



Gulshan police lobbed tear gas shells to disperse demonstrators who gheraoed the thana (L) and a procession in the area yesterday (R) protesting killing of Shamsul Alam — a businessman Sunday.



The Midnight File

Serbs burning key locations

SARAJEVO, Jan 9: Serbs threatening a mass exodus from Sarajevo began burning key locations north of the Bosnian capital today, apparently destroying strongpoints they plan to vacate. Witnesses said the city skyline was spectacularly wreathed in smoke, with huge flames seen shooting out of military bunkers and explosions echoing from Serb-held suburbs, reports Reuters.

Gas-based power plant British co starts site survey soon

By Sharier Khan

Midland Power International, a British company, is likely to begin site survey in four districts of the country soon for setting up a 110 MW gas-based power plant.

The company is now awaiting a letter from the Ministry of Energy allowing it to begin the survey in Haripur, Semutang, Baghabari and Barisal districts, ministry sources said.

Midland Power signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the government on setting up a natural gas-fired combined-cycle power plant on build-own-operate (BOO) basis, within 15 months of signing the final accord.

About a month ago, representatives of Midland met with the Energy Secretary seeking green signal to conduct site survey for the power plant. The ministry asked the representatives of Midland to obtain a verbal objection from the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) before allowing them to begin the survey.

Midland representatives were verbally given no objection by the BPDB for the site survey in the Haripur and Semutang region and suggested they could also look

Govt trying to stage farce in name of polls, says Hasina

Awami League president Sheikh Hasina said the BNP government was desperately trying to stage a "farce" in the name of elections to perpetuate its power and vowed to foil that design, reports UNB.

"We cannot allow anyone to make a mockery of people's rights to food and franchise any more by holding an election keeping the Opposition at bay," she said in a post-hartal statement yesterday evening.

Hasina said the government was pushing the country towards a grave crisis by sticking to power although the people were expressing their "no-confidence" in it by "spontaneously" observing hartals time and again.

"The government is mocking at the nation by revising the elections schedule again and again instead of resolving the main problem, bypassing the people's demand for holding elections under a neutral, non-party caretaker government," said the Awami League president.

She said the government was pushing the country towards a "dangerous crisis" for its petty party interest to stay in power through intransigence.

Stop functions related to election process: AL

Awami League leaders yesterday demanded that all functions related to the electoral process be stopped until a neutral non-party caretaker government is formed to conduct the national elections, reports UNB.

The caretaker government will announce the elections schedule after consultation with the political parties, they told a hartal rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the afternoon.

They also expressed the determination to resist any "blue print election" under the BNP government.

"The Prime Minister is the only obstacle to constituting a caretaker government. After her resignation all the political parties will decide on the elections and its schedule," said Awami League leader Abdus Samad Azad.

He said all the political parties have been united on one point — the resignation of the Prime Minister — and there is no more scope for killing time.

Samad Azad said the people will launch the "final blow" if the BNP government does not resign showing respect to the people's demand.

"Shifting of elections schedule was not the demand of the people. Their demand was elections under a caretaker government," said Awami League leader Amir Hossain Anu.

No party will take part in elections under the BNP government, he said adding the government will be forced to accept the people's demand through all-out movement.

He said the Opposition will not take part in the elections even if the government accepts the demand without giving them enough time for elections preparation.

Amu said all the parties should take the decision about the election schedule for the sake of a smooth, impartial and fair elections.

The AL leaders called upon the people to join the party rally at Panthapath today to be addressed by party chief Sheikh Hasina.

City Awami League general secretary Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya presided over the rally, also addressed by Mofazzal Hossain Paltu, Obaidul Kader, Shudhangshu Shekhar Haldar, Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Siddique Rouf Khan, Advocate Kazi Iqbal Hossain and Ahsanullah Master.

Gunmen abduct 3 PPP men, kill two

KARACHI, Jan 9: Gunmen kidnapped and killed two local politicians of Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in Karachi today, police said, reports Reuters.

Gunmen in Karachi also abducted and wounded a third PPP politician and killed a policeman who resisted an attempt to kidnap him overnight, police said.

In Lahore, capital of Punjab province, gunmen on a motorcycle ambushed and shot dead a senior provincial bureaucrat. Police said Sajjad Gillani, Director General of Excise and Taxes in Punjab, died on the spot. His driver was also killed.

