

## Assault on Chechens over 82 Russian hostages freed, 18 missing

MOSCOW, Jan 18: The Russian assault against Chechen rebels in the village of Pervomaiskaya ended today and a total of 82 hostages were freed and 18 were missing, President Boris Yeltsin said today, report agencies.

In the Chechen capital of Grozny, a Chechen separatist spokesman meanwhile said that Chechen guerrillas had

**Anwar Hossain Manju granted anticipatory bail**

By SC Correspondent

The High Court yesterday granted anticipatory bail to Anwar Hossain Manju, who was energy minister under former president H M Ershad, in an anti-corruption case related to leasing out Haripur Oil field to Scimifer Exploration Ltd. S.A.

A division bench of the HC comprising Justice Mohammad Moazzamul Huq and Justice Mahfuzur Rahman granted him bail on a bond of Tk 2 lakh with the satisfaction of the Deputy Commissioner, Dhaka.

The Anti-corruption Bureau on January 16 lodged an FIR with Tejgaon thana against Ershad, now in jail, and Anwar Hossain, under Section 109 of the Penal Code read with Section 5(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947.

**Phone exchanges in MP hostels closed**

Three 500-line telephone exchanges in the MP Hostels were closed yesterday temporarily to avoid their misuse by some MPs of the dissolved Parliament, reports UNB.

Official sources said a number of former MPs — both from the ruling party and the opposition parties — were still staying at the three MP Hostels and making numerous phone calls everyday.

Parliament Secretariat sources also said that many outsiders had been staying in different rooms allotted to MPs as per the instruction of the ex-MPs.

## If there is a will

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Dr Mizanur Rahman, Associate Professor of the Law Department of Dhaka University, similarly emphasised the need for an agreement among the political parties first and devising a way out

"If they (the political leaders) had wanted a solution, there were always enough room — but they did not or could not devise a solution," Barrister Rafiqul Haq pointed out.

Barrister Amirul Islam told The Daily Star "Actually, if there is any political solution, then the lawyers can find out ways. There will be constitutional engineering only after the leaders reach an understanding."

He added that the President could do many things to resolve the political crisis or bring about a consensus, but he had remained inactive. "Still, he can play an important role," Amirul Islam said.

### Defamation suit

#### Charges against 4 newsmen framed

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) court yesterday framed charges against four senior newsmen in a defamation suit filed by Labour and Manpower Minister Mir Shawkat Ali, reports UNB.

The accused are Golam Sarwar, News Editor of Daily Ittefaq, Fazlur Rahman Miroff, Managing Editor of Bangla Bani, Motiur Rahman Chowdhury, Editor of Bangla Bazar Patrika, and Mustafizur Rahman, Editor of Dainik Rupali.

Mir Shawkat filed the defamation suit against the dailies on September 19, stating that the newspapers in their September 12 issues published a defamatory statement against him.

### Zia's birthday

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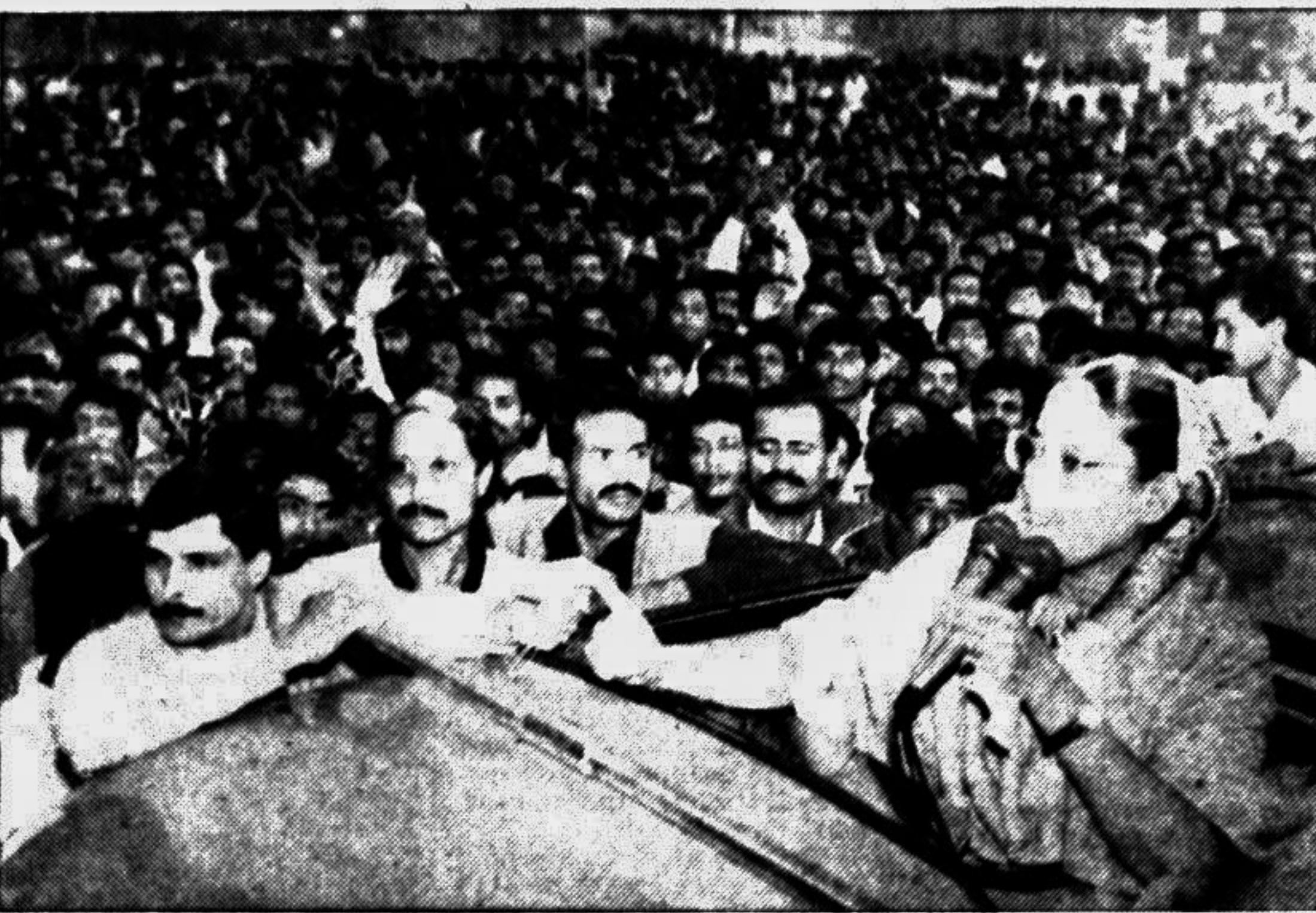
mazar of the late leader at 9 am, discussion at Shilpakala Academy auditorium at 4 pm, documentary film show and cultural functions.

