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NEWS BRIEFS

Comilla-free day programmes

COMILLA, Dec 7: A 9-day
festival in observance of the
"Comilla Occupation-Free Day"
begins here tomorrow. Supriya
Sudha Bhadra, mother of a
martyr of 1971 Liberation War,
will inaugurate the function at
Bir Chandra Nagar auditorium
at 8 am. A committee, com-
prising all political parties and
cultural organisations, has ar-
ranged the festival. The festival
programmes include victory
rally, cultural functions, various
competitions and "joy mela".
reports UNB.

Body recovered

From Our Correspondent
KHULNA, Dec 7: Police re-
covered on Tuesday night a
body of Komela Begum, (30)
from Chila village under
Mongla thana. Wife of a farmer,
Wazed Sardar and mother of
two children, Komela bore
marks of multiple injuries on
her body. A UD case has been
filed.

One killed in road mishap

One person was killed and
three others were injured
when an auto-rickshaw turned
over at Mohakhali crossing
yesterday. The dead was the
driver of the auto-rickshaw,
but his identity could not be
gathered immediately. One of
the injured was identified as
Mazeda. All the injured were
admitted to the Dhaka Medical
College Hospital, reports UNB.

Senior US official in India

NEW DELHI, Dec 7: A senior
US official arrived here
today to prepare for next
month's visit to India by US
Defence Secretary William
Perry, officials said. Walter
Slocombe, under secretary of
defence for policy, was re-
ceived by Indian defence offi-
cials when he flew in here on a
four-day official visit, reports
AFP.

Hartal peaceful on first day

By Staff Correspondent

More than 50 people were
injured in stray clashes at
some places on the first day of
the one and a half-day coun-
trywide hartal at the call of the
major Opposition parties from
6 am yesterday.

However, the hartal was by
and large peaceful in most of
the areas.

According to reports re-
ceived in Dhaka, at least 15
persons were injured in
Narayanganj and over 25 in
Sirajganj in clashes during the
hartal hours.

The Awami League, Jatiya
Party and Jamaat-e-Islami
called the 30-hour hartal till
12 noon today with a four-hour
break from 6 pm to 10 pm

yesterday to press home their
demand for general elections
under a caretaker administra-
tion.

In the capital, all modes of
transport remained off the
roads during the hartal hours,
except a small number of rick-
shaws. All markets, business
centres, offices and banks re-
mained closed.

The offices and banks in the
Motijheel commercial area,
however, functioned almost
normally.

No inter-city buses or trains
moved to and from Dhaka. At
the Sadarghat terminal, inter-
district launches were seen
leaving Dhaka with smaller
number of passengers.

Activists of various pro-har-
tal political parties brought out
processions on the city streets
in support of the hartal. Pick-
ets, however, seemed to be
less active.

Cocktails were exploded
occasionally in different parts
of the city, including Moti-
jheel, Mohammadpur, Azampur
and Shahjahanpur. But none
was reported to be injured.

According to Railway
sources, train communication
was disrupted throughout the
country because of obstacles
created by the pro-hartal ac-
tivists.

The city Awami league held
a rally in front of the Jatiya
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With Victory Day nearing, peddlers selling the national flag
found very few buyers on the deserted city streets during
yesterday's hartal hours. — Star photo

Recess makes little difference

By Staff Correspondent

The four-hour recess during
yesterday's hartal in the capital
made very little difference in
the traffic scenario and city life
remained coiled in the wintry
evening.

Though the two-day hartal
across the country was relaxed
yesterday from 6 pm to 10 pm
to allow people to complete
their daily chores, many ap-
parently chose to remain at
home.

Shops and market places
were seen shuttered down
while banks, commercial and
business houses closed much
before sun set.

However, a few groceries,
tea-stalls and video-shops re-
mained opened after 6 pm.

The city streets wore a de-
serted look in the evening
with few cars and rickshaws
on the roads.

Rickshaws and auto-rick-
shaws piled for exorbitant
fares after the hartal hours but
their number decreased with
the approach of the night.

Those arriving at Zia Inter-
national Airport, Kamalapur
railway station and the three
inter-district bus terminals in
the city had to face particular
difficulty. The hartal ends at
noon today.

2 Bangladeshis die in Malaysian landslide

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 7:
Two Bangladeshis were killed,
while four others including a
Malaysian were feared dead in
landslides after torrential rain
at a highland resort in Mala-
ysia's central Pahang state,
Bernama news agency re-
ported today, says AFP.

