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by M Arshad Ali
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Twenty four countries are expected to participate in the month-long business extravaganza which begins in city Feb 22

DSE index experiences 83-point fall
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DSE MARKET

DSE price index 1896.38 (-4.20%)
Market capital Tk 13792.35cr
Transactions in volume 223224
Transactions in value Tk 640 cr

CSE MARKET

CSE price index 839.01 (-1.32%)
Market capital Tk 107444.44cr
Transactions in volume 55510
Transactions in value Tk 14442175

26 killed in Lahore bomb explosion

LAHORE, Jan 18: A massive bomb exploded outside the Lahore Sessions Court today killing 26 people, wounding 100 more and leaving police fearing the outbreak of bitter sectarian fighting, report agencies.

Although no one has claimed responsibility for the bombing, several of the dead and wounded were senior leaders of a militant Sunni Muslim group known as Sipah-e-Sahab Pakistan (SSP).

One person was arrested apparently fleeing the scene, the police said.

But the suspect has not been identified, nor is it known whether he was picked up because he was behaving suspiciously or if he is linked to militant Shi'ite groups that may have been involved.

Bomb experts at the scene said that at least five kilograms of explosive materials was used, although it wasn't known what type of material it was.

Among the dead was Zia-ur Rahman, Patron-in-chief of SSP.

SSP president Azim Tariq was seriously wounded. Tariq also is a candidate for the National Assembly elections being held next month.

Police has stepped up security at Shi'ite mosques around the country.

Official sources said at least 13 people died at the scene while the rest succumbed to their injuries in the hospital.

The dead included Z A Shahid, a photographer for a local Urdu daily Khabrain, police said.

The bomb was detonated as police were taking the two SSP leaders from jail to appear in court in connection with a case pending against them concerning the murders of rival Shi'ite party leaders.

A police officer said the bomb, planted in a motorcycle outside the sessions court, "was perhaps the most powerful device ever used" in Pakistan. The judge escaped injuries.

Witnesses said the bomb exploded when the SSP leaders came out of their vehicle and supporters were showering them with flower petals.

Thick black smoke engulfed the area, triggering panic among a large number of people outside the court.

"People were screaming and rushing here and there," a witness said adding that several policemen with torn and partially burnt uniforms were seen limping from the area.

The local administration chief, Kamran Lashari, said the attack appeared to be "sectarian."

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We'll take to streets if 4-pt accord not implemented

Khaleda at BNPPP meet
By Nazmul Ashraf

BNP chief and Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday said that her party would utilise all the opportunities available in and outside the Sangsad to protest 'persecution' of opposition political activists.

"We'll take to the streets in time," Begum Zia told a meeting of the BNP Parliamentary Party (BNPPP). She also asked the party lawmakers to raise their voice in the House and also mobilise public opinion outside it against all 'acts of repression' by the government, according to meeting sources.

Begum Zia also instructed the party legislators to raise in the House the "deterioration of law and order, disaster in the share market and inner conflict in the ruling party" and advised them not to be 'harsh' in their deliberations, the sources added.

The meeting held at the conference room of the Opposition in the Sangsad Bhaban yesterday afternoon with Begum Zia in the chair lasted for about one hour and a half.

About her party's four-point agreement with the ruling Awami League, she said, "We'll take firm steps if the accord is not implemented.... In that case, we'll be left with no option but street agitation," she said.

Reacting to Jatiya Party chief HM Ershad's recent statements about her party, she said, "It's the outcome of Ershad's sold entente with AL. We don't need to react now. Time will come when the AL itself will react."

Some young lawmakers of the party questioned the justification of signing the accord with ruling party which, according to them, continued to undermine Shaheed Zia in various ways such as implicating him in the Mujib murder case and repress party activists. Some officers however, justified the accord saying it paved the way for...

The 61st birth anniversary of late President Ziaur Rahman, the founding chairman of the BNP, will be observed today, reports UNB.

The BNP has drawn up programmes to observe the day. Party flag will be hoisted at the BNP central office in the See Page 12 Col 1



Mohammedan Sporting Club forward Sadeq leads an assault on the India Airlines defence during the crucial engagement of the ongoing international tournament at the Hockey Stadium yesterday. The visitors beat the local giants 1-0. (Details on Page-10) — Star photo

'Card system' for sale of fertiliser under pilot project soon

By Reaz Ahmad, back from Sherpur

Sale of fertiliser through 'card system' is going to be introduced in two thanas of Sherpur district very soon under a pilot project, to ensure its supply to farmers at fair prices.

