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Notice

Today's issue of The Daily Star includes a four-page section on 'US Business in Bangladesh'.

NEWS BRIEFS

Hasina to address 2 rallies today

By Staff Correspondent
Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina will address two election rallies in the capital today. The rallies will be held at Hazaribagh at 3 pm and at Azampur under Uttara Thana at 5 pm to canvass for the AL mayoral candidate Mohammad Hanif.

3 killed in Cox's Bazar road mishap

COX'S BAZAR, Jan 21: Three people were killed and four were wounded when a truck smashed two rickshaws at Mehergona in Sadar thana on the Cox's Bazar-Chittagong highway today. Police sources said the truck laden with bricks struck the rickshaws before plunging into a wayside ditch in the evening as one of its front wheels became inoperative. The accident left three rickshaw passengers dead. Their identities could not be known immediately, reports UNB.

Cold wave claims 5 more in Sirajganj

SIRAJGANJ, Jan 21: Cold wave sweeping across the northern districts claimed five more lives in the district in 48 hours till 6 am today, family sources said. The dead were identified as Kasim Bepari and Rubia, 4, of Bengani in Chowhali thana, Maya Rishi, 60, of Mohanpur and Buddha, 5, of Dhaleswar village in Ullapara and Hares Ali, 56, of Charnati Para in Kazipur thana, reports UNB.

Ghali threatens to use force against Serbs

THE HAGUE, Jan 21: UN Secretary General Boutros-Boutros Ghali said Friday he may order air strikes against Serb forces unless they allow the rotation of UN peacekeeping troops in Bosnia next within few days, reports AP.

"I have received today information that the problem (in Srebrenica) is on the point of being resolved," said Ghali at a news conference.

"If it (the rotation) does not happen, then we will have to make the decision to use the power."

NATO said last week it was prepared to use air strikes to open an air strip in northern Bosnia to aid flights and to protect Canadian troops in the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica in Eastern Bosnia. The strike would have to be authorised by the UN.

"Before agreeing to use air

power we have to agree on what our plan of action will be and that is what we are doing now."

Ghali's special envoy in the former Yugoslavia, Yasushi Akashi, presented a cease-fire plan three days ago and Ghali hopes it will be agreed to by the Serbs.

"Personally I am in favour of the use of air power," said the Secretary General.

"He said if he received a request to use the power, it will certainly give the green light after consultation with the Security Council."

NATO officials have said that Ghali must be the one to order any air strikes.

Serb gunners have surrounded Srebrenica and blocked Dutch peacekeepers from moving in and replacing Canadian troops.

AFP adds: NATO is close to taking action to reopen Tuzla

airport and break the siege of the enclave of Srebrenica. Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic said Thursday after a meeting here with NATO officials.

"My feeling is that NATO is studying the problem of Tuzla and Srebrenica. They will do something to solve the problem," he told a press conference.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which last week threatened to use allied warplanes to break the Serb siege of Sarajevo and other besieged Bosnian communities, "can help to end the war through negotiation and some military action against the Serb positions," Izetbegovic said.

He said he had explained to NATO officials why Bosnian negotiators had been unable to accept the proposed settlement in Geneva.

Quake in Indonesia kills 7

JAKARTA, Jan 21: At least seven people were reported killed when a strong earthquake shook the Moluccan island of Halmahera today, toppling buildings, ruining a runway and triggering panic, residents said, reports Reuter.

The Jakarta Meteorological and Geophysics agency revised its earlier estimate of the size of the quake, which struck at mid-morning in the area (0224 GMT) to 6.8 on the open-ended Richter scale.

It earlier said the quake, the largest in the region in more than 30 years, hit 7.2, while the US Geological Survey said it hit 7.3 on the same scale.

One resident in radio contact with the worst-hit area, around the town of Kao on the northern Isthmus of the island, said seven people were killed, although the cause of death was unclear.

BNP leaders seek votes for Abbas

By Staff Correspondent

A number of central BNP leaders yesterday toured some city areas to canvass for their mayoral candidate Mirza Abbas.

Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah addressed a rally at the Muggapara Square, Commerce Minister M Shamsul Islam at Maniknagar and Labour and Manpower Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan at the AGB colony.

