



Visitors at a stall of the Iranian trade fair that began at the Officers' Club in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Iranian trade fair opens in city

By Staff Correspondent

Expensive Persian carpets, furniture, crockery and jewellery and many other household items have been put on display and for sale at the Iranian trade fair which opened in the capital yesterday.

The single-country exhibition of Iran, the first of its kind in the country, was inaugurated by Commerce and Information Minister M. Shamsul Islam, at the Officers' Club.

The opening function was also addressed by M. Morshed Khan, Special Envoy to the Prime Minister, Dhaka Chamber of Commerce president A. Rob Chowdhury and Iranian Ambassador Mahmud Bayat.

Inaugurating the 10 day fair, M. Shamsul Islam said, the exhibition will help strengthen the bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries.

The trade fair is the beginning of further improvement of the economic relations between Iran and Bangladesh, the minister said.

Mentioning the steps taken by the present government to liberalise the economic policies of the country, the Commerce Minister said, Iranian entrepreneurs can now invest or set up joint venture industries in our country.

The minister also called for opening the Iranian markets for Bangladeshi products.

He hoped Bangladesh would have a big market in Iran specially for jute and tea in the years to come.

Morshed Khan said the time has come to improve direct trade relations among all Muslim countries. He emphasised the need for direct air link between Bangladesh and Iran and other Middle Eastern countries.

A Rab Chowdhury said, although Bangladesh has been exporting jute and jute goods, tea and some other non-traditional items to Iran for a long time, still there is potential market for Bangladeshi products like ready-made garments, handicraft and leather goods.

In his brief speech, the Iranian Ambassador recalled the historic relations between the two countries and hoped the Iranian trade fair will help consolidate it.

About 20 private companies of Iran are taking part in the fair.

Among the products on display, the famous and colourful Persian carpets, various household items, melamine electrical equipment, high-quality furniture, handicraft and precious ornaments attracted the visitors.

The fair will remain open during office hours until December 25.

Victory Day today

From Page 1 Col 4

message on the occasion, called upon all to renew the pledge to establish democracy and rule of law in the country.

The government, political parties and various socio-cultural organisations have taken up elaborate programmes to mark the day.

The day's programmes begin with a 31-gun salute in the capital. The National Flag will be hoisted atop the public and private buildings.

The day is a public holiday.

The national dailies will bring out special supplements while the Bangladesh Television and Radio Bangladesh will put up special programmes highlighting the significance of the day.

Political parties, organisations and individuals will place wreaths at the National Memorial at Savar which is dedicated to the 30 lakh martyrs of the war of independence. They will also hold discussion meetings, seminars and cultural functions on the occasion.

The bands of Army, Navy and Air Force, BDR, Police, Ansar-VDP and civil defence will play bands at selected places of the capital.

The naval ships will remain for public display at Chittagong, Khulna and Mongla ports, Dhaka Sadarghat, Narayanganj and JMTA terminals from 3 pm to 5 pm on the day.

In observance of the day, cultural functions will be arranged. Shilpakala Academy, from its roving trucks, will render sessions of patriotic songs in various important city places.

Bangla Academy will hold a cultural session in its premises.

Sammilita Sangskritik Jote will bring out a colourful rally. Mayor Mohammad Hanif will take part in the rally from Central Shaheed Minar at 10:30 am.

The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has chalked out week-long programme on the occasion of the Victory Day.

National and party flags will be hoisted atop the party central office. Wreaths will be placed by the leaders of the BNP and its front organisations at the mazar of late President Ziaur Rahman.

The BNP will also bring out a colourful procession on the occasion at 3 pm. JASSAS will hold a discussion meeting to be followed by a cultural programme at Ramna Park at 3 pm.

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina will place wreath at the National Mausoleum. Central leaders of Awami League will accompany her.

The AL will also bring out a colourful procession from the party central office at Bangabandhu Avenue at 3 pm.

