

Accord on ceasefire in Chechnya

MOSCOW, Jan 17: Russian Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin and two cabinet ministers from the breakaway Russian republic of Chechnya today reached an agreement in principle on a ceasefire in the Chechnya conflict, a Chechen spokesman said, reports AFP.

Chechen Justice Minister Usman Imaev said at a press conference: "We have reached an agreement on a ceasefire and a halt in military action."

He said the ceasefire could start as early as Wednesday night.

A government spokesman confirmed the accord, which came during an hour-long meeting between Chernomyrdin and vice premier Sergei Shakhrai on one hand and Imaev and Chechen Economic Minister Teimuraz Abdubakarov on the other.

Imaev, a close aide of Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev, said the issue of prisoner exchanges would be discussed later. He added that Ingush President Ruslan Aushev had acted as go-between in brokering the ceasefire accord.

But Imaev could not give any firm official timing for the ceasefire or announce any of the details.

Meanwhile AFP correspondents at the Chechen capital of Grozny said Russian bombardments of Chechen positions in the city were continuing today.

A 48-hour ceasefire declared unilaterally by the Kremlin last week collapsed after two hours, although the intensity of fighting lessened over the two days.

AP adds: The Interfax news agency cited Chechnya's economic minister as saying the agreement was a first step toward peaceful settlement of the 5-week-old war. He said he would convey details of the talks to Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev on returning to Grozny.



Chief of Army Staff Lt General Abu Saleh Mohammed Nasim pointing out something to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia during a joint winter exercise of 11 Infantry Division of the Bangladesh Army at Ghoraghat in Dinajpur district Monday. — PID photo

PM witnesses winter exercise of 11 Infantry Div

DINAJPUR, Jan 17: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday described the well-organised Bangladesh Army as pride of the nation and hoped that the army would maintain its trend of success through their continued training and hard work, reports BSS.

The Prime Minister was addressing a 'darbar' of the officers and jawans of the 11 Infantry Division at Ghoraghat in Dinajpur after witnessing a collective winter training exercise at adjacent Birinchi in Gobindaganj thana under Gaibanda district.

After receiving the Prime Minister at Ghoraghat, area commander of Bogra area and general officer commanding (GOC) 11 Infantry Division Brigadier GM Moshed Khan briefed her about the winter exercise.

The Midnight File

Plastic explosives found in Kumaratunga's residence

COLOMBO, Jan 17: A cache of plastic explosives was found in Sri Lankan President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga's residence and two guards were detained for questioning, police said today. They said the explosives, believed to weigh 15 kg (33 lbs), were found in a room close to the one used by Kumaratunga's son, Vimukthi, reports Reuter.

Israeli jets collide, 1 killed

JERUSALEM, Jan 17: Two Israeli fighter jets collided over the Mediterranean Sea on Tuesday and one pilot was killed when he apparently was ripped from his parachute, the army said. The collision occurred during an exercise off Palmachim in central Israel. Both pilots initially succeeded in bailing out, but one was killed.

Massive quake in Japan

From Page 1 Col 2

Rescue workers in Kobe worked frantically to free 20 patients trapped by rubble in a hospital and the scene was repeated in many parts of the city.

Damage and casualties were in a 100 km radius around Kobe, extending to Japan's second largest city of Osaka and to the Imperial capital of Kyoto, where temples and priceless Buddha statues were damaged.

There were yawning gaps into which unaware motorists plunged in the elevated Hanshin expressway which connects Osaka to Kobe.

Police said at least 20 motorists died and 20 were injured as their cars were flung from the expressway or drove into chasms in the highway.

Ten trains were derailed by the tremor.

There were no immediate reports of casualties among the thousands of Americans, Britons and other foreigners who live in Kobe, one of Japan's most picturesque cities, famed for its pearls and Kobe beef.

But the German Consulate in Kobe was badly damaged although there were no reports of casualties among the staff.

Most of the 600 or so people still missing were in collapsed buildings in Kobe, including an eight-storey building and a three-storey hotel. Nearly all the dead were in Kobe.

