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NEWS BRIEFS

PM hosts iftar for professionals

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina hosted an iftar party for leaders of different professional groups and well-known personalities in different fields at her official residence yesterday. Teachers, journalists, lawyers, leaders and members of different chambers, poets and writers were among those who attended the iftar. A number of ministers and MPs were present at the iftar party, reports UNB.

Cargo hits launch in Sadarghat: 6 hurt

A cargo vessel hit a Jhalakati-bound passenger launch yesterday at the Sadarghat launch terminal injuring six persons. Out of the injured one Abdul Halim, 27, a degree student of the New Model Degree College was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) in a critical condition, reports BSS.

10 shops gutted at Sylhet

From Staff Correspondent
SYLHET, Jan 17: Ten shops were gutted in a fire that broke out at the Station Road in South Surma area of the town early today. The fire reportedly originated from electric short circuit in a shop belonging to one M Ismail Hossain and spread to the adjacent shops, at about 4 AM. Fire Brigade personnel brought the blaze under control.

One killed in road accident

One person died as he was knocked down by a speeding tempo at West Tejguri Bazar under Tejgaon thana yesterday afternoon. The dead was identified as Ataur Rahman, 22, khadem of the West Tejguri Bazar Jame Mosque. The body has been sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

540 bottles of Phensidyl seized

Police seized 540 bottles of Phensidyl syrup and arrested a fugitive from Balurmath area in Demra thana in the city on Thursday night. Acting on a tip-off, police conducted a special drive at Balurmath area and arrested Amjad Hossain alias Kalu Sarker while he was selling the banned syrup at about 11.45 pm. Later, according to the confidential statement of Kalu, police recovered the contraband from his possession, reports UNB.

Sehri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Jan	Sehri	Iftar
8	18	5:20	5:38
9	19	5:20	5:39
10	20	5:20	5:40



A bus carrying Palestinian police heading towards Israeli Army headquarters in the West Bank city of Hebron after it was handed over to the Palestinian Authority before sunrise yesterday.

BNP meets today to decide its stand on issues in JS

By Nazmul Ashraf

The BNP parliamentary party will meet today, the second in four days, to decide the party's strategy on different issues in the Jatiya Sangsad.

"This meeting has been called mainly to decide the party position on the President's address to the House, select the issues the party intends to raise in the House, monitor implementation of the recent accord with the ruling party and review the latest political situation," BNP leader and Chief Whip of the Opposition in the JS Khandakar Delwar Hossain told The Daily Star last night.

The BNP returned to the House following signing of a four-point accord with ruling Awami League, BNPP's earlier meeting on Tuesday endorsed the agreement and discussed other issues.

The meeting will discuss strategies in dealing with all the issues already placed in the House as well as those likely to come up, he said.

"We will mount pressure on

the Treasury bench members in the next meeting of the Business Advisory Committee to allow us to speak on issues including the Ganges water sharing treaty, proposed sub-regional grouping, persecution of the opposition political activists, filing of conspiratorial cases against Begum Zia and other party leaders, deteriorating law and order and stagnancy in the economy," he said.

Replying to a question, the

Programme on Zia's birthday begins today

The BNP has drawn up programme to celebrate the 61st birth anniversary of its founder Chairman late President Ziaur Rahman tomorrow, reports UNB.

To mark the day, the Jatiyatabadi Samajik Sangskritik Sangstha will organise a children's art and speech competition.

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Opposition Chief Whip said his party will attend the meetings of various JS committees and the UNDP Task Force on strengthening the parliament as soon as BNP's proper representation in those bodies is guaranteed by the ruling party as per the agreement.

Asked if his party will reconsider its plan to launch street agitation after the Eid-ul-Azha if its agreement with the ruling party is implemented, he said, "Implementation of the agreement will enable us to raise various issues in the House... But we will have to go to the people to realise our demands if those are not settled on the floor."

"The final decision on the issue depends on many things, mainly the government's behaviour and attitude in the days to come."

BNP chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia at a public meeting on January 7 threatened to launch vigorous

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Israel hands over army HQ Palestinians take control of Hebron after 30 years

HEBRON, (West Bank) Jan 17: A young Palestinian climbed up a tall antenna on Israel's former military headquarters at dawn today, his national flag on a stick tucked in the back of his pants. At the top he planted the banner, then raised a hand in triumph, reports AP.

The moment ushered in a new era in Hebron, the city that had become a symbol of bitter strife. After 30 years of Israeli military rule and three months of tortuous negotiations, Palestinian police took control of 80 per cent of the city.

The handover, the first tangible step by Benjamin Netanyahu's government in making peace with the Palestinians,

was remarkably brief and calm. But tensions rose hours later as Palestinian troops scuffled with Israeli troops patrolling a downtown square adjacent to Jewish settler enclaves.

At one point, Palestinians threw rocks, bottles and potatoes at Israeli troops. Police in riot gear charged through a Palestinian vegetable market next to the square.

After the confrontation, the army declared the square off-limits to Palestinians.

The new arrangement for Hebron will leave Israeli troops downtown to protect the 500 Jewish settlers. Up to 20,000 Palestinians live in the area that remains under Israeli control.

