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NEWS BRIEFS

Khaleda's public meetings today

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will address a public meeting today at 3 pm at Zinjira of Keraniganj on the occasion of 58th birth anniversary of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman. BNP central leaders will also address the meeting, reports BSS.

Hasina shocked at loss of lives in LA

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and chief of the Bangladesh Awami League Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed her profound shock at the loss of life and property in an earthquake in Los Angeles on January 17. In a condolence message to US President Bill Clinton, Hasina hoped that the people of the United States would have the courage and fortitude to bear the irreparable loss, reports UNB.

JP mayor candidate for KCC gets bail

KHULNA, Jan 18: The District and Sessions Judge here today granted bail to Jatiya Party's mayor candidate for Khulna City Corporation election M A Rab. Rab, the president of district JP, went into hiding after an anti-terrorism case was filed against him following a JP-BNP clash in the city on November 19 last year, reports UNB.

Workers' Party's 'protest day' today

Workers' Party will observe 'protest day' today all over the country against the December 15 agreement signed by the government with the World Bank. A protest procession will be brought from the party central office at 4 pm with the slogan: Save the Industries. Save the Workers. Save the Agriculture and Farmer. Save the Country, reports UNB.

PM tells engineers' convention

Increase use of technology to strengthen economy

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday called for alleviating poverty through the use of updated technological know-how to give the country's economy a firm footing.

"The nation will prosper if every professional is aware of his responsibilities. We want to eradicate poverty from the country and develop science and technology," she said.

The Prime Minister was addressing as chief guest the opening session of the 38th convention of the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) at its headquarters in the capital.

Describing science and technology as the most impor-

tant elements in human resources development, the Prime Minister emphasised the need for applying appropriate technology in the industrial and agricultural sectors to establish a strong economic infrastructure.

Widespread contributions from the professionals have led to the advancement of the nation of the world, she pointed out.

Reiterating her government's policy of discouraging foreign experts in the country's projects where local expertise were available, Begum Zia lauded the Bangladeshi engineers for successful planning and commissioning of the

