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**High velocity wind from desert harming Taj**

NEW DELHI, Jan 16: Despite the Supreme Court order against the polluting units in Taj trapezium zone, a string of other factors continue to threaten this marble wonder besides other monuments in Agra whose environs is far from satisfactory, experts say.

Not only Mathura Refinery but other factors including the dusty high velocity winds from Rajasthan desert are also harming the Taj and other monuments in Agra, says archaeologist K N Dixit of the Archaeological Society of India.

"Leakage of water inside, cracks in the veneer stones, out of plumb minarets, loss of inlay pieces and loss of cohesion in the mortar have also been noticed in this world heritage monument which needs due attention," the Superintendent Archaeologist (Agra), PBS Sengupta told PTI.

But these symptoms are mainly due to its age, effects of environment and geotechnical changes, besides its own massive weight over the years, he added.

He also admits that the velocity and direction of the wind coming from Rajasthan and the overall dusty environment are having adverse effects on this monument of love.

The accumulation of dust, dirt, carbon particles and natural weathering were the main causes of the marble's yellowishness at some places in the Taj, says noted scientist B N Tandon of the School of Planning and Architecture, quoting studies and UNESCO experts.

Besides the Taj, other monuments mainly of sandstone, also face threat from the pollutants which are already higher than the prescribed limit in Agra, warns Prof Dixit in his Rs 15 crore project report submitted to the Indian Oil Corporation recently.

The National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) showed in a report that the red sandstones veneering the Taj, were not in good state for being more prone to atmospheric pollution due to their sedimentary nature.

NEERI report also hinted at the substantial presence of sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) in Agra city which attack sandstone more easily than the marble.

The alteration of feldspar and multiplication of algae was adding to deterioration in the sandstone in the Taj's boundary as in other city monuments, studies show.

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Jatiya Party Chairman and former president H M Ershad shaking hands with party workers and supporters on his way to Rangpur from Saidpur airport yesterday. — Star photo

**Ershad tells followers in Rangpur Give befitting reply to BNP thru' ballot**

RANGPUR, Jan 16: People from all walks of life came out on to the street to welcome deposed president Hussain Muhammad Ershad as he came to his hometown today after six years in prison, reports UNB.

Ershad in an emotion-charged voice urged his followers to give a befitting reply to the "torture and repression" unleashed on him during the "BNP regime" through ballot in next election.

The Jatiya Party Chairman arrived at Saidpur airport at 3:15 in the afternoon to make a three-day visit to his hometown Rangpur. He had last come to the town to inaugurate a Parjatan motel on October 28, 1990, only five weeks before his fall amid a mass upsurge.

On his way from Saidpur to Rangpur, he addressed some 10 wayside meetings.

Addressing a reception, accorded to him at Saidpur School ground, he said Khaleda Zia's government had tried to destroy him. "They wanted to kill me... to make me mad in jail. But it is you for whose blessings and great kindness of Almighty I am still alive," he said.

In every meeting, he narrated his sufferings and painful experiences which he had to endure in prison after being arrested on December 12, six days after his handover of power to the caretaker government of Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed.

Nearly 20,000 people were also waiting at Saidpur School ground where he made public address for the first time after his release on bail on January 9.

Said Ershad: I have nothing to get. I was country's President for nine years. I passed six years in jail. During my imprisonment, I have identified my faults and am determined not to make the same mistakes again.

The JP Chairman also expressed his optimism about winning the next election.

Elaborating on JP government's successes during his tenure, Ershad said AL, BNP, Jamaat and others had opposed the upazila system. Even BNP abolished the "pro-people" system. However, the present government is considering reviving the upazila, he said.

Regarding the cases filed against him, the JP Chairman termed all of those motivated and conspiratorial. Without naming Khaleda Zia, the former president, who took over on March 24, 1992, said: "She did not want trial of the killing of her husband. She wants trial of the killing of Manjur to trap me."

He bitterly criticised BNP government for, what he said, its failure in every sector. It also destroyed the democracy, he alleged.