The police spokeswoman said more than 3,000 buildings had been brought crashing down in the region.

The Japan meteorological agency said the earthquake rumbled across the centre of Honshu Island from the Japan Sea to the Pacific Ocean at 2046 GMT Monday its epicentre was located about 20 km beneath the island of Awajishima which is about 30 km off the coast of Kobe.

It was the biggest quake in the Kansai area of central Japan since a 1946 tremor measuring 8.0 on the Richter scale killed nearly 1,500 people.

It was also the biggest quake ever recorded in Kobe since statistics were first compiled in 1926.

In the hours after the first monster tremor, more than 400 aftershocks hampered rescue efforts and brought down already-damaged buildings.

Walking through the shattered city of Kobe was like being on the set of a disaster movie. Streets were littered with rubble, building walls were cracked in many places and shop roofs had collapsed inwards into a V-shape.

The smell of gas from broken pipes hung over the area as fire engines crisscrossed the city.

Residents said the earthquake was preceded by an ominous rumble. "I didn't know if I was dreaming," one resident still in his pyjamas five hours later said. "We just don't expect this sort of horror here."

Police said about 40 homes came crashing down on Awajishima, a fishing area which is also a popular tourist resort for residents of Kobe.

Telephone and other communications to Kobe, a city of 1.5 million, were cut.

Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama called on emergency meeting of rescue services and Japan's armed forces were rushed to the area to help the relief effort.

This is the biggest urban-type earthquake in Japan after the great Kanto earthquake (of 1923). Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama told a hastily arranged news conference.

"More than anything else, the government is taking every possible measure to save the lives of the people because there are many people who are asking for help," he added.

Avalanches kill 36 in Kashmir

SRINAGAR (India), Jan 17: At least 36 people, including 10 policemen, were killed in two days of avalanches after heavy snow on the Srinagar-Jammu national highway, the Press Trust of India reported today, says Reuter.

The news agency said that in the worst incident 26 people were killed when their vehicle was swept into a 1,500-foot (450 metre) gorge by an avalanche at the Jawahar tunnel.

KNM worker hacked to death

From Our Correspondent

KHULNA, Jan 17: Abul Hossain, 45, a permanent worker of the Khulna Newsprint Mills, was hacked to death on Monday night by an unknown assailant.

Police said Abul Hossain was allegedly killed for having an affair with a woman named Jahannara 28, the wife of his colleague Abul Mansur.

Meanwhile, Abul Mansur, the only suspect until now, is absconding.

Govt, Opposition formula

From Page 1 Col 8

The opposition parties are demanding an amendment to the constitution to give the president executive powers for the interim period of elections after the prime minister resigns. On the other hand, the ruling party is still opposed to any amendment and has suggested that the period when the president exercises executive power would have to be ratified by the next Parliament. Under the Constitution the Prime Minister exercises executive power.

A ruling party leader, however, expressed optimism that they would be able to iron out the differences which had slowed down the process.

The source, who had earlier told The Daily Star they would reach a solution by Tuesday, said "we are facing a lot of obstacles from different circles."

He declined to elaborate the latest 'agreed formula' but said it had been reported in the media in different forms.

In reply to a question whether both the sides agreed to form a parliamentary committee headed by the Speaker to supervise the next general election, the ruling party leader said "it is one of the propositions."

Meanwhile, sources close to Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali confirmed that he had already prepared his lengthy ruling on the resignations of Opposition MPs. The announcement of it was delayed apparently to give the rival camps opportunity to reach a consensus, he added.

About the nature of the ruling, the source said the Speaker found the resignation letters faulty and is likely to reject it. "He (Speaker) prepared his decision like a court judgement, which is substantiated by many legal provisions," the source added.

When contacted over telephone the Speaker was re-iterated that since the matter was complicated, he was taking some more time to give the decision.

There is no time-frame in the Constitution regarding announcement of the decision, he added.