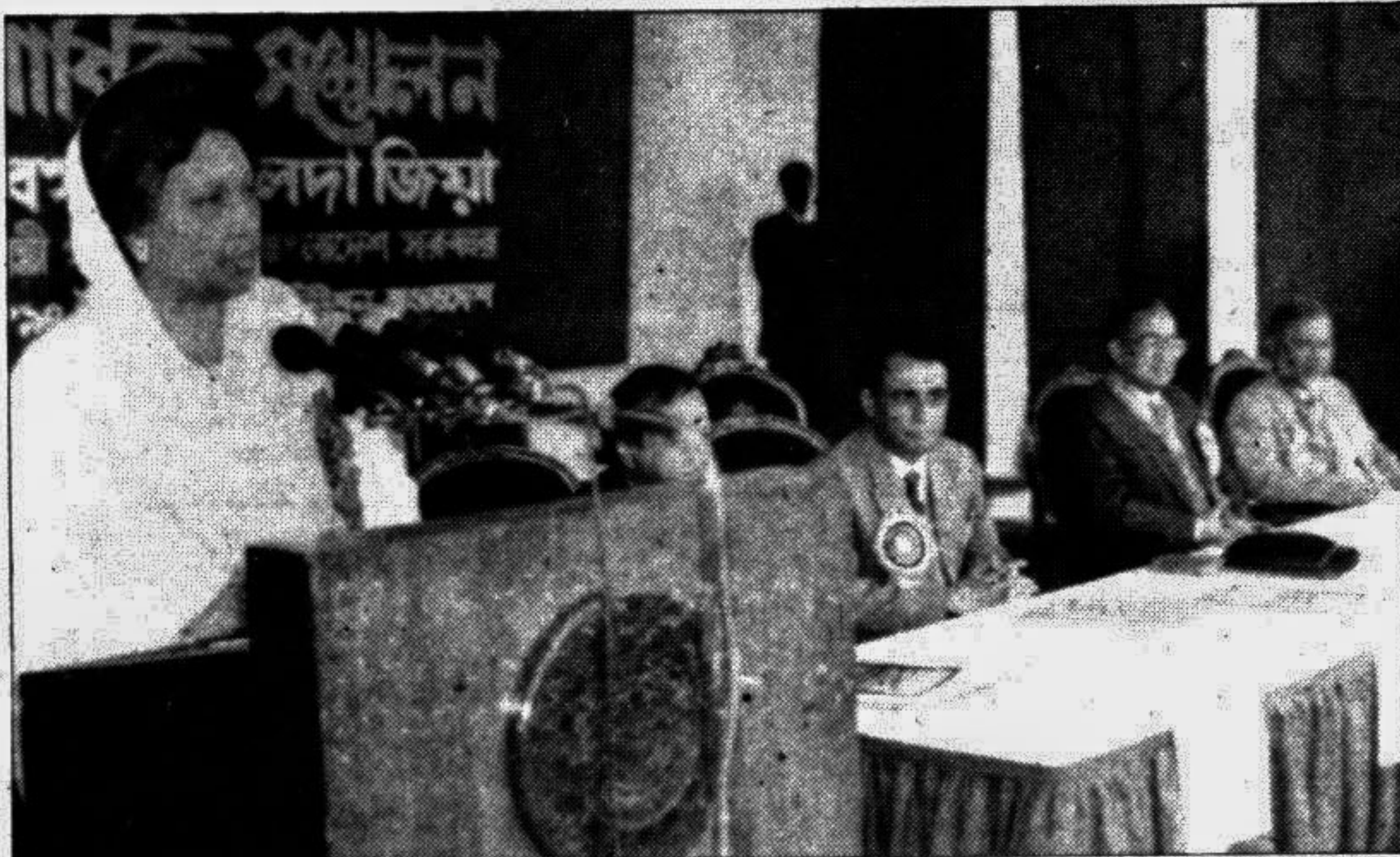
Teesta Barrage Project.

"Uninterrupted development is essential to give democracy an institutional shape, which was the only way for evolving a transparent, accountable and pro-people administration," the Prime Minister added.

IEB President Dr Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, Honorary General Secretary M A K Azad and IEB Dhaka Centre Chairman Muhammad Abul Hayat also spoke on the occasion.

Later, the Prime Minister distributed IEB awards among individuals and groups for their outstanding contributions to engineering development and commissioning of the

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Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia inaugurating the 38th Annual Convention of the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh at its auditorium in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Focus on Rajshahi city polls

Weak Jamaat candidate, rivalry in AL brighten BNP chances

From Asiuzzaman

RAJSHAHI, Jan 18: The fielding by Jamaat of an obscure candidate in the upcoming City Corporation polls and rivalry inside the major opposition Awami League have placed the ruling party candidate in an advantageous position, local political sources say.

The Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh, which has a rich vote bank in Rajshahi has nominated a low-profile local Shura member Siddique Hussain, for the crucial January 30 City Corporation polls. The Jamaat's central high command early last month first nominated Rajshahi city Amir Ziaur Rahman as its candidate for the mayoral election but suddenly changed the nomination and chose Hussain for the post. Local political sources termed the decision as part of what they said an entente with the BNP.

Both Jamaat and BNP leaders denied the speculations, saying the relations between Jamaat leaders and the ruling party candidate Mizanur Rahman Minu were very strained and as such there was no scope for any immediate reconciliation.

Minu filed a defamatory suit against some central Jamaat leaders after they clashes on the Rajshahi University campus on February 6, 1993 in which five students were killed and many others injured. The Jamaat leaders also issued statements accusing Minu of instigating the clashes. The all-party students group including the JCD, locked in clashes with Chhatra Shibir activists.

Rather, the Jamaat is supporting Enamul Haq to erode the vote bank of Minu, one BNP leader claimed. Enamul sought the ruling party nomination. He was later expelled from the BNP after he had started anti-party activities failing to get the BNP nomination.

