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Heavy rush of home-bound people at bus, railway stations

Home-bound people rushed to the city's bus terminals, rail station and Sadarghat launch terminal as a six-day vacation began yesterday to allow people to celebrate Eid with their near and dear ones, reports UNB.

Yesterday was the holiday for Shab-e-Quadr, the night for prayers. Today is weekend holiday. Saturday was the only workday ahead of the three-day Eid vacation. But the government declared Saturday as public holiday, extending the vacation.

The extended Eid vacation brought offices and institutions under a six-day closure from yesterday.

Banks and other financial institutions, however, will remain open on Saturday till 1 pm.

Because of the long vacation, the city's bus and launch terminals and Kamalapur rail station experienced a heavy rush of the home-bound passengers.

President okays release of 1000 prisoners under '91 amnesty

By Mizan Ali

President Shahabuddin Ahmed has approved the release of all prisoners who were made eligible for amnesty under an order of the caretaker government of 1991, according to Home Ministry officials.

A total of 1,000 prisoners who were eligible for amnesty granted by the caretaker government of Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed in 1991, were denied the benefit following another amnesty order issued by the caretaker government of Justice Habibur Rahman in 1996, the sources said.

A file in this regard prepared by the Home Ministry was forwarded to Bangabhaban from the Prime Minister's Office.

President Shahabuddin gave his consent to the file on Wednesday, ordering the benefit of remission of sentences as per the 1991 amnesty order, the sources said.

A total of 9,000 prisoners had benefited from the amnesty granted in 1991.

A series of jail revolt took place across the country in December last year demanding benefit of 1991 amnesty for the 'eligible' prisoners.

A prisoner of the Comilla Central Jail, Mustafa Patwari, who was earlier denied amnesty, was released on January 23, following a High Court order.

Mustafa, who was serving a 30-year sentence, was eligible for amnesty under 1991 order. But he was later denied benefit of remission.

The caretaker government of Justice Habibur Rahman announced remission of sentences of some categories of prisoners with effect from March 31, 1996, the day it started functioning.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina offering munajat after laying the foundation stone of the Chancery building of Bangladesh Mission in Washington Wednesday. —PID photo

Jummatul Wida today

Today is the Jummatul Wida, the last Jumma of the holy month of Ramadan, reports UNB.

The day will be observed with due solemnity and religious fervour across the country.

Special prayers will be offered at all mosques seeking divine blessings for continued peace, progress and prosperity of the country as well as the unity and solidarity of the Muslim Ummah.

Tafsilul Guran and milad mahfil will be held in different mosques and religious centres to mark the occasion.

Zakat clothes One dies in stampede at Gulshan

By Staff Correspondent

A 70-year-old woman died in a stampede while trying to collect zakat clothes from a businessman's Gulshan house in the city early yesterday.

Nayan Tara, a resident of Nayanara area under Gulshan thana suffered fatal injuries when she fell down under pressure of a surging crowd in front of the gate of the house of road no. 96 Gulshan-2 at about 1:30 pm, police said.

The old woman who hailed from Bederjanj thana of Shariatpur succumbed to her injuries soon after admission to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

An unnatural death case has been filed.

Rail links with Ctg snapped

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Feb 6: Train communication between Chittagong and other parts of the country was snapped today after a Chittagong-bound train derailed at Muhuriganj point at 4 pm, railway sources said.

A salvage train was sent to the spot from Chittagong.

The train was coming from Rajshahi. However, no casualty was reported due to the accident.

Meanwhile, the rail link remained snapped till filing of this report at 11 pm.

Minor boy murder Police yet to nab maid, arrested guard remanded

By Staff Correspondent

The arrested guard of the Residential Model College was placed on a two-day remand yesterday.

Nurul Amin, 35, the guard of the Qudrat-e-Khuda House on the college campus at Mohammadpur, was picked up by police shortly after the murder. He was arrested in the early hours of yesterday.

Shafayet, 7, son of the House Master of the Qudrat-e-Khuda House and a teacher of the college, Sharif Harunur Rashid, was chopped to death allegedly by their maid Shaheda in their residence at about 4:30 pm Wednesday. Shafayet's mother, Farida Begum, who sustained serious cut injuries was under treatment at the Dhaka Medical College.