At dawn, the Israeli and Palestinian commanders shook hands, a long convoy of Israeli jeeps pulled out of the military headquarters, and Palestinian police drove into the compound.

"This is the happiest day of my life," a Palestinian police officer shouted, leaning from a window in the headquarters and flashing a victory sign.

In the downtown Bab Iza-wiya district, Palestinian police directed traffic, standing where Israeli troops had manned a checkpoint only days earlier.

Shopkeepers hung Palestinian flags in their windows. A 15-foot (5-meter) sign declared: "The Hebron municipality welcomes you."

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Nepalese trucks barred from entering India

KATHMANDU, Jan 17: India has been barring trucks carrying Nepalese goods from entering the country despite a recently signed bilateral trade agreement, reports AFP.

Some 55 trucks from Nepal carrying goods for Indian markets were barred at several border crossings in recent days, sources at the border said.

The trucks may have been stopped "due to the Indian government's reluctance to accept the certificate of origin provided to Nepalese products by the Federation of Nepal Chamber of Commerce and Industry," said Nepalese businessman Ram Lal Agarwal.

But chamber chairman Padma Jyoti disagreed. "The present problem arose because the commerce treaty with India is quite new while India still has to implement and manage it properly."

"The problem will be solved after New Delhi alerts border crossing authorities about the new treaty," Jyoti added.

Under the agreement signed December 4, India allows entry to all but a few Nepalese products.

Try corrupt BNP men, Ershad urges PM

RANGPUR, Jan 17: Jatiya Party Chairman Hussain Mohammad Ershad today urged Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to hold the trial for corruption committed during the BNP regime, reports UNB.

"You (Hasina) will be identified as a promise breaker if you don't hold the trial," he said addressing a huge public meeting at the local Zilla School ground.

Recalling the election pledge of the Prime Minister, Ershad said Hasina will be unable to continue her politics if she does not try the corrupt people of BNP.

"People of this area will not be with you (Hasina) and my people will not support you," the JP chairman said amid thunderous applause by his supporters who chanted "Go ahead Ershad, we are with you."

The former General said Sheikh Hasina has nothing to be afraid of BNP, "a finished chapter as they will never come back to power."

Earlier, Ershad was greeted by the people of his home district as he reached the meeting venue after visiting a cluster village and an orphanage.

named after him. He also offered *fateha* at the grave of his parents and of saint Jainpuri.

Narrating the background of his support to Awami League, Ershad said the BNP which "tried to destroy me had sent a proposal to me in jail" at night.

"They offered me unconditional release and also to be the prime minister," he claimed. "But I refused, remembering the torture and repression they unleashed on me in jail and their step-motherly attitude towards me."

The JP chief said his party supported the Awami League to form government as it had emerged the largest party through the June 12 general election.

The JP chairman, who flew in here on Thursday on a three-day visit, told the meeting that he had resigned on December 6, 1990 only to avoid bloodshed.

"There was no movement in the country in 1990 against me. It was centralised only in front of Press Club in Dhaka... but I resigned so that nobody has to die," he said.

Ershad charged the then caretaker government of Sha-

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Voters' ID Card project being revised

By Staff Correspondent

The voters' ID Card project is being revised in line with the recommendations by a five-member enquiry committee which submitted its report recently. Election Commission (EC) sources said.

EC Secretariat has requested the Planning Commission to extend the time-limit of the project till April this year so that the revision work could be completed, the sources added.

The earlier extended time-limit expired on December 31. Some 97 crore taka had already been spent on the Tk 180 crore project with only 30 per cent work completed. In September last, a meeting of the National Economic Council chaired by the Prime Minister ordered a probe into the project, an official pointed out.

The EC sources said that several new proposals would be made in the revised project. These include computerised data-base at the centre as well

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Bangabandhu murder case to be sent to Dhaka Dist Judge's Court

Star Report

The Bangabandhu murder case will be sent to the District and Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka shortly, sources concerned said.

The charge-sheet in the case was sent on the CMM's Court on Wednesday. Twenty-five persons were named as accused.

The names of former president Khandaker Mushtaque Ahmed and former bureaucrat Mahbubul Alam Chashi were mentioned in the charge-sheet as offenders but their names were not sent up for trial as both are dead, the sources pointed out.

Asked about the mention of late president Ziaur Rahman's name in the charge-sheet, as reported in a section of the press, a high official said "it is not in the charge-sheet."

Bangladeshi shot dead by BSF

LALMONIRHAT, Jan 17: A Bangladeshi national was killed by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) at Daikhowa frontier in Hatibandha thana today, reports UNB.

The dead was identified as Abdul Kader, 20, son of Shamsher Ali of Daikhowa village.

Villagers said some BSF jawans intruded about 200 yards into the Bangladesh territory and shot him dead while he was ploughing a piece of land at about 9 am. They also took away his body.

TT College exam hall ransacked, five injured

By Staff Correspondent

At least five persons were injured when a group of unidentified people went on rampage during an examination of the Teachers' Training College on Mirpur Road in the city yesterday morning.

