is likely to be made more client oriented in the coming months, sources in the Finance Ministry said.

Launched in September last, the HBFC programme offers a client an amount of Taka 7.8 lakh under a 40 percent borrower's equity provision, to purchase under construction apartments in the city.

Under the present plan a borrower has to repay the loan in 18 years, from the date of receipt, marked up by a 13 per cent simple interest. The monthly instalment of repayment at the present rate stands at about Taka 8,000.

But since the launching of the programme, the HBFC authorities have come to realise that the monthly repayment instalment was too high for the middle class people, the main target of the corporation.

According to sources, the HBFC has so far received only 17 applications, although about 400 forms have been sold since September.

Following the experience, the HBFC recently made a revised proposal to the Finance Ministry to lower the instalments by extending the period of repayment, sources added.

Under the revised proposal, a borrower will repay the loan in 25 years and consequently

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It was quite cold yesterday.

### Winter makes itself felt

By Staff Correspondent

Scattered drizzles in the city as well as in other parts of the country caused the mercury to fall sharply, compounding the misery of the poor people.

The day, blanketed in thick mist, forced Dhaka dwellers to don warm clothes. Moreover, unseasonal intermittent showers accompanied by gusty wind yesterday paralysed normal life.

Many of the rickshaw-pullers were seen coiling into their hooded three-wheelers to seek shelter from the chilly weather.

In the evening, bonfires were made in the slums to fight back the cold.

According to the Met Office, the showers were due to the cold wave, now sweeping the whole country.

### Russian first DPM resigns

MOSCOW, Jan 16: Russian first Deputy Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar said today, he was resigning over disagreements with other members of the government on the course of economic reforms, reports AFP.

"I cannot be at the same time both in the government and in opposition to it," Gaidar said in a resignation letter sent to President Boris Yeltsin that he showed to reporters.