On the other hand, rivalry in the AL has weakened the campaign of AL nominee Matin Khan. Matin, who recently returned from London after 30 years, got the AL nomination in a secret balloting in the party's local working council.

Since he was not nominated by the central body or by the AL president, a group of AL leaders say the nomination

should have been given to local party veterans.

"The voters call him an alien," one disgruntled AL worker told The Daily Star. Matin Khan, however, said he is a son of Rajshahi and never forgot his beloved city. He has geared up his campaign with the help of his supporters, he claimed.

For the Jatiya Party, the elections have come as a blessing. The City Corporation polls helped the party to regroup itself after months of inactivity. The central party leaders are frequently visiting the city ahead of the elections. The JP candidate, former RCC mayor Durul Huda has also won the support of the breakaway JP (Nationalist) candidate Selim Sarder who, of late, has stopped his own campaigning. Political sources termed it a significant development for the JP in Rajshahi.

After the withdrawal of Selim Sarder, six candidates are now contesting for the mayoral post in Rajshahi. The other candidate Siddiqur Rahman, is backed by the JSD (Inu) and the Workers' Party.

Saifur to address World Economic Forum in Davos

Star Report

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman is expected to deliver the key-note address at the World Economic Forum scheduled to start on January 28 in Davos, Switzerland.

During his upcoming visit to Europe, the minister is scheduled to be interviewed by the CNN in London. He will also preside over a meeting of the Pay Fixation Procedure Committee of the Board of Governors of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as its newly elected Chairman.

He is expected to leave Dhaka for London tomorrow on a two-week official visit to Europe.

Rahman is likely to be interviewed by the US-based Cable News Network during his stay in London on January 21.

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Silwal lauds Dhaka's role in strengthening SAARC

The visiting SAARC Secretary General Y K Silwal yesterday called on SAARC Chairperson and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office here and acclaimed her leadership, reports BSS.

During the discussion, Silwal recalled that the idea and the process of establishment of the seven-nation SAARC were mooted in Bangladesh and said Dhaka had been playing an active and vital role in strengthening the SAARC as a regional grouping.

The newly appointed SAARC Secretary General said the role of Bangladesh had been appreciated not only by the regional states but also by the international community.

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EC asks police to remove camps, erase graffiti

The Election Commission has requested the Dhaka Metropolitan Police and the City Corporation to take steps to remove election camps on roads and pavements and erase the wall writings of candidates of the January 30 polls.

The Election Commission also sent letters yesterday to representatives of five major political parties and groups urging them to remove election camps on the roads and pavements of their candidates for the sake of an atmosphere

See Page 12 Col 7

Party stalwarts continue campaign in city

By Staff Correspondent

Leaders of major political parties continued campaigning for their respective party candidates contesting the January 30 city corporation polls.

BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia conducted a whirlwind campaign in different city areas seeking votes for her party candidate Mirza Abbas.

The ruling party chief, during her door-to-door campaign in the Nakhlapara, Tejgaon, Gulshan, Baridhara, Anandabazar, Kalachandpur, Joarsha

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REB may face problems as WB stops funding

By Inam Ahmed

The Rural Electrification Board (REB) is likely to face legal problems soon with a five million US dollar import order because the World Bank (WB) has suddenly stopped disbursing the amount, according to Energy Ministry officials.

The REB had opened letters of credit (LCs) of five million dollars for the import of equipment for its expansion programme under a 76-million Special Drawing Rights (SDR) World Bank credit for the 1633 BD project. The amount was the last portion of the bank's credit to be used in this project. The WB was supposed to release the funds after opening of the LCs.

"But the World Bank took the unprecedented, and rather, unusual step to stop the disbursement of fund because the Power Development Board (PDB) did not hand over 250

kilometer grid lines to the REB as per an agreement signed two years ago," the sources said.

As a result, the REB will not be able to pay the suppliers of the equipment.