Old woman run over in Ghior

MANIKGANJ, Dec 15: Dhaka-Aricha highway remained closed for about three hours (Thursday) morning as local people in Ghior put up barricades demanding a speed-breaker after an old woman was run over by a speeding coach, reports UNB.

Suru Bala, 55, died on the spot while she was hit by a Khulna bound bus.

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Haider India's new foreign secy

NEW DELHI, Dec 15: India on Thursday named Salman Haider, a career diplomat with 35 years' experience, as its next foreign secretary, reports AP.

Haider, who has been ambassador to China, will succeed Srinivasan, who retires on February 28.

The foreign secretary is the top bureaucrat in the ministry.

Award after name of Bangabandhu

By Staff Correspondent

The Uttaran Institute has announced a peace award after the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on the occasion of the Victory Day. The award will be given every year on the eve of Victory Day.

The institute will give the award following the guidelines of the 'Julio Curie Peace Award'. The award will be given to national and international personalities for their contribution to the cause of peace, freedom and democracy and struggle for the welfare of the deprived and exploited section of society, says a press release.

Disabled FFs continue hunger strike

By Staff Correspondent

War disabled freedom fighters and their family members, who are on a 'fast-unto-death' programme since December 10, have made some more demands on the eve of Victory Day.

Demands include increase of honorarium, housing facilities for them and re-employment of retrenched FFs in the Freedom Fighters' Welfare Trust.

A press release of the central action committee of the Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Kalyan Trust said that of the 500 members of martyrs' families taking part in the strike, some one dozen fell sick yesterday and had to be shifted to different hospitals because of hunger-related illness. Yesterday was the sixth day of their strike.

The freedom fighters started their fast-unto-death programme demanding withdrawal of lease of Trust enterprises and transfer of important offices to Swadhinata Bhawan.

Sakharov prize for Taslima

STRASBOURG, Dec 15: Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasreen was awarded a literary prize by the European Parliament here today amid protests from French intellectuals claiming her plight has been exaggerated, reports AFP.

Thirty-two-year old Nasreen, who lives in exile in Sweden after fleeing a death threat for alleged blasphemy in Bangladesh, was given the parliament's Sakharov prize as the intellectuals protested what they termed excessive media exploitation of her visit to France last month.

Meanwhile writer and profession polemicist Jean-Ederm Hallier made a 'solemn protest' in this eastern French city today and said, the award was a 'stunt' on the parliament.

One found dead in Badda

By DMCH Correspondent

Rafiqul Islam, 40, was found dead in the city's Badda Nagar area, early yesterday.

Police arrested his friend, Mohammad Yunus Ali Khan, 45, who was reportedly with Rafiqul just before the incident around 1 am Wednesday.

According to police, the two friends were going to Gulshan by a motorbike when from a bar, Sakura, at Mymensingh Road, they were drunk. On the way, Rafiqul fell unconscious and was taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where he was declared dead.

Patrol police arrested Yunus when he tried to escape leaving Rafiqul unconscious on board the vehicle.

He was detained in the Ramna police custody under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code (Cr. PC).

KAFCO

From Page 1 Col 3

terday said "the first drop of saleable ammonia was produced at its plant in Rangadia, Chittagong".

The brief statement added that the Chittagong plant, which is in the final stage of commissioning, would produce at full capacity 1500 metric tons of ammonia per day of which 1000 mt would be processed to produce approximately 1725 mt of urea per day. Urea production is scheduled to start shortly.

The entire production is for the export market, which is expected to fetch around 150 million dollars in foreign exchange.



From L to R Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, King Hassan II of Morocco, Bangladeshi Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto attending a meeting of the Jerusalem Committee on the sidelines of the seventh OIC summit in Casablanca Wednesday. — AFP photo

Casablanca summit

From Page 1 Col 7

tion made a reservation" on the proposal which was passed, that called on Israel not to make any demographic or geographic changes to Jerusalem during the interim period of Palestinian peace process and insisted on dismantling settlements.

