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NEWS BRIEFS

'One-world camp' begins

Nearly 100 peace activists from home and abroad begin their 10-day 'one-world camp' today at the Santosh Islamic University premises, Tangail. Jointly sponsored by 'Bangla-German Sampreeti' and the 'Society for Peace and Development', two Germany funded non-governmental organisations, the gathering would devote to deliberations for bringing peace and stability in the world, reports BSS.

Dhaka elected UNDP GC member

Bangladesh has been elected a member of the governing council of the UNDP in the first round of voting in the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) held at the United Nations headquarters in New York yesterday morning. According to official sources here last night, Bangladesh won one of the four Asian seats which were contested by eight countries. In the first round of balloting Bangladesh secured 35 votes, reports BSS.

Ahmadiya Jamaat congregation

The three-day annual congregation of the Ahmadiya Muslim Jamaat, Bangladesh began at its central office at Bakshi Bazar in the capital yesterday. Amir of the Jamaat, Mohammad Mostafa Ali presided over the opening function of the 70th congregation in which Moulana Abdul Aziz Sadeq, Ibraetel Hasan, Vazir Ali and Moulana Ahmad Sadeq Mahmud also spoke.

Russia, France sign defence accords

MOSCOW, Feb 4: The Russian and French defence ministers, Pavel Grachev and Francois Leotard, signed two defence agreements here today, reports AFP.

JS goes into session today

AL, JP to skip speech by the President

By Nurul Kabir

The fifth Jatiya Sangsad (JS) of the country goes into its 13th session this morning with the major opposition parties adopting a new strategy vis-a-vis the address to Parliament by the President.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas is scheduled to address the first session of the new calendar year today.

But unlike previous years, when the AL-led Opposition and the Jatiya Party (JP) had boycotted the presidential address on various grounds, the AL parliamentary party meeting yesterday resolved not to boycott the presidential address directly, especially in the wake of the party's victory in the mayoral elections in the

two major cities, including the capital.

The AL's parliamentary wing yesterday felt that a boycott of the presidential speech would suggest the party's negative attitude towards a 'flourishing, sound political system' and may adversely affect the AL's growing popularity among the common people.

Firm to erase the aggressive image of the party, the AL legislators, therefore, decided to avoid listening to the presidential address in a slightly different manner.

"Instead of boycotting him, we shall stage a walkout immediately before the President enters the house for addressing Parliament," a top-ranking

AL leader told this correspondent last night.

Explaining the new strategy for the opening day of the winter session, the AL leader said that the Party would demand discussion on the post-polls violence taking place in the capital's Labagh area Monday before the presidential speech.

The violence claimed the lives of six persons, reportedly sympathetic to the AL-backed commissioner-elect of the area.

The AL legislators would demand immediate adoption of a resolution seeking condemnation against the local BNP activists in the House today.

And taking advantage of the

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Thousands join Nat'l Prayer Breakfast in Washington

WASHINGTON, Feb 4: US President Bill Clinton said on Thursday while addressing a mammoth gathering of National Prayer Breakfast "We must seek to know the will of God and live by it," says a USIS-press release.

He added, "To do it we have to give up our bitterness and our resentment, we have to learn to forgive ourselves and one another, and we have to fight as hard as it is to be honest and fair and if we can be focussed on others and not ourselves, realising that we did not get one whit of power from the constitution and laws from the farmers to do anything for ourselves, it all comes for the purpose of helping others and perhaps we can do honour to the faith and to the God who has brought us all here today."

President Clinton and Hillary Clinton, Vice President Al Gore and Tipper Gore joined four thousand participants from all over the United States and 140 nations at the National Prayer Breakfast at

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US President Bill Clinton (2nd from R), First Lady Hillary (2nd from L), Senator H Heflin (R) and his wife Elizabeth (L) praying during the National Prayer Breakfast held at a Washington hotel yesterday. — AFP photo

NBR order puts car dealers in quandary

By Inam Ahmed

The country's car importers are faced with huge financial losses following the National Board of Revenue's (NBR) sudden decision to cut duty on car imports.

More than 700 imported automobiles lying at the Chittagong port for release will be deprived of the facility, according to sources concerned.

The NBR on January 13 had issued a Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) saying that duty on motor vehicles would be reduced to 45 per cent and 75 per cent from the previous 60 and 100 per cent respectively with immediate effect.

As per the circular only car dealers submitting their bills of entry from the issuance date of the circular would enjoy the facility.

However, already over 700, reconditioned and about a hundred brand new cars are in the port for which bills of entry had been submitted before January 13. These cars would not get the duty-cut facility

and as a result the total financial loss for these vehicles are estimated to be in the region of over Taka four crore, sources said.

