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Notice

Our regular feature "Women on the Move" will be published tomorrow

NEWS BRIEFS

PM donates buses

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday presented six educational institutions with half a dozen buses for their students. The institutions are: Khulna University, Dhaka Dental College, Tejgaon Government College, Dhaka, the Cantonment Public School and College at Jahanabad in Khulna, Narsingdi University College and Ramganj Government College in Laxmipur, reports UNB.

Speaker leaves hospital

Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali was released from the Suhrawardy Hospital yesterday following improvement in his condition but doctors advised him complete rest for one week. The Speaker was admitted to the hospital on December 30 with chest pain, reports UNB.

Nat'l Film Awards ceremony postponed

The function for giving away the national film awards for the years 1992 and 1993, scheduled to be held tomorrow at the Osmany Memorial Hall, has been postponed due to unavoidable circumstances, an official announcement said yesterday, reports BSS.

Myanmar envoy hosts reception

On the occasion of the 47th anniversary of the independence of the Union of Myanmar, the ambassador of Myanmar and Mrs. Hla Myint-Oo held a reception at the Sonargaon hotel in Dhaka yesterday evening. The reception was attended by Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury, politicians, high civil and military officials, journalists, diplomats and elite of the city, reports BSS.

Village police confce Jan 21

A national grand conference of the Bangladesh Village Police Employees Union (chowkidars) will be held in Dhaka on January 21. Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is expected to attend the function at the National Parade Ground as chief guest, reports UNB.

Moscow orders halt to Grozny bombing

ARSHTY, Jan 4: President Boris Yeltsin today ordered a halt to the bombing of the Chechen capital on the fifth day of the Russian army's disastrous attempt to take Grozny, reports AP.

The presidential press service said the bombing halt would take effect at midnight Moscow time (2100 GMT).

The assault on Grozny was preceded by day after day of airstrikes that left hundreds dead and much of the city in ruins.

Yeltsin once before said he was stopping the bombing of Grozny, but Russian warplanes continued their attacks, destroying, among other things, an orphanage.

It was not immediately clear whether Yeltsin intended to use the bombing halt to pursue talks with the Chechens, or whether a new ground assault was being planned.

The press service said Yeltsin was responding to appeals from lawmakers, the media and others to halt the conflict in Chechnya.

"Proceeding from the intention to prevent an increase in civilian casualties, the president of the Russian Federation orders the leaders of the power structures to stop bombing Grozny beginning at midnight Jan. 5," it said.

Despite the bombing halt, Russia poured fresh troops into Chechnya today and geared up for a fresh assault on the Chechen capital.

Gunfire erupted in the suburbs in the morning. But a thick, milky fog enveloped the capital most of the day, reducing visibility to a few blocks and stifling the kind of heavy shelling that has destroyed much of the center.

The Russian government's press service said federal troops were continuing their mission but the situation in Grozny "has started to change drastically. There were fewer clashes and they became less intensive."

About 60 kilometers west of the capital, villagers in tiny Arshty — a clump of homes on the Chechen border with Ingushetia — were trying to make sense of a Russian aerial

See Page 12 Col 3

British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Douglas Hurd called on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday. — PID photo

Dhaka's economic progress 'striking', Hurd tells PM

British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Douglas Hurd yesterday said ,there is immense scope for foreign investment in Bangladesh if the country could ensure political stability, reports UNB.

Hurd expressed the view during a courtesy call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at the PM office in the evening.

He described the economic progress in Bangladesh as 'striking' but observed that the prevailing political situation may have adverse impact on overseas investment in the country.

"Bangladesh should try its best to maintain stable situation for ensuring development of the country," said the visiting Foreign Minister of the United Kingdom, which has the second highest investment in Bangladesh after Hong Kong.

See Page 12 Col 2

Food Minister tells Daily Star

Hoarders, hartals push rice prices up

By Special Correspondent

Food Minister Mir Shawkat Ali has attributed the recent price hike of rice to both hoarding of foodgrain and Opposition's agitation programmes.

"A section of the millers, traders and big farmers is hoarding rice to increase their profit while the Opposition programmes like hartals and sieges are also indirectly contributing to the rise in prices of essential commodities," he said.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, the minister said that there was no reason for the price hike since the present food stock with the private sector is adequate to meet the requirement for at least five months and the government also has a satisfactory reserve of rice and wheat.

The price of rice of all varieties has increased by at least Taka 2 per kg in a month. Coarse rice now sells at Taka 13 to 14 per kg and quality rice from Taka 16 to 17.50.

The minister admitted that there has been an upward trend in the price of rice for about a month.

"But the situation is stable at the moment, and the price is expected to go down soon since steps have been taken for this."

Mir Shawkat disclosed that the government would go for open market sale (OMS) from its own stock if the upward trend persisted.

Elaborating the measures taken to arrest the price hike, the minister said the government has already withdrawn import duty on rice to facilitate increased supply of foodgrain through private sector imports.