However, OIC Secretary General Hamid Al-Gabid told reporters that a detailed plan for action in Bosnia was agreed.

A Moroccan official said the Muslim contact group would hold talks with its Western counterpart in Geneva "as soon as possible".

The western contact group that is trying to broker a political solution in Bosnia is composed of Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States.

The Islamic group comprises Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan, Senegal and Turkey.

But the Islamic group is unlikely to accept French and US proposals to offer the Serbs in Bosnia the possibility of confederation with the Serbian Republic in exchange for their acceptance of a territorial settlement.

The summit stand rejects strongly confederation and advocates boosting the size of the

23,000-strong United Nations protection force (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia, well as more NATO strikes on Serb positions and an end to an international arms embargo on the Bosnian government.

Malaysia, meanwhile, announced from Kuala Lumpur that it would send 377 more soldiers to beef up its 1,633 member team serving with the United Nations in Bosnia, even as the UN was drawing up contingency plans to withdraw.

Editorial on page 4

The resolution sought a special session of the UN General Assembly on Bosnia-Herzegovina in case the Security Council is unable to counter Serb attacks.

The leaders adopted a code of conduct urging OIC members not to finance or support 'terrorist acts' and to ensure their territory is not used by violent groups to plan or carry out operations.

Oman had called for references to 'religious extremism' to be included in the resolution, but the proposal was rejected by Saudi Arabia and Iran, Arab and African delegates said.

Delegates said resolutions on curbing extremism nonetheless amounted to an unprecedented legal document.

Two doctors manhandled

FARIDPUR, Dec 15: Doctors at the Faridpur General Hospital today went on a strike protesting manhandling of a physician by some miscreants in the town today, reports UNB.

The doctors alleged that ENT specialist of the hospital Dr Rafiqul Islam was beaten up mercilessly by some young men in front of the supermarket when he was on his way to the hospital at around 8:30 am.

Another report from Lalmonirhat adds: Miscreants attacked a Family Planning Welfare Centre and injured two officials including a doctor and also assaulted two policemen in Khuniagach union of Sadar thana of Lalmonirhat today.

Witnesses said the gang of miscreants attacked the centre and beat up Doctor Nandan Kumar Shil, 35, and Family Welfare Visitor Muslima Begum, 40, who were on duty.

A cruel contrast!

By Staff Correspondent

While the world spends 40 billion US dollars a year for gold and \$5 billion for wine, an additional amount of 34 billion dollars would eradicate problems related to basic child health, primary education, safe water and sanitation and family planning, according to a UNICEF estimate.

The 1995 State of the World's Children report of the UNICEF says, it only requires annually 13 billion dollars extra budget to ensure basic child health and nutrition, 6 billion extra for primary education, 9 billion for safe water and sanitation and 6 billion for family planning.

In contrast, the world spends 160 billion dollars for beer, 400 billion dollars for cigarettes, 250 billion dollars for advertising and 800 billion dollars for the military, the report points out.

Hasina yet to reply

From Page 1 Col 8

Bangladesh to help solve the crisis created over the caretaker government issue, Chief Emeka faxed separate messages to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina urging them to resume the dialogue.

Meanwhile, party sources said the AL high command has already finalised its stance on Emeka's fresh initiative for a settlement.

"We welcome the Commonwealth Secretary General's efforts, but we have already discussed enough during the dialogue arranged by Sir

Gunmen kill 8 more in Karachi

KARACHI, Dec 15: Gunmen today killed eight people including a policeman and his son in Pakistan's southern city of Karachi, where 104 people have died in ethnic and sectarian violence this month, police and hospital sources said, reports Reuters.

By-election in Natore-3 Jan 25

Polling will take place to elect a member from the vacant seat of Jatiya Sangsad constituency 59, Natore-3 on January 25 next, reports BSS.

The commission has announced the timetable for holding the election.