This was disclosed by Food and Agriculture Minister Begum Motia Chowdhury during a visit to Sherpur on Friday.

"If it works well, the card system can be replicated in other places as well and I have in my mind, if possible, diesel can also be distributed among peasants through this system for operating irrigation pumps," the minister said talking to this correspondent.

Cards will be issued to peasants in Nakla and Nalitabari thanas and they will be able to buy fertiliser from designated dealers showing those, she explained. Each peasant's requirement will be ascertained taking into consideration the area of land he cultivates, she said.

Agriculture officials, now working on this pilot project, told this correspondent that the card system would ensure supply of fertiliser by the farmers at fair prices in time of need and remove the 'loopholes' now utilised by 'fake farmers' to create artificial crisis.

Thana Nirbahi Officer (TNO) of Nakla, Haradhan Gop told this correspondent that names of 18,000 peasants with areas of land under cultivation have so far been registered in the thana. TNO of Nalitabari, Abdul Matin Khan, said some 16,800 peasants have been enlisted in his thana.

They said cards will be issued to all the enlisted farmers soon after careful scrutiny, now underway.

While visiting Rupnarayan Kura union in Nalitabari thana, Thana Agriculture Officer (TAO) Mihir Kumar Dey told this correspondent that block supervisors, who work at union level enlisted the peasants following a specific criteria. They took the commanding area of each deep tubewell as an unit," he said.

This correspondent also talked to some peasants, many of whom are landless share croppers. "Who will get the cards, the land owners or we?" a landless share cropper asked. "We have to bear the cost of fertilizer that we use."

Mihir Kumar Dey said this issue is being considered. "If cards are issued against land owners, share croppers can always use those if they cultivate their (land owners) lands."

Badizazzar, Badsha, a local peasant leader said, "Once the card system is introduced, fertilizer distribution will definitely be better managed."

Two murdered in Chittagong

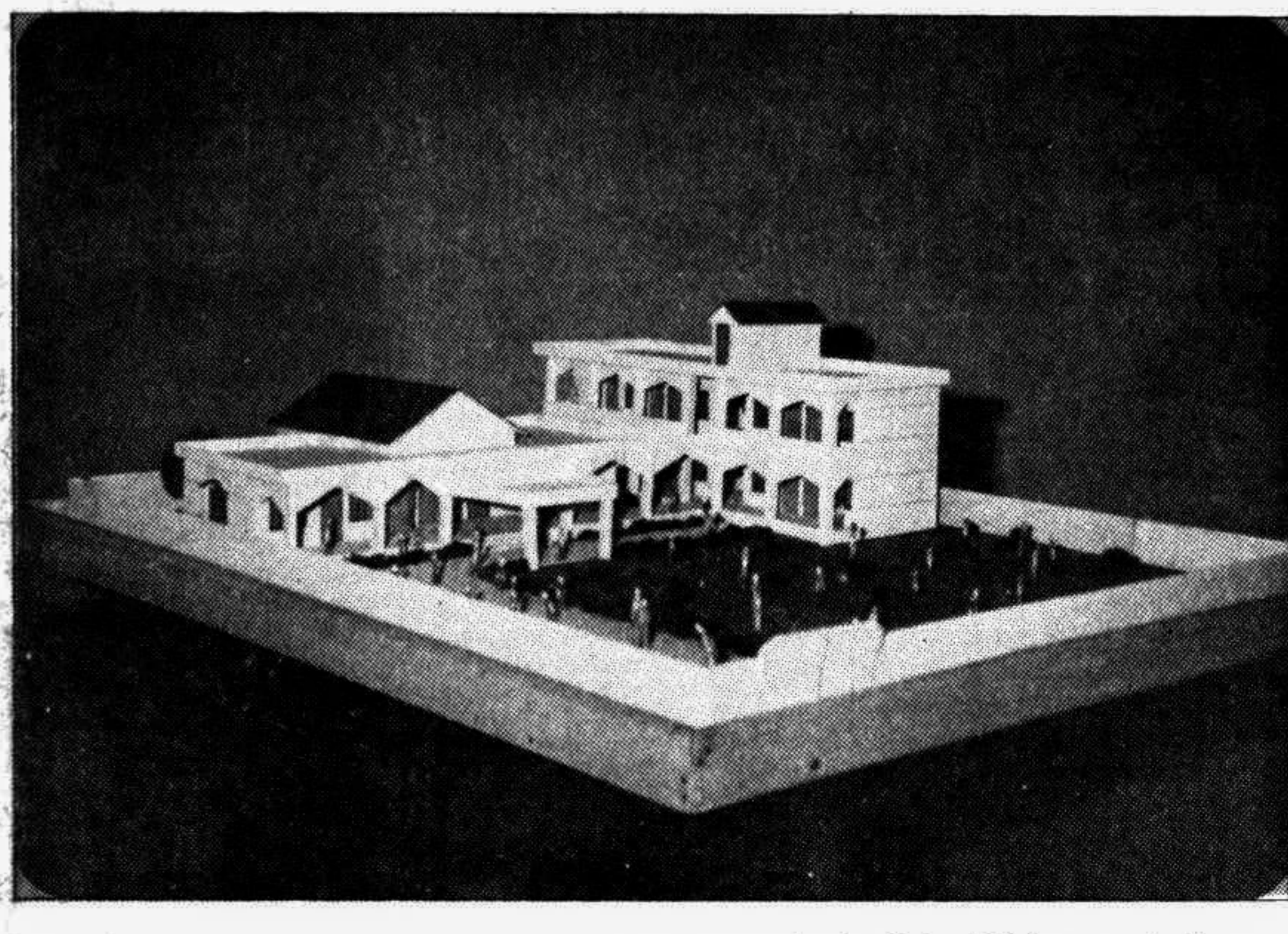
From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, Jan 18: Two persons were murdered here last night, police said.