The Bangladesh Reconditioned Vehicles Importers and Dealers Association has already notified the matter to the Prime Minister and demanded that the implementation date for the SRO should be extended further retrospectively covering the cars already in the port.

The NBR had adjusted the duty rate downwards with a view to increasing the sale of cars by keeping prices within the buying capacity of the customers. Sales had dropped by almost 30 per cent over the last few months, sources said.

The decision of the NBR that the buyers of new cars will have to disclose their source of income had caused a shock in the market leading to the drop in sales, automobile dealers said.

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Hasina meets Clinton

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League president Sheikh Hasina met with US President Bill Clinton and exchanged pleasantries in Washington Thursday, reports UNB.

Hasina also met with American Vice-President Al Gore at the National Prayer Breakfast, a press release of the Awami League said in Dhaka yesterday.

Members of the US Congress, political leaders and invited guests from different countries of the world joined this session.

The Awami League president exchange views with members of Congress, including John Heflin, Chairman of coordinating committee of the Breakfast Prayer, leaders and ambassadors of different countries.

She also joined the congressional lunch and Fellowship Dinner hosted in honour of the invited guests. She had talks with members of different Congress Committees.

Lankan dancers delight city audience

By Staff Correspondent

The sound of drums, tambourines and jingling 'malls' (bells) attached to the ankles filled the air of the Osmany Auditorium yesterday as the Chitrasena-Vajira Dance Troupe from Sri Lanka enthralled the audience with their brilliant performances.

The group, which arrived in Dhaka recently, gave its first performance last night at the Osmany Auditorium which Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman attended as chief guest.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs Prof Jahanara Begum was present as a special guest.

During the performance, the audience sat mesmerised as Upeka, the lead soloist, floated all over the dance floor smoothly on her "Suddha Mathraya" (pure rhythm) dance and Ravibandhu Vidyapathi, the lead male dancer, soared with his "Rajaliya", the dance of the eagle.

Eighteen other performers of the Chitrasena-Vajira outfit virtually took all present in the near-full house to the ancient Kandyan kingdom.

Welcoming the troupe, the Foreign Minister spoke of the SAARC spirit to bring the people of the region closer together.

Prof Jahanara Begum said Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are tested friends in both adversity and happiness.

Shri Lankan High Commissioner to Bangladesh Dr Nasz Haniffa also spoke on the occasion.

In its first performance last night, the Chitrasena-Vajira Dancing Company presented a number of dances like the Saraswathi Pooja, and invocation, the Mask Dance, Ravan Leekell and Ves.

Amaratunga Arachige Maurice Dias alias Chitrasena is a doyen of the Sinhala form of 'dance' and Sri Lanka's first professional dancer.

Nallapeuma Arachigh Vajira Dias is his wife and the prima ballerina of the group.

The Chitrasena Kalayath-anaya, founded in 1944, works for combining the traditional dance form and the contemporary dance drama.

Influenced by Kathakali, the Sinhala form of dance is based on drums and is usually performed in the field.



Upeka, member of a Sri Lankan dance troupe, performing at the Osmany Memorial Auditorium in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Mosque demolition

Indian SC serves notices on 8 BJP leaders

NEW DELHI, Feb 4: India's Supreme Court today served notices on eight right-wing Hindu leaders for their alleged role in the razing of the Babri Mosque in the northern town of Ayodhya, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said, reports AFP.

The chief of the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian Peoples Party), Lal Krishna Advani, his senior colleague Murl Manohar Joshi, and six other Hindu revivalist leaders were issued the order, PTI said.

Chief Justice of India, M N Venkatachaliah, and senior judge S Mohan asked the eight leaders to explain in three weeks why they should not be charged with contempt of court and desecration of the mosque.

The six other leaders, apart from Advani and Joshi, include two BJP Hindu nuns, Uma Bharati and Sadhavi Ritam. See Page 12 Col 2

AL to seek revision of City Corpn Act

The Awami League is preparing to bring an amendment to the City Corporation Act, 1993 with a view to abolishing the provision related to the removal of an elected mayor.

AL sources told NFS that the party would bring a private member's bill in the Jatiya Sangsad proposing abolition of Section 10 of the Act under which mayors or commissioners of the city corporations can be removed for certain reasons.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Abdus Samad Azad said his party had opposed this Act when it was introduced as a bill before Parliament last year since, according to him it is undemocratic to remove an elected mayor from his office.

Samad Azad maintained that Section 10 was introduced to keep Opposition men away from the post of mayor.

Section 10 of the City Corporation (amendment) Act, 1993 reads:

(1) The Mayor or a Commissioner shall render himself liable to removal from his office or seat, as the case may be, if—

(a) he, without reasonable excuse, absents himself from three consecutive meetings of the Corporation; or

(b) he is involved in any activity prejudicial to the interest of the Corporation or of the State or is convicted for any offence relating to corruption or misconduct; or

(c) he refuses to perform or becomes disabled from performing his functions; or

(d) he is guilty of misconduct or abuse of power or is responsible for any loss or misappropriation of money or property of the Corporation.

