

Lankan govt, LTTE set up direct radio links

COLOMBO, Jan 7: Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga and Tamil Tiger guerrillas have established direct radio links ahead of their truce that goes into effect Sunday, defence sources said, reports AFP.

The Defence Ministry provided the communication links to the leadership of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) so they could have easy access to the president as well as military commanders, the source said.

The president will also gazette the names of observers who will be monitoring the truce. Communication links have now been established, the defence official said.

He said both sides will be in contact to ensure there were no violations of the 'Cessation of hostilities' agreement signed by LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran and Kumaratunga on Thursday.

The Tigers also agreed in principle to open the main land route to their northern stronghold on the Jaffna Peninsula as part of the truce, aimed at clearing the way for political talks to end the long-running ethnic conflict.

The main highway to Jaffna will be open for heavy vehicles taking supplies to the region while a narrow causeway will be made available for civilian traffic, the source said. It was not immediately clear when the road would open.

Both routes are through military camps established to tighten an embargo on the Jaffna Peninsula. Earlier, the LTTE refused to open the main Elephant Pass highway, arguing that the army could use it to march into Jaffna.

UN seeks 6500 more troops for Bosnia

UNITED NATIONS, Jan 7: The United Nations is urging members to contribute another 6,500 troops to the peacekeeping force in Bosnia, saying that a new truce could collapse if it is not closely monitored, reports AP.

The soldiers would patrol cease-fire lines, supervise the withdrawal of heavy weapons and monitor human rights, said Kofi Annan, undersecretary-general for peacekeeping.

"Cease-fires in Bosnia have a tendency to unravel soon after they have been signed," Annan told a Thursday meeting of troop contributors. The fewer the opportunities the parties have to violate the agreement,

1 killed, 30 hurt as quakes rock Japan

TOKYO, Jan 7: Two strong earthquakes rocked Japan including the capital Tokyo today, killing one person and injuring about 30, a Meteorological agency spokesman said, reports Reuters.

The two quakes, one measuring 6.9 on the Richter scale in northern Japan and one 14 hours later just outside Tokyo measuring 6.2, rattled buildings and the nerves of many residents.

All the casualties reported so far were in the first quake which hit the Hachinohe area about 500 km (325 miles) north of Tokyo at about 7:30 am (22:30 GMT).

The quake which rattled Tokyo rumbled through the city at about 9:40 pm (12:40 GMT).

The agency spokesman said its focal point was located about 45 miles (70 kms) under the earth near the fishing port of Mito, just north of the capital.

He said there were no reports so far of casualties or damage from the tremor which shook high-rise buildings and set lights swinging inside houses.

Biswa Ijtema

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Maulana Enamul Haque, chief of the World Tablig Jamaat, will conduct the Akheri Munajat Monday morning.

Innumerable food stalls, restaurants, bedding stores and groceries have opened shop at the venue.

Some 400 tubewells and nearly 2,500 sanitary latrines and some 20,000 kutcha latrines have been put in place.

To ensure medicare, temporary camps and hospitals have been set up by the Health Ministry, the Religious Affairs Ministry and other voluntary organisations, including the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, Hamdard Laboratories and the Ijtema Committee.

The Gazipur District Health Department set up two camps where doctors in three shifts are attending the patients round the clock. The Red Crescent Society has set up a mini-hospital with 15 beds and six doctors to attend to the sick.

Ten ambulances and sufficient stock of medicine have been kept ready for the seriously ill. Health Services volunteers said.

Tongi Municipality and Dhaka Metropolitan Police have taken measures for smoothly regulating traffic and the parking of vehicles on the occasion.

The DMP has made parking arrangements for vehicles carrying the participants at the Tongi College field, the Capri cinema hall ground near the

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Britain's Prince of Wales and his sister-in-law, the Duchess of York, line up Friday with their children (from left) Princess Eugenie, Prince Harry, Princess Beatrice and Prince William during their royal sledding race on the slopes outside their hostel in the exclusive Swiss resort of Klosters, where they have been enjoying a winter holiday. — AFP photo

Miscrants damage Shah Khurram College at Sylhet

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Jan 7: The Shah Khurram College here was damaged by a group of miscrants early today. In protest, the agitated people of the area created a barricade on the Sylhet-Sunamganj and Sylhet-Badaghat roads. Police cleared the roads after nearly seven hours.

The extent of the damage has been estimated at taka fifteen lakh.

According to police, an organised gang of miscrants attacked the college building at about 2 am Friday night. They tied up the night-guard and then went on a rampage.

