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NEWS BRIEFS

31 arms recovered

Law enforcing agencies recovered 31 firearms till morning yesterday, the 28th day of the nationwide drive for illegal arms. According to Election Commission, they also recovered 235 bullets and 13 explosives, and arrested 325 people on various charges, including unauthorised possession of arms, reports UNB.

Young house wife commits suicide

PIROJPUR, Jan 17: A young house wife allegedly committed suicide at her father's residence at Maddharyasta area in the town today. Police said Shaheen Sultana Mala, 19, daughter of Kabir Hossain, took her own life by hanging herself from the ceiling of the house at about 11 am. The reason beyond the suicide could not be known, reports UNB.

18 dacoits held

From Staff Correspondent
 CHITTAGONG, Jan 17: Police in a special raid today arrested 18 dacoits including a woman from Nayabazar of Middle Rampur under Daulatdia. They recovered 10 kgs of gold ornaments, 10 kgs of silver goods and a sawed off from their possession. Acting on a tip-off police raided a house there at around 1 pm today when the dacoits were engaged in distributing the stolen goods among themselves.

Interne doctors on strike

Interne Physicians Council (IPC) of Dhaka Medical College unit went for an indefinite strike on Tuesday to renege its various demands. The IPC's demands include regular payment of their monthly remuneration, reopening of the cafeteria of the college, proper supply of water, electricity and gas, reports UNB.

SAARC docs' assoc to be formed

KATHMANDU, Jan 17: South Asian countries will form a regional body of physicians to achieve better cooperation in fighting common health problems in the regional, local press reports said today, according to Xin-

1987 nominations filed till closing

By Staff Correspondent

A total of 1,987 nomination papers were filed for the February 15 parliamentary election till the 5 pm deadline yesterday.

The Election Commission will scrutinise the nomination papers today while the last date for withdrawal of candidature is January 21.

The three major opposition parties — Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami — agitating for holding of the election under a neutral caretaker government, refrained from filing nomination papers.

According to EC sources, the candidates who filed the nomination papers were from the ruling BNP, Freedom Party, Islami Shashantara Andolon, Muslim League, Gano Adhikar Front, Progotishil Ganotantrik Shakti, Jatiya Nagorik Sangati, Khe-lafat Andolon, Seven Party Alliance and Jatiya Janata Party. In four constituencies

only one nomination paper each was filed. The only candidates in the four constituencies are Fazlur Rahman in Natore-1, Barrister Salam Talukdar in Jamalpur-4, A S M Nazmul Huda in Mymensingh-3 and Sha Chi Pru in Parlobita Bandarban.

No Opposition, BNP contact

By Staff Correspondent

No contacts took place between the ruling BNP and the mainstream Opposition yesterday for a consensus on participation in the February 15 general elections.

We did not have any contact with the Opposition today. In my view, the process of negotiation to bring the major opposition parties to the coming polls cannot continue with the expiry of

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The highest number of 18 nomination papers were submitted in Luxmipur-3 constituency.

Our Sirajganj Correspondent adds that eight persons submitted their nominations yesterday raising the total number to 35 in the seven constituencies of the district. Mentionably Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has also filed nomination paper in Sirajganj-2 constituency.

Our Narayanganj correspondent reports: More than 30 nomination papers were submitted with election offices in the district yesterday amid the dawn-to-dusk hartal. Of those, five were from BNP and 19 were independent candidates. The rest were from smaller parties.

Our Barisal Correspondent adds that 53 nomination papers were filed in the seven constituencies of the district. The number of nomination

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Opposition gheraoes EC offices today

By Staff Correspondent

The major opposition political parties will gherao the Election Commission offices throughout the country including the office of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) in the city today.

The gherao programme coincides with the date of scrutiny of the nomination papers filed for the ensuing parliamentary election.

The three major political parties — Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami — will hold separate rallies in the city in the afternoon and then proceed towards the CEC's office at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar to gherao it, said Opposition sources. AL and JP will hold their separate rallies at the Panthapath and the Jamaat at the Moghbazar crossing.

The gherao programme follows a country-wide dawn-to-dusk hartal yesterday to press resignation of the Prime Minister and holding of the election under a neutral caretaker government.

