



Prime Minister Begum Khaleida Zia inspecting the children's troupes before their rally at the Dhaka Stadium on the Victory Day. — Star photo



Awami League brought out a colourful procession in the city Saturday to mark the 25th Victory Day. — Star photo

15 more killed in Afghan fighting

KABUL, Dec 17: Rebel rocketing and shelling killed at least 15 people in the Afghan capital Kabul at the weekend as a powerful opposition warlord was reported to be massing troops at a strategic northern town, reports Reuters.

Government sources said more than 30 other people were also wounded by the attacks blamed on Taliban Islamic militia besieging the city and seeking to topple President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

Twelve people were killed and 15 wounded by today's rocketing on the blue mosque near the presidential palace and other residential areas, official Kabul Radio said.

Three people were killed and 17 wounded on Saturday night when Taliban fired 48 rockets into the city, said the broadcast monitored in Islamabad.

Witnesses in Kabul said some rockets fired today

Voter registration

and the district election officers are working as registration officers in their respective areas to facilitate the unregistered voters to enlist their names.

The EC sought cooperation of the local political leaders and the social workers to help the voters register their names.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission has asked the Home Ministry and Deputy Commissioners to suspend issuing licence of all kinds of firearms from now on till completion of the general election.

The directive has been given in the interest of maintaining law and order situation, conducive to holding free and fair polls, said and Election Commission press release.

Feroz Shain

allies of life.

Feroz Shain reached out to these young men and his songs along with Azam Khan, Lucky Akhand and Ferdous Wahid gave birth to a new pop genre.

Feroz Shain AKM Feroz Alam was born in Nilphamari, the work place of his father Dr. Abdul Wahed.

His debut in the television was in 1972 and in radio in 1977. His first record came out in 1972.

As a member of cultural delegation, Feroz Shain visited many countries.

He was an assistant director of the Shilpakala Academy.

Feroz left behind his parents, wife and three children, besides a host of fans, friends, relatives and well wishers.

His first namaz-e-janaza was held on Saturday at his Pallabi residence and the second one at the Shilpakala Academy.

He was buried at the graveyard close to the Martyred Intellectuals Memorial at Mirpur.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas, Prime Minister Begum Khaleida Zia, State Minister for Cultural Affairs Prof Jahanara Begum and Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina, besides many organisations and individuals expressed shock at the sudden demise of the pop vocalist.

Shilpakala Academy has arranged a condolence meeting at 11 am today at the academy premises.

Scouts' jamboree

During the jamboree, the scouts will work hand in hand with the local people in various social development and welfare-oriented activities.

Australia, Indonesia, Japan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, the Maldives, the Philippines, Switzerland, Korea and Thailand have already sent their consent to join the COMDECA.

World Scout officials and leaders, including Felix Li Tai Ho, Kim Kyu Young, John Liem Beng Kiat, Abdullah Rashed, Narayan Parajuli, Prof Leel-Choul, Gazanfar Mashkoor and Dr Tomomichi Goke, will attend the Monday-Friday meet.

Radio Bangladesh will broadcast two-hour live programme everyday from Tamtu during the jamboree.

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Victory Day

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late President Ziaur Rahman. Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina also placed wreaths at the mausoleum.

Muktijuddho and Swedhinatar Rajat Jayonti Parishad organised a huge victory procession in the capital which was led by Sheikh Hasina.

The procession ended at the Suhrawardy Uddyan where Hasina laid the foundation stone of the Bijoy Stambho (victory monument).

The day's attraction was a march past by some 1400 children and juvenile at the National Stadium number-1.

The PM attended the impressive march past and took salute.

President Biswas and Begum Biswas hosted a reception at the Bangabhaban in the evening.

In Chittagong, people from all walks of life stood in their respective places to mark the surrendering ceremony of the Pakistani soldiers.

Besides, different political and cultural organisations also observed the day in a befitting manner.

Heavy turnout in Russian polls

MOSCOW (Russia), Dec 17: Heavy turnout was reported today as voters across Russia went to the polls in parliamentary elections tipped to favour the resurgent Communist Party and nationalist groups, reports AFP.

In snow-covered Moscow, voters converged on polling booths despite a flu epidemic, as soon as they opened at 8:00 am (0500 GMT).

By the time polls opened in Moscow, participation had already reached the 25-per cent minimum barrier in four Far-Eastern regions which are 10 time zones ahead of the capital, and also in the Buryat region in the south-east.