Meanwhile, the suppliers have unofficially informed the Rural Electrification Board of their desire to go for legal actions against the Board unless payments are made on time.

The LCs were opened a few months ago and the equipment are already on their way to Bangladesh from the USA, India, South Korea and Japan.

Within a few weeks, the shipments will reach the Chittagong Port and the legal complications will arise if the payments are not made in due time.

The REB is now trying to find ways to avert such an event. See Page 12 Col 7

Private jute mills workers press for wage hike

By Staff Correspondent

The country's private sector jute mills are under pressure from the workers for raising their wages in conformity with the recent hike of the wages of the public sector jute mills workers.

The government recently declared the Wages Commission award which is applicable to the workers of six public sector corporations only.

This had hit the loss-incurring and cash-strapped state-run jute mills hard.

But the private sector Bangladesh Jute Mills Association (BJMA) had decided that wages of the private jute mills workers would not be raised in view of the financial losses and the phasing out of government

subsidy in line with a market economy philosophy.

Despite this, the private sector workers are agitating for a raise in their salaries.

On January 9 this year, the workers of the private mills in the Khulna and Jessore regions gheraoed the mills officials and forced them to sign and agreement on implementation of the Wages Commission report in respect of the private sector workers although the award did not apply to them.

The private jute mills owners now feel that the government's economic policy is not being backed up by appropriate action on the law and order and political fronts.

French general on UN military role

It's neither peacekeeping, nor enforcement

By Staff Correspondent

The idea of a 'clean war or a zero kill' imposed on the UN Peace-Keeping Forces is impractical and not workable, says French Lieutenant General Philippe Morillon.

To act efficiently, the political objectives will have to be clear, and the mandate clear enough for the UN peace-keeping forces, he added, while talking to a group of newsmen at a city hotel yesterday. The idea of a clean war or zero kill is just a dream."

A former Deputy Commander of the United Nations Protection Force in former Yugoslavia, Lt. Gen. Morillon, a French military hero, is currently here to attend the Pacific Armies Management Seminar, being held in the city. Presently, he is a military advisor to the French government.

The difficulty being faced by the UN forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina, he said, is that their mission neither peacekeeping nor an enforcement operation. They are being allowed to keep only light armoured units and the use of force has been restricted to only legitimate defences.

"The UN forces are being asked to play the role of a ref-

eree."

The role of the UN forces in these kinds of 'quizes,' he added, is to calm the fear. "But for that purpose, we have to be feared, which needs more efficient capability against snipers and artillery, to play a deterrent role."

He also emphasised that the on-ground military and intelligence capability has to be enhanced further.

However, he added that a decision has been taken not to intervene. The role of the UN should be to provide some kind of trusteeship, on a temporary basis, to curb the fear and restore multi-ethnicity in Bosnia, he observed.

"It is the duty of the UN to find a way to re-establish the previous condition of multicultural life in Bosnia and we have to put an end to the ethnic-cleansing policy."

Gen Morillon, 58, was posted with the UN forces in former Yugoslavia in 1992 until early last year where he left his mark for his courageous and fearless humanitarian efforts to save endangered lives in the war-torn country. He was later honoured with the Grand Officer De La Legion D'Honneur.

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Anniversary of Zia's birth today

The 58th birth anniversary of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman will be observed today throughout the country in befitting manner, reports BSS.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has directed its all units to observe the birth anniversary through holding milad mahfil, discussions and cultural functions.

Elaborate programmes have been organised in the capital. The programmes including placing of wreaths at the mazar of Shaheed President Ziaur at 9 am, offering of fatha and holding of milad mahfil.

A discussion will be held at the mazar premises after the milad mahfil.

Kamal Kali, a juvenile organisation, has taken separate programmes. It has announced "Zia Memorial Gold Medal '93" for persons who have contributed in their respective fields of work.