None requested EC to defer polls

By Staff Correspondent

The Election Commission did not receive any request from any political party till 5 pm yesterday to further shift the election schedule.

"Now we have to go ahead with the elections in the country and the election rules do not allow us to reverse the proceedings of the nomination," said Justice Md A. Jalil, Election Commissioner.

"Had there been requests from the political parties before the time-limit of 5 pm yesterday, the EC probably could have deferred it for another two or three days," he told The Daily Star last night.

There were widespread speculation that the nomination filing date would be rescheduled once again because there had been efforts till Tuesday to remove the BNP-Opposition stand-off over the issue of caretaker government to end the lingering political impasse.

Justice Jalil said that there was a legal obligation under Article 11 of the Representation of the People Order, 1972 to hold the elections at least 15 days after the date of withdrawal of the nomination papers.

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Hasina warns BNP govt, EC to be blamed for consequences

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday warned that the BNP government, the Election Commission and the Chief Election Commissioner would be responsible for any consequences of going for 'one-party' elections.

In a statement Hasina said that the people would not participate in the 'farical elections' the EC was going to hold as 'dictated' by the government.

She called upon the people to refrain from participating in the 'one party' elections and not to be involved

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Opposition now set for all-out agitation

By Staff Correspondent

The mainstream Opposition is now set for an intense street campaign to unseat the present government as the hope for a negotiated settlement of the persisting political crisis faded yesterday with the expiry of deadline for filing nomination papers for the ensuing parliamentary polls.

The crisis over the Opposition demand for a caretaker government stepped into a new phase with the Opposition's announcement of a 'no deal'.

With no dialogue in sight, the opposition Awami League

Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami leaders yesterday spent most of their time reviewing the situation and exchanging views on the future course of action.

The AL also held a separate meeting with the JP at the Dhanmondi residence of AL chief Sheikh Hasina.

In a joint statement late last night, the Opposition called upon the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) to abort the elections and "set an example by stepping down."

Briefing newsmen over a joint meeting of the three

opposition parties, AL Organising Secretary Mohammad Nasim said that the Opposition would not only boycott the February 15 parliamentary elections, but also "resist the polls of a farce".

He said that the combined opposition no longer demanded polls. "Rather, from now on, our campaign will be directed towards the formation of a caretaker government with the fall of the ruling party," he added.

On behalf of the three parties, he called upon the EC officials as well as the

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Rallies banned

Authorities imposed a ban on demonstrations in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar area of the city as the opposition parties prepared to lay siege to the Election Commission today, reports UNB.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner AN Husein ordered the prohibition on rally, procession and demonstration from noon to 12 midnight on the day according to the DMP Ordinance, a police press release said yesterday.

The restriction will be in force in the areas between Dhanmondi Boys High School on Mirpur Road and Shyamoli Shishu Mela crossing, the road in front of Talata petrol pump on Rokeya Sarani, Farmgate, Mohakhali crossing and the areas in-between the said points.

Congestion at Aricha still continues

The Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) has ferried 2,596 vehicles Tuesday and 1,225 vehicles from 6 am to 6 pm yesterday through Aricha-Nagarbari and Aricha-Daulatdia riverine routes, reports BSS.

Only 1,133 vehicles were waiting till 6 pm today at Aricha, Nagarbari and Daulatdia ghats, an official handout said.