According to the AL leaders, this will disturb the Opposition mayors and the government will always try to misuse the power.

The Awami League also plans to move the courts by filing a writ against the contents of Section 10.

Mugger shot dead by police

By DMCH Correspondent

A suspected mugger was shot dead by police and a cop was injured in a bomb blast during a cat-and-mouse chase between police and muggers in the city's Dholairpar area, Demra, yesterday morning.

Munir, who sustained bullet wounds at around 5:15 in the morning died in the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) at about 12 noon.

A police constable Mohammad Nurul Haque Mridha who fired at Munir was himself admitted to the Rajarbagh Police Hospital with blasts injuries, according to police.

According to witnesses, four muggers waylaid two persons who were on a rickshaw and looted Tk 8000 from one Mohammad Musa at around 5 in the morning.

Two police constables and an ansar who were patrolling the area chased the muggers when the two rickshaw passengers sought help. But the

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Nawabganj murder: Three accused sent to jail

By Staff Correspondent

Three people out of five who were on police-remand for interrogation in connection with the post-polls carnage at Nawabganj were sent to the Dhaka Central Jail yesterday.

The three accused are Kayes, Akmal and Kalachand. They were arrested on Tuesday and taken to the city's Detective Branch (DB) office on two-day police remand on the same day.

The DB police are still interrogating Alhaj Abdul Majid, father of Abdul Aziz — the main accused of the carnage which left six people killed on Monday — and Mohammad Joyal Abedin.

Until yesterday police had failed to arrest Abdul Aziz and his brother Shaheen who had reportedly led the armed attack on the supporters of Humayun Kabir, commissioner-elect for Ward No 59, on Monday, a day after the polls. Abdul Aziz, a BNP nominee was defeated in the polls by Kabir, an Awami League candidate.

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UN-JCGP meet begins tomorrow

The United Nations Joint Consultative Group on Policies (UN-JCGP) begins a four-day meeting here tomorrow to review the UN programmes and discuss future strategies, reports UNB.

The Group comprises United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Food Programme (WFP) and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

Officials said Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman will chair the opening session of the annual meeting of the JCGP at the International Conference Centre (ICC) here at 8:30 am.

The summit of heads of the five UN organisations is being held outside UN headquarters in New York or Rome for the first time to discuss programmes on poverty alleviation, human resource development, health and family planning and women development.

UNICEF Executive Director James P Grant and WFP

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AL to gear up campaign in 10 DCC wards

By Staff Correspondent

The Awami League Central Working Committee at a meeting in the city yesterday decided to gear up the campaigning for Mohammad Hanif and commissioner candidates in those city areas where re-polling would be held on February 9.

Repolling would be held in 28 centres as the Election commission postponed voting in 25 centres and cancelled the results of three others on grounds of acts of violence during the Dhaka City Corporation polls on January 30.

The acting chief of the party Abdul Mannan chaired the meeting.

People losing faith in judiciary due to backlog of cases: CJ

By Staff Correspondent

People are losing their confidence in the judiciary due to a mounting backlog of cases.

Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed said this at the inaugural session of the two-day conference of advocates at the Supreme Court Bar Association premises yesterday afternoon.

Organised by the Bangladesh Bar Council, the opening session of the sixth conference was attended by lawyers from 72 different bar councils. Vice Chairman Dr Kamal Hossain was in the chair. The elite of the city and diplomats were also present.

Justice Shahabuddin noted with regret that his efforts to establish a neutral and independent judiciary have not yet

been successful.

"The independence of the judiciary enhances the image of nation," the former Acting President said, admitting that he, too, had failed to establish an independent judiciary because of the limitations of his powers.

The Chief Justice also stressed the need for improving the professional expertise of the lawyers to ensure quick dispensation of justice.

"For the poor and deprived, the lawyers can create a fund from their annual conference budget," Justice Shahabuddin suggested.

Attorney General and Chairman of the Bar Council Aminul Huq, Chairman executive

committee of the council Shamsul Huq Chowdhury, member of the executive committee of the council Barrister Amirul Islam and member of the finance committee of the council Abdus Salam Talukder also spoke on the occasion.

Chief Justice Shahabuddin said during his 40-year career he had served the country in various capacities, right from a magistrate to Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and a Sub-Divisional Officer to the head of state. During this period, he said that he had faced strong challenges but never felt defeated. But now he felt he was being defeated in establishing a neutral and independent ju-

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Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed addressing the sixth lawyers' conference organised by the Bangladesh Bar Council in the city yesterday. — Star photo