In the Primoriye, region, on the Pacific coast, turnout reached 35.4 per cent after six hours of voting, ITAR-Tass news agency reported.

Across Russia, polls were to stay open from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm local time.

The national turnout rate was to be announced by the electoral commission in Moscow at around 4:00 pm (1300 GMT) and the first estimates of the results at around midnight (2100 GMT).

The election is shaping up into a battle between divided liberal forces and the government party 'Our home is Russia' against the increasingly popular Communist Party, which wants to reverse tough free market reforms and recreate — voluntarily — the Soviet Union.

2 killed in city

By DMCH Correspondent

At least two persons were killed in different incidents in the city yesterday and Saturday.

Muhammad Khurshid, 28, a resident of 138 Probatibagh, under Sabujbagh thana was murdered allegedly in a sequel to a previous enmity Saturday night.

According to police, Khurshid was shot near 671/4 Khilgaon, and sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where he succumbed to his injuries.

In another incident, an unknown person was killed in a rail accident near Gulbagh at around 9:30 am yesterday. He was rushed to the DMCH where the doctors declared him dead.

Meanwhile, Parul, 18, a resident of 67 Goalghat lane, Tipu Sultan Road in the city, was injured when cocktails went off near her kitchen yesterday.

Sporadic blasts of fire crackers to mark the 25th anniversary of the Victory Day also left at least 12 persons injured on Saturday.

New US govt shutdown likely to linger

WASHINGTON, Dec 17: Their budget talks aground, President Clinton and Republicans traded accusations but no new offers yesterday as the second government shutdown in a month left tourists staring forlornly at padlocked federal museums and parks, reports AP.

In a sign that the standoff might take some time to solve, Democrats trying to craft a new proposal they could unite behind found themselves divided.

A day after bargainers angrily stalked out of three-week-old negotiations over Balancing the budget by 2002, the rhetoric, if anything, edged up a notch.

"I am not going to let them hurt our children," Clinton said during his weekly radio address, vowing to hold fast against proposed Republican cuts in health, education and waste-cleanup programmes.

"He can stop that garbage he's been spewing on his radio programme and everything else," fumed Senate Republican Majority Bob Dole, a Republican, when asked what Clinton could do to restart negotiations.

Though the words fell on deaf ears, Clinton urged Republicans to pass legislation halting the pre-holiday shutdown and to return to the table. He met with congressional Democrats at the Blair House, across the street from the White House, to try to craft a unified strategy as his press secretary issued a warning.

"Whether the government will open tomorrow depends on whether the Republicans will come back to the table," said White House spokesman.

10 injured in Ctg clash

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 17: At least 10 persons were injured during a clash this evening between two local groups over sharing illegal toll money at Chandanpura under Kotwali area, policy said.

Two of the injured persons were admitted into Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

The groups freely exchanged cocktails for half an hour from 8 pm and fled away when police came, witnesses said.

Overbridge at Jatrabari likely

The construction of overbridge at Jatrabari could be taken up in view of the delay in constructing a fly-over there, a meeting was told here yesterday, reports BSS.

The third meeting of the task force for the improvement of Greater Dhaka transportation system was told that under a crash programme, overbridges near Ananda cinema hall and Shamoly cinema hall and the extension of Farmgate overbridge were completed.

Overbridge at Shanir Akhra is under construction.

The meeting held at the committee room of the NEC building of the Planning Commission was chaired by State Minister for Planning Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan.

It discussed the short, medium and long-term programme suggested by the two working groups constituted under the task force. The reports of the two working groups and the immediate action programme (crash programme) under implementation were also reviewed.

JCD, Shibir clash in Jhenidah: 8 hurt

JHENIDAH, Dec 17: Eight people including three policemen were seriously injured in a clash between supporters of two student groups at Kotchandpur thana headquarters today, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the clash erupted between the activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and Islami Chhatra Shibir when the latter was holding a rally at Kotchandpur town in the afternoon to protest Saturday's killing of Shibir activists in the Agricultural University.

Police fired blankshots to disperse the feuding groups who used sticks, stones and crackers during the clash.

Three of the injured were identified as Shibir activists. Two injured JCD supporters, Rabin and Tufan, and police constables Hashem, Masud and Afzal were admitted to Kotchandpur Health Complex.

Garments: Orders drop drastically

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In 2002. The rest has to go by 2004.

India, which enjoys the advantage of backward linkage, is now in a position to make quick delivery of apparels. But for Bangladesh, which can supply locally only about four per cent of total fabric demand and is heavily dependent on imported fabrics and accessories, the delivery time in not less than four months.