According to the schedule, nomination papers have to be submitted with the returning or assistant returning officers on January 1, scrutiny will be held on January 2 and the last date of withdrawal is January 9.

Muktijoddha

From Page 1 Col 8

to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM), Shahiduddin alleged that Mujibur Rahman and Hamidullah Khan at a press conference at Hotel Sheraton on December 12 defamed the freedom fighters of the Central Action Council.

The Magistrate ordered for a judicial inquiry in this regard.

King Hassan to visit Bangladesh

CASABLANCA, Dec 15: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia had a royal audience with King Hassan of Morocco at the royal palace yesterday evening, reports BSS.

They exchanged pleasantries and discussed the 51-nation Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).

Begum Zia invited King Hassan, who is the current chairman of OIC, to visit Bangladesh.

The King accepted the invitation and expressed his desire to visit Bangladesh at a mutually convenient time.

Begum Zia also made a courtesy call on with Ameer of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber Al-Sabah and Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia Prince Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz yesterday separately.

During the discussion at the VIP villa of the Kuwaiti Ameer, Begum Zia and Sheikh Jaber underscored the need for strengthening the existing excellent relations between the two countries. They expressed identical views that effective action plan should be worked out to help the Bosnian Muslims.

Referring to the Bangladeshi workers working in Kuwait, Begum Zia urged the Ameer to take more Bangladeshi manpower.

During the discussion with Saudi Crown Prince at the royal palace, Begum Zia and Prince Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz expressed satisfaction over the excellent state of political and economic ties between the two countries. The two leaders underscored the need for enhancing commercial linkages between Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia.

PM returns home

From Page 1 Col 5

ugh discussion.

She said Bangladesh had become OIC Vice-Chairman for three years.

Begum Zia reiterated government's sincere wishes to resolve the present political crisis and said the Opposition has equal responsibility in this regard.

"It is the responsibility of all. The country belongs to all, and everyone has right on it. Like the government, the Opposition also has a responsibility," she told reporters.

Replying questions relating to the national crisis over the Opposition demand for a caretaker government, the Prime Minister said the government had given a lot of concession for the sake of the country and democracy.

"But the Opposition has not moved an inch from their stand," she regretted.

"We love the country and want the democratic process to continue," she said pointing at the sincerity of the government to resolve the problem.

When her attention was drawn to the reported move the Speaker to solve the problem, Begum Zia said, "It is better if you ask the Speaker about it."

"We have always said we believe in discussion and solution through dialogue," she went on saying, apparently endorsing the latest move ahead of the opposition threat of resignation from Parliament on December 28.

Clash over char land: 20 hurt, 42 houses burnt

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Dec 15: At least 20 people were injured and 42 dwellings gutted today and yesterday during clashes between two groups of people over occupation of Ilishar Char land under sadar thana of Bhola district.

According to Bhola police, the clash occurred between the temporary and the permanent residents of Ilishar Char yesterday morning. One group swooped on the other group and set 38 houses on fire leaving 15 persons injured, four of them seriously.

Another clash began today in which five persons were injured and four houses burnt.

The Midnight File

48 killed in Liberia

MONROVIA, Dec 15: At least 48 Liberians including women and children were killed in fighting in an outer Monrovia suburb Thursday, according to an AFP correspondent who counted the bodies after they were brought to the city centre. The bodies, many of them burnt and dismembered, were buried in a mass grave near the city centre late in the afternoon.

Russia shells Chechen village

GROZNY, Dec 15: Russian guns shelled a strategic village outside the Chechen capital for a third day Thursday, but fighting eased as a thick fog settled over the separatist republic. A regional official sympathetic to Chechnya's cause said hundreds of civilians had been killed in four days of fighting. Chechens defied the Kremlin's ultimatum to lay down their arms by Thursday or face the consequences, even as Moscow said Russian soldiers had already entered the northern and western outskirts of Grozny and were advancing from the east, reports AP.

