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NEWS BRIEFS

Sit-in at Kamalapur link road today

Local people, adjacent to the Kamalapur railway station, will enforce a two-hour sit-in from 8 am at the link road today. The people under the banner of 'Mugdah-Kamalapur Link Road Stopping Resistance Committee' announced the programme on Thursday, reports UNB.

Indian salt, sugar seized

SIRAJGANJ, Jan 3: Police seized 107 sacks of Indian salt and sugar from a godown at Jamtoli in Kamarkhand thana on Thursday night and arrested two people in this connection. Acting on a tip-off, police conducted a special raid and seized 82 bags of salt and 25 bags of sugar from the godown. The arrested are: Nuruzzaman of Momenpur village in Bichuchi thana and Abdul Khaleq of Sadanandapur village in Sadar thana, reports UNB.

New KMP commissioner takes over

KHULNA, Jan 3: Kazi Nazrul has joined as new commissioner of Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) with effect from today. He took over charge from Mohammad Fazuul Huq who has been transferred to police headquarters in Dhaka as DIG.

19 injured in Sirajganj clash

SIRAJGANJ, Jan 3: At least 19 people were injured in a clash in Rahmatganj area of the town today, reports UNB. The clash between dwellers of Khan Para and Khalifa Para erupted at about 4 pm over assaulting a veterinary doctor. Police lobbed several tear gas shells to bring situation under control. They also picked up eight trouble makers from the spot. Of the injured, six were admitted to Sirajganj General Hospital.

Leopard killed

MYMENSINGH, Jan 3: A leopard was killed after it clawed and bit three men at a village in Halaughat thana of the district today. Witnesses said the wild animal attacked one Moslemuddin near a mastered field of Dopa Gochandia village. Two other villagers, Halim and Abdul Kashem, fell victims as they tried to resist the leopard. The 7.5 feet long leopard was later shot dead. Its body was brought to Halaughat thana, reports UNB.

Phensidyl seized

Police yesterday seized 1025 bottles of phensidyl from a private car near Gabtoli of the city. A DMP press release said last night. According to the release, police force in Gabtoli camp on a tip-off stopped the car and seized the bottles with phensidyl. Two persons were arrested in this connection and the car was also seized.

1500 Indonesians in two batches sent back

Malaysia starts mass deportation of illegal foreign workers

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 3: The mass deportation of illegal immigrants from Malaysia began today, just ahead of a nationwide sweep to arrest one million of them, report AP, AFP.

Officials loaded 1,205 Indonesian illegals and another 252 Indonesians who had completed jail terms on board an Indonesian navy ship which will take four days to go from Pasir Gudang, 300 kilometers south of Kuala Lumpur, to Surabaya in East Java.

Another 40 had left on a ferry for a 40-minute journey to be Indonesian island of Batam, near Singapore.

A five-month amnesty to allow the 1 million job-seeking migrants to surrender and arrange work permits expired on Dec 31.

Immigration officer Aesh Che Ma said 3,000 police, immigration and army personnel would now search door-to-door to arrest others for expulsion.

The first 1,205 were arrested some time ago and held in six detention camps and two prisons.

Home Ministry Secretary General Samsuddin Osman turned them over to Indonesian Ambassador Mohd Jacob Dasto at the port. Samsuddin said another 12,000 Indonesians, Burmese, Indians and others were already detained.

Dasto said other human shipments would follow if the first was successful.

"The crackdown is expected to start within a week or two," said Mohamed Sabri Zainal, Public Relations Officer with the Immigration Department.

The department is processing "a few thousands of applications" from employers who submitted applications Monday to legalise their workers.

"We need about two weeks to process their applications before we can launch the crackdown," Sabri pointed out.

Successful applicants will be issued documents by the Immigration Department, he said.

"The deportation is necessary to clear the camps of the legalise before we can start the nation-wide crackdown," a Malaysian government official said.

Witnesses said the deportation was orderly and calm as the immigrants carrying plastic bags containing their belongings boarded the Kri Tanjung Osina.

