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Uneasy calm at JU: Two memos to VC

From JU Correspondent
An uneasy calm prevailed on the Jahangirnagar University campus yesterday following Wednesday's police action which left at least 200 students and 11 teachers of the university injured.

Meanwhile, the activists of Awami League-backed Chhatra League attacked the leaders of Ganatantrik Chhatra Oikya (GCO), a conglomerate of some left leaning student organisations, in the early hours of yesterday in their dormitories leaving at least five injured.

The injured Raqib, Bhanakar, Titu, Faruq and Bappi — belong to Samajtantrik Chhatra Front and Bangladesh Chhatra Federation.

GCO leaders alleged that they were attacked by the Chhatra League workers at around 3 am yesterday.

GCO brought out a procession on the campus protesting the See Page 12 Col 3

Myanmar to become BISTEC member

BANGKOK, Dec 18: Senior officials from Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand start a special meeting of Asia's latest regional cooperation group here tomorrow to admit Myanmar as a new member. Thai officials said, reports AFP.

Myanmar will be enrolled into the group, known as BISTEC, in a move hoped to provide a missing link — and valuable land bridge — to expand trade, investment and joint development between Southeast and Southern Asia.

The Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation (BISTEC) was established in Bangkok in June with Myanmar attending as an See Page 12 Col 3

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Family members of Sekandar Ali, a disabled freedom fighter, are seen on the road after being evicted from a PWD-owned house in the city's Dhanmondi area yesterday. — Star photo

Mobil, Petronas asked to join hands with Tullow in Block-9

Star Report
The government yesterday proposed to US oil giant Mobil and Malaysian company Petronas to join Irish company Tullow Oil Plc in oil and gas exploration in Block-9, according to sources.

The government is likely to hold a second round of talks with these companies.

The sources said that when the Negotiation Committee of the Energy Ministry proposed to Mobil to join hands with Tullow, the US oil giant wanted to see the proposal of the Irish company.

Representatives of Mobil and Petronas, invited for negotiations for the first time yesterday, refrained from making any comment about Tullow's proposal. They said they will verify the proposal to see whether it will be 'feasible' for Mobil to join hands with it.

The government negotiators are likely to invite the Mobil-Petronas joint venture for a second round of talks sometime next week. Mobil-Petronas jointly proposed for Block 9 along with Bangladeshi company BAPEX. The joint venture has also proposed for Block 11.

This is for the first time that a big oil company reacted positively to the government's persistent proposal to take Tullow as partner, the sources said. Mobil had earlier refused to be a partner of Tullow in Block 9.

Previously, US oil companies Chevron-Texaco apparently quit the oil and gas exploration block bidding Sunday after the negotiators made the same proposal to them and declined to negotiate on any other point, the sources said.

However a local representative of Chevron-Texaco yesterday said that the joint venture had not 'officially withdrawn' from the negotiations and that they expected to work in Bangladesh.

Shell oil, which was once approached to join Tullow recently indicated its interest See Page 12 Col 8

Road links with CHT still snapped

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, Dec 18: Road communication between the Chittagong Hill Tracts and other parts of the country remained suspended following road barricade enforced there by Parbatyia Sarbadalia Oikya Parishad (PSOP).

PSOP enforced the barricade demanding cancellation of the peace accord on CHT.

However, no untoward incidents were reported from there, police said.

Police and BDR remained See Page 12 Col 8

BNP standing body members to visit CHT

By Nazmul Ashraf
BNP Standing Committee members will visit the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) to mobilise public opinion against the CHT accord, according to party sources.

The move is apparently designed to counter the on-going ruling party efforts to drum up support for the peace agreement. Several ministers and leaders of ruling Awami League have been touring the area since the accord was signed on Dec See Page 12 Col 3

Development projects in CHT Ensure peace first: EU

By Staff Correspondent
The European Union (EU) is ready to support development projects in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, but before that, it wants to be sure that peace returns to the area.

"We are encouraged that a peace accord has been reached. Now, we want to see how it is implemented," said Ruth Albuquerque who looks after the Bangladesh-EU relations in Brussels. "EU is ready to support with projects for development of the region, but first, we have to be sure that peace is ensured. All conditions for implementation of the accord should be there."

She said the Chittagong Hill Tract peace accord has shown respect for human rights and one of the conditions of EU for assistance is respect for human rights and minority rights.

Albuquerque, head of the service responsible for relations with Bangladesh and other countries in South Asia, in the European Commission, Brussels, was speaking at a press conference at a city hotel yesterday.

Officials of the delegation were asked about EU's view on the political situation which prompted the donors to issue a statement at the annual Aid Group meet in November.

Michael Drury, head of the EU mission in Dhaka, said it is sad that the dialogue between the government and the opposition has turned sour indicating to yesterday's violence at the See Page 12 Col 2



Ruth Albuquerque making a point at the press confce

A hope against hope for the Sekandars

By Staff Correspondent
Dhanmondi police, led by a magistrate yesterday, evicted a family who allegedly squatted in a PWD-owned house on Road No 3 in Dhanmondi area for three months.

