

## Russians detain Chechen men of fighting age

GROZNY, Jan 28: Russian troops again pumelled the battered capital of Grozny with mortar, artillery and rocket fire on Saturday as both sides accused each other of excessive brutality in the bitter Chechen war, reports AP.

In the southwestern outskirts of Grozny, Russian helicopters strafed the villages of Alkhan-Yurt and Alkhan-Kala for the third consecutive day.

"Last night, we had the heaviest bombardment since the New Year's Eve shelling and bombing of Grozny," Chechen Information Minister Movladi Udugov told The Associated Press. "The Russian troops are using all sorts of weapons, including artillery, mortar, tank fire and bombing."

Russian troops, meanwhile, are being accused of rounding up Chechen men of fighting age, and officials in Chechnya and neighbouring Ingushetia are irate about the wave of arrests in the region.

"The Russians think all men here are fighters," Magomet Batayev, head of local administration in the Sunzha district of Grozny, said angrily on Friday.

Many fighters commute to Grozny from towns and villages in the south. But many people are simply struggling to get on with their lives in the face of a crippling war.

At a news conference in Moscow on Friday, elite Russian commando officials, wearing balaclava masks to conceal their identities, accused the Chechens of using women and children as shields while shooting Russians in the back.

## Leghari calls for peace in Karachi

KARACHI, Jan 28: Pakistani President Farooq Leghari appealed today for peace in Karachi, where police reported seven more deaths in political violence, reports Reuters.

"I call upon the people of Karachi, particularly major players... to swear on the Quran to end violence in Karachi," Leghari told business and industry leaders in the port city. Police said seven people had been killed today.



Amanullah Aman, MP, speaking at a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday organised by the Jatiyatobadi Chhatra Dal to condemn the bomb attack on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's motorcade in the city Tuesday.

## World Leprosy Day today

The World Leprosy Day will be observed today in Bangladesh as elsewhere around the world, reports BSS.

The main objective of the World Leprosy Day is to remove prejudices about leprosy as well as creating awareness among the people.

Radio and television will put up special programmes while various national dailies will publish special articles on leprosy.

Discussion, poster and leaflet distribution and procession will be organised at all the district headquarters.

President Abdur Rahim Biswas in a message yesterday, urged all concerned to put in their best efforts for combating socially stigmatised disease leprosy.

President Biswas said leprosy is no longer a deadly disease as the modern multi-drug treatment (MDT) approach revolutionised its treatment.

In a message on the occasion, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said that leprosy is not just a medical problem, but it is also a major social problem.

The Prime Minister said that despite of all the knowledge and effective treatment, the leprosy patients continue to be the victims of social stigma and injustices.

## Constable

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UNB correspondent said the attackers fired 6 to 7 rounds of shots in the air and escaped safe. They also looted goods from three other compartments.

He said seven policemen from Poradah GRP were travelling by the train — five in one compartment and two in another.

## JS resumes

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Nurul Islam Mond and Abu Yousuf Mohammad Khalilur Rahman submitted the notices which the Deputy Speaker kept pending since Wednesday.

One of the two MPs last night told The Daily Star the matter may be discussed in the House sometime this week.

A High Court division bench in a ruling on January 18 asked the Speaker to show cause within seven days why action should not be taken, as required by the Constitution, on the resignation letters of the MPs.

The court also asked the Speaker to refrain from giving any decision on the matter in 10 days. The time limit expired yesterday.

The Speaker did not respond to the show cause notice. He told The Daily Star Parliament would decide the matter.

## Rubber

From Page 1 Col 5

land by the BFIDC, 8000 acres of land by the Hill Tracts Development Board and 10,000 acres of land by some 1000 private garden owners. Besides, Duncan Brothers, a tea estate operator, is also raising rubber gardens on 5,000 acres of land, where tea was cultivated earlier.

A BFIDC official said private rubber garden owners have been allocated 20,000 acres of land but, they could not raise gardens on the whole area, due to lack of infrastructural facilities. The government has taken initiative to develop road communication and provide other logistic support to private entrepreneurs so that they could utilise the whole area.

Experts said rubber plants are environment-friendly and most economical and help the process of quick afforestation. Presently, the world has a rubber production deficit of 20 lakh tons and depends on rubber produced only in a few countries.

## 18 Islamic militants killed in Egypt

EGYPT, Jan 28: Security forces today shot dead 14 Islamic militants in southern Egypt while fundamentalist gunmen killed four people in the bloodiest day in three years of violence, police said, reports AFP.

Twelve of the militants were killed after police surrounded an abandoned marble quarry in the eastern desert near the Nile city of Minya, which is 250 kilometres (150 miles) south of Cairo, they added.