An official of the Indonesian Manpower Department told reporters this was the first time an Indonesian navy vessel was being used to retrieve illegal immigrants. Indonesia and Malaysia were sharing the cost.

Malaysia earlier sent them across the narrow Straits of Malacca, to Sumatra in small groups, using ferries and chartered boats.

The 1,457 would be sent to their homes in Sulawesi, Flores, West, East and Central Java, officials said. They included women, at least seven children and a month-old baby.

Malaysia and Indonesia agreed last year that Indonesia would help take back its illegals.

Jakarta has begun a campaign in rural areas to urge people to arrange to be recruited legally.

Malaysian officials said the government will strictly enforce new laws to punish employers who hire undocumented migrants.

Employers can be fined up to \$12,000, jailed five years and caned if convicted. Illegal who return can be whipped, jailed for five years and fined \$4,000.

During the amnesty, 300,000 people at work for 17,000 employers surrendered and were legalised.

The migrants are from 28 nations, with the majority from Indonesia. Others come



A midfield tussle between Dhaka Mohammedan's Arman (L) and an unidentified Friends Club booter of Nepal during their Bangabandhu Cup match at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday. Mohammedan won 2-0. — Star photo

Saga of a Bangladeshi returnee

By Reaz Ahmad

High cost of getting passports, work permits and re-entry visas appeared to be major obstacles to thousands of Bangladeshis, reportedly staying illegally in Malaysia, in availing an amnesty offered by the government of that country, that expired on December 31.

A Bangladeshi youth, who returned home on December 18 after months of immense pangs and agony in Malaysia said this yesterday.

He was narrating to this correspondent the condition of Bangladeshis who could not manage a legal status nor could return home.

Talking on condition of anonymity, the returnee who stays in the city's Mirpur area said 'unauthorised brokers dealing in passports, work permits and visas took control of the total process, thereby causing immense sufferings to illegal stayers willing to return home.

He alleged that over the last few months, thousands of Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia found themselves in the grip of brokers whenever they had gone to Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur for necessary assistance.

"If one tries to get a passport issued from the High Commission there, one has to wait for weeks. But one who offers bribe to brokers, gets his passport instantly", he alleged, adding that in normal procedure, getting a passport cost 143 Malaysian ringgit while the amount rose to 350 ringgit when one tried through brokers.

The State Minister for Foreign Affairs had, however, told The Daily Star earlier that the High Commission was renewing 200 to 300 passports every day and the process was being issued on the date it is supposed to.

Deportation of Bangladeshis starts any time

Star Report

Bangladeshis who have been put into the camps for illegal workers are waiting to be sent back home by the Malaysian authorities anytime, according to Bangladesh High Commission sources in Malaysia reached over telephone late last night.

There were 1075 Bangladeshis in various camps till yesterday, said the sources. There is hardly any chance for them to obtain employment of 'yellow card' since the amnesty

Dhaka not allowing camps to train terrorists: Delhi

NEW DELHI, Jan 3: India today said there was some evidence that Bangladesh is not allowing its soil to be used for terrorist activities directed against this country, reports PTI.

"There is some evidence that the situation is changing," an official in the prime minister's office (PMO) said while briefing newsmen on the two-day visit of Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda to Bangladesh beginning on January 6.

The official said the new Bangladesh government had already given an assurance to India that it will not allow camps to train terrorists on its soil to carry out subversive activities in India.

The official said the visit was purely 'goodwill' in nature to maintain the momentum of the dialogue at the highest political level since the first meeting between Gowda and the

Crisis artificial, says BFA

Many dealers yet to get allotted fertiliser

By Govinda Shil

An "artificial crisis" of urea fertiliser is prevailing in some north and north-western districts of the country due to "irregularities" in release of allotted consignments and sudden suspension of production in the

Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd (CUFL), according to sources in the Bangladesh Fertiliser Association (BFA).

A group of fertiliser dealers from Faridpur, Pabna, Satkhira, Rajbari and Khulna told The Daily Star at the BFA office here that they did not yet get the allotted consignments for November and December. They alleged that most of their Demand Orders (DOs) for November have not yet been cleared and that frequent interference by the local administration was lengthening the delivery.