The group forcibly entered the examination hall at about 10:30 am and damaged some furniture and windowpanes. Nine answer scripts were missing following the attack, police sources said.

Dharmond police said that they did not get any information.

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malaysia

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Chang halts Henman

MELBOURNE, Jan 17: Unflappable Michael Chang damped the fires of Britain's "Hen-man" Friday night, beating Tim Henman 6-1, 7-6 (7-3), 6-3 with deft lobs and precision passing shots, reports AP.

Henman attacked throughout the match, but Chang usually had an answer, or had help from errors by the overzealous Briton, as he advanced to the last 16 of the Australian Open.

Still, Chang said, "Tim is a very talented player... I just feel like I have to do a little bit of everything" to beat him.

Another round-of-16 match pits last year's runner-up, No 5 seed Andre Agassi against 1995 champion Gary Pierce of France.

Huber advanced by beating Natasha Zvereva of Belarus 7-5, 6-0, and Pierce drubbed German qualifier Marketa Kochta 6-0, 6-2.

No 3 Conchita Martinez of Spain blitzed Asa Carlsson of Sweden 6-0, 6-1, and next plays No 16 Sabine Appelmans of Belgium.

Details on page-11

WB on project implementation Effective monitoring needed to resolve generic problems

The World Bank has said the country needs to address some generic problems to improve its poor performance in project implementation and suggested that an effective monitoring system should be ensured, reports UNB.

A recent Bank report said the donor body had discussed with the government some crucial generic issues during the preparation of the 1996 Country Portfolio Performance Review (CPRP).

But the government has not taken any resolute action to address these issues which still continue to affect project outcome, it pointed out.

The issues include inadequate administrative authorities of project directors and frequent staff rotation, delays in procurement processing, lack of compliance with financial reporting and audit requirements and delays in TAPP (Technical Assistance Project Formal).

The Bank stressed that the IMED (Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division) should be made the focal point for ensuring the timely and cost-effective implementation of the ADF and proposed that IMED be put directly under the Prime Minister's Office.

The IMED, it said, has already established a fairly elaborate system of monitoring and evaluating the development projects. Nevertheless, there is a need for expanding IMED's monitoring role to cover the qualitative and physical aspects of project performance.

The most glaring weakness of the existing system is that the IMED does not seem to enforce with the implementing ministries, its recommendations regarding lagging project activities, procurement delays, and expenditure overruns, it said.

While pointing out the generic problems, the report

said most ministerial and project staff can address specific project issues, but they often express the inability to resolve the generic problems, which are "beyond ministerial competence."

The single most important factor determining the quality of projects at entry and also affecting the speed of implementation, it said, is borrower ownership.

At the political level, the Bank said, in the past there was often too little involvement at the conceptual stage and consequently ministers were rarely the true champions of project conceived and implemented.

The government should ensure a high degree of commitment by taking a more proactive role at the project conceptualisation and design stage, the report said.

Also the government should take the lead in monitoring the

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Dhaka, Yangon to determine 7 border pillars by Jan 31

Bangladesh and Myanmar have decided that survey teams would be sent from both the countries on January 21 to Taungbro to determine the locations of seven boundary pillars, reports UNB.

A meeting of the survey delegations of the two countries yesterday also decided to finish the field works for the determination of the pillars by January 31.

Technical details of the survey teams were also decided at the meeting held at the Department of Survey in the Myanmar capital of Yangon, according to a message received in Dhaka.

Bangladesh delegation was led by Surveyor General Brig Shabudul Islam Mondol while Myanmar side was led by U Aung Than, Director General of Survey Department.

Bangladesh Ambassador to Myanmar Brig Choudhury Khalequzzaman was also present in the meeting.

The Bangladesh delegation submitted the draft treaty at the meeting and discussion took place on the treaty.

Deadlock may lead to closure of RU again

From Abdul Wadood

RAJSHAHI, Jan 17: Rajshahi University may be closed again if the present deadlock continues, sources on the campus said.

No classes and examinations were held in the last nine days and almost all offices remained closed following strike calls by the Rajshahi University Teachers' Association (RUTA) and the All-Party Student Union (APSU) demanding removal of the VC Prof. M. Yousuf Ali. The teachers and officers are divided into two groups. One group supporting the VC tried to hold classes, but failed.

The sources said the situation is worsening day by day as the student organisations are becoming more involved. Any untoward incident may happen any time that may lead to closure of the university, they said.

From 1988 to 1994, there were frequent clashes between the VC tried to hold classes, but failed.

closure of the varsity for most of the period, the sources said.

The situation improved after Prof. Muhammad Yousuf Ali took over as VC in 1994, the sources said. In 1995, no mentionable untoward incident was recorded. Classes and examinations were held and results published timely and session jam eased considerably, the sources claimed.

But a group of teachers who were defeated by Prof. Yousuf Ali in the VC panel election are trying to disturb him in running the university from the very beginning, they claimed. They launched movement programmes including abstention from taking classes and examinations several times in the past but failed to make any considerable impact, the source said.

"This time, that group of teachers, has again adopted the same trick of making disturbance to create such a situation so that the VC can be removed,"

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