EC officials' meet with NGOs in Dhaka soon

The leader of the delegation of the European Community, now visiting Bangladesh, has praised BRAC's non-formal schooling programmes for eradicating illiteracy from the country, reports UNB.

"We have never seen anywhere in the world such an effective primary education system. We are very happy to be associated with and share your efforts in providing the children of those who come from very poor families with the light of knowledge," said E. Fassati.

Fassati said that an informal meeting between EC officials and NGOs will be held in Dhaka within a few months. This, he said, will be first direct dialogue between the EC and the NGOs.

The leader of the EC delegation to the EC-Bangladesh Joint Commission meeting, made the remarks after visiting BRAC's non-formal primary schools in Rangpur area on Wednesday.

Fassati, who is the Asian Regional Director in the EC headquarters in Brussels, is also the co-chairman of the EC-Bangladesh Joint Commission.

He and members of the

Diarrhoea claims 2 more lives in Patuakhali

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Dec 15: Diarrhoea has claimed two more lives and attacked 26 others in the last 24 hours in two unions — Mittaganj and Lalua — under Kalapara thana of the Patuakhali district.

Official sources said five persons died and 47 were attacked during the last 72 hours. Thana Health Officer (THO) of Kalapara Health Complex admitted the outbreak of diarrhoea.

Furniture

From Page 1 Col 8

If the demand for caretaker government is not met by December 27, the deadline set by the Opposition.

Hasina is learnt to have communicated to the Works Ministry her decision and requested the Telephone department to transfer her private telephone lines to her new house, party sources said adding the residence will be handed over to the Public Works Department.

The Opposition Leader would be entitled to her government staff — personal secretary and public relations officer — till her resignation. As the daughter of former President Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and a leading political leader of the country she will be provided with state security personnel even after her resignation, sources said.

Unicef

From Page 1 Col 3

of children were immunised. But after successful implementation of the expanded programme on immunisation (EPI), the percentage now rose to around 80 per cent.

Bangladesh has also succeeded in promoting oral rehydration therapy (ORT). More than 13 million households were covered with ORT to fight diarrhoeal dehydration while 90 per cent of the population was aware of ORT.

As against the UNICEF goals of ensuring basic education for all girls and boys and primary school education for 80 per cent by the year 2000, Bangladesh has succeeded in raising enrolment rates to about 70 per cent and the previously significant gap between boys' and girls' enrolment has been almost eliminated, the UNICEF report says.

The government of Bangladesh and UNICEF have just completed their joint planning for the remaining five years of the century. These recommendations, according to Carriere, will be presented to the UNICEF Board in March 1995 for implementation from 1996 onwards. This programme, with a proposed budget of 250 million US dollars, will give greatest importance to education.

Per capita income

From Page 1 Col 4

to Thailand in five to seven years.

Rahman was addressing a reception at a local hotel hosted in honour of the newly elected FBCCI executive committee by the Bangladesh Ausadhi Shilpa Samity (BASS).

Underpinning his optimism, he argued that Bangladesh has the highest per capita resource in the Sub-continent and a unique 'inherent strength' of being a homogeneous nation.

"But unfortunately that strength has been transformed into weakness by the politicians," said Rahman, who has recently failed in his bid to bring the political parties to a meeting.

"The country does not have any real problem, the present political crisis is rather a consequence of personality clash between two," the FBCCI President said.

He appealed to the members of the business community to rise above their political affiliations and be united in protecting the interest of business.

"A congenial business climate is what we want... we will not allow that the direction of the country is at stake," asserted Salman Rahman.

Rahman cautioned that a staggering political uncertainty would destabilise the macro-economic successes the country achieved over the recent years.

Earlier, addressing the function BASS Vice-president Samson S Chowdhury vented a similar concern over the current political impasse over caretaker government issue, affecting the economy.

"The political leadership on both sides is deeply embroiled in power struggle. They are totally unconcerned about the fate of the economy," said Chowdhury.