The miscrants damaged the 120-foot time-shed structure of the Shah Khurram College in Tukerbazar area of Sylhet Sadar. The under-construction building was razed to the ground by the miscrants during a 2-hour carnage. They also looted some important documents and furniture.

Agitated villagers and some students of the college gathered in the area, held protest meetings and brought out processions. They created barricades on the Sylhet-Sunamganj road and the Sylhet-Badaghat road from 8 am this morning. The roads were cleared by the police at about 3 pm.

Kotwali police later arrested one person from Kumargaoq area and recovered some of the loot from his house.

A protest meeting was later held with the college principal Sirajul Islam in the chair. The speakers demanded arrest of the miscrants.

Former foreign minister Humayun Rashid Chowdhury demanded immediate reconstruction of the college.

AL backed Sonali Bank employees' hunger strike Jan 24

A section of the employees of the Sonali Bank will stage a mass hunger-strike on January 24 at the Shapla Square in the city to press for their seven-point demand including raise in financial incentives, reports UNB.

Addressing a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday, general secretary of the Awami League-backed Sonali Bank Employees' Union Aminul Haq Farouk hoped that AL chief Sheikh Hasina would attend their fasting programme from 10 am to 4 pm to bolster their move.

They demanded two and a half incentive bonuses of 1991, reintroduction of fringe benefit, 10 per cent increment like that of government officials, loan to the employees for consumer goods, due promotion, and stoppage of harassment transfer.

Announcing the programme, Farouk said they would hold a rally at the Shapla Square in front of the Sonali Bank head office at 4 pm on January 22 and gate meeting and rallies at 10 departmental sections from January 14 to 19.

Criticising the present government for waiving interest on crores of taka in the name of sick industries and sanctioning fake loan, Farouk said the BNP government had curtailed a number of financial benefits instead of encouraging them.

Replying to a question, he said since independence the bank had disbursed irrecoverable loan to the tune of Tk 960 crore and bad debt of Tk 1250 crore.

The present government has waived Tk 600 crore in interest on bank money in the interest of certain vested quarters who have taken business loans in crores, the union leader alleged.

There are 30,000 officers and employees of more than 1300 branches of the largest nationalised commercial bank, he informed.

Among others, Abdur Razaq, Kamrul Islam, Nazim Uddin, Nurul Alam, Nazrul Islam, Sarajul Islam, were present at the press conference.

PM opens trade fair

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Mofazzal Karim and president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) Salman F Rahman also spoke on the occasion.

At the opening function, the PM also released a set of two postal stamps of Taka four and Taka six denominations. Post and Telecommunication Minister Tariqul Islam was present on the occasion.

Begum Zia was presented with a crest of the fair.

Ministers, MPs, diplomats, industrialists and businessmen from home and abroad attended the opening function.

The fair has been organised to attract foreign buyers for Bangladeshi goods and enable local entrepreneurs to know about a wide range of foreign commodities, their quality and technology.

Foreign firms at the DITF '95 put on display electric and electronic goods, industrial and agricultural machinery, household items, handicraft, textile equipment, carpets and surgical equipment.

The goods being displayed by local enterprises include ready-made garments, jute and textile products, leather goods, ceramic wares, toiletries, electric goods, handicraft, frozen food and plastic items.

Merchandise of a wide variety were put on display at the impressive stalls of the trade fair. Toothbrush stalls rubbed shoulders with those of gramophone records, stalls displaying pickles and canned foods were not far from those of ornaments, colour TVs or expensive carpets.

On the opening day, crowds swarmed the spacious pavilions of Monno Ceramics, Transcom, or BOMEA while several stalls had to close down immediately after the opening to avoid sudden rush.

However, foreign participants said they were very impressed by the arrangements at the DITF '95, except the dust that clouded the whole area after the inauguration.

M Maghari was displaying his ceramic tiles brought from Iran. "Considering Bangladesh's lack of experience in holding such international fair, I think arrangements are fairly good," he said.

The DITF '95 would bring him good business, Maghari hoped.

Several stall owners said they have to keep on mopping their goods and sprinkle water in front as thick dust frequently cover their articles.

Iran denies US report on its N-weapons

TEHRAN, Jan 7: Iran said today it would sign a contract with Russia to complete a nuclear power plant on the Gulf coast but denied a US report it could be less than five years away from producing nuclear weapons, reports Reuters.

Tehran's United Nations mission, in a statement carried by the country's official news agency IRNA, described the report in The New York Times as "a dramatic, though not unusual, distortion of facts about Iran."

The New York Times said on Thursday that US and Israeli officials believe Iran is much closer to producing atomic arms than previously thought, maybe less than five years.