Bangladeshis Mohammed
Moklesur Rahman, 28, Mo-
hammed Abdul Latif, 23, were
found dead after a landslide at
Cameron highlands early
Wednesday buried four of them
under mud. The other two
have not been found nor iden-
tified.

A day earlier, Bangladeshi
M. S. Salam, 35, was working
on a vegetable farm when a
hillslope gave way. Rescuers
have not located him.

Rescuers were still digging
for survivors, officials said.

All-out agitation after Dec 27, warns AL

Awami League leaders
yesterday said the people
would wage an all-out agitation
against the government if the
demand for a caretaker gov-
ernment to conduct national
polls was not met within the
deadline set by the Opposition,
reports UNB.

Addressing a post-hartal
rally at the Bangabandhu Ave-
nue in the evening, they said a
greater agitation would be
started to oust the government
if it failed to accept the Opposi-
tion demand by Decem-
ber 27.

Opposition Awami League,
Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-
Islami yesterday enforced a
country-wide hartal to press
the government to concede to
the demand for a non-party
caretaker government.

The Opposition Tuesday
gave a three week ultimatum
till December 27 asking the
ruling BNP to accept their
demand. Otherwise, they
threatened to resign en masse
from Parliament on December
28.

Yesterday's Awami League
rally was addressed by Amir
Hossain Anu, Abdur Razzak
MP, Abdul Jalil, Dr Mostafa
See Page 12 Col 3

Pullout of Bangladeshi troops trapped in Bihac begins

SARAJEVO, Dec 7: The
United Nations today began
pulling out a third of the 1200
Bangladeshi peacekeepers de-
ployed in the besieged enclave
of Bihac, a UN spokesman said,
report AFP, AP.

Major Herve Gourmelon re-
fused to give any details on the
number of men in the first
contingent leaving the pocket
in northwest Bosnia for Croa-
tia.

Earlier UN officials said
they were planning to with-
draw 400 poorly supplied
Bangladeshi troops stuck in
the middle of vicious fighting
in northwest Bosnia.

Velika Kladusa, in the far
northwest corner of Bosnia, is
held by government soldiers
but appears to be close to
falling to a month-long assault
by renegade Muslims and

Serbs.
Despite heavy shelling in
recent days, UN sources said
there appeared to be no point
in keeping the Bangladeshi
soldiers in Velika Kladusa.
About 1200 soldiers arrived
this fall to replace French
troops, but officials said only
about one in six had his own
gun.

Details of the pullout are
sketchy, but UN officials hope
to withdraw the peacekeepers
overland through Serb-held
territory in Croatia to the
Croatian capital Zagreb.

UN spokesman Thant
Myint-U said in Sarajevo that
although the move was meant
to be temporary, Serbs
surrounding the region may
not let them back in.

Sources in Zagreb, who spo-
ke on condition of anonymity,

said about 100 peacekeepers
would be moved out of the area
per day.

The sources said the United
Nations still had to get
approval for the plan from the
combatants, and predicted
that the Bosnian government
might object.

Besides a couple of small
supply convoys, Serbs have
refused to allow UN convoys
for the Bangladeshis to cross
the territory they hold in
Croatia. The Bangladeshis are
reported to be short of food
and medicine, and the United
Nations said one man died last
week of an illness.

Bangladeshi soldiers in
another embattled town,
Bihac, 40 kilometers south of
Velika Kladusa, and at a base
came at Coralic highway
See Page 12 Col 3

Opposition must shoulder responsibilities: Salam

By Staff Correspondent

The opposition will have to
shoulder the responsibilities
for dissolution of the Fifth Par-
liament if they resign before
its five-year term is com-
pleted, BNP Secretary General
Abdus Salam Talukdar said yester-
day.

"They are responsible for
making Parliament ineffective
by a prolonged boycott and
they will also be held respon-
sible for a premature expiry of
the House," Talukdar said
while giving his reactions on
the Opposition's ultimatum for
its MPs to resign.

He said there are constitu-
tional provisions to handle the
situation arising out of a mass
resignation.

"Either we have to hold by-
elections or call for fresh elec-
tions by dissolving Parliament,"
he said.

He, however, would not say
which option the ruling party
would follow if the opposition
MPs did resign on December
28.

The major opposition parties
Tuesday announced they
would resign en masse if the
ruling party failed to accept
their demand for a caretaker

government to supervise gen-
eral elections by a December
27 deadline.

Salam Talukdar said the
opposition parties consumed
80 per cent of the total work-
ing hours when they attended
Parliament.

"But under a parliamentary
system of government the ma-
jority party always dominates
the House for policy-making
decisions," he said.

"I don't know what sort of
democratic practice they
want," Talukdar said.