They opened fire after they were ordered to surrender. Police fired back in a gun-battle that lasted seven hours, a policeman told AFP.

The militants were members of the outlawed Jamaa Islamiyya (Islamic group).

Two other militants, two civilians and two policemen were also killed in unrest elsewhere in southern Egypt, police said.

Several militants opened fire with automatic weapons at a police van outside a hospital in Nagaa Hamadi, 640 kilometres (397 miles) south of Cairo, killing two policemen as well as a man and a woman, police said in a new toll.

The gunmen fled after also wounding three policemen and three other civilians.

Police also arrested Hassan Hussein, a regional leader of the main armed fundamentalist group Jamaa Islamiyya, in Nagaa Hamadi.

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The pullout will be completed on February 10 as scheduled in the accord, said Brig. Gen. Tahsin Shurthom, head of the Jordanian delegation, in a joint border and security committee with Israel.

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## AL rally in city today

Awami League will hold a public meeting at the Bangabandhu Avenue in the city today at 3 pm to press the demand for resignation of the BNP government and dissolution of Parliament to pave the way for general elections under a caretaker administration.

Party chief Sheikh Hasina will address the meeting. The meeting will be part of the AL's demonstration day programmes across the country on the day.

People would vote AL to power, hopes Hasina

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed optimism that the people would vote her party to power if the leaders and workers of the AL worked unitedly to that end.

"This has, once again been proved in the Sylhet poushabha polls," she said.

Hasina was addressing a group of party men, led by the newly-elected Chairman of Sylhet Poushabha Badruddin Kamran, called on her at the party office in the city yesterday.

The AL chief congratulated the new chairman and advised him to work sincerely for the wellbeing of the people of Sylhet town and strive to implement his pre-election pledges to the voters.

Sylhet district AL president Abu Nasar also spoke on the occasion.

## T & T rejoinder

The Bangladesh Telephone and Telegraph Board yesterday issued the following rejoinder to the news item headlined "Most card phones in city out of order" published in the January 28 issue of The Daily Star:

"There are more than 300 card phones in Dhaka city which are continuously monitored by the computerised fault control centre and only 2/3 card phones remain faulty on a given day. So the caption of the news item as published is not correct."

It mentioned that out of the 12 card phones at the Kamalapur railway station only one was out of order as per computer test on January 27 and said the statement that "six out of 12 card phones were out of order" is not also based on facts. It noted that the fully computerised card phone management system results in very low faults, but acknowledged that the report relating to tampering is "correct" and that the complaints about the Mohammapur area are being investigated. It noted that all such phones are fitted with anti-fraud device to prevent their use without payment.

Note: Our Staff Correspondent noted that the specific instances of card phone faults were discovered after on-the-spot investigations on January 15. On that day, of the 10 card phones located in and around the telephone room at the Kamalapur station, six were out of order. However, due to an editing oversight, the date mentioned was "yesterday" (Jan 26) instead of January 15. We stand corrected to that extent.

## Fire in city

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flame engulfed all the 258 (unshaded and thatched houses in the slum within minutes.

The whole area got panicky as men, women and children stampeded in their frenzied efforts to escape through a narrow lane dugged for sewerage line — the only way out of the slum.

The air of the neighbourhood was filled with the screams and the hot smokes billowing from the burning slum.

Local people rushed to the spot to rescue those trapped inside and recover the belongings.

Meanwhile, a section of rescuers looted belongings of the houses deserted by those living around the slum, alleged Mohammad Ilyas, owner of a three-storey house next to the slum.

When The Daily Star correspondents arrived at the spot, they found hundreds of people walling and searching for their kins.

Volunteers were seen distributing food from a gruel kitchen set up at a nearby playground.

On hearing the news of the fire, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia visited the slum.

She expressed her sympathy for the fire-affected and assured of adequate government support.

Begum Zia distributed blankets, jackets, children's wear, saarees, lunges and winter clothes among the victims.

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## Khaleeda at Rajshahi

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"How can those who cannot take the responsibility of the people do good to the people?" asked Begum Zia.

The Prime Minister said that when the opposition parties realised that their future was murky, they started agitating for removing the elected government.

Begum Zia said the Opposition is ignorant of the harmful effects of hartals, politics of destruction, anarchy and such other anti-people activities which seriously hinder development efforts and cause suffering to the people.

"They deliberately call for hartals and blockades whenever foreign investors come to invest in Bangladesh and on major national occasions," she said.

Due to correct measures, the Prime Minister said, the economy of the country had improved and the per capita income increased; a development spree was sweeping over the country.

The country is now bearing 38 per cent of the development expenditure from its own resources and holds its head high in the world community, she told the meetings.