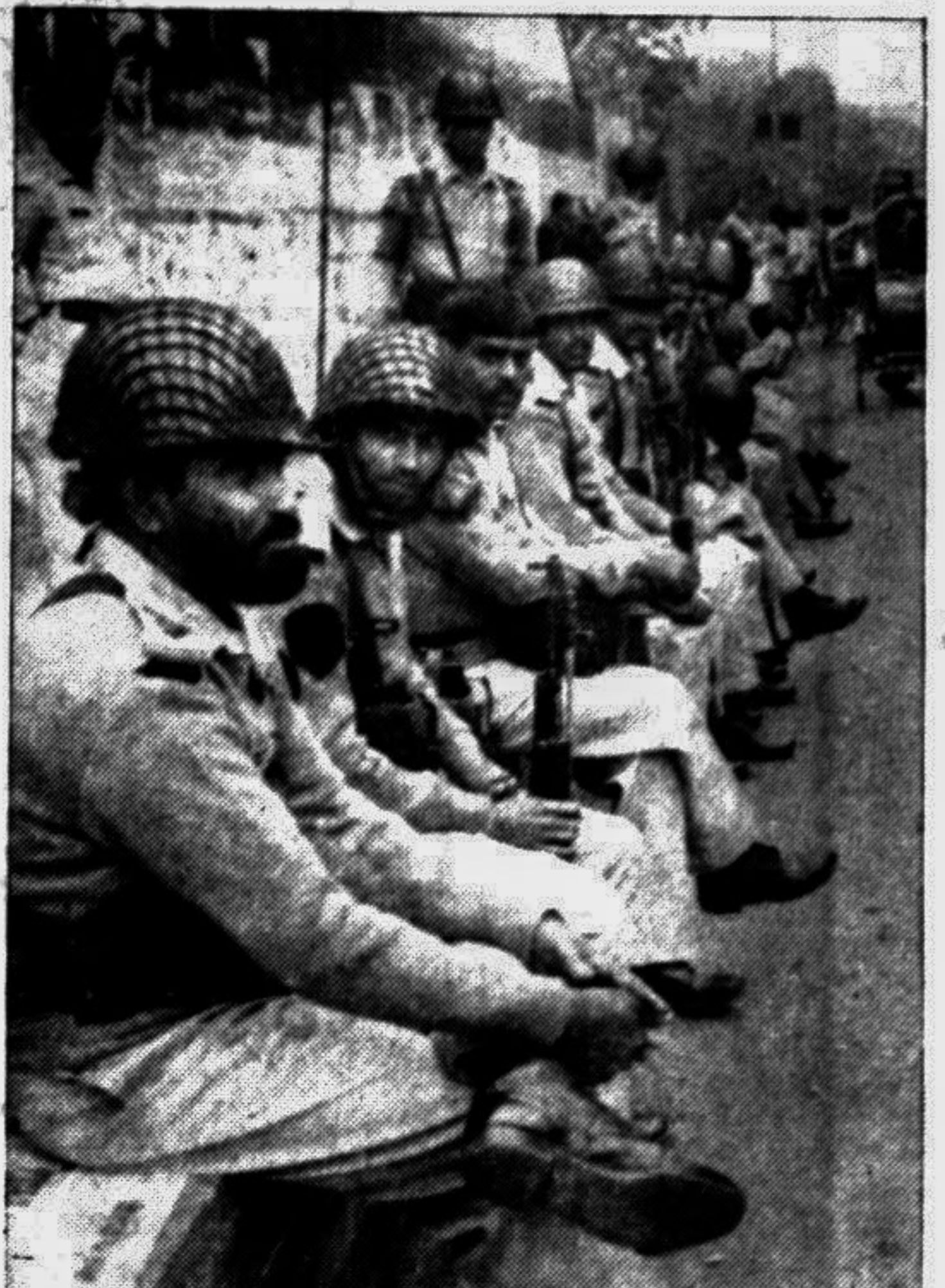
Meanwhile a review meeting to monitor service situation was held yesterday at the Shipping Ministry with State Minister for Shipping Shajahan Siraj in the chair.

The state minister directed the officials concerned to ensure smooth

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Hartal passes off peacefully

By Staff Correspondent



BDR was deployed in the city during the dawn-to-dusk hartal yesterday.
 — Star photo

The Opposition-called countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal yesterday passed off by and large peacefully but paralysed normal life and caused partial disruption in road and rail communications.

The three major opposition parties — Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami — and the Left Democratic Front (LDF) called the hartal to press their common demands for resignation of the Prime Minister and holding of elections under a neutral caretaker government.

The shutdown coincided with the last date for filing nomination papers for ensuing parliamentary elections.

Yesterday's hartal was observed amid hectic backstage parleys between the ruling party and the opposition to end the political crisis and widespread speculation about re-fixing of the election schedule.

Earlier, on three occasions the Opposition had called hartals on the dates for filing and scrutiny of nomination papers. The poll schedule was revised thrice.