Ershad said: We would have support for Awami League, but will oppose its misdeeds.

At Saidpur Airport, Ershad was received by JP leaders Anwar Hossain Manju, Col (ret'd) Abdul Maleq, Sarder Anjad Hossain, Shaheen Reza and local MPs, Asadur Rahman, Karimuddin Bharsa and Sharifuddin Jhantu.

Ershad was accompanied by his wife, Rawshan Ershad MP, sister Marina Rahman, brother GM Kader MP, and party leaders Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, Kazi Zafar Ahmed, Shah Moazzem Hossain, Dr MA Matin, Syed Tareq and Sadek Siddiqui.

He will address a public meeting at Zilla School premises tomorrow. He will also offer فاتحة at graves of his parents and visit an orphanage named after him. Ershad will return to Dhaka on Saturday morning.

**SEC body invites information to probe into allegations**

A committee of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) invites dependable information from members of share markets to help it identify procedural complexities of the SEC and also enquire into allegations, a SEC press release said yesterday, reports BSS.

All concerned share investors have been requested to send the required information in signed sheets with full address to committee chairman Prof Anirul Islam Chowdhury, Vice-Chancellor of Jahangirnagar University, Savar, Dhaka, within January 23 next.

The names of the information suppliers would be kept secret, the press release said adding, no information would be received after January 23.

The high-powered neutral committee was constituted by the SEC following the sharp fluctuation in the share prices recently and various allegations made on transactions in Dhaka and Chittagong stock exchanges.

**Kerb marketmen announce fresh agitation**

By Staff Correspondent

The Out Market Share Trade Association, a platform of kerb market operators, declared first agitation programmes demanding government initiatives to bring back normalcy in the country's share markets.

Addressing a press conference at Jatiya Press Club yesterday, leaders of the association said that although the government assured them of implementing their 11-point demand, no steps have been taken in this regard yet.

"Even Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina assured us of considering our demand during submission of a memorandum to her but nothing was done to restore normalcy in the share market," said Emdad Hossain, president of the association.

M Islam Jahangir, general secretary, Enam Omar Lipon, vice president, and other leaders of the association were present at the press conference.

Under the fresh agitation programme, a solidarity rally will be held in front of the DSE building on Tuesday. Members of the association will march in a procession towards Jatiya Sangsad to submit a memorandum to the Leader of the Opposition in parliament and all members of the parliament on Sunday.

**Anniversary of Zia's birth Sunday**

BNP has drawn up a two-day programme to celebrate the 61st birth anniversary of its founding chairman late President Ziaur Rahman on Sunday, reports UNB.

On the occasion, the Jatiya-atabadi Samajik Sangskritik Sangstha will organise a children art competition, recitation and discussion at 10 am on Saturday at Ramna Green.

Party Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia will inaugurate the programmes.

On the same day, the Zia Shishu Kishore Sanggathan will organise an international juvenile art competition at 2:30 pm at the Shilpakala Academy.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan will open the competition.

On Sunday morning, party flag will be hoisted at the BNP central office. Party leaders will offer فاتحة and place wreaths at the mazar of Ziaur Rahman at 10 am.

**Deadlock at RU continues**

From RU Correspondent

RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY, Jan 16: A deadlock situation has been prevailing at Rajshahi University since January 8.

No classes and examinations were held during the last 8 days and almost all offices remain closed as the Rajshahi University Teachers Association (RUTA) and the All-party students Unity (APSU) went on strike demanding the removal of the Vice Chancellor Prof M Yunus Ali. The Teachers and Officers are, however, divided into two groups. The one group backed by VC Prof Yunus Ali vowed to take classes and examinations defying RUTA's decision but failed.

The VC at a press conference at his official residence refuted the allegations brought against him and blamed a group of teachers and "an armed group" for preventing students and teachers from attending classes.

Meanwhile, some pro-Jamaat teachers continued taking classes for the second consecutive day today amidst a poor attendance of students.