Gunner shot dead a night guard, Md Mostafa, 35, at the Burma Colony under Panch-lasha thana at 1:30 am, police said.

One Osman Gani was arrested for the killing.

In another incident, an autorickshaw driver, Abdur Rahim, was strangled at Keranirhat under Noapara village of Raozan thana, police said.

Local people caught two suspected killers when they were being and handed them over to Raozan police.



The model of union parishad complex approved by the Prime Minister yesterday.

PCJSS agrees to hold next round of talks in Dhaka

By Nazmul Ashraf

KHAGRACHHARI, Jan 18: Shantibahini leaders have agreed to hold the next round talks with the government in Dhaka on January 25 to discuss ways and means to resolve the long running problems of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), reports UNB.

A leader of Parbatya Chattergram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS), the political umbrella of Shantibahini, sent a letter to the liaison committee today, saying that it will send a five-member delegation to the peace talks.

PCJSS Chairman Jotrintra Bodiprya Larma will lead the delegation to the talks with the National Committee on Chittagong Hill Tracts. Chief Whip Abdul Hasnat Abdullah will lead the government side in the talks that may continue for more than one day.

This will be the third round of talks between the PCJSS and the present government. The previous BNP government had held three meetings with leaders of the tribal insurgents in quest of See Page 12 Col 1

It monitoring of water flow at Hardinge Bridge begins

PABNA, Jan 18: Experts from India and Bangladesh started monitoring the flow of the Ganges water at the Hardinge Bridge point today, reports UNB.

The joint monitoring is being conducted as per provision of the Indo-Bangla Ganges water sharing treaty signed in New Delhi on December 12 last year.

Executive engineer of India's central water commission Pradip Kumar and his assistant engineer RK P... and executive engineer of the Hydrology Department of Bangladesh SA Ainul Kabir recorded the flow of water.

Officials said water level of See Page 12 Col 2

Tk 2.75 lakh snatched in city

By Staff Correspondent
Muggers snatched Tk 2.75 lakh from two persons in separate incidents in Motijheel and Ramna areas of the city yesterday morning.

A gang of three armed muggers riding a motorcycle attacked Nazrul Islam Kanchan of ABC Air Ltd when he came out of his office at Motijheel with Tk 2 lakh in a hand bag. As Nazrul was about to get into a waiting microbus, the muggers hurled handbombs at him and snatched the hand bag at gun point.

They soon fled the scene exploding bombs, police said. Nazrul was going to the American Express Bank to deposit the money.

A case has been lodged with Motijheel thana.