When contacted, a high official of the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) admitted that an "artificial crisis of fertiliser was prevailing

M SC beat Friends, Ujung Pandang hold Barg Shiraj

Sports Reporter

Dhaka Mohammedan Sporting Club got off to a flying start in the Bangabandhu Cup Invitational Football Tournament last night handing Friends Club of Nepal a 0-2 defeat in their Group B opener at the flood-lit Dhaka Stadium.

In an one-sided affair, captain Jewel Rana put the black and whites ahead in the 13th minute, converting a penalty while Nigerian striker Zide doubled the margin six minutes later.

Earlier in day's first match between Barg Shiraj Football Club of Iran and PMS Football Club (Ujung Pandang) of Indonesia ended in a 1-1 draw.

In a see-saw encounter, striker Izak C Fatari drew the first blood for the Indonesians in the 24th minute while midfielder Mohsan levelled the margin for the Iranians in the 56th minute.

In today's lone match, Cosmos Club of Moscow will take on Malaysia Red in a Group D engagement at the Dhaka Stadium at 4 pm.

Hasina-John Major official talks

Trade, industry and energy sectors on top of agenda

By M Anwarul Haq

Increase of British investment in trade, industry and energy sectors in Bangladesh would figure prominently in official talks during the forthcoming visit of British Prime Minister John Major, official sources said.

Major arrives in Dhaka on January 10 on a three-day official visit. He will be staying at the residence of the British High Commissioner.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will receive the British Prime Minister at Zia International Airport when he arrives by a special flight. Major would be arriving from Bangalore, India, on the second leg of a three-nation tour that will later take him to Pakistan, the sources added.

The British Prime Minister's entourage would include some leading businessmen. He will be accompanied by Malcolm Rifkind, Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

The visit is being considered important as it would seek to strengthen further the existing bilateral trade and commercial links between the two countries.

Besides official talks with Sheikh Hasina, Major's itinerary includes visit to BRAC projects in Manikganj and addressing local businesses and trade leaders.

Official talks between the two premiers will be held on January 11. It is learnt that the talks will focus on boosting British investment in Bangladesh, particularly in the industry and energy sectors. Sources concerned said an agreement on oil exploration is likely to be signed with Cairn and Brown and Roots.

Talks will also be held on further increasing export to Britain, which is the second largest importer of Bangladeshi

Difference over Tangail transport strike plan

From Our Correspondent

TANGAIL, Jan 3: The Transport Owner's Association of Tangail is firm to go for indefinite transport strike in the district from January 5, while the central leadership of the organisation is opposing it, sources concerned said.

Following the arrest of Azad Siddiky, an 'executive member' of the organisation and brother of Awami League MPs Latif Siddiky and Kader Siddiky, the association had said if the arrested was not released by January 4, it would go on strike.

The central leadership of the Transport Owners Association, according to district officials, refused to back the strike plan and sought security from the administration for plugging vehicles. The central leaders, however, are not in agreement.

Mannan brushes aside Kader Siddiky's claim

Star Report

Awami League presidium member Abdul Mannan MP has said steps should be taken at the party level to end the tension in Tangail for the greater interest of law and order in the district.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday Mannan brushed aside Kader Siddiky's contention about his (Mannan) alleged role in the killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and subsequent joining Khandaker Moshtaque's cabinet.

Mannan claimed that he was the only member of Bangabandhu's cabinet who managed to move out of his official residence, evading army surveillance after the killing of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

"But, later some army men caught me from my hideout."

Kesri elected Cong president

NEW DELHI, Jan 3: The Congress Party chose Sitaram Kesri, the son of a poor trader and a longtime party functionary, as its top leader today, a move that could threaten the shaky government of Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda, reports AP.

Kesri, 80, was elected head of the party's delegation in Parliament, a post vacated by former Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao who is facing three criminal cases connected to alleged corruption.

The position made Kesri the likely candidate for prime minister for India's largest party.