He said the ruling party had
given ample concessions dur-
ing the failed Commonwealth-
brokered dialogue and had
even agreed to form a national
government to conduct the
next elections.

Regarding hartals the BNP
Secretary General said the
people would judge the merits
and demerits of the coun-
try-wide general strike enforced
by the Opposition yesterday
and today.

He indicated that the BNP's
standing committee would sit
shortly to evaluate the latest sit-
uation.

Bangladeshi troops in Somalia moved to safer position

The Bangladeshi troops
barricaded by Somali milita-
men near Mogadishu, took
safer position Tuesday after
removing the barricades, re-
ports UNB.

Three of the soldiers, how-
ever, suffered minor injuries
during the action, an ISPR
press release said yesterday.

They are Lance Dafader
Momin Hossain, Naik Shah
Alam and Sepoy Imdad Hos-
sain. Their condition is now
well, said the release.

The troops, who are in the
Bangladesh battalion working
with the United Nations Op-
eration in Somalia (UNOSOM),
took position in the Mogadishu
port area after removing barri-
cades on way to their camp at
Sabeli, north of Mogadishu.

The action was taken in ac-
cordance with the decision
taken by the UNOSOM head-
quarters with the support of
the troops of other countries
in the UN mission.

Equipped with heavy arms,
the militiamen laid the barri-
cades on November 29. As a
result, the Bangladeshi troops
had been cut off from their
base camp at Afgoye.

The action plan was taken
after UN officials' talks with
the Somali gunmen for re-
moval of the roadblocks had
failed.

Jamaat MP Abu Baker dead

Mohammad Abu Baker MP
of the Jamaat-e-Islami died of
heart attack early yesterday.
He was 61, report agencies.

The Jamaat MP elected
from Natore-3 constituency
suffered a massive heart attack
in his village home in Singaive
thana of Natore district and
died at about 2:15 am on his
way to the Rajshahi Medical
College Hospital, a Jamaat
source said.

Late Baker left behind wife,
four sons and seven daughters
and a host of relatives and
friends to mourn his death.

President Abdur Rahman
Biswas expressed deep shock
at the sudden death of Mo-
hammad Abu Baker MP.

In a message of condolence
President Biswas said Abu
Baker was a dedicated political
leader who always upheld the
people's interest and fought
for them.

The President conveyed his
sympathy to the members of
See Page 12 Col 7

Mostafiz off to Casablanca to attend ICFM meet

By Staff Correspondent

Foreign Minister Mostafizur
Rahman left Dhaka yesterday
for Casablanca to attend a two-
day meeting of the Islamic
Conference of Foreign Minis-
ters (ICFM) beginning in the
Moroccan city on December
10. This would be the 22nd
conference of the Foreign Min-
isters of the OIC.

The ICFM is expected to
prepare the agenda for the 7th
summit of the OIC scheduled
to be held on December 13
and 14 in the same city, lo-
cated on the Atlantic coast.

International issues, particu-
larly those concerning the
Muslim world including that of
Palestine and Middle-East,
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus
and persecution of Muslim mi-
norities in non-Muslim coun-
tries are expected to be dis-
cussed at the OIC meet.

The 7th summit of the OIC
comprising 52 member coun-
tries would also commemorate
See Page 12 Col 7

No instance of caretaker govt anywhere in the World : PM

JESSORE, Dec 7: Prime
Minister Begum Khaleda Zia
today said the opposition ac-
tivities for an "unconstitu-
tional" demand is severely
hampering the country's de-
velopment endeavour, reports
UNB.

"There is no instance of a
caretaker government as de-
manded by the Opposition
anywhere in the world," she
told a huge rally at Keshabpur
College ground, some 32 kilo-
metre off the district town, in
the afternoon.

Begum Zia identified two
trends of politics presently
prevailing in the country — one
is development-oriented and
the other destructive.

The BNP believes in the
politics of development and for
that it has undertaken various
programmes aiming at
progress of the country and
welfare of commonman, she
told the rally.

On the other hand, the
Prime Minister accused the

destructive politics being pur-
sued by the Opposition politi-
cal parties is severely hamper-
ing the development process.

"There is still time to come
out and join the people. Only
then you will be accepted by
the people in future," she ad-
vised the Opposition, which
enforced a one-and-a-half-day
hartal from today as part of
their current move for a care-
taker government to conduct
national elections.

Referring to the amend-
ment of People's Representa-
tion Act, Begum Zia said the
BNP government had decided
to introduce identity cards for
voters to ensure that everyone
can cast his own vote.