Party candidate Mirza Abbas himself addressed a number of meetings.

The BNP leaders pledged that the development works in the capital would be geared up and basic amenities of the citizens ensured if Mirza Abbas won the January 30 polls.

The party will bring out a procession in the city Sunday. It will start from the party's Nayapalton central office at 11 am.

Strike paralyses Bombay: 1122 arrested

BOMBAY, Jan 21: Right Wing Hindu militants virtually paralysed India's commercial capital Bombay on Friday with a strike protesting against the renaming of a university after a former low caste leader, police officials said, reports Reuter.

There was scattered violence as supporters of the hardline Hindu Shiv Sena party stoned buses and suburban trains to enforce the stoppage.

Security was tight as 28,000 police and paramilitary manned major junctions. The city police control centre said 1,122 people had been arrested since last night.

The Shiv Sena, or Shiv's army, which takes its name from a 15th century warrior king Shivaji, called the strike in India's western state of Maharashtra after the government renamed a local university after Babasaheb Ambedkar, former leader of the "untouchables" community.

Muggers rob picnic party

By Staff Correspondent

A serious daylight robbery was committed at the Joydevpur National Park in Gazipur district, some 30 kms from the capital yesterday.

An armed gang of six to seven muggers attacked some members of a picnic party of the Bangladesh Watch Traders Association, Patuyatuly at the National Park at around 10:30 in the morning.

The muggers, brandishing two pistols, long knives and machetes, pounced on some of the picnicers while they were playing cards. Before anyone could react, the gangsters made good their escape with more than two dozen wrist-watches, at least a dozen cameras, sunglasses and cash amounting to more than one lakh.

Local police was informed of the matter but none had been arrested.

Meanwhile, Lenin Gani, a Sub-editor of the Daily Star, was attacked by four muggers travelling in a white car last night. Gani, who was returning home by an autorickshaw at around midnight, was robbed of his wristwatch on Road No 4, Dhanmondi, only yards from the newspaper office.

Foreign aid in the pipeline declines

By In'am Ahmed

The country's foreign aid in the pipeline has gone down considerably over the last few months against the backdrop of the global aid scenario emerging out of the demise of the communist empire.

The pipeline reserve of foreign aid was at a little over 4.4 billion US dollars last month. It was 5,264 billion in June, 1992. During the first quarter of fiscal 1993-94, the reserve remained at the five billion level, sources indicated.

When negotiations for any foreign assistance is completed, it is regarded as being in the pipeline. The recipient country then utilises the pipeline reserve over the next few years once the projects start rolling.

The slimming down of the pipeline is of keen interest to the country's economists because the pipeline reserve tends to become bigger due to

slower disbursement and exchange rate revaluation.

Each year, after adjusting the books, the pipeline situation usually appears higher because of the revaluation of 29 major currencies which come as aid and add up to the pipeline.

Sources said the pipeline had been narrowed recently because of some tightening up by the government with regard to receiving foreign aid. Also there was a record low commitment last year by the donors.

It was decided that the government would not receive new aid with too many strings and any foreign-assisted project must have relevance to the country's development strategy.

On the other hand, the commitment last year — 1275 million US dollars — was the

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President Assad's son killed in car crash

DAMASCUS, Jan 21: Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad's son and possible successor, Basil, was killed in a car crash in Syria on Friday, state-run radio reported. He was 31, reports AP.

Basil Assad was a Syrian air force major and head of the presidential security apparatus. He was considered a candidate to succeed his father, but would have been constitutionally forbidden from assuming the presidency until he was 40.

The radio gave no details of the accident.

But sources close to the Assad family said Basil was heading to Damascus airport to catch a flight to Germany when his car crashed in foggy weather. He was driving the car.

The radio said his funeral would be held Saturday in the family's hometown of Kardaah in the northwest of the country.

Six killed in mishaps

By DMCH Correspondent

At least six persons were killed in separate incidents — four in the capital and two in Narayanganj yesterday.

A garments factory worker — Rahima — died on the spot when a train ran over her at the Mohakhali rail crossing in the evening.

A passerby, Abdul Khaleq, 50, died when a speeding car knocked him down at Mollartek, Uttara, at 7 am.