Foreigners coming to Bangladesh had once dubbed the country a 'bottomless basket' during the post-liberation regime. But they now see Bangladesh as an 'emerging tiger'.

"This latest epithet has been earned because of relentless work by the BNP government in the last four years," Begum Zia said.

She said only a democratic government can ensure development of a country and welfare of the people. "There is no alternative to an elected government for carrying forward the ongoing development activities."

Turning to the Opposition demand for a caretaker government, the Prime Minister said the 12th amendment to the Constitution clearly provides that elected representatives would run all affairs of the country.

"So, under the Constitution, a nominated person cannot replace an elected government," she argued. "Not only in Bangladesh, you will not find the concept of a caretaker government anywhere in the world."

Begum Zia alleged that three opposition parties had banded to destroy the hard-earned democracy instead of strengthening it. They are indulging in anti-people activities with an ulterior motive of hindering development of the country.

"These parties act to the dictates of their masters. Their hands and legs are chained," she said, adding: "As the 25-

## 2 Myanmar citizens jailed for life

From Our Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, Jan 28: A court here today sentenced two Myanmar citizens to life imprisonment on charge of killing a Bangladesh national.

The Additional District and Sessions Judge Abdul Mannan convicted the two Rohingya refugees, Rahmatullah and Mohammad Idris of Mondu township of Myanmar of murdering one Karimullah of Teknaf thana on May 10, 1992.

The court also fined the accused Tk 1000 each or another six months' imprisonment in default.

## CU reopens Mar 8

CHITTAGONG, Jan 28: The Chittagong University classes will resume on March 8, campus sources said. The decision was taken at an emergency meeting of the CU Syndicate held today with VC Prof Rafiqul Islam Chowdhury in the chair.

The university was closed early November last year following the killing of a JCD leader on the campus. Meanwhile, residential halls of the university will reopen on February 8 for the Honours and Masters examinations, reports UNB.

## The Midnight File

### 23 killed in fighting between Ecuadoran, Peruvian soldiers

SHELL, Ecuador, Jan 28: At least 23 people were killed in fighting between Ecuadoran and Peruvian soldiers in a disputed border area, an Ecuadoran Colonel said today. Colonel Pablo Viteri, commander of the 17 Pastaza Jungle Brigade, told AFP that 20 Peruvian soldiers and three Ecuadorans were killed on the first day of fighting Thursday.

### Honduran president escapes attempt on life

TEGUCIGALPA, Jan 28: Honduran President Carlos Roberto Reina escaped unharmed from an assassination attempt today, according to official sources. The president was the target of a bomb attack, the sources said, reports AFP.

## Arjun Singh served showcause notice

NEW DELHI, Jan 28: India's ruling Congress (I) Party has slapped a notice on Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao's chief rival, asking him to explain why he should not be punished for rebellion, reports AFP.

The showcause notice served on dissident leader Arjun Singh by the Congress disciplinary committee late Friday was seen as the prelude to his imminent expulsion from the 109-year-old party.

He was given four days to reply to the notice, mandatory for expulsion, the committee, headed by Rao confident Vijay Bhaskar Reddy, announced in the latest move by the 73-year-old premier to assert his authority as party president.

Arjun Singh said he was drafting his reply to the show-cause notice but refused to comment on it.

The notice accused Arjun Singh, 64, of "publicly opposing the policies and programmes of the government with mala fide intention" and ordered him to explain why he should not be punished.

The dissident leader was suspended from the party on Tuesday, a month after he quit Rao's cabinet and raised the banner of revolt after the Rao-led Congress suffered shock election defeats in two key southern bastions.

### 33 DU teachers condemn attack on motorcade

By Staff Correspondent

Thirty three teachers of the Dhaka University in a joint statement yesterday strongly condemned Tuesday's bomb-hurling at the car carrying the Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia while she was returning from the opening session of the International Investment Conference in the city.

"Such practice will also encourage the anti-democratic forces," BSS adds, the Dhaka unit of the Jatiyatobadi Ainjibi Forum at a meeting yesterday demanded immediate arrest of those responsible for the incident.

## Govt, JS illegal: Hasina

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nounce the date of general election under a caretaker government.

The one-hour march, which started at about 4:30 pm from near the Shyamoli Cinema, ended at the Mohammapur bus stand after parading the Ring Road, Adabar, Madrassah Road, Humayun Road, Tajmahal Road and Shershah Suri Road. At least 25 welcome arches were erected on the route.

Students of the Haji Salma Khatun Primary School stood on both sides of the road near the Shyamoli Cinema and showered flowers and petals on the Awami League chief when she passed through leading the march.

"Speaking at another rally at the Mohammapur bus stand, the Awami League chief said both Parliament and the government had become illegal after the en masse resignation of 147 Opposition MPs on December 28.