Many traders have now become keen to import foodgrain, a number of LCs has been opened while ships carrying 15,000 tonnes of rice have already berthed at the Chittagong and Mongla ports, he said.

"Meanwhile, the government has also decided to increase its own food reserves by procuring 1.5 lakh tonnes of rice through local tender", the minister added.

Purchase of 75,000 tonnes of *atap* (unboiled) rice through such tender has been arranged of which 22,000 tonnes have already been procured. The *atap* rice was imported by the private sector traders and sold to the government.

Local tender to buy another 50,000 tonnes of parboiled rice of foreign origin has also been floated and it will be opened on January 8.

According to sources con-

See Page 12 Col 8

Opposition announces programmes

By Staff Correspondent

The mainstream opposition political parties, the Awami League, Jatiya Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday announced a set of fresh action programmes including railroad barricade on January 19.

Other programmes are : Country-wide mass processions from January 11 to 13, mass contact on January 14 and 15 and torch processions on January 18.

The programmes were announced at the rallies held after the hartal hours.

Awami League general sec-

See Page 12 Col 3

Hartals end: 25 hurt in stray incidents

By Staff Correspondent

The Opposition-called eight-hour hartals for three consecutive days in the city ended yesterday.

At least 25 people were reported injured in stray incidents of bomb blasts and brick-batting while 11 people were arrested on charges of carrying bombs and attacking police vans.

The Awami League, Jatiya Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami called the series of hartals after the resignation of their legislators from the Jatiya Sangsad to press the demand

See Page 12 Col 1

Dissolve JS for fresh polls: Hasina

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said dissolution of Parliament and election under a non-partisan caretaker government is the only solution to the present political crisis, reports UNB.

In a statement, she thanked the people for observing hartal on January 2,3 and 4 and said they (people) expressed their no-confidence in the government by responding spontaneously to the hartal calls.

"The present movement is aimed at establishing people's voting right to ensure democracy, political stability and development," said Hasina, the

See Page 12 Col 5

Return to the 'path of peace', AL urges govt

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League presidium member Abdus Samad Azad has urged the government put an end to the persisting political impasse by returning to the 'path of peace'.

"After the *en masse* resignation of the opposition MPs, the only way to resolve the crisis peacefully is the dissolution of the present 'illegal' Parliament and announcement of fresh general elections as demanded by the mainstream opposition parties including the AL", he told a post-hartal rally at Bangabandhu Avenue in the

See Page 12 Col 3

Political stability must for investment: Hurd

By Staff Correspondent

British Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Secretary Douglas Hurd has "expressed the hope that an understanding would be reached by the Bangladeshis themselves to resolve the present political crisis for the sake of continuity of the country's democratic process and economic stability.

Addressing a press conference late yesterday afternoon, Hurd said that political stability was an essential premise for securing foreign confidence and investment.

Responding to questions on the political situation, the British Foreign Secretary repeatedly emphasised without elaborating: "There is a linkage between foreign aid and political stability."

Evading a direct reply to whether British aid would be reduced if the present political crisis continued, Hurd said "Aid is going to be allocated, if it can be well spent."

The British Foreign Secretary said he had listened to several points of view on the political situation and added, "It's not a matter for me, but for the Bangladeshis to decide."

"As a friend of Bangladesh, I hope an agreement can be reached so that economic progress could continue," he said Britain was committed to supporting good government and parliamentary democracy," he added.

Speaking about the economic situation, Hurd said, "I am impressed by the economic progress of the country. Statistics are impressive. There is increasing exports and inflation rate is very low."

Hurd pointed out that many British companies have invested in Bangladesh, and good progress has been made in the textile sector.

Responding to a question if more British investors would come to Bangladesh, he said investment was a matter for private firms to decide and the

See Page 12 Col 7

Joint statement

Dhaka, London to promote cooperation

Bangladesh and Britain yesterday expressed "happiness with the progressive development of bilateral cooperation" between the two countries and showed their desire to "further promote and broaden their mutually beneficial cooperation in political, economic, trade and other fields," reports BSS.

This was stated in a joint statement issued by Bangladesh Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman and the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth

See Page 12 Col 1

Salam admits fresh move to resolve impasse

By Staff Correspondent

Ruling party Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukdar yesterday admitted that fresh initiatives are on to resolve the political impasse.

"The fresh move has not yet taken any concrete shape. It is still in the very initial stage," Talukdar told reporters at his official Hare Road residence.

He said if both sides finally agree, the situation can be resolved amicably despite certain

See Page 12 Col 6

JCD leader succumbs to injuries

By DMCH Correspondent

A JCD leader, Farhad Hossain Shaheen, who was severely beaten up by some unidentified youths suspecting him to be the murderer of Kamal Reza (Tamal), another JCD activist last month, succumbed to injuries at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday evening.

Kamal Reza was shot dead by some unidentified gunmen on December 23 near the Khilgaon railgate. Police suspect he was a victim of rivalry in JCD.