The Speaker admitted that he had heard about the fresh negotiations between the ruling party and the Opposition but he had no details.

Razzak Ali also declined to say anything about the decision he is going to give.

Some sources said that the Speaker's decision might be delayed till the ruling of a High Court bench which is now hearing a writ petition filed by an advocate challenging the validity of the en masse resignations by the Opposition MPs.

Khaleda

From Page 1 Col 2

people had rightly voted for the national force in the last national elections and BNP gave due honour to their verdict by implementing various development programmes aimed at socio-economic emancipation of commonman.

As part of the move for streamlining the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, Begum Zia will attend her party's divisional conference in Rajshahi tomorrow (Wednesday).

AL concerned at price hike of essentials

By Staff Correspondent

An emergency meeting of the Awami League Central Working Committee yesterday expressed deep concern over unabated price hike of essentials including rice, pulse, oil and papers.

The meeting, held with party chief Sheikh Hasina in the chair, observed that an abnormal food crisis and increase in the price of essentials made people's lives unbearable.

The government had totally failed to tackle the situation, the meeting said adding the prices of rice went beyond the purchasing capacity of commonmen at the beginning of harvesting season.

The party also demanded that the government take necessary measures to check the price hike of essentials.

The meeting in another resolution said Speaker's delaying tactics in accepting the resignations of the opposition members would be harmful for the country. It called for accepting the resignations.

Price of urea fertilizer reduced

The government has reduced the maximum retail price of urea fertilizer to Taka 230 per 50 kg bag with immediate effect, reports UNB.

As a part of an emergency price control measure, an official announcement said Monday, the government reduced the price of fertilizer considering the production, transport and storage costs and other ancillary costs.

All concerned, including the Bangladesh Fertilizer Association, Fertilizer Dealers Samity other organisations and Deputy Commissioners of all districts have been directed to go by the decision under the Essential Commodities Price Control Act 1956.

Banani Complex in Ctg shut

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 17: Chittagong Customs Excise and VAT Collectorate sealed off a city's prominent cinema Banani Complex on charge of non-payment of VAT amounting to Tk 80 lakh, official sources said here today.

A joint task force comprising Customs officials, police personnel and BDR raided the cinema at Agrabad Monday afternoon and closed the hall.

Country well-poised for growth

From Page 1 Col 7

shown by the investors from India," the BOI executive chairman said.

Asked if he thought that Euro money's description of Bangladesh as an 'emerging tiger' was appropriate, Haque said "It is their perception that Bangladesh is the emerging tiger in South Asia and they valid reasons for saying that. It indicates the degree of international confidence being shown in Bangladesh after the country successfully introduced economic liberalisation and reform measures over the past few years."

With the prevailing macro-economic stability and the initiation of market-oriented reform measures, he added, an enabling environment for investment, both local and foreign, has already been put in place.

"We have the best incentive packages for attracting foreign investment in the region and except for the five restrictive sectors, all others are open for 100 per cent foreign investment," Haque pointed out. "If we can coordinate these incentives and can provide a one-stop service to the investors than we will be able to take advantage of the increasing opportunities to attract investment."

Furthermore, Haque emphasised, there is also a political consensus among the major political parties on economic and investment policies of the country. "It is clearly evident from the economic policies of all major political parties that there is a consensus on the market-oriented economic policies and they all encourage foreign investment in the country."

Responding to a question, the BOI executive chairman identified the lack of coordination among various government agencies as an impediment to attracting investment. "But we are working on ways to improve the coordination among the government agencies and to streamline the procedures."

Inadequacies in infrastructural facilities available in the country also needs to be improved very fast in order to attract investors, he said.

