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VOL. VI NO. 6 REGD. NO. DA 781

The Daily Star

MAGH 6, 1402 BS,

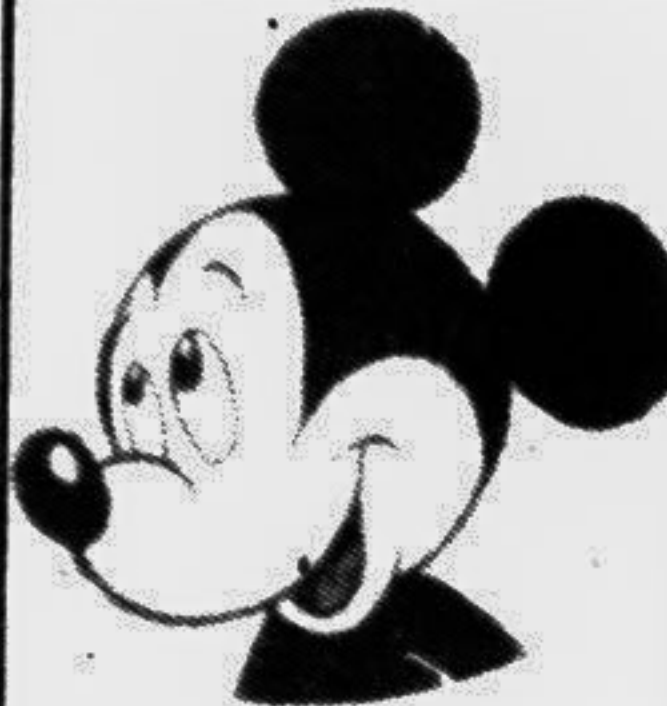
DHAKA FRIDAY, JANUARY 19, 1996

SABAN 27, 1416 HIJRI

16 PAGES: PRICE TAKA 5.00

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ANNOUNCEMENT



Today, The Daily Star introduces "Disney Time," a FULL-PAGE 4-colour cartoon series of Walt Disney characters of Mickey & his friends, including Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, Donald Duck, Daisy Duck, Goofy, Pluto, etc.

This 4-colour full-page cartoon series will be published EVERY FRIDAY on the last page of our Magazine Section. So, don't miss the fun!



Inside Today

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Election in Bangladesh and Paradox of Power

by M Amir-ul Islam
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International

India to face stiff sanctions if it conducts N-test, warns US

2 new planets with 'life' supportable environments discovered
Page 5

Business

India's bribery scandal likely to trigger another fall on BSE
Page 6

DSE MARKET

DSE price index 818.87 (+0.34%)
Market capital Tk 5310.90 cr
Transactions in volume 85996
Transactions in value Tk 1.78 cr

CSE MARKET

CSE price index 801.95 (+0.12%)
Market capital Tk 2420.97 cr
Transactions in volume 1320
Transactions in value Tk 46775.50 lakh

Weekend Magazine

The charm of Baldah Garden; The relevance of Tagore today; Glimpses of Africa; with Living, Travel and Tourism, Teens and Twenties and Rising Stars and a special-Disney Time
Pages 9-16

50 hurt during Opposition bid to gherao EC office

By Staff Correspondent

At least 50 people were injured, two with rubber bullets, and scores of vehicles were damaged in the capital yesterday as processionists belonging to the major opposition political parties defied a ban and tried to break police cordons on their way to gherao the Election Commission Secretariat.

Police swung into action to prevent the marchers from heading towards the EC Secretariat at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar and picked up 32 opposition activists from Farmgate area.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police had earlier imposed a 12-

hour ban on rallies, processions and gatherings in the areas around the EC Secretariat yesterday, the day for scrutiny of nomination papers for the ensuing parliamentary elections filed on the previous day.

Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami held separate rallies in the city and brought out processions as part of their countrywide programme of gherao of EC offices.

Police used water cannons and hurled tear gas shells to stop the slogan-chanting marchers from proceeding towards the Sher-e-Bangla

Nagar from the Panthapath area. Dozens of vehicles were damaged by the processionists in various parts of the city.

A number of cars with their windscreens smashed were seen running for shelters at the Sonargaon Road.

On both sides of the Sonargaon Road, and at Hatirpaul and Katabon, shopkeepers pulled the shutters down in panic and hundreds of shoppers were seen stranded inside the Eastern Plaza, a city supermarket.

Streets were strewn with broken windscreens.

Awami League held a rally at the eastern end of the Panthapath where top party leaders briefly spoke.