See Page 12 Col 5

Tk 5 lakh snatched from bidi co salesman in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, Jan 18: A gang of terrorists snatched Tk five lakh from a salesman of a bidi factory at Halishahar G-bidk under Pahartal thana this morning, police said.

While snatching the money, the terrorists opened fire on the salesman of Akiz Bidi Company, Rajab Ali, who was carrying the cash to deposit with a bank at 9:30 am, police said.

Rajab was admitted to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital with bullet wounds.

According to police, four terrorists equipped with arms arrived at the scene on board an autorickshaw and intercepted the company's van.

UP Complex to be set up in each union, design approved

By Staff Correspondent

The government has decided to set up Union Parishad Complex in each union to coordinate all development activities at the union level, says a press release of the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED).

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday approved a model of the proposed complex designed by the LGED. She also directed the relevant departments to take necessary steps to shift the existing union parishad offices to these complexes, it added.

Besides, housing the office of a union parishad, the complex will also be used as union level offices of Health and Family Welfare, Agriculture, Education, Livestock, Ansar and VDP, BRDB and LGED.

The complex would enable the villagers to ventilate their various problems and difficulties.

See Page 12 col 6

Meeting on 3-yr Rolling Plan, FFYP today

By Inam Ahmed

The Planning Commission is meeting today to discuss formulation of the Three Year Rolling Investment Plan, and the Five Year Plan.

According to official sources, it has been planned that the Three Year Rolling Investment Plan would be formulated within this fiscal year, clearly laying out, in advance, actions for implementation of programmes for the next two years.

Meanwhile, the government has decided to conduct a feasibility study of the Participatory Perspective Planning (PPP), formulated by the BNP government, but later shelved.

An expert committee consisting of eminent economists and personalities will be formed to see if the PPP could be adapted to 'Awami League's own political philosophy and economic programmes', according to a policy paper prepared for today's meeting.

The PPP was formulated after a long-drawn process by a panel of experts with financial support from UNDP. But the Japanese Annual Consultation mission visiting early this year had enquired about it leading to its revival, the sources said.

The rolling investment plan incorporates 237 new projects envisaging an investment of Tk 13,750 crore which is eight per cent higher than the figure of 1996-97. This includes Tk 8,127 crore in local currency and Tk 5,623 crore in Project Aid.

Regarding project allocations, the plan will give priority to the on-going foreign-aided projects. About new foreign-aided projects, those for which agreements have been signed or those which have firm commitment, would be given priority, the sources added.

The Planning Commission observed that new projects to be implemented with full local resources should not be included See Page 12 Col 3

President suggests FBCCI team Build up social resistance against loan defaulters

President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed has called for a 'social resistance' against loan defaulters and suggested political parties not to harbour them, reports UNB.

"Genuine businessmen, specially the FBCCI members, should initiate a social resistance against the bank loan defaulters," he said while talking to the 27-member delegation of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) who called on him at Bangabandhu yesterday.

"We need patriotic men of strong character and integrity for our socio-economic development," the President said while observing that political parties should not allow the loan defaulters to join their parties.

He said country's business community should vent their unanimous opinion to the political leaders for ensuring a sound financial system.

Justice Shahabuddin also suggested that the process of granting loan and its recovery should be streamlined. He sought cooperation of all concerned in the enforcement of existing laws relating to financial matters.

The members of the delegation, led by FBCCI president Yusuf Abdullah Harun, apprised the President of various problems and difficulties facing the genuine businessmen of the country.

They said genuine businessmen were in difficulty getting loans from banks because of a few selected bank loan defaulters.

The business leaders opined that political stability, sound industrial infrastructure, quick decision of the government and peaceful atmosphere are prerequisite to industrial development of the country.

They viewed that privatisation policy of the government should be geared up with certain criteria to face the challenge of the free market economy.

The members of the delegation brought to the notice of the President the future problems of the country's garment sector which, at present, earns 65 per cent of the foreign exchange for See Page 12 col 6

Bangabandhu murder CMM's Court takes up case tomorrow to complete formalities

By Mizan Ali

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, is scheduled to take up the Bangabandhu murder case tomorrow, for completing the procedural formalities before it commits the accused persons named in the charge-sheet for trial in the District and Sessions Judge's Court, sources concerned said.

Since it is a murder case, the trial will be conducted by the Court of District and Session Judge, they added.

