



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.

— Star photo

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-operate (BOO) basis, within 15 months of signing the final accord.

About a month ago, representatives of Midland Power 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 no-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

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 (SAFTA) 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 SAFTA framework and to suggest measures for trade facilitation.

The meeting agreed that the IGG may consider adopting

Release of Khulna JP, JCD leaders demanded

KHULNA, Jan 9: Local leaders of the BNP and Jatiyatabadi 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 Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) president Advocate Mobinuddin, 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 Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) president, was arrested during a joint raid of Army, BDR and police on the same night.

Jamaat rejects revised polls schedule

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 Dame cathedral tomorrow.

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

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

Cargo ship

From Page 1 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 Seaside Shipping (Pte) Ltd.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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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 hartal 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.

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 Shah 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 Naita and Company with artificial flowers.

Zahiruddin to attend Mitterrand's funeral

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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.

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 Moazzaf Hossain Paltu, Obaidul Kader, Shudhangshu Shekhar Halder, Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Siddiquar Rouf Khan, Advocate Kazi Iqbal Hossain and Ahsanullah Master.

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 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.

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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

From Page 1 four cheques to four hawkers 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 Sabjul Hossain, general secretary of Fulbaria Adarsha Hawkers Market Shopkeepers Owners Samity, a cheque for Tk. 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 Mohanganj Fulbaria Shopkeepers Hawkers Samity, a cheque for Tk. 19,36,206.

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 shopkeepers 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 Jan 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.

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

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 flares seen shooting out of military bunkers and explosions echoing from Serb-held suburbs, reports Reuter.

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 Reuter.

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 Sajid 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.

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

In a joint statement yesterday, Reporters' Unity president Shahidul Kabir and general secretary Mostafa Ferz 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.

Boy drowns

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Jan 9: An unidentified teenaged boy drowned into the Sugandha river from the pontoon at the Jhalakathi launch ghat this evening.

According to witnesses, the boy was standing on the pontoon at the launch ghat when the passenger launch MV Salam Rasul suddenly dashed the pontoon heavily. The boy fell into the river and drowned. He is still untraced.

ROK investor

From Page 1

Sung, President of Youngone, a South Korean