

Prabhakaran ready to talk peace

COLOMBO, Dec 30: Tamil rebel leader Velupillai Prabhakaran is ready to negotiate peace if the military withdraws from the former guerrilla stronghold of Jaffna city. Tamil civilians said today quoting rebel radio, reports AP.

Eelam (LTTE) which is fighting to establish a Tamil state in northern and eastern Sri Lanka. On December 5, the military captured the rebel stronghold of Jaffna city in the north, capping a 50-day fierce military operation that forced the rebels to retreat to the jungles.



Nine suspected terrorists, two bearing Saudi Arabian passports, one a Sudanese passport and six others Iraqi passports including Adel Annon (2nd from left), brother of World Trade Centre bombing mastermind Ramzi Yusef, were presented to media in Manila by Philippine police yesterday. They were arrested late Friday with explosive devices in their possession. — AFP/UNB photo

Budget impasse: US leaders hopeful of settlement

WASHINGTON, Dec 30: The White House and Republican leaders expressed optimism over balanced budget negotiations, but failed to agree to immediately return federal employees to work and reopen the US government, reports AP.

Smithsonian museums. Parts of the government, closed since Dec. 16, will remain so for now. Republicans tied a back-to-work plan for federal employees to their demand that a balanced budget deal be considered under an expedited Senate procedure that would allow 10 hours of debate. All amendments would have to be discussed within that limited time period.

speaking to reporters as the meeting began, said negotiators — in addition to sending employees back — were trying "to find a way to possibly get everyone paid." Gingrich noted that the Senate last week passed a back-to-work plan sponsored by Dole, who also was at the White House meeting. It would declare all federal workers essential, and guarantee that they would be paid when appropriations were passed.

Ramallah free forever, says Arafat

RAMALLAH, West Bank, Dec 30: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat declared the West Bank town of Ramallah "free forever" as he paid a triumphant first visit today following the end of 28 years of Israeli occupation, reports AFP.

tal, to Arafat's self-rule authority on Wednesday under a deal spreading autonomy across the West Bank. Standing on the roof of the new Palestinian police headquarters, he told tens of thousands of cheering supporters, "before you, I declare the town of Ramallah free forever."

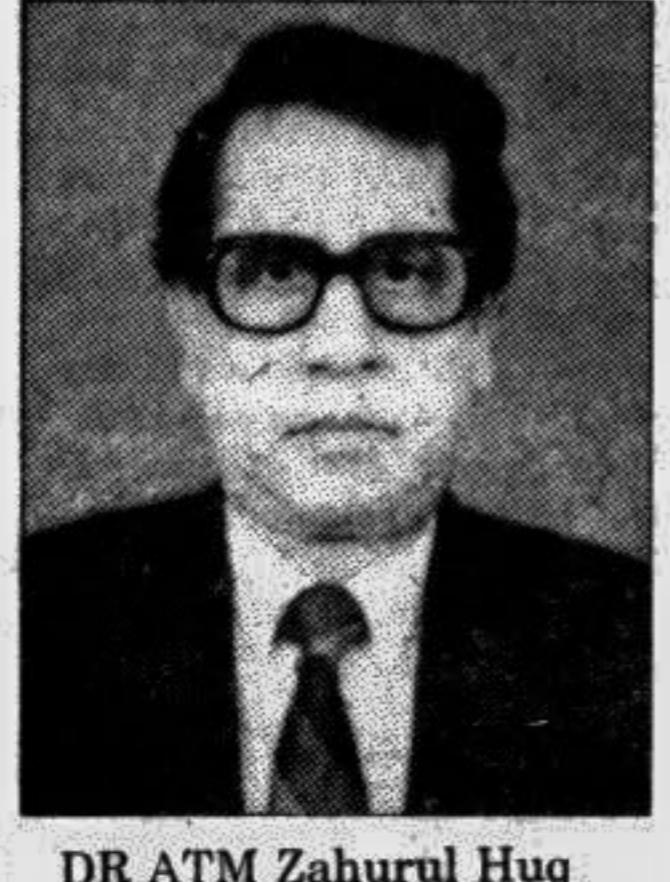
Monajatuddin laid to rest

RANGPUR, Dec 30: The body of journalist Monajatuddin was laid to rest at Munshipara graveyard of Rangpur town today, reports BSS. His first namaj-e-janaza was held at Dhap Lalkuti Primary School ground of his village home while the second janaza was held at Keramatia Jam-e-mosque in the Rangpur town.

2 die in separate incidents

By DMCH Correspondent One minor girl was killed in bus accident and a young woman reportedly committed suicide in the city yesterday. Taslima, 7, was killed when a speeding bus ran over her near the old airport in the morning.

