

## Air raids on Grozny called off, claims Moscow

MOSCOW, Dec 26: Russia has called off its air raids against the rebel Chechen capital Grozny for the time being, a high-ranking official in the Defense Ministry said here today, reports AFP.

Air strikes were aimed at wiping out groups of bandits, tanks and ammunition dumps, said the official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Another report says, the fighting for Argun intensified today despite an order from President Boris Yeltsin to suspend all military operations, with Russian tanks, artillery and snipers closing in on Chechen forces defending the strategic town.

Yeltsin said it was now pos-

sible to end the three-year crisis, but he insisted the region was part of Russia, news reports said.

Chechen defenders were separated from the Russians, sent on December 11 to crush the mostly Muslim republic's independence drive, by as lit-

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te as 600 metres to a kilometre.

The air rang constantly with the thunder and percussion of the Russian artillery and tanks, the hammer of machine guns and the crack of sniper fire.

The Russian side opened up with big guns at 3:00 am today after only sporadic fighting Sunday.

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## Appeal to leaders

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genuine opinion polling system in the country today, you both would know how utterly disgusted people are with your bickering, mutual abuse, negative politics, lawlessness, mis-government, broken promises, state-controlled electronic media, boycotting Parliament, frequent hartals, impeding regular productive activities in our mills and factories, patronising violence, keeping armed cadres in your student wings, putting personal and party interest above the country's, and failing to understand what the people want. As you see, the list is long, and is getting longer by the day.

Recently a UN study has shown that only 9 per cent of our children get adequate nutrition between the ages of 1 to 2. Don't you both feel ashamed that you are leaders of a country where 91 per cent of the children are below the nutrition level, and a majority of them are so chronically undernourished that they are stunted for life by the age of five? Did you both have time to read the report that said we are the **ONLY** country in the **WORLD** where people are actually growing shorter, while in the rest, they are growing taller? Do you realise that the people, you both are fighting so hard to lead, are suffering so much, just as you both quarrel?

But with all the disadvantages, with all the problems and resource constraints, with all the disruptions, our people are forging ahead. After being in shackles for decades, our private sector is for the first time poised to make significant strides. International investors are already favourably inclined to come here, and are waiting and watching the latest political developments.

Our farmers are already producing much more than they did ever before, and we are on the brink of food-self-sufficiency. Our private development partners are setting superb examples of developmental activities which the world is emulating.

Much has happened. **And much more can happen. Only if you both allow them to happen.** And here comes the question of true leadership. I appreciate very much all that the Opposition has done to bring to the public agenda, the question of free and fair election. But can elections, however central and critical, be more important than our very economic survival? Isn't China postponing many of its democratic reforms for the sake of economic growth and greater grassroots-level prosperity of the people?

On the other hand we also understand the concern for constitutional continuity and to maintain the forms and etiquette of parliamentary government. But can such concerns ever be more important than peace, and political harmony? Especially when that peace and harmony can be gained by a simple personal

### HSC results

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The computer centre of the Engineering University (BUET), the services of which were utilised for the publication of the HSC results, earlier on Thursday said that there were at least ten causes for withholding of the results.

Sources said, the Dhaka Board authorities replied to the queries of the computer centre Saturday night. But the replies of the other three boards are yet to be received by the computer centre.

The results of around two per cent examinees of the Dhaka Board and roughly three per cent of the three other boards were withheld.

It was learnt that a large number of students who were shown absent in the attendance registers of the examination centres were not actually absent. The results of those students were withheld.

Besides, according to sources, a number of students who got 70 or 80 per cent marks in some subjects, got failing marks in the practical examinations. Results of those examinees were also withheld.

sacrifice — a sacrifice which can bring immense political dividend.

No, leaders, **please do not be prisoners of your own egos.**

Except for the most blindly partisan few, all will agree that the biggest obstacle to political harmony today is the incapacity of you both, to rise up above self interest and consider the interest of the country above your own. Permit me to recount a story from the life of Caliph Omar. Once two women came, both claiming to be the mother of the same infant. Both professed to love the child more than anything else in the world, and insisted that they would rather die than part with the child. All possible investigation, suggestions and offers did not help solve the problem. Then a novel idea struck the Caliph. He said since both love the child equally, and since both claimed to be its rightful mother, so "I will cut the infant into two, and give one half to each of you." Nobody had any doubt as to who the real mother was when suddenly one of the women said, "I don't want the child to die, let the other woman have it."

How much more do we need to suffer so the real leader inside you both will come out? How many more of us will need to die through street violence or at the hands of *mastaans*, till one of you will say "Let not the country suffer more. I will be flexible and accommodate, even if it hurts my personal or party interest."

All reports indicate that much has already been achieved in talks, and what remains are small gaps. **We appeal, we plead, we implore** that for the sake of the country, for the sake of its poor and impoverished people, and for the bright economic future that can be ours if we get a stable political situation, please, please compromise on those minor issues and let us breathe a bit freely.

But just as we plead, we also warn. Do not underestimate the intelligence of our people, and their capacity to understand who is doing what to the country. As so often in the past, so also in the future, our people will surprise you both with their capacity for fair and intelligent judgment.

### Attack on brother: Sister gets bail

By Court Correspondent

Nasim Banu, arrested on Sunday allegedly for bursting into her brother's Dhanmondi residence along with some hired gunmen, was released on bail yesterday.