Project implementation

Major donors unhappy

Major donor agencies and countries are unhappy over Bangladesh's poor performance in project preparation and implementation, and have asked for improving the situation to channel more funds, reports UNB.

Officials said the donors, including the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and Japan, are annoyed to find that the works never start immediately after signing of loan and project agreements.

The donors reportedly said

that the officials had always taken 'unnecessarily long time in processing tender documents and preparing the project.

But a senior official at ERD (Economic Relations Division) said the government has too little involvement in project preparation because in most cases the consultants are doing this job.

The government has to sign agreements without any home work and even the negotiations are not carried out properly, he said.

The recent World Bank's Country Portfolio Performance Review (CPPR) meeting said the poor performance of Bangladesh portfolio is largely due to some cross-cutting generic problems which negatively impact the smooth operation of the government machinery.

While most ministerial and project staff do and can, if they wish, address specific project issues, they often express the inability to resolve the generic problems, which are 'beyond ministerial competence.'

A WB report said though the government set up special project preparation task forces

Investors start buying shares, debentures

By Rafiq Hasan

The situation in the country's capital market is improving gradually as the investors are regaining their confidence and making positive response in buying shares and debentures.

According to market operators and share traders, share prices have started going up again with an increasing buying pressure on the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) floor.

Relaxation of circuit breaker, government initiative to reform the Securities and Exchange Commission and formation of some committees to look into the alleged manipulation by some brokers and monitoring of the day to day transaction helped bring back confidence among the investors, they said.

"Although full enthusiasm is yet to return in the market, the situation has improved a lot," Imtiaz Hussain, Chairman of the DSE told this correspondent.

He attributed the recent sluggish situation in the share market to imposition of circuit breaker and said the market could not overcome the situation because of controls.

"Ups and downs in share market are normal. But the market plunged into deep crisis due to some policy decisions of the government," he said.

Some members of the DSE, when contacted, said they are hoping that the market will continue to rise in the days ahead.

"Now the investors will be able to recover their invested money which was stuck up during the recent massive fall and stalemate in the market," one DSE member said.

"After relaxation of the circuit breaker to 10 per cent from 5 per cent, the investors are

PCJSS denies involvement in Subinoy murder

CHITTAGONG, Jan 3: Parbatya Chattagram Jano Sanghatita Samiti (PCJSS), an apex body of the so-called Santal tribals, denied its involvement in the assassination of leading tribal human rights activist Subinoy Chakma, reports BSS.

The denial was conveyed in a press release despatched to Khagrachhari Press Club yesterday by PCJSS through its liaison committee convenor Hagsadhaha Chakma.

The press release signed by Jagadish Chakma, chief of public relation.

Wing of PCJSS, said that the

Major reforms in Saudi political system soon

RIYADH, Jan 3: King Fahd of Saudi Arabia said in an interview published Thursday that he was on the verge of introducing major reforms into the country's political system, reports AFP.

"All systems need to be improved, we're at the point of effecting an overall reform," the King told the Saudi newspaper Al Okaz, which asked him to evaluate the progress of reforms that he began in 1992.

The monarch added that his cabinet was going to "consult experts so that they can contribute to the improvements to be introduced," but he did not indicate which government agencies would be affected by

Gandhi not father of the nation: Bal Thackeray

BOMBAY, Jan 3: India's most controversial militant Hindu leader today said Mahatma Gandhi could not be called the "Father of the Nation" but denied he was insulting the freedom campaigner, reports AFP.

Bal Thackeray, whose Shiv Sena party heads a Hindu alliance running the state of Maharashtra, said Gandhi, whose philosophy of non-violence helped end British rule, should be called at best "an outstanding son of India."

Thackeray argued Gandhi cannot be seen as the father of a nation dating back 5,000 years.

He also said his recent remarks, that Gandhi's sexual abstinence had been a sham since he had been accompanied everywhere by two young girls just before his death, had been misinterpreted.



Models on the cat walk at Mehnaz Faisal's Fashion Show at Hotel Sheraton yesterday evening. — Star photo