Later, a procession from that area started marching towards the EC Secretariat, but it was halted by members of the law enforcing agencies at Farmgate.

Jatiya Party's procession, which started from the western end of the Panthapath, was intercepted by police near Dhanmondi Government Boys' High School.

Jamaat also brought out a procession after holding a rally at Moghbazar crossing. See Page 8 Col 8

If there is a will, there is still a way: Experts

By Sharier Khan and Aminul Islam Sajal

The opposition parties can still participate in elections averting a much-feared collision course if they and the ruling party reach an understanding and the President intervenes, three legal experts said yesterday.

But first the top leaders will have to agree on avoiding confrontations and on finding a peaceful way out, they told The Daily Star.

"So far the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) is concerned, the chapter of rescheduling of elections is closed," said former Attorney General Barrister Rafiqul

Haq. "But if the country wants a peaceful solution to avoid violence, there is always a way out."

He said if the major opposition parties and the ruling party reach a consensus, the President with his residual powers can seek the opinion of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court and then he can take steps accordingly— "even if it is outside the purview of the Constitution."

"Under the principle of necessity, the Constitution can be violated for the purpose of saving it. Therefore,

even if the Constitution has to be violated in the greater interest of the nation, the court can condone the violation. Therefore, there would not be a constitutional crisis," said Rafiqul Haq.

He added that the opinion of the court could not be challenged since it was not a verdict and therefore, nobody was bound to abide by it.

The former attorney general referred to two cases under the principle of necessity— one during the Pakistani rule in 1957 (Tajmuddin case) and the other during the British rule. See Page 8 Col 1

Hasina's call for non-cooperation



Awami League activists trying to remove barricades from the road near Farmgate on their way to gherao the Election Commission Secretariat in the city yesterday. (Below) Shoe shine boys duck for safety as police lob tear gas shells and pickets throw bombs. (Bottom) Some makeshift hawkers' shops at Farmgate set ablaze. Star photo

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League president Sheikh Hasina yesterday called for launching an 'all-out non-cooperation movement' against the BNP government and to thwart its attempt to hold a 'one-party farcical election'.

"It is a misfortune for the nation that after killing the hard-earned democracy, the BNP is now going ahead with a blue-print election", Hasina, who pioneered the Opposition boycott of the polls told a party rally at Panthapath in the city before a planned gherao of the Election Commission Secretariat.

"Not a single voter will exercise his franchise in the farcical polls," Hasina said and called upon the public servants and members of the law enforcing agencies to side with the people.

She accused Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia of killing the hard-earned democracy and violating the Constitution on several counts.

See Page 8 Col 4

Khaleda begins polls campaign from Jan 24

By Nazmul Ashraf

Prime Minister and BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia will start election campaign for her party with a visit to the mazar of Hazrat Shahjalal at Sylhet on January 24, said Nazmul Islam Khan, office secretary of the party.

The PM is also likely to address the nation over the radio and TV "to explain her party's sincere efforts to end the political impasse" another top leader of the BNP said. The date is yet to be fixed, the BNP leader added.

The BNP will soon give instructions to the party candidates.

See Page 8 Col 7

Lawyers' call to boycott polls

By SC Correspondent

The Bangladesh Lawyers' Co-ordination Council yesterday urged the people not to take part in the coming parliamentary elections under a partisan government.

In a protest gathering in front of the National Press Club the leaders of the council also demanded removal of the puppet chief election commissioner.

Earlier the council, headed by its president Advocate Shamul Haq Chowdhury, brought out a procession from the Bangladesh Bar Association. See Page 8 Col 2

Commentary

The Wolves are Smiling

By Mahfuz Anam

Seldom, if ever, has so much damage been done, to so many, by so few (paraphrasing Churchill's famous comment on RAF men). A handful of people in the ruling and the opposition parties have held this country, and its vast multitude of poor people, hostage in a blind and reckless ambition to retain, (on one side) or to capture (on the other) political power in a shameful disregard of national interest. Whatever general interest there was in the political tug of war over the last two years, practically crippling our political and social life, there never was, even a remote desire that this conflict should jeopardize our national elections.