President of Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal Farzil Huq Milan and general secretary Nazimuddin Alam, in a joint statement, yesterday urged the members of their organisation to observe the day at district, thana, union and ward level.

The programmes of the Jatiyatabadi Shechib Sebabak include rally at the mazar of Ziaur Rahman at 8:30 am laying of wreaths and offering of fete at 9 am.

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Awami League President Sheikh Hasina addressing a rally at the Panthapath in the city yesterday before proceeding to gherao the Election Commission Secretariat. — Star photo

## 'Polls without Opposition to deepen crisis'

Senior Nayeb-e-Ameer of the Jamaat-i-Islami Abbas Ali Khan said yesterday that holding the general elections without the participation of the opposition parties would deepen the crisis further.

The rebels, who said they would not harm local Dagestanis, told him they had come from the village of Engel-yurt, on the Chechen border some 12 km to the south.

### JP rally

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JP leader called for allowing election under a neutral caretaker government and said requisite constitution amendments would be made by next parliament unitedly.

"Don't play with fire ... people will not allow you to hold one-party election," Mizan said of the Prime Minister.

He alleged the government resorted to conspiracy and tried to split parties and tempt some of them to take part in the election, but finally failed, he said referring to government's reported bid to bring Ershad in election through some JP leaders.

Diplomats also tried to convince the ruling BNP to hold an acceptable election. Mizan said and observed that the BNP was not accepting the opposition demand fearing its debacle in free and fair election under a neutral caretaker government.

Parliament Secretariat sources also said that many outsiders had been staying in different rooms allotted to MPs as per the instruction of the ex-MPs.



A rally of the Jatiya Party at the Panthapath-Mirpur Road crossing (Top) and procession of the Jamaat-e-Islami on the Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in the city yesterday afternoon. — Star photo

## Wolves are smiling

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times better than where we have now landed ourselves into.

Whatever may have been their respective positions at first, when the two sides finally parted ways, the differences were reduced to a minimum. It got stuck in whether or not the so-called 'chief' of the so-called Advisory Council should or should not have executive power. In a five plus five configuration, and when a consensus was needed for a decision, what earth shaking measure the President could or could not take, which made the two sides risk everything, and throw the elections to the wolves.

It is doubtful whether Begum Zia really weighed the pros and cons of her decision to go for a one-plus-fringe party elections. If she goes through with it, as she seems determined to, then she will have thrown to the winds the most important element of her unquestioned prestige — the fact that she was elected in a universally participated elections. After 21st February '96 she will, at best, appear as the winner of a controversial election. A laurel far removed from the one she enjoyed for the last five years.

The ruling party always worked on the assumption that the opposition did not really want to participate in the elections. Thus every new demand of the opposition

## Non-cooperation

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The Prime minister speaks of democracy and the Constitution but herself violates those by resorting to vote rigging and politicising the administration," the AL chief alleged.

Gherao of the EC Secretariat was part of a country-wide Opposition programme yesterday, the date for scrutiny of the nomination papers filed for the February 15 polls.

As the AL procession reached Farmgate on its way to Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, police intercepted it, sprinkled coloured water and hurled tear gas shells to disperse on.