Uttara police seized the car bearing number Dhaka Metro-Ka-02-0740 and arrested its driver Munir Hossain. They recovered a charred body of a woman from Kawla at around noon. The cause of her death was not known.

Demra police also recovered the body of an unidentified man aged about 60 from a drain at Amliya, Demra. Police suspect the man was murdered. The body was sent to the Mitford Hospital morgue while three other bodies were sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for autopsy.

Our Narayanganj Correspondent reports: At least two persons were killed and three others injured when three trucks collided on the Nayabari Bridge under the Sonargaon police station early yesterday.

None of the victims could be identified immediately. Police confirmed the deaths and said the victims were believed to be drivers of two trucks.

Hosokawa's reform bills rejected

TOKYO, Jan 21: Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa and his governing coalition lost a crucial battle on Friday when the Upper House of parliament rejected their plan for sweeping political reforms, reports Reuter.

Hosokawa, who has fallen behind on the urgent task of drafting anti-recession measures to gamble on political reform, could now try to forge a compromise deal with the opposition or convene a joint house panel in a last-ditch bid to save his reforms.

"The political reform bills have been rejected," said Bumpai Hara, Upper House president, after the bills were voted down 130-118 in a plenary session.

Hosokawa raised out strap elections today after his package of reforms was stunningly defeated.

Asked at a news conference if he would call elections or step down, he replied: "I am not considering such a course."

Instead of elections, Hosokawa said, the ruling coalition would seek to keep the bills alive through a compromise with the opposition Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) before January 29, the end of the current session.

"I regret the vote, but we will still keep trying. We still

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Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa pauses during a press conference in Tokyo yesterday following the rejection of his political reform bills by the Upper House of Parliament. — AFP photo

Polls burning topic in 4 cities

By Nurul Kabir

The number of voters under the Dhaka City Corporation is 17,54,475 while it is 6,85,855 in Chittagong, 3,28,765 in Khulna and 1,51,681 in Rajshahi. The 1457 mayoral and commissioner candidates are likely to spend, if the election rules are not violated, Taka nine crore, forty four lakh and fifty thousand for campaigning with each mayoral candidate allowed to spend Tk five lakh and each commissioner candidate Tk fifty thousand.

However, the city polls have become a burning topic this year for different reasons.

First of all, the mayors are going to be elected, for the first time in the history of the corporations, directly by the voters. Previously, the city bosses had been picked either by the commissioners elected

directly by the people or were nominated by the government itself.

The newly adopted direct election system has naturally generated some additional enthusiasm about the polls among the voters.

Secondly, the present Election Commission, which has already earned a reputation for its sincere efforts to conduct polls neutrally, has once again expressed its firm determination to exploit all possible means, under the existing laws and rules, to ensure fairness in the city polls.

Chief Election Commissioner Justice Abdur Rouf, with a view to averting possible violence in the elections, has had several rounds of talks with leaders of the political parties having representation

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Interview with RCC mayor candidate

Mayor shouldn't be govt agent: Matin

From Asiuzzaman

RAJSHAHI, Jan 21: Awami League mayoral candidate for the Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) polls, Abdul Matin Khan has said, if elected, he would take necessary steps to provide basic amenities to the city dwellers of Rajshahi.

"The administrative setup of the RCC would be overhauled to ensure the development of Rajshahi," Khan, who spent 30 years in Britain till 1992, told The Daily Star.

The AL leader, who is also a citizen of the United Kingdom and was a Labour Party member in that country said, mere development of some roads and graveyards in Rajshahi was not enough. This city, he said needs special development and the people need social security with proper medicare



A Matin Khan and education.

A renowned athlete, who was selected for the Rome Olympics from the then East Pakistan in 1966, the 55-year

old AL leader said "I always feel proud of being a Bengali rather than a Briton."

"I am here to spend the rest of my life at the service of the people," Khan, who participated in the London marathon seven times till 1990, said.

Matin Khan alleged that the funds allocated for the development of the city were not being utilised properly. Moreover, sometimes some unrealistic projects were taken up by the RCC authorities, he said.

This century-old city is beset with many problems including floating populations.

A mayor should not be an agent of the government. He should work independently for the betterment of the citizens,

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