What we find infuriating is not only the fact that these

handful of people are playing with the future of our country and that of each of us, but also the casual way in which this catastrophe was brought about. One side said that "Come to talks first, and we will discuss everything". The other side said "Fix an agenda first, then we will come for talks". On this hair-splitting difference months and months of valuable time was lost. Would Heaven have fallen if the BNP did give an "agenda" for talks. Similarly, what would have happened if the opposition did go for talks without an "agenda". They could have always walked out (something for which they have a lot of practice) if such talks were not fruitful. Wouldn't both such options been a thousand

See Page 8 Col 3

83 nomination papers rejected

By Staff Correspondent

A total of 83 nomination papers were rejected by the Election Commission after scrutiny yesterday.

The number may rise as the EC Secretariat here was receiving reports from its offices in districts till late last night, according to a source at the EC.

The papers were rejected for being incomplete, or 'defective' or because the candidate was found to be a bank loan defaulter, the sources said.

A total of 1,987 nomination papers were submitted for the 300 Jatiya Sangsad seats.

The candidates whose nomination papers have been rejected can still appeal against the decision. Therefore, till the day of withdrawal of nomination papers it cannot be said that they are out of the race, the EC source said. The last date for withdrawal of nomination papers in January 23.

The number of rejected nomination papers so far are 26 in Dhaka division, 10 in Sylhet, 11 in Khulna, 14 in Rajshahi, 16 in Chittagong and 6 in Barisal division.

Meanwhile, the number of constituencies with only one candidate each rose to 9 yesterday. The lone candi-

dates in those constituencies are Begum Khaleda Zia in Barguna-7, Maidul Islam in Kurigram-3, Kamruddin in Sirajganj-7, Salauddin Ahmed in Cox's Bazar-1 and Khalequzzaman in Cox's Bazar-3.

Earlier, the lone nomination papers found valid were those of LGRD Minister Abdus Salam Talukdar in Jamalpur-4, state minister for social welfare Fazlur Rahman Patal in Natore-1, Sha Chin Puri in Bandarban and Nazmul Huda in Mymensingh.

Our Khulna correspondent adds: The nomination paper of BNP candidate Sekander Ali Dalim for Khulna-3 was rejected as he was found to be a bank loan defaulter. Two other papers for Khulna-4 and Khulna-6 were found 'defective' during scrutiny.

See Page 8 Col 7



Anniversary of Zia's birth today

The 60th birth anniversary of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman will be observed today, reports BSS.

In a message, President Abdur Rahman Biswas has called for concerted efforts to establish a happy and prosperous Bangladesh as dreamt by Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman.

BNP secretary general Barrister Abdus Salam Talukdar urged the party's district, city, municipality and thana units to observe the birth anniversary of Ziaur Rahman in a befitting manner.

The programmes include hoisting of party flag at the BNP central office in the morning, offering of prayers and placing of wreaths at the

See Page 8 Col 1

US wants fully contested polls

The United States hoped that the government and the Opposition in Bangladesh would cooperate on a political solution to the country's problems and agree on free and fair and fully contested elections, reports UNB.

State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns expressed the US optimism while responding to reporters' queries related to Bangladesh at a briefing in Washington on Tuesday, according to a message received yesterday.

"We have no specific for-

See Page 8 Col 6

Saifur blasts FBCCI for filing writ

'Non-payment of loans is no fundamental right'

By Staff Correspondent

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday criticised the FBCCI for challenging the ordinance debarbing the loan defaulters from contesting the ensuing parliamentary polls.

"Defaulters are running amok in the name of fundamental rights", he said. "Fundamental right is not to default creditor's money. This sort of situation can not be allowed", Saifur observed while inaugurating the Credit Rating Information and Services Limited (CRISL), the first ever such company in the country.

The finance minister stressed the need for legal support to check bad debt problem in the country.

If law is not effective to enforce obligation and gover-

nance is not efficient, honest and responsive, the situation can not be changed," he said. Without naming, the finance minister said that a defaulter with loans of crores of taka was showing thumb to banks.

Writs by JP leaders withdrawn

By SC Correspondent

All the three writ petitions filed in the High Court by Jatiya Party leaders challenging the ordinance debarbing bank loan defaulters from contesting parliamentary elections were withdrawn yesterday.

See Page 8 Col 8

He said the bankers also need to be rated for their performance.