The gunmen reportedly shot and wounded one Rintu Mahmood in the house of Banu's brother Waker Hossain at West Dhanmondi.

Dhanmondi police arrested Nasim Banu and produced her before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM), Dhaka, who granted the bail on a bond of Tk 25,000 yesterday after the prosecution failed to furnish any supporting papers regarding the seriousness of the injured condition.

### 20 injured as launches collide

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Dec 26: At least 20 people were injured, three of them seriously, when two launches collided on the river Shitalakhy around noon yesterday.

The Narayanganj-bound MV Nazmul Haq, which was coming from Sureshwar, Faridpur, collided with the ML Shahana which left Narayanganj for Taltola, Munshiganj near Sona-kanda around 12 noon.

### Hajj policy

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A 53-member medical mission will be at hand to serve the Bangladeshi pilgrims in Saudi Arabia, according to the policy.

The Cabinet also approved the public holiday list of next year (1995). It also approved the draft bills of Merchant Shipping Ordinance (Amendment) 1994 and Bangladesh T&T Board Ordinance (Amendment) 1994.

About the Opposition's threatened resignation from Parliament, Dr Kamal said, "resignation is not the solution. Rather such an action would lead the nation towards chaos. The nation would resist such a move, he added.

The rally was also addressed by Mostafa Mohsin Montu.

A procession was brought out later.



Shahjahan Siraj, MP, presenting a bouquet to BNP chairperson Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on the occasion of his formally joining BNP at a ceremony held at the Prime Minister's Hare Road office yesterday. — PID photo

### Prokrichi strike from tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

A two-day work stoppage of the country's professionals, called by the Prokrichi-BCS Central Action Council, starts Wednesday.

The strike, called to enforce implementation of the 17-point charter of demands by the Prokrichi members, exempts emergency, medical services, utility services, police and Ansars, postal and customs department officials, and the school and college teachers on examination duties.

The decision to go ahead with the strike programme was finalised yesterday at a meeting of the Prokrichi-BCS Central Action Council, platform of some 70 thousand doctors, engineers, agriculturists and members of 26 non-administrative cadres.

The Prokrichi members are campaigning for overhauling of the existing bureaucracy, separation of the judiciary from the administration and other professional demands.

### Demand for enlisting slum dwellers as voters

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh Homeless Welfare Association yesterday demanded of the government to 'restore' voting rights of 20 lakh slum dwellers in Dhaka.

In a memorandum submitted to the Chief Election Commissioner, the leaders of the association called for enlisting the slum dwellers as voters for future elections.

Earlier, the association brought out a procession from its Mirpur head office and marched to the Election Commission (EC) office at Agargaon in the capital.

The responsibility of preparing the voters list primarily rests with the government, the memorandum pointed out. Any attempt to leave the slum dwellers out of the electoral process was a violation of their rights, it added.

A voters' list prepared by the EC in September 1992 excluded the shum-dwellers of Dhaka.

As a result, these people could not exercise their franchise in the last city corporation polls.

### Gano Forum

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have the right to be or not to be represented in the cabinet.

The GF proposal readout at the rally by Advocate Zahidul Islam, noted that the political parties and the people of South Africa had evolved constitutional provisions for a national government to rebuild their country.

A GF declaration which contained the formula called upon all political parties and individuals concerned to actively consider it. "Only a national government could rid the nation of the present crisis," it said.

Referring to the major opposition parties' demand for a caretaker government to conduct general elections, the declaration said only a caretaker administration could not ensure fair elections. For free and fair polls, the Election Commission should be independent and have the authority to punish the poll offenders and introduce a code of conduct for the political parties.

Addressing the rally, GF chief Dr Kamal Hossain urged the two top leaders (the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition) to evolve an effective method, through a dialogue, for ensuring free and fair polls.

About the Opposition's threatened resignation from Parliament, Dr Kamal said, "resignation is not the solution. Rather such an action would lead the nation towards chaos. The nation would resist such a move, he added.

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### DSE gaining confidence of the investors'

By Staff Correspondent

The Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) held its 33rd annual general meeting yesterday with a pledge to improve the functioning of the institution.

The major decisions of the meeting, chaired by DSE Chairman Khurshid Alam, included computerisation of the trading system by next year, introduction of custodian arrangements and measures to improve the quality of brokers.

According to sources, members of the DSE also discussed the possibility of shifting its office to a bigger building in the city in view of the increased volume of trade. The meeting decided to seek government help in implementing its decisions.

The meeting observed that tremendous confidence has been created among the local and foreign investors in the future of the stock market. The confidence would have to be strengthened further and maintained by improving the services of the institution.

According to DSE sources, the market capitalisation increased almost five times this year compared to that of 1991.

During the time, the turnover of shares increased ten times and the price index about three times.

A number of leading international firms have also got involved in the DSE as it is growing as a big share market. The money injected by the firms this year in the DSE is over 200 million US dollars, the sources said.

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During the time, the turnover of shares increased ten times and the price index about three times.

There are allegations against some of the members of the DSE of being non-professional in dealing with the investors, he said, adding that this erodes the confidence of the investors not only in the particular members, but also in the institution as a whole.

"We have to become more trustworthy to the investors by being more professional," the DSE Vice Chairman said.

Some 163 securities of 154 companies are presently listed with the DSE, the market capitalisation of which crossed the one billion dollar mark for the first time last month.

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