She made it clear that the
BNP government did not
come to power after nine years
of anti-autocracy agitation and
through a free and fair election
to step down at anybody's
threats.

The Prime Minister men-
tioned that the 12th amend-

ment was passed by all the
elected political parties mak-
ing Parliament sovereign and
accountable unanimously.

She chided the Opposition
for forgetting all these and
raising an extra-constitutional
demand of a caretaker gov-
ernment. "There is nothing
like the so-called caretaker
government in the country's
Constitution," she reiterated.

Begum Zia listed the devel-
opment programmes of the
government in all the sectors,
including education, commu-
nication, health and employ-
ment.

Referring to local demands,
the prime minister assured
that Keshabpur-Trimohini
road would be metalled soon,
the local hospital upgraded to
50-bed one and a hostel be
constructed for the students of
Keshabpur College.

Presided over by thana BNP
president Abu Bakar Abu, the
meeting was also addressed by
See Page 12 Col 8

JS session may be prorogued today

By Staff Correspondent

The seventeenth session of
the country's Fifth Parliament,
which began November 12, is
likely to be prorogued today.

Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali
informed the House yesterday
that President Abdur Rahman
Biswas had already asked him
to prorogue the session yester-
day evening.

But the House resolved to
request the President to
"reconsider the prorogation
order because yesterday's
scheduled business was sus-
pended following the death of
Jamaat MP Mohammad Abu
Baker."

"I have already received the
prorogation order from the
President, but I would like to
adjourn," if the Leader of the
House consents, the sitting to-
day in order to maintain the
tradition of showing honour to
a sitting member," the

Speaker said.
"In that case, a request
would be made to the Presi-
dent on behalf of the Chair and
the Leader of the House to the
President to reconsider his
order," the Speaker added.

"The request would be to
prorogue the session tomor-
row (Thursday)," the Speaker
said.

Prime Minister and Leader
of the House Begum Khaleda
Zia, at this stage, took the floor
to inform the Speaker that she
had no objection to the propo-
sal, especially when all mem-
bers had the same feeling.

The Speaker then ad-
journed the sitting immedi-
ately. It resumes at 6:00 this
evening.
Earlier, the House unani-
mously adopted an obituary
reference at the death of the
See Page 12 Col 8

Unknown Van Gogh at flea market

AMSTERDAM, Dec 7: A
French flea market purchase
has been identified as a previ-
ously unknown flower still life
by Vincent Van Gogh, the Van
Gogh Museum announced to-
day, reports AP.

"It's never been seen by the
public, never touched by pro-
fessionals. There was no var-
nish on it and no frame. It's so
pure," said museum spokes-
woman Rianne Norbart.

The oil, called 'Still Life
(Vase with Flowers)' by the
museum, shows a brilliantly
coloured autumn bouquet with
asters and other flowers.

The cm 58x43.5 work was
painted by Van Gogh likely in
late 1886 during his stay in
Paris, according to the mu-
seum.

The unnamed owner bought
the painting at a flea market
See Page 12 Col 8



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia addressing a huge public meeting at Keshabpur in
Jessore district yesterday. — PID photo

Two Indian ministers may have to quit over bank scandal

NEW DELHI, Dec 7: Two
close colleagues of Prime Min-
ister PV Narasimha Rao came
under severe pressure today to
resign over the nation's worst
financial scandal after opposi-
tion groups disrupted parlia-
ment over the issue, reports
Reuters.

The scandal emerged as
the most important Opposition
plank today when Parliament
began its winter session, its
last meeting before the budget
in February.

The 1.3 billion US dollars
scandal, in which brokers and
bankers colluded two years ago
to siphon funds from govern-
ment securities to invest in
the then booming Bombay
Stock Exchange, has over-
shadowed the country's biggest
spy case involving the theft of
space secrets, deputies said.

A joint parliamentary com-
mittee (JPC) that investigated
the scandal said the then
petroleum minister B. Shan-
karanand and junior finance

minister Rameshwar Thakur
were involved.

But the government, in its
action taken report, ignored
the JPC's indictment of the
ministers, forcing a showdown
with the Opposition during the
parliament's monsoon session.

Congress deputies said pri-
vately they expected Shan-
karanand to resign by Saturday
when results for the recent
state assembly polls would be
known.

Shankaranand is an influen-
tial leader in the southern
state of Karnataka where the
Congress is expected to lose.

"There's every chance that
he will be asked to go. Defeat
in Karnataka will make him
dispensable," a deputy close to
Rao told Reuters.

He said Rao might also per-
suade Thakur, whose influence
stems from his closeness to
the family of former prime
minister