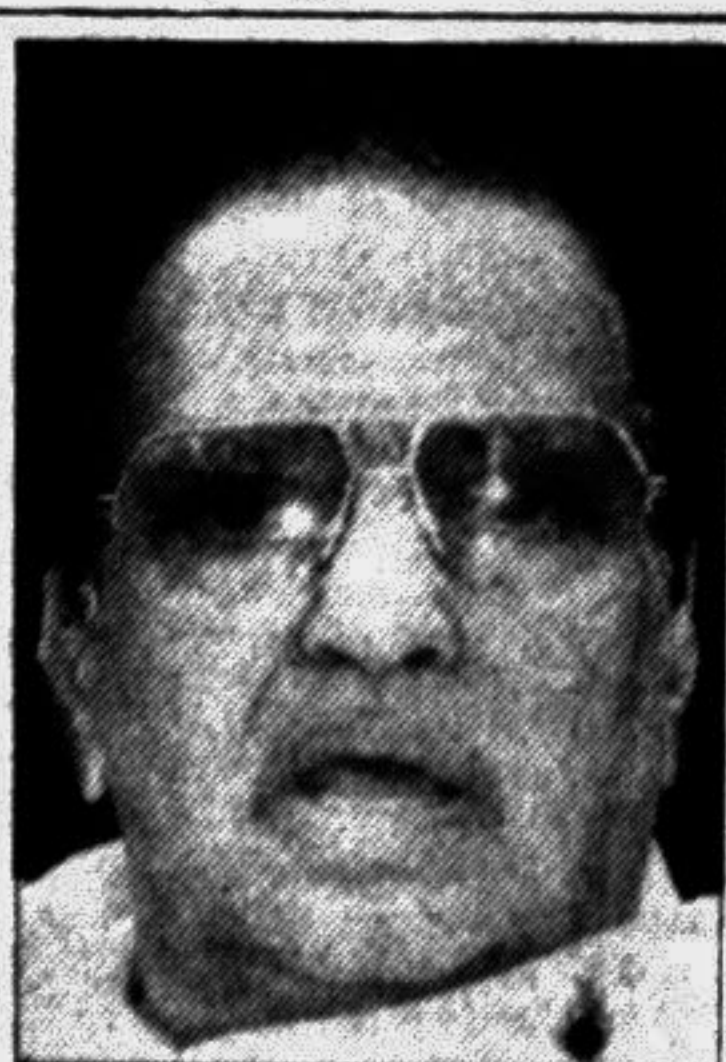
"How can a banker sanction loan to a defaulter of Taka 100 crore again?" he asked.

He also stressed the need for rating of both the borrowers and the banks.

"Borrowers' rating is needed for security of the banks, and banks' rating is needed to judge their acceptability both nationally and internationally," he said.

Saifur said 'the reform programme was greatly affected because of short-term political expediency. "Politicians will not accept reforms because they think these will affect their votes," said Saifur. "This is a

See Page 8 Col 7



N T Rama Rao dead

NEW DELHI, Jan 18: N T Rama Rao, one of India's top opposition leaders, died at the age of 73 today following a heart attack, dealing a crushing blow to the opposition's prospects in upcoming parliamentary polls, reports AFP.

The charismatic Rama Rao, a former movie actor, See Page 8 Col 8

Tamabil firing Flag meet yields no results

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Jan 18: The flag meeting between the Indian BSF and BDR ended today without any decision.

At the two-hour meeting from 1:30 pm held on the no-man's land, commanding officer, A K Sheel led the BSF team while Major S M A Jallil led the BDR side.

The agenda included the Indian fresh attempt for construction of pucca building near 'no-man's land, deployment of additional BSF troops and border trade problems.

An official source said that the BSF gave no assurance for the postponement of the construction of pucca building. However, the meeting was told that the BSF would decide about this after consultation with the higher authorities, the source added.

Meanwhile, the tense situation is prevailing in Tamabil border area.



ঢাকা আন্তর্জাতিক বাণিজ্য মেলা '৯৬ মেয়াদকাল বৃদ্ধি সংক্রান্ত বিজ্ঞপ্তি

এতদ্বারা সর্বসাধারণের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, বিপুল দর্শক সমাগম এবং অংশগ্রহণকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহের অনুরোধের পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে মেলা কর্তৃপক্ষ আন্তর্জাতিক বাণিজ্য মেলার মেয়াদকাল ২৭ শে জানুয়ারী '৯৬ পর্যন্ত বৃদ্ধি করার সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণ করেছে।

২। পবিত্র রমজান মাসে মেলা প্রতিদিন ১০টা থেকে সন্ধ্যা ৭টা পর্যন্ত জনসাধারণের জন্য উন্মুক্ত থাকবে।

৩। ইফতার এবং মাগরিবের নামাজের জন্য আধ ঘণ্টা বিরতি থাকবে।

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মেলা কর্তৃপক্ষ