In a separate attack, film star Sultan Rahi, hero of countless Punjabi-language action movies, was shot dead on a road near Gujranwala, about 70 km (40 miles) from Lahore, during what police described as an apparent robbery attempt.

Police identified the murdered PPP politicians as Abdul Bari Qureshi, PPP councillor from the Liaquatabad district, and Burhanuddin, General Secretary of New Karachi PPP ward. Their bullet-riddled bodies were found in New Karachi.

They had been kidnapped earlier outside their homes. The third kidnapped PPP activist, named only as Sultan, was found with bullet wounds in New Karachi and was in hospital.

No group immediately claimed responsibility.

Karachi is the scene of a long-running conflict pitting Bhutto's government and security forces against the opposition ethnic Mohajir National Movement (MQM).

Protesters set fire to a truck and two buses in Liaquatabad, regarded as an MQM stronghold, after a political activist died today, allegedly while he was in police custody.

Harassment of newsmen by army condemned

The Dhaka Reporters' Unity has condemned and strongly protested what it said harassment of and misbehaviour with journalist Madhusudan Mandal by some army personnel in the small hours of Monday, reports UNB.

In a joint statement yesterday, Reporters' Unity president Shaifullah Kabir and general secretary Mostafa Feroz said troops led by an army officer entered the house of Mandal, the Morning Sun reporter, without any warrant.

They (troops) tied the reporter with a rope and abused him in a filthy language even after getting his identity, the statement alleged.

The leaders of the Unity, a forum of reporters of the national newspapers and news agencies, also condemned the harassment of a photo-journalist on Monday by army in Farmgate area.

Arms recovery drive WP concerned at 'harassment' of Opposition workers

By Staff Correspondent

Workers Party President Amal Sen and general secretary Rashed Khan Menon in a joint statement yesterday expressed their deep concern at the alleged arrest and harassment of opposition leaders and workers in the ongoing drive to recover illegal arms.

The drive was practically being directed as per the list prepared by the BNP, the Workers Party leaders alleged.

The statement further said, "We expressed our fear earlier that with Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury in power, the arms recovery drive would make the role of the armed forces controversial."

Armed cadres belonging to the ruling party and Jamaat-Shibir were in liberty despite the drive, the statement claimed.

JP rally today

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Party city unit will hold a rally today at the south gate of Baitul Mukarram to press its demand for holding elections under a neutral, non-partisan caretaker government, a press release said here last night.

Party acting chairman Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury and Begum Raushan Ershad will address the meeting while city unit chief Col (Retd) Malek will preside.

PM donates

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four cheques to four hawkers unions at her office in the afternoon. The donation will be distributed among the traders of 1,787 gutted shops of Bangabazar.

Mozammel Huq, Chairman of Gulistan Hawkers Market Samity, received a cheque for Tk. 30,60,996 and Sabjal Hossain, general secretary of Fulbaria Adarsha Hawkers Market Shopkeepers Owners Samity, a cheque for Tk. 20,64,913.

Tofazzel Hossain, general secretary of Bangabazar Hawkers Samity, received a cheque for Tk. 29,37,885 while Ruhul Amin, general secretary of Dhaka Mohanagari Fulbaria Shopkeepers Hawkers Samity, a cheque for Tk. 19,36,208.

Earlier, as per instruction of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief donated 1,100 bundles of CI sheets to the affected shopowners of Bangabazar.

Business from Jan 15

Another report says, Bangabazar will resume business next week, hawkers union sources said yesterday.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is expected to inaugurate the market on January 15. Dhaka City Mayor Mohammad Hanif will be present at the function as special guest.

Nearly 3,000 shops of Bangabazar and its adjacent areas at Fulbaria in the city were gutted on November 27 last in the most devastating fire in recent years.

She said obstinacy and greed for power of the Prime Minister is pushing the country towards the path of confrontation. She added that the PM is trying to hold a one-party election without conceding to peoples' demands.

Hasina urged the people to carry forward the current agitation by the Opposition, demanding resignation of the PM and holding of general elections under a neutral, caretaker government.

Next round of SAARC trade talks in Mar

NEW DELHI, Jan 9: The SAARC commerce ministers' meeting today reiterated the commitment to accelerate the implementation of South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) and go ahead with all the provisions of the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) by the year 2005, reports BSS.