The current phase of the Opposition agitation also includes gherao of Election Commission offices throughout the country, including the office of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) in

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Bangladeshi to be tried in Malaysia

By Staff Correspondent

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 17: Malaysia is to try a Bangladeshi farmer for unlawful possession of 155 Bangladeshi passports, the New Straits Times daily reports, says AFP.

Magistrate Tay Lee Ly rejected a guilty plea by Shamsul Alam, 23, since the farmer, while admitting he was carrying the travel papers, insisted he had obtained them by mistake.

Shamsul was arrested after he was found with mistake. Shamsul was arrested

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Teenaged girl commits suicide

By DMCH Correspondent

A teenaged girl reportedly committed suicide in Shahabjib area while a 45-year old man died in a residential hotel at Gulistan in the city yesterday.

Shila, 16, daughter of one Abdur Rashid of Trimohoni under Shahabjib thana reportedly took poison in their residence early morning, according to medical and police sources.

She succumbed on the way to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) at about 4:30 am, medical sources added.

One Radeshiwan Babu, 45, a boarder of Al Mansoor Hotel in Gulistan died at the hotel yesterday afternoon. Medical

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Missing vessel still untraced

Mystery shrouded the whereabouts of a Bangladeshi vessel that remained missing for nearly two months in the South China sea, official sources said yesterday, reports UNB.

Al-Qasem, a cargo vessel owned by Captain Rabiul Islam Chowdhury — who himself skipped the vessel — had set sail from Taiwan for the port of Onahama in Japan on November 21. Capt Chowdhury and 23 crewmen were on board.

There was no trace of the vessel yet since it left Taiwan, officials said adding that concerned agencies of China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan and other countries in the region had been making vigorous efforts to know the ship's whereabouts.

The sources said that satellite network also failed to monitor the movement of the ship in the sea.

Tamabil still tense, flag meet today

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Jan 17: A tense situation is still prevailing in Tamabil border areas in the district as the BDR and the BSF exchanged fire yesterday and remained alert with reinforcements on their respective sides today.

An official said BSF today asked the BDR to sit in a flag meeting soon. The proposed battalion commander-level meeting would be held tomorrow morning, he added.

The commander of 20 rifle battalion is staying at

Tamabil border. The villagers who left their houses in panic yesterday in the Tamabil border areas are yet to return.

Border trade has also been suspended for two days. As tension mounted, BSF fired 40 to 50 shots. In reply, BDR also fired 23 shots.

The dispute originated in October last as the Indian authorities began construction of a pucca building close to the "no man's land". BDR

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Compensation from frozen Iraqi assets Riyadh likely to give \$10m to Bangladeshi claimants

By Reaz Ahmad

The government is persuading the countries, which have frozen Iraqi assets, to channel funds for meeting the compensation claims of Bangladeshis who returned from Kuwait and Iraq during the Gulf War in 1990, according to official sources here.

Saudi Arabia has been requested to channel directly to Bangladesh 10 million US dollars, frozen there from Iraqi oil-sale proceeds, the sources said. Saudi government has agreed to channel the fund to Bangladesh. It was reliably learnt from other sources.

So far, only Tk 1.15 crore has been paid as compensation to 68 returnees. Funds for compensation to another 11 claimants will be available anytime, said the official

sources. The United Nations Compensation Commission (UNCC), a Geneva-based body which began work in December 1993, is expected to approve claims of some 14,000 Bangladeshis by March next. Earlier, the UNCC approved claims of 32,000 Bangladeshis.

According to the Kuwait-Iraq Repatriated Bangladeshi Association (KIRBA), all its 62,352 members have compensation claims with the UNCC, ranging from 2,500 to 8,000 US dollars and above under Category-A and B. The 68 returnees who received compensations were under Category-B, said Al Haj Md Ali Ashraf Khan, President of the KIRBA.

When contacted sources

in the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Labour and Manpower, explained that getting compensation was not linked with approval of the claims by the UNCC, but was dependent on the availability of fund.

The fund for compensation is being raised by the UNCC from Iraq's assets frozen in different countries as there is a UN-imposed ban on sale of oil by Iraq. Otherwise, the fund could be raised from Iraq's earnings from oil export, the sources said.

An official who had a meeting with the Executive Director of the UNCC recently told The Daily Star that availability of fund largely depended on a deal between

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Deposit	:	Tk.	13290 million
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