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June '96 order cancelled only 'special remissions'

By Nurul Kabir

A recent High Court judgment indicates that a 'misinterpretation' of a government order by the Home Ministry officials and the jail authorities led to the agitations in different prisons last year that left at least 11 persons killed in Jessore jail.

The prisoners of Jessore Central Jail revolted on December 16 last mainly protesting against the alleged reversal of an 1991 amnesty order of the then acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, commutation of the sentences of a large number of prisoners, by the caretaker government of Justice Habibur Rahman in 1996. The prisoners were informed about the alleged reversal of the amnesty reportedly by the jail authorities.

A recent High Court judgment on a writ petition by one Mohammad Jangir Alam (later government of Justice Habibur Rahman) had nothing to do with the cancellation of the amnesty order issued by acting President Shahabuddin Ahmed.

The content of the judgment, arguments put forward by the defending lawyer in the said case, wordings of the amnesty orders by two governments and various legal provisions indicate that the jail authorities had confused the legal implications of a general amnesty granted by the head of government with special remission awarded by jail Superintendents or an Inspector General (Prison), Justice Rahman, who himself granted amnesty to many prisoners, cancelled the special remissions — not the previously announced amnesty granted by Justice Ahmed.

The judgment also indicates that the entire actions of the government, reactions of the opposition political parties and even the media reports relating to the prison uprising issue were based on the misinterpretation of the amnesty order issued by the caretaker government of Justice Habibur Rahman.

The amnesty order of Justice Ahmed, issued on January 14, 1991, said that the convicts who had already served half of their sentences until December 6, 1990 were entitled to immediate release, and those who were yet to serve the remainder of their sentences until 1990 would be entitled to release after serving half of their jail term. The amnesty was not applicable for those convicted under the Bangladesh Army Act or Regulation.

The amnesty order by the interim government of Justice Habibur Rahman was issued on June 1, 1996. The content of the order, which was to take effect from March 31, 1996, was almost identical, except that the category of convicts made eligible for the amnesty was more

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PM joins Nat'l Prayer Breakfast with Clinton

WASHINGTON, Feb 6: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina joined a National Prayer Breakfast meeting with US President Bill Clinton here this morning, reports UNB.

This was the second meeting of the Bangladesh Prime Minister with the US President in last five days of her sojourn in Washington.

BSS adds: Hasina yesterday also attended a similar Breakfast Prayer at the Washington Hilton Hotel here.

She was received by Congressman Bill Barrett, who is chairman of the national prayer committee, a prestigious national institution.

At the meeting, Congressman Tony Hall, who played a key role in providing US disaster relief for Bangladesh in the past, also met the prime minister. Senator Gramm introduced the Bangladesh leader saying "She is a very much member of the American people."

She also attended the national prayer breakfast in the past and now attending as head of the government.

Congressman Bill Richardson, ambassador designate to the United Nations, also met with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and made glowing remarks about Bangladesh in his speech.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina recited a verse from the holy Quran at the invitation of the organisers. A large number of senators and congressmen and members of the diplomatic

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Leaders of some parties poised to join AL

By Nazmul Ashraf

A good number of leaders of some political parties along with their followers are now poised to join the ruling Awami League.

The process formally begins on February 19 with seven central leaders of the Gano Forum (GF) joining the AL in presence of party chief and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The joining of the GF leaders and their followers will take place at the Engineers' Institution auditorium in the city, said Shamsuddoha, one of the politicians initiating the process.

Leaders of other parties such as Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Communist Party (GP) and National Awami Party (NAP) are likely to follow the GF leaders, he added.

Shamsuddoha and six other central committee leaders of the GF resigned from the party following their meeting on the issue early this week. The others are: Shekhar Dutta, Mukul Chowdhury, Kazi Rabul Haq, Nooh-ul-Alam Lenin, Shamsunnahar and Mahboob-e-Alam. Earlier, another central leader, Kamal Haider, had resigned. Dr. Mahmudur Rahman and Advocate Nazrul Islam

Khan, two of the former CPB leaders who also attended the meet, may join the move.

Talking to The Daily Star, Shamsuddoha said that they had talks with the AL chief on January 23 on their joining her party and the schedule for this. The exact time for the joining ceremony would be finalised in consultation with the Prime Minister on her return from Washington.

