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Notice

The details of The Daily Star Roundtable on 'How to Create a People-friendly Legal System', could not be published today under unavoidable circumstances. It will be published tomorrow.

Lottery draw

The results of the lottery draw of the public issues of Meghna Vegetable Oil Industries Ltd will be published in The Daily Star tomorrow.

Inside Today

Article

Winning the Competitive Battle

Column : Window on Asia
by Shahed Latif
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Focus

Need for a special economic zone in Jalalabad; and Flood control: From a farmer's angle
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International

India stepping up its missile power ignoring US warning

Govt-rebels sign peace accord in Guatemala
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Business

DSE MARKET

DSE price index 2300.15
Market capital Tk. 6604.19 cr
Transactions in volume 74041
Transactions in value Tk. 2.78 cr

CSE MARKET

CSE price index 1157.90
Market capital Tk. 44163.00 cr
Transactions in volume 13075
Transactions in value Tk. 4352437.50

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300 killed as Bodos blow up train

GUWAHATI, Dec 30: At least 300 people were killed today when a powerful bomb ripped through several carriages of a packed train in India's north-eastern state of Assam, police said.

A senior police official told Reuters here that separatist Bodo militants had used a remote-controlled device packed with explosives to blow up the Delhi-bound train.

The bomb exploded at around 1930 hrs just after the train left Kokrajhar Railway Station where it halted for a minute only, sources said. The distance of the site of the incident was about 216 km from Guwahati by rail.

A high railway official told PTI here that the station master of Kokrajhar Railway Station heard a loud explosion just as the train left the station and immediately informed the district Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police about it.

The force of the blast was so intense that it also derailed the engine and two other coaches of the train.

The accident site presented a gruesome picture with blood splashes and the dismembered limbs and bodies of the victims spewn all around.

The sources attributed the explosion to suspected Bodo militants.

The railway police and civil administration officials were conducting rescue and relief operation at the site near Sesapani.

The blast came a day after tribal Bodo guerillas blew up a road bridge that formed the main link between India's

BNP to reorganise some of its front organisations

Opposition BNP has decided to strengthen the organisational activities of the party by reorganising some of its front organisations, reports UNB.

Party sources said the councils of Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal and Jatiyatabadi Sechhasabak Dal would be held soon to elect

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northeast regions and the rest of the country, injuring seven people.

A police officer told Reuters today that ethnic Bodo rebels blasted the bridge over a small river at Rakhaladubi, between the towns of Bijni and Bonggaon on national highway - 31 in the tea and oil-rich state of Assam.

Witnesses reported a huge line of about 5,000 trucks on the highway linking the adjoining state of West Bengal to Assam. They said the trucks were carrying essential supplies including fuel and food.

Repairs had started on the 12-metre long bridge, police said, adding that a massive operation had been launched to arrest the guerillas.

Bodo tribals have killed hundred of people in Assam including Indian security troops.

Activists representing Bodo tribesmen living north of the Brahmaputra River want a homeland within India in the state of Assam, but an extremist fringe, the Bodoland army, has been fighting for a separate nation since 1989.

Football fiesta begins in city today

By Al-Amin and Ashfaquul Haque



FIFA banner spread across the gallery as part of authorities' last minute preparation for the inaugural ceremony of the Bangabandhu Cup Football Tournament at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday.



Country's sports fraternity will bid a fitting farewell to the eventful year of 1996, the year of nation's silver jubilee celebration of victory in Liberation War, with the kicking off of the Bangabandhu Cup football tournament at the greenery of the Dhaka Stadium today.

The tourney, named after the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, features thirteen clubs including ten overseas outfits from India, Nepal, Thailand, Russia, Iran, Malaysia and Indonesia.

The stage is all set to pay homage to Bangabandhu, whose impassioned oration during

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Union Parishad polls in April

By Staff Correspondent

The government has decided to hold Union Parishad elections in the country in April next year.

The decision was taken at a cabinet meeting last night with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair, cabinet sources said.

The cabinet also decided that from now on, formal reception to state guests would take place at the airport and five ministers including the foreign minister would be present, the sources added.

The meeting in principle agreed that a national stock exchange would be set up. But be-

fore taking a final decision on the issue, the government would seek suggestions from different sections of the people, specially businessmen, industrialists and experts.

The cabinet also approved the proposal for amending the related electoral laws of the local government council of the hill districts of Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban.

Ministers, state ministers in charge of different ministries, Cabinet Secretary, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister and secretaries concerned were present at the meeting.

Ijtema ends Over 2m take part in Akheri Munajat

By Staff Correspondent

The three-day Biswa Ijtema at Tongi concluded yesterday with over two million devotees participating in the Akheri Munajat for peace, prosperity and greater solidarity of the Muslim Ummah.