Some legal experts said the judge's court, after taking cognizance of the offence on receipt of the case record, would complete the formalities as laid down in Section 339 B of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC). The case would then be ready for trial, they noted.

For the case to proceed against those who are absconding, the court, according to Section 339 B of the CrPC, will have to notify through two leading Bengali dailies about charges against them. Following this, the case against them can be started. If the accused fail to surrender before the court within the specified period, they will be tried in absentia, the legal experts said.

The trial court will decide as to who would be made state witnesses in the Bangabandhu murder case, they added.

Meanwhile, at least four persons made confessional statements during the CID investigation into the case. On the issue of state witness, officials said CID only registers the confessional statements but the trial court decides about it.

The charge-sheet produced by the CID is yet to reach Dhanmondi thana, according to police sources. CID took up the case, filed with that thana on October 2 last, accusing 14 persons.

CID arrested nine persons in connection with the case so far. Six of them have also been accused in the charge-sheet. They are former military officers: Col Syed Feroqur Rahman, See Page 12 Col 3

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See Page 12 col 6

Assault on employee District Collector employees go on indefinite strike in Tangail

From Our Correspondent
TANGAIL, Jan 18: Judicial functions of 17 magistrates' courts in the district remained suspended today as the employees of the District Collectorate abstained from work and staged a sit-in to protest what they said assault on an employee by an advocate.

The President of the Non-gazetted Employees' Association, Nazmus Sakib, announced a programme of indefinite strike from today at a rally held near the District Collectorate's office. The association leader also announced that the employees of TNO offices of 11 thanas under the district and land offices would also join the strike from tomorrow.

The Association alleged that Abdul Ali Siddiky, father of Mps Abdul Kader Siddiky and Abdul Latif Siddiky, assaulted an employee of the Collectorate, Mohiuddin, on January 16 for See Page 12 Col 2

PSC with US co signed to explore oil, gas in Bay

A top US company signed a production-sharing contract (PSC) with Petrobangla yesterday for exploring oil and gas in two blocks of the Bay of Bengal, considered as hydrocarbon-rich area, reports UNB.

Rexwood-Okland, an American joint-venture company, will explore oil and gas in the offshore blocks 17 and 18 covering 18,367 square kilometres along the coastal belt stretching from Cox's Bazar to Teknaf.

Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources M A Gani and Petrobangla Secretary Abdul See Page 12 Col 2



Melbourne's master blasters

From Tawfiq Aziz Khan
MELBOURNE, Jan 18: Lawn tennis today is essentially a power game. Gone are the days of delightful touch and intelligent placement. Bullet like serves have continued to characterise the modern day game since the passage of greats like John McEnroe, Bjorn Borg and Jimmy Connors. Monotonous it may seem at times for such pronounced presence of strength, but the fact of the matter is that it is the most significant feature of modern day tennis. A look at the speed of some of the fastest servers, both men and women, will give an idea how important strength is in today's tennis.

GORAN STILL ON TOP

PLAYER	KMH MPH
1 G Ivanisevic (CRO)	210 130.5
2 P Becker (GER)	207 128.7
3 P Rosqvist (SWE)	207 128.7
4 M Rostetter (AUS)	207 128.7
5 T Henman (GBR)	205 127.4
6 C Moya (ESP)	204 126.8
7 M Stich (GER)	201 124.9
8 T Muster (AUT)	199 123.7
9 P Raftar (AUS)	199 123.7
10 J Prana (ARG)	197 122.4
11 G Grant (USA)	197 122.4
12 P Sampras (USA)	197 122.4

LADY LEADERS

PLAYER	KMH MPH
1 G Pizzichini (ITA)	173 107.5
2 H Sukova (CZE)	170 105.7
3 E Callens (BEL)	168 104.4
4 Y Basuki (INA)	167 103.8
5 S Graf (GER)	167 103.8
6 S Nelrand (LAT)	167 103.8
7 J Kapriotti (USA)	165 102.5
8 C Morarzu (ITA)	165 102.5
9 L Raymond (USA)	165 102.5
10 I Spirlea (ROM)	165 102.5
11 S Testud (FRA)	165 102.5
12 R Zrubakova (SVK)	165 102.5

Sehri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Jan	Sehri	Iftar
9	19	-	5:39
10	20	5:20	5:40
11	21	5:20	5:40