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**3000 vehicles stranded at 3 ferry ghats**

MANIKGANJ, Jan 16: Some 3,000 vehicles were stranded at Aricha, Nagarbari and Doulatia ferry ghats as the traffic congestion at the terminals remained unchanged today, reports UNB.

Traffic system in the terminals collapsed because of the congestion resulting in delay in loading and unloading of vehicles, sources at the terminals said.

They said the situation took a serious turn as three ferries at the ghats went out of order.

Meanwhile, a group of truckers brought out a procession at Nagarbari terminal, demanding serial numbers to get lift of the ferries.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC), which operates the ferries in the three river ports, issued serial numbers to some 2,000 vehicles while 1,000 others were in queue for serial.

Nearly 500 trucks with perishable commodities like vegetables, fruits, onion and chilly, were waiting at Nagarbari terminal.

**Young trader shot in city**

By DMC Correspondent

A young trader was shot by a gang near a shopping arcade at Hatirpool under Dhanmondi thana in the city yesterday afternoon.

Sarwar Jahan Sohel, 24, a cloth trader received bullet injuries in his belly when a gang of terrorists shot him at close range behind Eastern Plaza at about 5 pm. He was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Hospital sources quoting Sohel's friends said the armed gang called him from his shop in Hatirpool area and took him to a place behind the market.

The cause of the attack could not be known immediately.

**British MP Lain Mills dead**

LONDON, Jan 16: Lain Mills, a Member of Parliament (MP) for Britain's ruling Conservative Party, has died, the press association news agency said today, reports Reuter.

His death means Prime Minister John Major is now in a conservative, have 322 MPs and the combined opposition have 323.

Mills, MP for Meriden in Central England, had a 14,699 majority at the 1992 election.

**JCD leader Pintu released**

COMILLA, Jan 16: Jatiya-atabadi Chhatra Dal leader Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu was released from Comilla Central Jail this afternoon after several months of detention, reports UNB.

Pintu, Dhaka City unit president and central vice-president of the BNP student wing, was shifted to Comilla from Dhaka Central Jail Wednesday evening.

The Comilla jail authorities released him at 2:30 pm after receiving four bail-bonds against four cases on Wednesday and today.

He was received by several hundred party activists and leaders at the jail gate.

Later, Pintu was taken to the Badurtoia residence of former BNP MP Begum Rabeya Chowdhury where he addressed an informal reception. He later left for Dhaka.

**Court rejects Priyanka's plea**

NEW DELHI, Jan 16: A New Delhi court today refused the country's most eligible bachelor girl Priyanka Gandhi, a scion of India's Gandhi-Nehru political dynasty, the chance to deny she had married a villager, reports AFP.

Civil judge Vipin Kumar Gupta, turned down Priyanka's plea on a technicality, saying she had not submitted her opposition to the marriage claim in writing, as required by the court, nor stated her objections.

He allowed that one Giasuddin, over the top Indian actress Sridevi and Jayaprada.

Priyanka, 26, is scheduled to marry businessman Robert Wadhwa on February 5.

Gowd, who is nearly twice her age, was jailed for five months in 1982 for molesting a doctor.

"He is a cheat, a fraud and a blackmailer, a psychopath on the prowl claiming that every influential woman is his wife," Gowd's uncle Nagaiah told the Indian Express newspaper.

**Abducted college girl yet to be rescued**

Kazi Sultana Akhter, an HSC student of Government Lalimata Women's College, who was kidnapped from the college area Wednesday is yet to be rescued by police, reports BSS.

Mohammadpur police said Sultana Akhter was kidnapped by a group of youths from in front of the college at about 11 am. The kidnapers took her to an unknown destination by a micro-bus.

Kazi Mainul Haque, father of the kidnapped girl lodged a case with Mohammadpur thana accusing five students of a residential hall of the Dhaka University. He alleged that one Giasuddin demanded Taka 50,000 as extortion, otherwise they threatened that they would kidnap his son or daughter.