Commenting on desertion of his party by seven of its central body members, GF chief Dr. Kamal Hossain told a press conference in the city on Wednesday, "Those who have failed to adapt themselves with his party's new trend of politics, they should have left the party long ago."

Replying to a question, he said he would have to go a long way with the new trend of politics of his party to matter if 'some' his comrades, afraid of the difficult task, left him and return to the traditional concept of politics.

With a view to consolidating the party, against the split already surfaced, the press conference announced holding of a grand rally in the city on February 26 and divisional conferences by March 15.

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Announcement

Good news for bridge-enthusiasts. From now on The Daily Star sports page will carry Bridge Notes, a new weekly column on every Saturday.

— Sports Editor

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by Prof M Maniruzzaman Miah

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Sehri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Feb	Sehri	Iftar
28	07	—	5:52
29	08	5:15	5:58
30	09	5:14	5:53

Mugger's hand chopped off

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Feb 6: Some angry people chopped the hand of a mugger at Halishahar under Doublemooring thana this afternoon, police said.

According to police he was caught by people when he made an attempt to snatch the money bag from a person at Halishahar road at 2 pm.

The mugger was beaten up and then his wrist was chopped off, police added.



BNP chief and Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia, (seated from right) Awami League president member Abdul Mannan MP, BNP leader Khurshid Jahan Huq MP and Jatiya Party president member Raushan Ershad MP attending an Iftar party jointly hosted by BFUJ and DUJ at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday. — Star photo

Implementation of projects Khaleda assures UNDP of all cooperation

By Staff Correspondent

BNP chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia has assured UNDP Resident Representative David E Lockwood that her party would extend all cooperation in implementing the projects funded by the UN body in the country.

The assurance was given when Lockwood called on the BNP chief at her cantonment residence in the city yesterday, a party press release said.

Lockwood appraised Begum Zia of various UNDP-funded projects in the country on poverty alleviation and development of the parliament and the local government bodies.

The UNDP representative praised the progress made in the fields of communication, education, rural employment and poverty alleviation under the previous BNP government.

The press release said, Begum Zia said that the former BNP government was very sincere in implementing the UNDP programmes aimed at socio-economic development of the country and assured Lockwood that her party would remain so in future too.

The BNP chief also pointed out her government had initiated various steps for setting up of dairy, poultry and fishery projects and small and cottage industries for creating employment opportunities for the rural people, introduced free-schooling and stipends for girl students and constructed 10,000 km of roads for developing rural communication system.

BNP vice-chairman Shamsul Islam, MP and Begum Zia's press secretary Nazir Ahmed were also present on the occasion.

Tough punishment if pilgrims carry political material, warns KSA

DUBAI, Feb 6: Saudi Arabia today warned pilgrims they would face tough punishment if they carried political material at the annual Muslim pilgrimage due in April this year, reports Reuters.

The Saudi Interior Ministry warned pilgrims in a statement carried by the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) against carrying any books, pictures or publications that have a political or propaganda aim.

It said "Anybody found to be in possession of anything forbidden, no matter what its kind is, will be severely punished... without any leniency or toleration."

The ministry, which issues similar warnings before Hajj every year, did not elaborate.

Up to two million Muslims perform Hajj at Mecca and Medina, two of Islam's holiest shrines, every year.

UNDP to provide tech help for water management

WASHINGTON, Feb 6: The UNDP chief James Gustave Speth has said his organisation would provide technical assistance for effective water management and water development in Bangladesh, reports BSS.

The assurance came when the UNDP Administrator called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Tuesday here.

Speth said that with the conclusion of the water sharing treaty between Bangladesh and India, the UNDP would be able to provide assistance to Bangladesh in her water management and water development projects.

Speth also emphasised the need for effective delivery and project approval for UNDP programme in Bangladesh.

The UNDP Administrator congratulated Sheikh Hasina for her significant role she had played as the leader of Bangladesh in the microcredit summit.

140 armed rebels in Tripura surrender

NEW DELHI, Feb 6: Some 140 armed tribal guerrillas surrendered in the northeastern Indian state of Tripura following a crackdown by federal troops, the United News of India (UNI) said today, reports AFP.

The guerrillas, belonging to the Tripura Resurrection Army (TRA), gave themselves up late Wednesday at a village 90 kilometers (56 miles) from the state capital Agartala, UNI said.