Referring to the last-ditch negotiation efforts, the former leader of the Opposition in the Fifth Parliament said, the diplomats also came up with valuable suggestions and "we cooperated with them but, Khaleda Zia even rejected their proposals."

Without elaborating Sheikh Hasina said: "We gave a lot of concessions with the good intention of reaching a settlement but they (BNP) did not listen to the words of logic."

She also drew a comparison between deposed president Ershad and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia saying "Ershad relinquished power in the face of people's demand but Khaleda did not do so".

He alleged that Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury was assigned by the ruling BNP to lure some letterhead parties to participate in the elections in exchange of a cash deal.

Referring to the Prime Minister's earlier promise to resign one month before the general elections, Sheikh Hasina came down heavily on her for not keeping her word.

The AL chief also urged the Election Commission to refrain from holding a one-party election at the cost of public money and warned that it would be responsible for any consequence thereof.

Awami League leaders Abdus Samad Azad, Amir Hussain Amu, Abdur Razzak, Toafel Ahmed, Motia Chowdhury, Suranjit Sen Gupta, Nurul Islam Nahid, Mozaffar Hossain Paltu and some leaders of the AL's front organisations also addressed the pre-gherao rally.

Amir Hussain Amu, who played an active role in the negotiations between the AL and the BNP to solve the lingering political impasse told the rally that when diplomats of six Western countries were in a meeting with the Prime Minister at 9:35 pm on Tuesday last, BNP secretary general Abdus Salam Talukder had told newsmen that the door for negotiations has closed.

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The reports in yesterday's newspapers to that effect are erroneous.

### Dacoity at ACME office

By Staff Correspondent

A robbery was committed at the head office of the ACME Laboratories Ltd, a pharmaceutical company, in the city Wednesday night.

A gang of dacoits broke the iron vaults in three rooms on the ground and first floors of the head office building located at 55 Saat Masjid road and escaped with about Tk 2 lakh, said ACME officials.

A case has been filed with Mohammadpur thana. However, none was arrested in this connection till last night, police said.

### Faruque Thakur's bail cancelled

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) court yesterday cancelled the bail of Faruque Thakur, the principal accused of the businessman Shamsul Alam murder case, and issued warrant of arrest against him, reports UNB.

CMM Shahiuddin Ahmed also ordered attachment of his immovable property.

The court orders came as Faruque failed to appear before the court on due date after his release on bail granted on January 7.

Bail-bond sureties had been asked to produce the main accused of the sensational murder case of Gulshan Thakur before the court yesterday.

The lawyer of Faruque Thakur, a film producer, filed a petition in the court yesterday stating that Thakur has been hospitalised with heart ailment. The counsel submitted a medical certificate to prove his client's illness.

Earlier, prosecution had filed petition in the court praying for cancellation of the bail.

### Contested polls

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... mula that we are advancing here for a settlement between the government and Opposition, but we remain hopeful that the political leaders of the country will together work out a resolution that moves democracy forward, that enhances the democratic process. That's our interest," Burns said.

When asked whether the State Department was frustrated as there was nothing happening despite the hectic efforts by Ambassador Merrill, the spokesman said the United States would continue efforts for promoting the democratic process in Bangladesh.

"We are determined — and here Ambassador Merrill has done a fine job — to push our view, which is that there ought to be elections, the democratic process ought to be enhanced, and there ought to be cooperation between the government and the Opposition," Burns was quoted by USIS.

He added: "And, you know, because there hasn't been significant progress doesn't mean we're going to stop our efforts. We'll continue to assert that these are things that should happen."

Burns said Ambassador Merrill had acted over the past couple of months to try to facilitate meetings between the government and the Opposition, and Ambassador Merrill certainly enunciated the strong hope that the government and the Opposition in Bangladesh would cooperate on a political solution to their problems.

In recent weeks, US Ambassador David N Merrill brokered back-stage parleys between top leaders of the government and the Opposition for a peaceful solution to the agonising political deadlock.

On Tuesday, the US Ambassador and diplomats of five other developed nations go to a last-ditch effort for resolving the country's nagging political crisis. But the move apparently failed to yield any results.

Sultan uz-Zaman Khan, Chairman of the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC), said proper rating with strong credibility and high standards will help develop in capital market and boost investment.

## PM's office, US embassy deny press report

Both the Prime Minister's Office and the US Embassy in Dhaka yesterday denied that US Ambassador Merrill had sent any letter to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on the coming election, reports UNB.

In a statement, Mohammad Moazzamul Haq, the Prime Minister's Press Secretary, described a news item published in a section of the press yesterday about the Ambassador's letter as "baseless and motivated".

He said no such letter was either written by the US Ambassador or sent to the Prime Minister through BNP Secretary General Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder.

The Press Secretary said the story was aimed at creating confusion among the people.

The US Embassy in Dhaka in a special release yesterday also said that Ambassador Merrill had sent no correspondence to the Prime Minister "on the subject of the upcoming national elections."

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