Those American and Israeli officials who used the Times to sublimate their mischievous political agenda know very well that Iran does not, and will not, in light of its own national interest, engage in a nuclear weapon programme," the mission said.

The denial coincided with a visit to Tehran by Russian Nuclear Energy Minister Viktor Mikhailov.

Mikhailov, who arrived in Iran on Thursday, and Kazem Khabir, acting director of Bushair Atomic Power Plant, told Tehran newspapers the contract to finish the first unit at the plant would be signed soon.

Work on the plant by two German firms began in 1974, five years before Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's Islamic revolution. It is located on the Gulf coast 750 km (470, miles) south of Tehran.

By the end of 1978, 80 per cent of the plant's first reactor and 60 per cent of its second reactor had been built. But the plant was heavily damaged by bombing raids during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

The Russian side has announced readiness to finish the project now that two-year feasibility review and engineering studies by both sides are over," Kar-Va-Karegar newspaper quoted Khabir as saying.

He said pressure by Washington following the revolution foiled Iranian efforts to get German or other western firms to complete the plant.

The Russian side has agreed to design and build the (remaining) 7,000 tonnes of equipment and main work can start in two to three months," Khabir added. It could take up to four years to complete work at the 1,000 megawatt first reactor.

Iran has long maintained that it was not seeking to develop nuclear arms and Khabir said "despite hostile western claims, Iran's atomic energy is only seeking peaceful purposes."

Iran has signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and is a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Its UN mission said the IAEA had carried out in November 1993 an inspection of Iran's "peaceful nuclear facilities" and found them in full compliance with the IAEA's safeguard agreement.



Militiamen arrest a demonstrator who is holding an anti-Yeltsin poster during a rally at the US embassy in Moscow, Friday. The rally was held in protest against Russian military actions in Chechnya, demanding western intervention in the Russian-Chechen conflict. — AFP photo

SKOP urges govt to implement signed accords

By Staff Correspondent

The Sramik Karmachari Otkya Parishad (SKOP), a platform of industrial and other workers, yesterday demanded that the government fully implement its accord with the SKOP signed on July 6 of 1992 and stop the privatisation of public enterprises.

In a statement read out at a news conference held at the Taher auditorium of the JSD (Inau) office in the city yesterday afternoon, the SKOP leaders strongly resented the government was yet to implement its agreements signed with the SKOP and other trade union bodies two and a half years ago. Non-implementation of the accords and even their violation by the authorities had aggravated the situation in the country's industrial sector, the statement said, adding that wholesale implementation of the World Bank and IMF-prescribed reforms has adversely affected the national economy.

The statement condemned the disinvestment drive, retrenchment of workers, non-payment of financial benefits to the workers, continued repression on the agitating workers and their transfers, and giving jail terms to 16 union leaders in violation of the government agreement with the trade union bodies.

It also blamed the government for not yet forming the proposed Labour Law Commission despite a consensus with the labour leaders.

The nation is now heading towards a total uncertainty because of the political deadlock coupled with the crisis in the industrial sector," the statement said.

Garments workers threaten greater agitation

The Jatiya Garments Sramik Federation (JGSF) yesterday threatened to go for a greater agitation if their demands including implementation of minimum wage scale were not met by January 20, reports UNB.

Representatives of the JGSF at the end of a two-day meeting set the deadline for the government and the garments industry owners, said a federation press release.

The meeting also announced a "Protest Day" on January 20 as part of fresh agitation programme.

The leaders alleged that despite their repeated agitations in the last year and even after submitting a memorandum to the Prime Minister, the demands were yet to be materialised.

The meeting in its resolution said the government had announced a minimum wage scale for garments workers on January 12, 1994, but has not yet implemented.

The resolution also expressed solidarity with the textile and spinning mills workers' 48-hour strike on January 15 and 16 and the rail-road barricade programmes of jute mills workers on January 22, 23 and 24.

5 hurt, 2 bodies recovered

By DMCH Correspondent

Five persons were injured in different incidents of mugging, cracker explosion and road accident in the city yesterday. Two bodies were also recovered by police, hospital sources said.

The injured were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the bodies of two unidentified victims were sent for autopsy.

Police recovered the bodies of two unidentified persons — one from behind the Shahjahanpur railway colony and the other from near Zia International Airport.

The Midnight File

12 killed in Rwanda shooting

NAIROBI, Jan 7: At least 12 people were killed and 36 others wounded in a shooting incident in southern Rwanda, near the border with Burundi today, the UN assistance mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) said. It was not immediately clear who was responsible for the shooting which broke out three kilometres (two miles) east of the town of Remera, according to an UNAMIR statement received here, reports AFP.