Farhad was admitted to the DMCH in a critical condition after being beaten up near the Press Club on December 24.

Pro-hartal activists holding a rally at a city street during yesterday's hartal hours. — Star photo

Israel okays new site for Jewish settlement in WB

AL-KHADER, West Bank, Jan 4: Bulldozers began clearing a new Jewish settlement site in the Israeli-occupied West Bank today as part of a government compromise to save threatened peace talks with the PLO, witnesses said, reports Reuter.

They said bulldozers began preparing the ground for housing units on the hillside tract next to another hill where Israeli troops and protesters clashed over plans to build on what Arab villagers said was their land.

On Monday Israel's government, under pressure from its Palestinian peace partners, halted work on the site for 500 apartments on a disputed hilltop near Al-Khader village but authorised work on a location closer to the nearby Jewish settlement of Efrat.

The compromise did little to defuse the dispute over settlement, one of the thorniest points of contention still to be negotiated in the 1993 Israeli-PLO peace deal.

The settlement rift cast a pall over Israeli-PLO talks in Cairo, which ended in disarray on Tuesday night. PLO officials have maintained that continued settlement will wreck the talks.

Palestinians view as a provocation the 100,000 Jews living in settlements scattered among one million Arabs on the West Bank.

Another report from Gaza adds: Israeli soldiers and Palestinian police exchanged fire in the Gaza Strip today.

Solution still possible thru' dialogue: GF

By Staff Correspondent

The Gano Forum yesterday appealed to the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition to make one more even if it be the last effort to resolve the present crisis through a meaningful dialogue.

"We believe this is legally possible and it is still not too late to achieve a settlement which will save the nation from a very grave danger," the party said in an appeal to the leaders.

The Gano Forum led by Dr Kamal Hossain, said the entire nation hoped that an accord would be reached between the government and the opposition by December 28 since they agreed on some basic

See Page 12 Col 7

No possibility of compromise : JP

By Staff Correspondent

Jatiya Party leaders yesterday said there was no possibility of a compromise with the government after the resignation of the Opposition MPs.

"We can now discuss as to when and how the government would resign and hold general elections under a caretaker administration," JP leaders told a post hartal rally in the city.

Held at the south gate of the Baitul Mukarram Mosque, the rally was addressed by party secretary general Khaledur Rahman Tito, presidium member Syeda Razia Faiz, central leaders Shamim Al-Mamun, Shah Mohammad Abu Zafar, Nitai Roy Chowdhury and city unit president Abdus Salam. City vice-president Shamsuzzaman Mintu was in the chair.

Khaledur Rahman Tito announced a fresh programme, saying the party was not going

See Page 12 Col 8

Jamaat threatens to cripple govt

Jamaat-e-Islami leader Matiur Rahman Nizami yesterday said the government will be ousted through agitation to clear the way for free elections under a neutral caretaker authority if it doesn't concede to the Opposition demand, reports UNB.

Addressing a post-hartal rally at the north gate of the Baitul Mukarram Mosque, he said any attempt to sidetrack the Opposition demand for a caretaker government or its dilly-dally practice in fulfilling the demand would not be tolerated.

The party announced a fresh programme at the rally of countrywide rail, road and riverine route blockade on January 19.

It will also organise mass processions on from Jan 11.

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বিজ্ঞপ্তি

ঢাকা আন্তর্জাতিক বাণিজ্য মেলা '৯৫

তারিখ ঃ ৭–২১ জানুয়ারী '৯৫

স্থান ঃ শেরেবাংলা নগর, ঢাকা।

উদ্বোধন ঃ ৭ জানুয়ারী বিকাল ৩.৩০ মিনিট
উদ্বোধন করবেন গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকারের মাননীয়া প্রধানমন্ত্রী বেগম খালেদা জিয়া

মেলার সময়সূচী ঃ প্রতিদিন সকাল ১০.০০ টা হতে রাত ৯.০০টা পর্যন্ত।
ঃ শুক্রবার ৩.৩০ টা হতে রাত ৯.০০ টা পর্যন্ত।
ঃ উদ্বোধনী দিন বিকাল ৫.৩০ টা হতে রাত ৯.০০ টা পর্যন্ত সর্বসাধারণের জন্য খোলা থাকবে।
ঃ ৯ জানুয়ারী (সোমবার) বিশ্ব ইজতেমার আখেরী মোনাজাত উপলক্ষে বেলা ৩টা পর্যন্ত মেলা বন্ধ থাকবে।
ঃ ১৬ জানুয়ারী (সোমবার) বেলা ৩টা থেকে ১৭ জানুয়ারী (মঙ্গলবার) বেলা ৩টা পর্যন্ত পবিত্র শব-ই-বরাত উপলক্ষে মেলা বন্ধ থাকবে।

বিজ্ঞপ্তি-২১৭-৩/১
বি-২৭

রপ্তানি উন্নয়ন ব্যুরো