It was the biggest surrender since the Tripura government set a deadline of January 26 for the state's 14 insurgent groups, who are fighting for their own homeland, to surrender or face tough military action.

They handed over 37 homemade guns, an AK-47 assault rifle, 12 pistols and revolvers and an unspecified quantity of grenades.

UNI said the surrender would spell the end of the TRA. Thirty other TRA members had surrendered on January 30.

Indian security forces launched a massive offensive on January 27 against tribal separatist militants in Tripura.

Tripura, with a population of about three million, has been wracked by violence blamed on three tribal groups which want their own separate state. The TRA is not counted among the major groups.

Meanwhile, an Indian state sent a high-level delegation to Israel today to explore purchasing weapons, helicopters and pilotless aircraft for a fight against Maoist insurgents, police said.

The four-member team led by the Home (Interior) Minister of Andhra Pradesh state, A Madhava Reddy, is interested in the state of the art equipment to combat left-wing Naxalite guerrillas, state police chief HJ Dora said.

The Naxalite movement was started in India in the 1960s by groups which split from the main communist party.

Dacoity in night coach in Manikganj

MANIKGANJ, Feb 6: Robbers looted valuables worth about Tk eight lakh from passengers of a night coach at Shibbalaya here on Dhaka-Aricha highway early today, reports UNB.

A band of armed dacoits travelling by the Dhaka-bound coach in disguise of passengers from Khulna attacked the passengers when it reached Tepra in Shibbalaya thana at about 4 am, police said.

At least 10 people, including driver of the bus, were injured in the attack. The miscreants snatched away gold ornaments and cash from the passengers. They stopped the bus at Joka area and decamped with the booties.

Seriously injured Farid Ahmed, 30, a resident of the capital's Bhasantek area, was admitted to Manikganj Sadar Hospital. The rest were released after first aid.

On Tuesday night, passengers of two buses were robbed of their belongings in Singair and Satura thanas.

Four killed in road accidents

Four people including a schoolboy were killed in two road accidents in Comilla and Cox's Bazar yesterday, report agencies.

UNB says: A microbus crashed into a bus on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway at Nimsar Bazar in Burichang thana of Comilla, killing its driver and two of its passengers.

Police and witnesses said the speeding Dhaka-bound microbus on Chittagong hit the standing bus at about 6 am. The driver of the microbus and two of its passengers died on the spot while 10 were injured severely.

The bus was unloading national dailies for local agent.

Two of the dead were identified as Raja, 22, and Dulal, 30, of Savar thana in Dhaka district. Name of the driver could not be known.

Injured Shakil Ahmed, Tahabur Rahman, Khalil, Jahangir Alam Jahangir, Yusuf, Dulal Sarkar, Shaheed, Mozammel Hossain, Sohel and Mahbubur Rahman were rushed to Comilla Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

Police seized both the vehicles.

BSS adds: One schoolboy was killed when a speeding tempo hit him at Nunia Hata under Cox's Bazar sadar thana yesterday, police said.

The boy was identified as Nayan, 8, a student of class four.

Meanwhile, a bank officer was killed in a road accident in Barisal on Wednesday evening.

The dead was identified as Mizanur Rahman Azad, 40, Assistant Manager of Sonali Bank, Cadet College Branch, Rahmatpur.

Police sources said Azad fell down from a speeding bus and was crushed under the wheels at 4 pm when he was returning home at Barisal town. The accident occurred in front of the Cadet College on Barisal-Dhaka highway.

Quake toll rises to 78 in Iran

TEHRAN, Feb 6: The death toll reached 78 and 220 others were injured in two strong earthquakes measuring 6.1 and 5.4 on the Richter scale in northeastern Iran Tuesday, Iran's official news agency IRNA reported today, says Xinhua.

Rasoul Zargar, head of the headquarters for natural disasters, was quoted as saying that 24 villages were damaged, 20 of which were levelled to ground.

The official added that at least 3,500 families have lost their homes. But they have been provided with all necessities by the Red Crescent Society.

Ctg BCL leader arrested

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Feb 6: Police arrested SM Babar a leader of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), Chittagong north unit, from Amirhat under Raozan thana yesterday.

Police said Babar is wanted in connection with several criminal cases of murder, terrorism and toll collection.