But the government was continuing the "illegal Parliament" to amass more wealth, she alleged, charging the government with widespread corruption.

"We have resigned from Parliament and are in agitation to establish the rights of the people. We have come to the street as we were not allowed to speak in Parliament about the problems of the people," Hasina said.

About the recent by-elections, she said vote rigging has become a habit of the government. "People did not go to the polling centres to cast votes, but the government claimed that record number of

### 3 killed in Cty

From Page 1 Col 7

killing of Ahsan. BCL denied it. Earlier, around 1 pm in another incident of attack by a group of gunmen at Azadi Bazar under Fatikchhari thana, 25 miles off the city, local Chhatra League leader Mohammad Ali (27) and a Homeopathic Nirod Mohajan (50) were killed, police said.

Mohammad Ali was president of BCL Fatikchhari unit. He came under attack in front of the homeopathic's shop.

The killers arrived at the bazar by an autorickshaw and a tempo.

BCL leaders blamed the activists of National Democratic Party (NDP) for killing Ali. NDP denied the charge.

Senior police officials and large contingents of police from the district headquarters moved to Fatikchhari to prevent further violence.

None could be arrested in connection with the incidents till the writing of this report at 9 pm.

Meanwhile, Alhaj Najibul Bashar Maizbhandary, Awami League leader of Fatikchhari, in a statement in Dhaka condemned the killing of the BCL leader.

He blamed Jamaat Shibir and NDP terrorists for the killing.

## Slow pace of reforms

From Page 1 Col 4

pleted studies on 100 government ministries and agencies, and that it is expected to prepare the final recommendations soon.

Manpower rationalisation in the public sector enterprises, he said, had already been initiated but the pace of the retrenchment process also has to be considered against the existence of the large number of unemployed people in the country, the sources added.

Reform measures in the railway, telecommunications, legal and the power sectors also came up for discussion at the meeting. The donors also raised issues relating to the environment and women's development.

On the performance of the power sector, the Finance Minister told the meeting that the systemic loss of the Power Development Board had been reduced to 23 per cent during the first five months of the current fiscal year while the government was trying to bring down the system loss at the Dhaka Electric Supply Authority, where it still runs at 30 per cent.

He also noted that punitive actions were also taken against 81 employees of the PDB and DESA for their failure to meet the system loss reduction target.

Rahman said that progress is being made on legal reforms and added that the railway sector needed massive infusion of investment for its survival while responding to criticisms about its 'poor performance' from the donors.

The Finance Minister brushed aside comments by some donors that Bangladesh

is behind other developing countries in respect to women's development, asserting that women were enjoying equal rights and privileges like other citizens while women are being given special privileges in a number of sectors, particularly education.

He also told the meeting that the government is setting up a national council on women to deal with various aspects of women development.

On the environment issue, he said the government was very much concerned about protecting the environment because of the country's huge population and small area and added that the National Environment Management Programme (NEMAP) is currently being finalised.

Donors were represented by the heads of different embassies and high commissions, including that of United States, Japan, United Kingdom, Australia, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Italy, Canada, and by country representatives of the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, International Monetary Fund and the UNDP.

More than a dozen secretaries, including Principal Secretary, ERD Secretary, Establishment Secretary, Roads Secretary and other senior government officials were also on the government side.

The mid-term review meeting is considered as a preparatory exercise for the government and the donor community before the World Bank organised Paris Aid Club meeting due to be held in April next.

## Another US visa lottery

From Page 1 Col 8

process and once a person is chosen in the lottery and completes all the documentation required, arrangements are made for a visa interview, the release said.

Being picked in the lottery is not a guarantee of a visa, a US State Department official said.

Like other visa applicants, lottery visa holders must show that they have the financial means to support themselves in the United States — a sponsor, job offer, or independent financial means.

The official said that the worldwide total of 55,000 visas in this programme includes spouses and minor children of successful applicants.

The countries excluded from the lottery because of previous 'high admission rates' are natives of China, Taiwan, India, the Philippines, Vietnam, South Korea, Great Britain, Canada, Mexico, Jamaica, El Salvador, Colombia and the Dominican Republic and their dependent territories.

There are a limited number of visas, so persons should not wait, once they are selected, to complete the visa process," the release advised.

Only one entry from each applicant will be accepted. A husband and wife can both apply. Applicants who are not chosen in this year's lottery can apply again next year.

Entries received before or after the registration dates, and any that are misaddressed, will be voided. Duplicate or multiple entries will disqualify individuals from registration for the lottery programme.

There is no advantage to mailing early in the 30-day period or to mailing from any particular location. Application information for the "Diversity

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