Releasing a joint statement at the end of the meeting Indian minister for Commerce P Chidambaram said at a press conference that the resolutions were adopted unanimously.

The meeting endorsed the inter-governmental group (IGG) meeting on trade liberalisation to be held in Sri Lanka in March to carry out the second round of negotiations for removal of para-tariff, non-tariff and other trade control barriers within specific time-frame and for expanding the concessions mutually exchanged under the SAPTA framework and to suggest measures for trade facilitation.

The meeting agreed that the IGG may consider adoption of sectoral and cross the board approaches in addition to product, by-product approach to accelerate the progress. The process of the second round of negotiations should be concluded not later than July, 1996.

The meeting expressed the views that the IGG should facilitate the full implementation of the provisions of Article 10 and Article 60 of the SAPTA agreement for the least developed contracting member states. It was agreed to consider issuance of visa to businessmen recommended by the respective apex trade bodies as expeditiously as possible and as a matter of norm within 72 hours of submission of application.

Other resolutions adopted at the meeting included for simplification, harmonisation and streamlining of customs and related procedures, promotion of a SAARC arbitration board for settlement of disputes, creation of national business information networks and linking the same with the SAARC secretariat.

SAARC trade fair begins in Delhi

NEW DELHI, Jan 9: The six-day SAARC Trade Fair with the theme of cooperation for development began here today, reports BSS.

Commerce ministers of member countries jointly inaugurated the fair. Later they went around the pavilions of the member countries.

Bangladesh High Commissioner CM Shaf Sami greeted the commerce ministers of SAARC countries when they visited the Bangladesh pavilion at the fair.

Indian Commerce Minister P Chidambaram and ministers of other countries showed keen interest in different products on display at 25 stalls.

Bangladesh pavilion also attracted a large number of visitors today.

The companies which are participating in the trade fair from Bangladesh include, Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC), Beximco group with products including garments, fabric and yarn and pharmaceutical products, Mousumi Industries with cosmetics, Dhaka Jamdani Saree with Jamdani fabrics and saree, Apex Tannery with leather goods including shoes, Saima Silk and Handloom industry with fabrics Nalita and Company with artificial flowers.

Zairean plane crash toll rises to 297

KINSHASA, Zaire, Jan 9: As pilots and aviation officials condemned lax safety standards, Zaireans on Tuesday mourned the victims of a Zairean plane crash that killed at least 297 people and devastated a downtown market, reports AP.

The cause of Monday's midday crash was being investigated. Preliminary reports indicated the Russian-built Antonov 32 was flying without authorisation and may have been overloaded.

Hartal

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said, "even if the election schedule is changed three hundred times, it will bring no good unless PM steps down and a caretaker government is formed."

Railway sources said the Syhet-bound Joyntika inter-city train and the My-mensingh-bound Isha Khan Express could not leave Kamalapur station yesterday due to barricades on the rail track at several points raised by the pro-hartal activists.

Two domestic flights of Biman from Zia International Airport were cancelled while some of the international flights were delayed but none was cancelled.

Launch service to and from Sadarghat terminal operated normally but with less passengers compared to normal days.



A vendor selling 'Kulfi', a traditional variety of ice cream at Gulistan during the hartal hours yesterday.

BCSIR develops smokeless tandur oven

Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR) has developed a smokeless tandur oven with greater cooking efficiency which saves two thirds of the fuel in comparison with the traditional one, reports BSS.

The "Tandur stoves" are used in many restaurants and large establishments for cooking common items like rice, curry and pulses and for baking tandur roti.

Dr AM Hasan Rashid Khan, principal scientific officer (PSO) of the Institute of Fuel Research and Development (IFRD) under BCSIR told BSS that they had developed this stove by using computer graphics and with financial assistance from the European Economic Community.

He said the principle of operation of the stove, in contrast to that of the conventional ones, is that the flow of air is in the same direction as that of the combustion gases and fuel.

The new tandur oven is coupled with cooking stove based on downdraft burning principle. It has a chimney to provide the necessary draft, which induces the liberated volatiles and air to flow downward through the fuel bed where they burn vigorously, raising temperatures up to 1100 degree Celsius.

Dr Khan said the downdraft tandur stove consists of three main parts: fire chamber, pot hole and tandur.