**Illegal wine factory found in Khulna**

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Jan 16: Police today unearthed an illegal wine factory near Boyra police lines and recovered ten bottles of rectified spirit and 30 bottles of beer.

Police also arrested its owner Sarwar Hossain, 40.

**Ershad: AL will keep JP alive**

From Page 1

Q: Will you respond if the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, Begum Khaleda Zia seeks your advice?

A: If BNP wants it, certainly I am ready. But they are talking about *tabol* (rubbish) since I came out of prison.

Q: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has termed the governments in the past 21 years as failed ones, the period includes your nine years in power. How do you evaluate that?

A: No, I disagree with her. There are signs of development everywhere you can see. But during the past five years, during Khaleda Zia's time, no development took place.

Q: How do you look at your predecessors' time before you took over?

A: No, I do not want to comment about those who had passed away. Let's not talk about it. Only during my time real development took place in the country. Look at the airport, roads and bridges, all were built during my time.

Q: What's your comment about the Ganges water sharing agreement with India? You had failed to sign an accord when you were in power.

A: Well, I tried. It's good that there has been some agreement at long last. We shall discuss its pros and cons in Parliament in future. Now I will not make any comment.

Q: What are your failures during your time in power?

A: Every man has his success and failure. I will not say anything about my failures now. Do you get always what you want?

Q: You wanted to give suggestions to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on running the statecraft. Did you get any response?

A: Well, yes, in a number of interviews I wanted to share with her my nine-year experiences of running the country. If she wants she can take my suggestions. As a Member of Parliament it is my duty to cooperate in running the country. However, she (the PM) is more intelligent than me.

Q: When are you going to perform Umrah?

A: I may be after Ramadan.

Q: You look fit. Why do you need treatment abroad?

A: (Again laughter) Treat-

ment? I am fighting fit... I may have a check up. It could be at home or abroad. What's so much in it?

Q: You have said that your party belongs to the opposition. Are you ready to build up relations with the BNP, the main opposition party, to strengthen the democratic process?

A: We have made efforts. If they try... when I came out they began making gibberish statements. They are pushing us away. We have made efforts, we are a small party.

Q: BNP and JP seems to have a symbiotic relationship, since both were born in Cantonment so all are predicting that you will have unity?

A: Really? Nobody could foresee the future except Allah. It is very difficult to say what will happen in future. We might have a relationship developing in the future. I just said only the other day that in their own interest Awami League will keep the Jatiya Party surviving. In its own interest the AL will have to bring JP closer to it.

Q: You wanted to give suggestions to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on running the statecraft. Did you get any response?

A: Well, yes, in a number of interviews I wanted to share with her my nine-year experiences of running the country. If she wants she can take my suggestions. As a Member of Parliament it is my duty to cooperate in running the country. However, she (the PM) is more intelligent than me.

**Body to make recommendations for welfare of freedom fighters**

The government yesterday constituted a three-member committee to prepare a comprehensive report and recommendations for the welfare of the freedom fighters, reports BSS.

The committee was formed at a meeting of the board of trustees of Bangladesh Mukti-Joddha Kalyan Trust held at the office of the Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who is also the Chairman of the Board of Trustees presided.

Khandker Asaduzzaman MP will head the committee. The other members are State Minister for Disaster Management Talukder Abdul Khaleque and Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Bir Bikram, MP.

The Prime Minister said the efforts of the Kalyan Trust should be orchestrated in such a way that the freedom fighters would get its optimum benefits. The government is pledge bound to ensure welfare of the freedom fighters who made invaluable contributions to the war of independence.

The Trust, founded by the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, would be deployed to the best services of the freedom fighters, the Prime Minister said.

Chief Whip Abul Hasanat Abdullah, MP, Abdur Rauf MP, Defence Secretary Kazi Mohammad Manzur-e-Mowla, Finance Secretary Dr Akbar Ali Khan, Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Industries Syed Yusuf Hossain and Managing Director of the Trust Brig Td Muhammad Iftakharul Bashir were present at the meeting.