"These factors are working against Bangladesh and in favour of India," said Redwan Ahmed. "At the current rate of growth in local fabric production, the country will be able to meet only 20 per cent of its total fabric requirement for garments internally leaving a big gap."

Vice-Chairman of Export Promotion Bureau Anisul Haq Chowdhury said, "The quota system was a cap on growth of Indian and Pakistani garments factories as they had their own fabrics as well as more production capacity which, under the quota system, was kept limited."

Entrepreneurs also apprehend that if the political impasse lingers, the fate of Bangladesh would be like that of Sri Lanka which lost its booming business in garments because of its ethnic and political violence.

"Our business in garments boomed at the height of Sri Lankan turmoil," said Ahmed. "Ironically, the same can happen to us now if this (political impasse) continues."

Despite the bleak outlook, the garments manufacturers of the country have performed remarkably well in the US market which absorbs about 50 per cent of the country's total garments exports. This is only due to the innovative ways adopted by manufacturers in maintaining production and exports amid strikes and port congestion, he said.

During January-August this year, 378.48 million square meters (MSM) were exported to USA against 278.30 MSM in the corresponding period last year.

Till December 4, performance of US and Canadian quota was also higher than last year's, according to BQMEA statistics.

"We are keeping the factories running during the halt paying 'security money' to local masters," said Engineer Abu Taher, former vice-president of BQMEA.

"Thanks to our entrepreneurs' innovations which somehow save the industry from a bog-down," said Taher.

"After long efforts, we persuaded the government to make the Chittagong port functional round the clock to ease the congestion," added Taher.

Consular section of US embassy to remain closed

The consular section of the American Embassy here will remain closed as a number of its officers has been furloughed.

The Embassy will be unable to accept applications for visas, passports or transportation letters until further notice. But the visas will be issued only in cases of extreme medical emergency, said a USIS press release yesterday.

It said emergency services for US citizens in Bangladesh will remain available.

The library and student counselling services at the United States Information Service (USIS) office in Motijheel will be closed until further notice.

The USAID Library in the Embassy building in Baridhara and the US Commercial library in Jiban Bima Bhaban in Motijheel will also be closed to the public until an appropriation bill is signed.

Two touchstone Shivalingas recovered

By Staff Correspondent

Two Shivalingas worth Tk 30 lakh were recovered, one from Tekerhat in Madaripur and the other from Jhigatala in the city, by a special team of the CID police recently, a press release said here yesterday.

Acting on a tip, the CID team on December 14 recovered a Shivalinga made of touchstone weighing 75 kgs from Tekerhat and nabbed two persons in this connection.

Acting on their confessions, a CID team recovered another Shivalinga, also made of touchstone weighing one and half kgs from a house at Jhigatala.

Shivalinga is a statue sacred to Hindu women.

In a primary investigation it was found that the arrested persons were involved in smuggling archaeologically precious articles outside the country.

BNP nomination seeker dead

K M Faruque, a candidate for BNP ticket for contesting the coming general elections from Jatiya Sangsad seat Sherpur-3, died of heart ailments at Suhrawardy Hospital here yesterday morning. He was 43, reports BSS.

Faruque came to Dhaka recently for the interview for BNP nomination.

He was rushed to Shurawardy Hospital immediately after he felt pain in his chest Saturday night.

Faruque was a member of the Sherpur district BNP executive committee.

The Midnight File

Serb parliament refuses to endorse Dayton accord

JAHORINA, Dec 17: The Bosnian Serb parliament refused today to endorse the Dayton peace accord, the Serb Srna news agency reported, says AFP.

8 more killed in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, Dec 17: Eight people, including four militants and three policemen, were killed in the strife-torn Indian state of Kashmir while four militants were arrested overnight, officials said today, reports AFP.

APSU-Shibir clash

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and BDR intercepted and Shibir activists left the campus at about 1 pm.

Police later arrested five APSU leaders, including the BAU unit president of Samajtantrik Chhatra Front, Zahirul Islam. Shibir claimed police also picked up 12 of its leaders, including its hospitalised BAU unit general secretary Masud.

Hearing about the killings, Shibir Members went on a rampage in capital Dhaka and damaged several vehicles in Purana Paltan area Saturday afternoon.

They also held a protest rally at North Gate of Baitul Mukarram Mosque. Speakers at the rally held ruling BNP's student wing, JCD, responsible for the killings.

Angry protests were also reported from Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Feni and other towns.