The fire chamber is made of bricks covered with mud and at the bottom of the chamber there is a great made of metal strips. The chamber is connected below the grate with the pot hole through a cylindrical hole.

The pot hole is placed between the fire chamber and the tandur and is connected with the tandur through a cylindrical hole.

The tandur is placed on a flat platform. The oval shaped tandur is made of mild steel sheet and at the centre of it steel pipes are placed to direct the flow of hot combustion gases towards the wall of the tandur stove. The outside wall of the tandur is covered with mud to reduce heat loss.

Chechen rebels take 2000 hostage, execute two

MOSCOW, Jan 9: Chechen guerrillas holding hundreds of people hostage in a hospital in Russia's north Caucasus have shot two of them dead, Itar-Tass news agency said today, quoting a local resident who was at the hospital, reports Reuters, AFP.

Earlier, the guerrillas had warned that they will soon start executing the captives if a demand for a Russian troops withdrawal from Chechnya is not met.

At least 2000 civilians were taken hostage today in Kizlyar in the southern Russian republic of Dagestan.

Between 200 and 400 guerrillas were keeping the hostages as human shields Interior Ministry spokesman Leonid Golovnev told AFP.

Tass, in a report from Kizlyar said the local resident had visited the hospital and met rebel leader Salman Raduyev.

Chechen rebels entered Kizlyar early today first attacking a military airfield and then seizing the hospital and forcing civilians into it.

They opened fire in several areas of the town, near the Chechen border, and there was a fierce firefight at a bridge over the Talovka river on the outskirts.

Russian news agencies reported more heavy fighting around the hospital itself.

The guerrillas controlled two of the hospital's three buildings, a flour mill and a residential building.

Itar-Tass news agency quoted local security services as saying that the Chechens were also hidden in woods outside the town.

Russian troops have poured into the town to deal with the crisis.

Release of Khulna JP, JCD leaders demanded

KHULNA, Jan 9: Local leaders of the BNP and Jatiyabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) today (Tuesday) demanded immediate release of district JCD president Wahiduzzaman Chanchal, reports UNB.

In a joint statement, City BNP president Nurul Islam and general secretary Nazrul Islam and JCD leader Ruhul Azim Rumi alleged that the law enforcing agencies arrested him though no arms was found at his residence.

Army, BDR and police in a joint raid arrested Chanchal from his residence early Monday. District BNP and JCD submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner demanding his release.

Meanwhile, district Jatiya Party president Advocate Mobinnuddin, general secretary Sardar Rabul Islam, city JP president S M A Rab and general secretary Ali Reza in a separate statement demanded the release of a JP leader.

Abul Hossain, a former Jatiya Party MP, was arrested during a joint raid of Army, BDR and police on the same night.

Jamaat rejects revised polls schedule

Jamaat secretary general Maulana Motiur Rahman Nizami yesterday rejected the revised election schedule and demanded immediate resignation of the Prime Minister to pave the way for a non-party caretaker government, reports UNB.

"The change of election schedule is not our demand. We have urged the Election Commissioner to postpone the election activities until a meaningful election is ensured under a neutral caretaker government," he told a public rally at the northern gate of Baitul Mokarram mosque.

Presided over by City Amir ATM Azharul Islam, the rally was also addressed by former MP Sheikh Anwar Ali.

Nizami accused the ruling party of making complicated the ongoing process to reach a consensus for holding the general elections under a caretaker government.

"If the government becomes sincere we must be able to resolve the current political crisis," the Jamaat leader said.

Zahiruddin to attend Mitterrand's funeral

Zahiruddin Khan, former minister of Industries, left Dhaka last night for Paris to attend the special funeral services for the former French President Francois Mitterrand, reports BSS.

The French government is arranging the service at Notre-dam cathedral tomorrow.

Khan will represent the government of Bangladesh. Bangladesh ambassador to France K M Shehabuddin will join him at the funeral services.

Meanwhile, message of condolences have been sent by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to President Jacques Chirac and Madame Danielle Mitterrand.

Cargo ship

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on through the foreign ministry with countries around the China Sea.

The ship might have been seized by the pirates because some incidents of piracy were reported earlier in those areas, he observed.

The Department of Shipping will prepare a report compiling the available information in this regard and submit it to the ministry soon.

Malek said the department received another list of crew members who were on board from the Singapore office of the owner company Seateam Shipping (Pte) Ltd.