DUTA polls



DR ATM Zahurul Huq The new Executive Committee of the DUTA has been elected for 1996. Members elected from the Blue panel are: Abdul Mannan Chowdhury (Management), Dr Abul Kalam Azad Chowdhury (Pharmacy), Dr Khandker Bazul Haq (Management), Dr Shahadat Ali (Biology), Dr Emamul Haq (Soil Science), Sharifullah Bhuiyan (History) and Dr Sayed Glasuddin Ahmed (Public Administration).

Opinion poll 93pc fear unrest if polls held without settlement

Some 1,031 intellectuals including teachers of different universities have opined that none of the ruling and the opposition parties would be able to protect the democratic process if they failed to consider the national interests remaining above petty partisan attitude, reports BSS. All of them unanimously expressed the opinion in an opinion poll conducted among 1031 intellectuals by National Democratic Foundation, a press release of the Foundation said in the city yesterday.

Arms drive

From Page 1 and wanted criminals. The law enforcing agencies began a nationwide hunt for illegal arms from December 21 to create a secure environment for the polls and so far netted 637 firearms and nabbed some 6,663 people on various charges, including possession of illegal arms. The Commission ordered the operation in a bid to create a secure environment conducive to holding the next general election scheduled for February 7 in a free and fair manner.

Opposition

From Page 1 meeting, the sources added. Talking to The Daily Star, Anwar Hossain Manju confirmed that he had a meeting with Sheikh Hasina but declined to give details.

PM lays foundation of 4th friendship bridge today

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will lay the foundation stone of fourth Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge at Debiganj in Panchagarh district today, reports UNB. PM office sources said the 577.40-metre-long bridge across the river Karotoa will cost Tk 60 crore.

Diana must have public role, says Major

LONDON, Dec 30: Princess Diana should play a role in public life even if she divorces her husband Prince Charles, Prime Minister John Major said in a BBC interview today, reports AFP. Amid feverish speculation in Britain over a divorce and the implications for the monarchy, his comments indicated strong support for Diana's stated desire to have an "ambassadorial" role regardless of the state of her marriage.

Unions clash

From Page 1 The reason of the clash was a meeting Thursday between the management and representatives of the Biman Sramik Union, said a leader of the Sramik Union. The other union is Biman Employees Union. After the clash, the employees also brought out a procession and staged a demonstration. Biman officials could not be contacted for comment. Motijheel police could not give any information in this regard.

EC may defer

From Page 1 "To be stronger I need support, which I am not getting from any quarters," he said, adding "only exception is the media." When pointed out that electoral rules and laws are being violated in many cases, he said, "I will try my level best to apply strictly the laws."

Barricade

From Page 1 at 4:10 pm. Eight passenger trains from both directions were stuck up due to the mishap, the added. The line was cleared for traffic after a salvage operation carried out by two relief trains - one from Dhaka and another from Akhaura. In city, activists of the Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami put up barricades at different entry points. Inter-district buses did not leave Gatabdi, Syedabad and Mahakhali terminals. Rallies and processions were organised by opposition supporters at almost every important road intersections in the city, affecting traffic movement. Our Staff Correspondent adds from Chittagong: Opposition activists put up barricades at Alanker Cinema crossing on Chittagong-Dhaka highway, Kaibalydhram rail-line point, Oxygen crossing on Chittagong-Rangamati road and Bahaddarhat crossing on Chittagong-Cox's Bazar road. All modes of transport operated inside the city areas. News agency reports from Khulna says: Ferry service in the Rupsha came to a halt due to the Opposition's barricade programme. UNB reports from Rajshahi: The engine fireman of the Nawabganj-bound 15-Up train was injured when it came under attack from pro-barricade at the city's Railgate area yesterday morning. But all other trains, except the inter-city Barendra Express, to and from the city, plied normally. At Rajshahi, all modes of transport, except a small number of rickshaws and auto-rickshaws, remained off the roads. Opposition parties brought out small processions and held rallies in the city.

The Midnight File

Revived peace talks with Israel useful: Syria

DAMASCUS, Dec 30: Revived peace talks with Israel this week were "useful," chief Syrian negotiator Walid Mualeem told AFP today. Speaking by telephone from the United States, he said he would not be returning to Syria as scheduled following the end of the formal three-day session on Friday and instead would be holding informal talks with Israeli counterpart Uri Savir.

Drilling of offshore well to be completed soon

CHITTAGONG, Dec 30: Drilling of an offshore well for finding hydrocarbon by two foreign companies in the Bay of Bengal will be completed in a fortnight, officials said. Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Dr Khandkar Mosharrar Hossain who flew to the drilling base, 35 km from the port city, yesterday to see the drilling work expressed his optimism about the prospect of hydrocarbon reserve. Giving his reaction to UNB, the minister said he was very much happy to see the hydrocarbon exploration work in the country after 20 years, which simultaneously will attract foreign investors to this potential energy sector. About the exploration well, he said some 1900 metres had already been dug out of the targeted 3500-metre depth. The work of the 8 million US dollar well will be completed in two weeks. He said the government had so far signed six contracts, including two initial contracts, with foreign companies for oil and gas exploration work in eight out of 23 geological blocks in the country. US dollar 75 million would be spent for exploration in eight blocks by the year 2001, he said, adding that international bidding would be called by next February for the exploration work in the rest 15 blocks. The two companies — Cairn Plc of Scotland and Holland Sea Search of the Netherlands, working for hydrocarbon exploration in the Bay — have gathered equipment including one oil rig, one wave barge, one tug and one anchor tug. The companies will drill two pilot holes in the exploration Block No-16, covering 881 sq km.