Period	Local Investment		Foreign Investment & 100% and Joint Venture		Total	
	No. of units registered	Investment (in million)	No. of units registered	Investment (in million)	No. of units registered	Investment (in million)
March, 91-June, 91	77	2899	72	216	88	3115
91-92	233	3653	91	1017	257	4670
92-93	353	3609	90	2109	381	5712
93-94	846	18264	457	32165	804	50429
94-95 (July to December, 94)	539	16992	425	8770	629	25762
Total	2048	45411	1135	44277	2301	89688
March, 94 to December, 94	867	27974	699	39925	998	67899

Total Employment Opportunities: 2,67,137
Industrial units registered by Board of Investment during the period March, 1991-December, 1994.

Hili mishap: People remember a big bang

By Naimul Haq, back from Hili (Dinajpur)

Jan 17: The scene at the Hili Railway Station Friday night was very pathetic. There were pools of blood all over. People were crying for help all around. Many of the injured were writing in pain.

This was described by one of the passengers, Abdul Malek, 27, who had boarded the local train at the Hili station only 20 minutes before the accident occurred. Malek said he was sitting in his uncle's panna shop just opposite the station about 300 yards away. The compartments of the local train were thrown apart. "I couldn't believe my eyes."

Jahanara, a neighbour of Islam, ran to join the rescue work but it was too much for her. "I couldn't bear the pains any more, so I came back," Jahanara said.

The condition of the station is even worse. The walls may collapse any day. There is only one toilet for both men and women. One can't get a glass of water at the station and has to walk all the way to the Customs building for it. The age old system of station management is still followed.

"How can one expect good services if you don't have proper facilities?" asked the newly deputed Assistant Station Master. "I was told to come and work here at the Hili station. But look at the office room. All we have is two sets of telephones which constantly keep buzzing. It's a risky job. Sometimes we run out of torch batteries. We then have to depend on candle lights. This is not unusual," he added.

There was a big bang, said most of the local people who took part in the rescue work. "I ran towards the station building minutes after the collision," said Abul Hassan, a senior teacher at the Bangla Hili Madrasah, opposite the station. "It was horrible. I witnessed severed hands and legs strewn on the ground. The situation

Fire in Comilla

From Page 1 Col 4

Ladakh Medical Association have started relief operations in the area.

The injured were admitted to different clinics. The homeless people remained under the open sky till filling of this report at around 10 pm with the current cold wave compounding their misery.

The people of Afizabad Colony migrated from India in 1950s and the district administration has been planning to evict them from the colony for quite a long time.

Our Correspondent from Narayanganj reports: Some 18 hosiery shops were gutted when a fire broke out in the Sved All Hosiery Market at Nandipara in the town in the early hours today.

The tin-shed hosiery market. The extent of damage could be about Tk 20 lakh, according to unofficial estimates.

Jhenidah murder

From Page 1 Col 8

around 6 pm on Monday by a gang of mercenaries.

The samity leaders claimed that the killers were the members of the outlawed Sarbahara Party. Police sent the body to Sadar hospital morgue for autopsy.

The samity brought out a procession on Monday night demanding arrest and exemplary punishment of the killers.

During hartal hours, most of the shops and educational institutions remained closed and vehicles were off the road.

Youth shot dead

From Page 1 Col 8

Some local people said that the clash was a sequel to a previous quarrel between two groups of local youths over a piece of land in the locality.

Heavy fighting in Bihac defying ceasefire

SARAJEVO, Jan 17: Heavy infantry fighting erupted between government forces and Bosnian Serbs, in defiance of the latest nationwide ceasefire, a UN spokesman said today, reports Reuter.

The clashes came near the UN "safe area" of Bihac town in the northwest.

They contravened a ceasefire agreed by Bosnia's main warring parties over the new year and prompted the United Nations to press both sides to speed up implementation of the truce.

Most of Bosnia has been quiet, but Bihac has been the scene of repeated outbreaks of fighting.

The latest clashes were fuelled by Serb attempts to recapture the village of Klokot and its water reservoir, which supplies Bihac town, from government 5th corps troops who seized it in a surprise attack on Friday.

"There was ground fighting on the west side of the safe area between the BSA (Bosnian Serb Army) and the 5th corps," said UN spokesman Paul Risley, describing the battle over the previous 24 hours.