Chopper crash kills 6 in Italy

BOLZANO (Italy), Jan 7: A helicopter carrying skiers crashed in northern Italy today killing all six aboard, civil defence authorities said. The pilot and five passengers on an off-piste skiing outing were killed when the helicopter crashed near here for as yet unknown reasons, reports AFP.

African summit on Rwandan refugees

NAIROBI, Jan 7: East and central African presidents opened a summit meeting in Nairobi today to seek a solution to the crisis caused by more than two million refugees from Rwanda and Burundi, reports Reuters.

The summit, chaired by Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi, is being attended by presidents Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, Ali Hassan Mwinyi of Tanzania, Pasteur Bizimungu of Rwanda, Sylvester Ntibunganya of Burundi and Zambian leader Frederick Chiluba.

African diplomats were concerned that Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko, a central figure in ensuring the crisis does not worsen, would not attend. Zaire's prime minister is in Nairobi to represent his president.

The genocide of up to one million people in Rwanda last year and a similar but lesser ethnic conflict between Hutus and Tutsis in neighbouring Burundi sent huge numbers of refugees across borders and caused what a Kenyan official described as a "monumental crisis."

Hundreds of millions of dollars of international money is being spent to feed and shelter refugees and to pay for United Nations peacekeepers in Rwanda.

Seismic survey

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The naval vessels, which are carrying out winter exercises in the Bay, have extended their cooperation to the survey vessel, the source said, adding that these vessels would be kept away from the path of the Ross Seal.

The Ross Seal will use a 2.5 km cable equipped for seismic survey when it begins operation Friday in the exploration area known as Block-16 covering Cox's Bazar-Sandwip region.

Since the ship would sink the 2.5 km survey-cable in the Bay during the operation, interference in its movement might cause damage to the sunken equipment. This is why its route should be kept clear, the source noted.

The two foreign companies had previously carried out some preliminary surveys in the area under a seven-year agreement for gas and oil exploration with the government, signed May 5 last year.

The Ross Seal would explore, in straight measurement, 1500 km in the Bay.

This is the first such survey, in the Bay for discovery of hydro-carbon reserves since 1974.

Some 25 different government agencies have been asked to keep the survey route of the Ross Seal clear of any fishing net or vessels during the survey period — the next 25 to 30 days.

Kazi Aref

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stand against the "unholy entente" for grabbing power.

Organised by the Bangladesh Chhatra League (B-CL), the student front of the JSD, the meeting was held at the Arts Building premises of Dhaka University with the organisation's president Ruhul Kudus Babu in the chair.

JSD joint secretary Sharif Nurul Ambia, SKOP leader Shirin Akhtar, former general secretary of DUCSU Mustafa Hossain and incumbent general secretary of the Chhatra League Abdullah-Hil Quayyum also spoke on the occasion.

Expressing deep concern over the current political situation, they demanded dissolution of Parliament and general elections under a neutral, caretaker government.

Ershad's trial

From Page 1 Col 5

have been indicted in the Special Case No 19 of 1993, popularly known as the "Japanese Boat Case."

Relevant documents in connection with the appointment of members of the committee and their recommendations have already been produced before the court and those have been marked as exhibits.

Yusuf Hossain Humayun, defence counsel for Ershad, declined to cross-examine Ahmed after he was "tendered" by the prosecution.

Former ministers Mahbubur Rahman and Rabeya Bhuiyan were among others present in the court to defend Ershad.

Ershad exchanged New Year's greetings with Abdur Razzak Khan, the public prosecutor.

Tofael

From Page 1 Col 7

In support of his contention, he said the Prime Minister kept mum till the day when opposition MPs en bloc tendered resignation. "As soon as the opposition quit Parliament, the Prime Minister started saying so many things including her resignation only to mislead the people."

To a question, he said there cannot be any solution within existing framework of the Constitution. If the government wants a solution and political stability, it must amend the Constitution for creating the provision of a neutral caretaker government for holding at least three general elections.

About the controversy over the opposition resignation, Tofael said, "There should not be any controversy... we tendered resignation constitutionally — as per Article 67 (2) of the Constitution."

"It's unethical," the Awami League presidium member said commenting on the delay in disposal of the resignation letters.

He said if the government does not concede to the demand for a caretaker government, Awami League would realise it through mass agitation.

Earlier, on her arrival at the venue, she was received by IGP A S M Shahjahan. Begum Zia reviewed the parade and took salute.

Ministers, MPs, diplomats, high civil, military and police officials were present on the occasion.