Purulia airdrop Review body submits report

NEW DELHI, Dec 30: A committee set up by India to review security following a mysterious weapons airdrop submitted its report to the government today, the United News of India (UNI) said, reports Reuters. The committee, headed by a senior civil servant responsible for internal security, had recommended measures to plug existing gaps to prevent any further recurrence of such incidents, the news agency reported. No further details were given. Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao had ordered the review following the discovery of weapons in some eastern Indian villages. The arms were apparently dropped by parachute from an Antonov AN-26, a Russian-made short-haul transport aircraft, in village around West Bengal town of Purulia on December 17. The aircraft believed to have made the drop was forced down in Bombay on December 23 while it was on a return flight from Phuket in Thailand via Madras to Karachi in Pakistan. Indian authorities said on Friday that more arms remained to be recovered after recovering 231 rifles, seven pistols, 80 anti-tank grenades and 17,000 rounds of ammunition.

Jatrabari bus fire

From Page 1 the sake of investigation. Investigation is going on but report of the Forensic Department is yet to reach the investigating officials, police said. An expert at the Forensic Department said that in the Jatrabari incident, water was used to put off the fire. When contacted a high ranking official of Fire Brigade explained that normally foam is used to extinguish fire which originates from petrol.

23pc ADP funds

From Page 1 cent. The import registered an increase due to a sudden upswing in the import of foodgrains. However, in the recent weeks, the import growth has been moderated and is decreasing now. About the foreign exchange reserve, the meeting expressed satisfaction and observed that the reserve is capable to meet the import requirements for five months. It was noted that the decline in foreign exchange reserve during the recent months was principally attributable to the increase in imports, particularly that of food imports. The reserve situation is stabilised in recent weeks. The meeting expressed satisfaction over the country's food situation. It was told in the meeting that the current stock of food grains in the government godowns stood at 9.86 lakh metric tons as on December 27. Of the stock 3.53 lakh metric tons is rice while the rest 6.33 metric tons is wheat. About the government's borrowings from banks, the meeting noted that such borrowings, which had increased in the first quarter of

the current fiscal, had considerably decreased in the last two months, and remained well below the target set by the government. Regarding remittances by Non-Resident Bangladeshis (NRBs), the finance minister emphasised to activate the country's foreign missions abroad to encourage the NRBs to send their remittances through appropriate channels. The finance minister also emphasised the proper and timely implementation of the ADP, particularly the programmes, involved with the development of agriculture sector so that the food imports are reduced in the coming years. The state minister for planning, Dr A Moyeen Khan, Finance Secretary Dr Akbar Alim Khan, ERD Secretary Lutfulah Majid, Planning Secretary, Shah Mohammad Farid, Food Secretary Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury, Labour Secretary Harun-ur-Rashid, NBR Chairman, Dr Sadaat Hossain and Planning Commission members Abu Hena, Shamsul Alam and other seniors officials of different ministries and divisions and Bangladesh Bank attended the meeting.

Advertisement for Dhaka Book Fair 96. It features a decorative border with books and text in Bengali. The text includes: 'বই ব্যক্তিকে আনন্দ সমাজকে আনন্দ আর দেশকে দেয় সমৃদ্ধি', 'DHAKA BOOK FAIR 96', '২ তাকাত বই মে', 'মেসার সময় সৃষ্টি', 'উদ্বোধনী দিনে বিকাল ৩টা থেকে রাত ৮-০০ অব্যাহত দিনে সকাল ১১টা থেকে রাত ৮-০০', 'বিক্রি: ১ ডিসেম্বর ১২-৩০ থেকে ২টা', 'স্থান: বিজয় সরণি স্থ সামরিক জাদুঘর মাঠ', 'প্রবেশ মূল্য ২ টাকা', 'প্রতিটি জেলা শহরে ১-৭ জানুয়ারী-১৯৯৬', 'আয়োজনে: জাতীয় গ্রন্থ কেন্দ্র', 'Editor: Mahfuz Anam', 'Printed & Published by A. S. Mahfuz, Managing Director, on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd, 52, Motihel C/A, Dhaka-1000, from City Publishing House Ltd, 90, Kairali, Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No: 11, Road No: 3, Dhanmandi R/A, Dhaka-1206. PABX: 500092-4, Commercial: 500091 (Direct), Fax No: 88-02-463035, GPO Box No: 2387, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA. DFP-32670-27/12