"We think the 5th corps is holding to positions they took around and near the Klokot reservoir against BSA efforts to take the area back. They haven't done it so far."

UN observers recorded about 100 artillery explosions and scores of small-arms rounds, together with heavy machinegun fire on the Klokot front. Fighting tailed off after dark.

3 more PWs examined in JP office case

With the testimony of three more witnesses recorded Monday, nine prosecution witnesses (PWs) have so far deposed in the Jatiya Party Office Case, reports BSS.

Deposed president Hussain Muhammad Ershad, the principal accused in the corruption case, has been charged with abusing his official position in ordering the renovation and refurbishment of an abandoned house in the city for the use of the then ruling Jatiya Party, resulting in the wastage of about Taka 82 lakh from the state exchequer.

Former Works Minister Mostafa Jamal Haider and former Works Secretary MA Rouf are the co-accused.

Those who deposed Monday included a retired chief engineer of the Public Works Department.

On conclusion of the depositions of three witnesses, Zinat Ara, Additional District and Sessions Judge (First Court, Dhaka) and Special Judge, adjourned the hearing till February 4, 1995.

PW-7 Md Anwaruddin Khan, Senior Assistant Secretary in the Road and Road Transport Division of the Ministry of Communications identified several exhibits, including a file of the Finance Ministry entitled "Jatiya Party Office at Road No 3, Dhanmandi Residential Area. Khan had served in the Expenditure Control Department of the Finance Ministry during 1988 to 1992. The JP office file was initiated by him, the witness said.

During cross-examination by Khandaker Mahub Hossain, the defence counsel of Ershad, PW-7 denied, having received any directive from the principal accused regarding the repair work. He gave no direct reply to a suggestion that Ershad had no role in the repair work, Khan said the responsibility of such a job lies with the Works Ministry.

Replying to a query from Yusuf Hossain Humayun, defence lawyer for Mostafa Jamal Haider, PW-7 admitted that the Finance Ministry had given approval to the repair and renovation work of the house.

Answering a query from TM Akbar, defence lawyer of Rouf, Anwaruddin Khan said that a NOC (no objection certificate) from the Finance Ministry was given for the Ministry of Works' but added that it was given under certain terms and conditions.

AKM Safiuddin, a retired chief engineer of the PWD, during his deposition said he had visited the site two to three times to inspect the progress of work. PW-9 Safiuddin was the additional chief engineer when the repair work was carried out.

He testified that he had not raised any objection about the work since it was done at the directive of the higher authorities.

During cross-examination by TM Akbar, PW-9 said that usually sanctions are given when rules and regulations are met.

Answering a question, the former chief engineer said there are three types of repair works — annual, quaternary (every four years) and special. The witness affirmed that there is no limit for expenditure in the case of 'special' works.

Salahuddin Ahmed, a head assistant, PWD, Eden buildings — the PW-8 — identified several papers which were earlier marked as exhibits.

Public Prosecutor Abdur Razzak Khan stood for the state.

Ban ignored

From Page 1 Col 7

local gas distribution gadget. This caused a fire that panicked the local people and they rushed out of their residences.

Fire-fighters had to be called in to douse the fire.

Street vendors and small shops in all areas sold the crackers as if there was no ban on the sale and purchase of these.

Police action was hardly noticeable when children came out on the streets and exploded crackers everywhere.

In many areas, particularly in the old part of the city, cracker blasts continued until Tuesday evening.

At some places, plaincloth policemen were, however, seen chasing those exploding crackers.

Police rounded up over 250 children and youths for allegedly taking part in fire-works, a DMP press release said.

Legal action would be taken against the arrested, it added.

A police official at Motijheel thana said they had picked up 51 children and youths aged 10 to 15 for setting off crackers on the holy night.

Under the DMP Act, the offenders might be fined Taka 20 to 50 each, said another official who wanted not to be named.

Police had earlier warned against sale and purchase of crackers on the Shab-e-Barat night.

Radio and television repeatedly announced the ban.