Meanwhile, Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and Ganotantrik Chhatra Oikya brought out separate processions on the Dhaka University campus yesterday morning protesting the 'terrorist' act of Shibir at BAU. Samajtantrik Chhatra Front also brought out a procession and held a rally in front of Madhu's Canteen.

A joint namaz-e-janaza for Monzur, Shawkat and Alauddin was held in front of My-mensingh Medical College Hospital morgue Saturday afternoon.

A separate namaz-e-janaza for Alauddin was held at Baitul Mukarram Mosque yesterday morning which was led by Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Ghulam Azam.

A BAU press release said all the bodies were sent to their respective homes after a prayer at Zainul Abedin auditorium of the BAU on Saturday.

Meanwhile, Jamaat Ameer Golam Azam and Secretary General Matur Rahman Nizami in a joint statement yesterday condemned the killings.

Accusing JCD of the killings they demanded immediate arrest and punishment of the killers.

Night coach

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(passengers) tried to resist them.

Twelve of the injured, including Rezaul Karim, 24, and Babul, 30, were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital and Puthia thana Health Complex.

The body was sent to the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy. A case was filed with Puthia thana.

Jubo League

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Eye witnesses said that some unidentified youths kidnapped Bablu at gunpoint while he was going to Rupsha ferry ghat by motor cycle.

Khulna city Jubo League has called a half-day hartal tomorrow protesting the killing.

Later in the afternoon Jubo League activists went on a rampage at the Picture Palace Square and the Dak-bunglow Square exploding bombs and hurling bricks indiscriminately. Four cars and some shops were damaged.

Police resorted to lathi charge and lobbed two tear gas shells to quell the protesters. None was injured.

Meanwhile, Awami League blamed the ruling party activists for the killing but the ruling party denied the charge.

Tension is prevailing in the city.

Ctg WTC

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16-storied building would be constructed at an estimated cost of Taka 20 crore to house the trade centre. It will have permanent display centres and facilities for international conference and local trade fairs, the sources added.

Besides, the office of the CCCI will be shifted there. The plan for setting up such a centre was taken up by the CCCI about four years ago in view of the commercial importance of the city. CCCI already received allotment of two bighas of land for the center aimed at promoting trade and investment.

A South Korean company — Young Ones — provided consultancy service, free of cost, to build the trade centre, chamber sources said.

The Prime Minister is also scheduled to inaugurate the newly built terminal building at the Chittagong railway station the same day, officials said.

New missions

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Minister of Turkmenistan.

There is also a proposal to open a mission in the Spanish capital, Madrid but no significant progress has been made till now. It was learnt that the existing mission in Dakar, Senegal may be closed down to facilitate the opening of the mission in Madrid.

Presently, Bangladesh missions in Europe are located at Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Russian Federation, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. There are two Assistant High Commissions, both in the UK — one in Birmingham and the other located in Manchester.

ALCWC meet

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tinue the practice of corruption and politicisation", the meeting said in a resolution.

The ALCWC alleged that armed terrorists under the shelter of those in power were indulging in criminal activities like murder and mugging and blamed the government for its 'failure' to ensure security of life and property. It demanded of the government to recover illegal arms immediately.

Slatting the government's 'failure to arrest the price hike' of essentials, the meeting demanded steps to bring down the prices within the reach of the commonman.

In a political resolution, the meeting said the Awami League, along with other opposition political parties, was struggling for quite a long time in demand for elections under a caretaker government so that people could exercise their franchise freely and fearlessly.

The meeting accused the ruling party of politicisation, turning the voters' list into a party voters list and misappropriating public money.

It came down heavily on the government of 'arresting thousands of AL leaders and workers and for attempt on Sheikh Hasina's life by resorting to firing and explosion of bombs at her rally on December 7.'

The meeting condoled the death of some party leaders, workers and renowned personalities recently.

Opposition

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The Opposition which postponed the Dec 17 and 18 programmes because of a deferred election schedule will now call for hartal and stage on January 3 and 4, the revised dates for filing nomination paper and scrutiny, UNB quoting political sources said.

The three major parties are also holding parleys with smaller political parties to launch a united movement to press Prime Minister Begum Zia to step down and pave the way for formation of a caretaker government.

The Election Commission has deferred the election schedule to February 7 from January 18 to allow major political parties to reach a consensus on the question of caretaker government.

BNP sources said some senior ministers who are negotiating with the opposition had a meeting with the Prime Minister at her office yesterday afternoon.