Hazrat Moulana Miaz Mehrib, a leader of the Tablig Jamaat of New Delhi, India, led the 15-minute Munajat which began at about 11-30 am.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury, Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia, Foreign

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Some logjammed shares to be freed Circuit breaker to be relaxed to 10 pc

Star Report

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has decided to relax the circuit breaker to 10 per cent from the existing five per cent, effective from tomorrow.

The decision was taken yesterday at a meeting of the four-member circuit breaker committee, according to a highly placed source.

The decision to widen the circuit breaker on price fluctuation was taken to help raise the volume of trading in the bourses which had been witnessing a slurring business in

the past fortnight following last month's upheaval in the market, the sources said.

It is also likely to free some shares, which remained logjammed at high prices at the height of the bull run in October.

Earlier, the committee relaxed the circuit breaker for post book closure issues to ease the pressure on the market.

Commenting on the latest decision of the committee, Chairman of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE), Imtiyaz Hossain said it will restore confi-

dence of investors and help normalise trading.

Meanwhile, two members of the SEC, Dr Shahab Alam and Alamgir Kabir, are likely to be removed from their posts in a couple of days as part of the work to reorganise the statutory body, authoritative sources said. None of the two members were available for comment.

Earlier, they were summoned by the finance ministry and were asked to resign, the sources said. However, they reportedly decided to wait for

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Team to monitor Ganges flow leaves today

By Staff Correspondent

A team of four engineers leaves Dhaka today for Farakka for monitoring the discharge of the Ganges water as per provisions of the recently concluded 30-year agreement between Bangladesh and India.

The recording and observation of the Ganges flow begins tomorrow.

Bangladesh is due to receive a quantum of 67,516 cusecs during the first 10-day cycle of the dry season, from January 1 to 10. Water flow for the five-month dry season beginning from the first day of the new year has been charted out in 15 cycles in the accord signed on December 12.

The joint monitoring of the discharge of water on the Indian side will be conducted at three

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Kader Siddiky refutes allegations Four BCL, one JCD leaders arrested

From Our Correspondent

TANGAIL, Dec 30: Awami League MP Kader Siddiky, Bir Uttam, today reiterated his demand for dismissal of Home Minister Major (rtd) Rafiqul Islam, Bir Uttam, for his alleged failure in maintaining law and order.

Meanwhile, police arrested four leaders of Awami League backed Bangla Chhatra League (BCL) and one leader of BNP-backed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) from the town today.

The arrests followed the arrest Sunday of Aziz Siddiky, leader of a BCL faction and younger brother of Kader

Siddiky. A series of clashes between rival groups of Bangladesh Chhatra League earlier this month left one BCL activist dead and 13 persons wounded and created a tense situation in the town.

Aziz Siddiky was arrested on Sunday in a 15-hour raid in his family home in the town and was given one month's detention. He was accused in 19 different cases, police said earlier.

Kader Siddiky, addressing a press conference at the Tangail Press Club alleged that harass-

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BNP leaders, MPs of greater Dhaka meet today

An emergency meeting of the BNP leaders and its MPs of Dhaka city and greater Dhaka district will be held at the party central office at 4 pm today, reports UNB.

The meeting will be attended by the party MPs from Dhaka city, Narayanganj town, and Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur, Narasingdi, Munshiganj and Manikganj districts.

Presidents and general secretaries of the district committees and party candidates who contested in the last general elections from the districts will also join the meeting, said a press release yesterday.

Party Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan will address the meeting.

Hartal observed in Bogra

BOGRA, Dec 30: A half-day hartal, called by the district unit of BNP demanding removal of ADC (Revenue), was observed here today, reports UNB.

The district BNP accused ADC (Revenue) Mushtaque Ahmed of tearing a picture of late president Ziaur Rahman at Bijoy Mela in the town on December 16.

Shops were closed while bus and train communications in the district were disrupted for six hours from 6 in the morning.

Pickets damaged several rickshaws and motorised vehicles as these tried to ply in the town defying the hartal call.

District BNP and its front organisations brought out procession in the town and held a protest rally at the Salmatha crossing in the morning.

50 killed as cold snap grips Europe

BUCHAREST (Romania), Dec 30: The coldest weather Europe has seen in a decade has killed more than 50 people and left hundreds of thousands without power, water or heat, reports AP.

The massive snows have also blocked supply routes and left areas without telephone connections. Swiss and other European weather officials are calling the frigid temperatures the coldest in a decade.

In Bulgaria, 13 people have died, including four at an unheated psychiatric hospital. One of the four jumped from a window shouting, 'I'm dying of

cold' according to the BTA news agency.

The cash-strapped Bulgarian government earlier had warned that heavy snowfall could bring the country to a halt, saying it lacked the funds to clear roads and railways.

Rescue teams with bulldozers struggled to clear roads, particularly in northeastern Bulgaria where the snow blocked the delivery of food, fuel and medicine.

Gas consumption was up sharply, slowing supply deliveries. Airports in the Black Sea cities of Burgas and Varna were closed Sunday.

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