The recipients of the award are: Gias Kamal Chowdhury and M Mosharraf Hossain (organiser), A K A Firoz Noon (Research), Syed Zafar (journalism), Md Nazir Uddin Ahmed (Banking), Masudur Rahman (Management), Md Obaidul Karim (Industry).

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Export promotion targets set for missions abroad

By Staff Correspondent

Commerce Minister M Shamsul Islam yesterday said that the government has fixed specific export promotion targets for the Bangladesh missions abroad. He, however, did not provide any details.

The minister was exchanging views on the government's trade policy with senior journalists of leading national dailies at the state guest house Padma.

During the meeting he replied to different queries on the government's import liberalisation policy and the thrust for export-led growth.

He said the diplomatic missions abroad have also been advised to promote export trade and attract foreign investment to help develop the country's economy. The government's policy is to pursue 'trade diplomacy,' he said.

The new Commerce Secretary A H Mofazzal Karim and other senior officials of the ministry were present during the meeting.

Inman withdraws as Clinton's nominee

WASHINGTON, Jan 18: Bobby Ray Inman is withdrawing his name as President Clinton's nominee as defence secretary, the White House announced Tuesday. The retired admiral was concerned about a probing confirmation process, an administration official said.

Inman scheduled a news conference in Austin, Texas, in the afternoon. The White House said it would withhold official comment until then.

Inman's decision was greeted with surprise on Capitol Hill, where confirmation hearings were scheduled to begin next week.

Clinton's choice of Inman to succeed Defence Secretary Les Aspin was widely praised, but ran into difficulty when it was disclosed he had not paid federal taxes for household help.

Clinton announced his choice of Inman of December 16, just a day after Aspin had abruptly resigned. At the time, Clinton praised the retired Navy admiral's intellect, integrity and leadership.

Inman said then that he neither sought nor wanted the job, but accepted it out of "duty and country."

Inman 62 ended three decades of government service in 1982, when he resigned as deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency.



Survivors looking at damages to the buildings in the Granada Hills in California following an earthquake measuring 6.6 on the Richter scale that hit the southern part of the state in the United States of America yesterday. — AFP photo

Curfew enforced to prevent looting

Quake toll rises to 32 in LA

LOS ANGELES, Jan 18: Thousands of people reeling from the earthquake and its aftershocks camped out in yards, cars and shelters Tuesday, struggling to get by with no power, no water and — in some cases — no place to live, reports AP.

At least 32 people died in Monday's quake, which measured 6.6 on the Richter scale and was centered in the sprawling, densely populated San Fernando Valley, 20 miles (32 kilometers) northwest of downtown Los Angeles.

Hundreds of aftershocks rolled through after the quake hit at 4:31 am including one measuring 5.3. The lingering threat kept many from returning to their homes overnight, especially in Northridge, the neighbourhood at the quake's epicenter.

"We could sleep in the apartment tonight, but we're

not taking the risk," said Juan Magallanes who drove his van onto the baseball diamond at Reseda Park in Northridge. "This is the worst day of my life."

Giant chunks of the region's vital freeways lay smashed on the ground, foretelling months or even years of traffic snarls in a city that is heavily dependent on cars.

Bangladeshis safe

All Bangladesh nationals living in Los Angeles have survived the earthquake, according to an official message received last night from Washington, reports UNB.

The Bangladesh embassy, quoting some Bangladeshis in the Los Angeles area, said all of them are safe although serious damage was caused to their property.

Melissa Edwards said her usual half-hour commute into the valley became a three-hour ordeal Monday.

"It's unbelievable, the things I've gone through," she said by telephone on the road. "Unbelievable detours because of fires, roads just completely torn up... People are driving crazy, cutting people off."

The state emergency agency sent about 300 search-and-rescue teams to find people — dead or alive — in the rubble. The teams were equipped with high-tech listening devices and cameras that can be lowered into crevices.

A dusk-to-dawn curfew was in effect as police and the National Guard patrolled to prevent looting. About 75 people were arrested in the first 24 hours for earthquake-related crimes, said Officer Don Cox, a police spokesman.