**Work on Sectt at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar to start soon**

The work on the National Secretariat on 47 acres of land at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar will start soon, said an official announcement yesterday, reports UNB.

The decision for quick implementation of the project was taken at an interministerial meeting held yesterday at the Ministry of Housing and Public Works with State Minister Afzaruddin Ahmed Khan in the chair.

There will be ten 14-storied main buildings with modern facilities which includes central mosque, conference room, health clinic, banks, post offices, telephone exchange and security arrangements.

The minister asked the authority concerned to submit the architectural plan to the ministry within three weeks and the ministry will get it approved by the competent authority by February.

**Gowda wants to give up chairmanship of UF coalition**

NEW DELHI, Jan 16: H D Deve Gowda wants to give up leadership of India's shaky United Front Coalition while remaining prime minister, but there are no takers of the position, the Asian Age reported today, says AFP.

Deve Gowda reportedly offered the chairmanship of the Front's steering committee to Harkishan Singh Surjeet, a Communist and, GK Moopanan, leader of a Tamil regional party, the daily said.

Heading the United Front involves regular consultations with the dozen central leftist and regional parties constituting the shaky alliance which took power in June last year, it is considered a thankless task.

**Taliban capture Bagram airbase**

ISLAMABAD, Jan 16: Afghanistan's Taliban Islamic militia Wednesday seized the key Bagram airbase north of Kabul from its opponents after heavy fighting, Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported, reports AFP.

The agency said 12 troops of the alliance arrayed against the militia were killed, while the Taliban toll was put at three dead and many wounded, of whom seven were taken to Kabul for treatment.

There was no independent confirmation of the report by the Pakistan-based information service, which quoted unnamed Taliban officials.

**25 chargesheeted**

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Court. He, however, declined to say when the trial will begin.

According to another source in the CMM's court, the case will be ready for trial after publication of a notification regarding the absconding accused persons. Once the notification is made, the case will be sent to the court of the District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka, the source said.

**Blast kills 14 in Algeria**

ALGIERS, Jan 16: A powerful blast in a town south of the capital left 14 people dead and at least 50 injured today, the latest deadly incident in Algeria's ongoing civil unrest, reports AFP.

**Slaughtered body recovered in Bogra**

BOGRA, Jan 16: A slaughtered body of an old man was recovered from a mazar at Dupchachia thana of the district on night. Police recovered the body of Rahimuddin, 70, from a thatched room of saint Sultan's mazar at Dhap Sultanganj hat. Police said Rahimuddin Darbesh of Kamargari area of the town had been living in the mazar for the last three years. The reason behind the gruesome murder could not be known immediately, reports UNB.

**9 dacoits held**

From Page 1

tails and seized the engine-boat by which the gang of about 11 dacoits came to the bazaar for looting some wholesale business houses, the sources added.

Acting on a tip off the CID team gheraoed the bazaar area. Being chased by the CID police, the dacoits started excluding cocktails and opened fire on the policemen indiscriminately. The police returned the fire.

Two of the dacoits managed to escape while nine others were caught by police. They hail from Faridpur, Munshiganj and Madaripur areas, police said.

**Teenage boy**

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morgue for autopsy.

Police and the relatives of the victim said, Alam, son of Almasuddin, used to stay in his brothers' jewellery shop at 82/8 Madartek at night.

According to police, an identified gang broke open the shop, killed Alam and took away ornaments. The gang also tried to open the iron vault.

A case has been filed with Shabujbagh thana.

**12 killed**

From Page 1

shock at the death of 12 persons in a road accident at Barot in the Bogra-Nagarbari highway.

In a condolence message, she prayed for the peace of the departed souls and expressed her sympathy to the members of the bereaved families.

The Prime Minister also wished early recovery of the injured persons.

UNB notes: Leader of the Opposition and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia has expressed concern over the growing trend of road accidents in the country.

In a message, she expressed her profound shock at the loss of lives in a road mishap on the Bogra-Nagarbari highway.

Begum Zia prayed for salvation of the departed souls and expressed sympathy to the bereaved family members.