Police and the magistrate on the spot said the alleged squatters, after forcibly occupying the house beat up the guards and drove them away.

A signboard hanging with the one-storey house balcony reads, "Disabled Freedom Fighter Sekandar Ali".

When the officials tried to break open the locked gate, Sekandar Ali's wife Aleya Begum said from behind the grills, "We came from Jessore and started living here hoping that the empty house could be ours because my husband is a script freedom fighter". She said that her husband was working See Page 12 Col 3

12 sail through in DSE mock polling

Star Report
The 12 "consensus" candidates were declared elected councillors by the Dhaka Stock Exchange yesterday in a process that saw ballot being restricted to a selected group of voters. One of the key casualties was the concept of secret ballot.

Only 29 votes out of 181 were cast and all the elected members got 28 votes each. The other vote was found not valid.

These 28 voters were in fact voting for the 12 elected seats on the 18-member DSE Council, the rest being ex-officio members. They had been made to sign a statement the day before yesterday, announcing their 'retirement' from election.

Journalists were not even allowed inside during the 10:00 am-5:00 pm polling hours.

According to 'disgruntled' DSE members and other witnesses, three men 'guarded' the polling booth and kept voters from entering the room where the election officials waited until late in the afternoon for the 28 voters to come and cast their votes. They were made to vote for the chosen 12.

Ahsanul Islam, Kazi Firoz Rashid and Md Rakibur Rahman, the three who stopped the voters, told the election commissioner that voting should not begin because their polling agents had not arrived as yet. This was when some of voters went to ask the election officials why the voting had not begun.

Asked by The Daily Star, Rashid and Rahman both denied that they, along with Is See Page 12 Col 1

Under-trial prisoner dies in Satkhira

From Our Correspondent
SATKHIRA, Dec 18: An under-trial prisoner in Satkhira Sub-jail died at the Satkhira hospital last night, jail and hospital sources said.

The prisoner Siraj Sheikh, 35, son of Alauddin Sheikh of Sastitala Para under Jessore town, was an accused in a murder case under Shyamnagar thana of the district.

Police arrested Siraj on November 18, 1995 and sent him to the Satkhira Sub-jail the next day.

Jail sources said, when Siraj fell ill, the jail authorities sent him to Satkhira hospital where the doctor on-duty, declared him dead. Further details were not available.

Dutch help to harness water resources

By Special Correspondent
Bangladesh and the Dutch 'grow up in water' and they have common experiences, to share in harnessing water resources for improving their quality of life, the Netherlands Ambassador in Dhaka Dick C B den Haas said.

Addressing a national conference on Participatory Water Management in the city yesterday, the Dutch envoy said helping Bangladesh 'share the ancestors' skills to husband the water resources' has been a priority in his country's relations with Dhaka.

Since independence, the Netherlands provided 300 million Guilders for water management projects in Bangladesh. It helped raise farm production in about 280,000 hectares of land, benefiting marginal farmers, the ambassador said.

Referring to the culture of Dutch farmers cleaning the ditches or canals beside their farms twice a year Haas further said that there was a need for developing a participatory water management and assured that his country's help in this regard would continue.

The day-long conference held at the BRAC centre was also addressed by Dr ATM Shamsul Huda, Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources. It was moderated by Editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam. Jointly organised by the Ministry of Water Resources and the Dutch government, the conference was participated by water experts from Bangladesh and the Netherlands, academicians, officials and NGO workers.

Dr Shamsul Huda said the government is formulating a national water policy. It wants that the beneficiaries of water resources bear part of the cost, through their participation in earth work and the jobs and the poor get employed in the process. But he said participation of the people in the water See Page 12 Col 4

শুভ উদ্বোধন

১৯ শে ডিসেম্বর '৯৭ হতে

শমরিতা হাসপাতাল

নিজস্ব ভবনে

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Trade Connection

Prices of coarse rice shoot up in city

By Staff Correspondent
Prices of at least two varieties of quality rice have shot up in the city market over the last few days.

The price of coarse IRR1 rice — the most consumed variety — has gone up from Tk 12 per kg to Tk 14. Another popular variety — Pajam — was sold at Tk 15 yesterday as against its previous price of Tk 13 per kg.

Wholesellers in city's kitchen markets feared that the price hike might continue because, they said, there was not enough stock in the godowns.

Prices of Nazirshail has also increased by two taka per kg and is now being sold at Tk 17 to Tk 18.

Wholesellers at the New Super Market say rice price has increased at thana level bazars from wherefrom it is procured. They say transport costs went up suddenly from Tk 4,000 to Tk 13,000-14,000 per truck in the last few days. Transportation cost increased due to traffic congestion at the Aricha ferry ghat, they said. Traders say prices of rice were also influenced by an official declaration for food procurement two weeks ago.

Eastern Zone trains come to a halt

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, Dec 18: Train communication in the Eastern Zone of Bangladesh Railway came to a halt as the drivers and guards went on a wild cat strike at 5 pm today.

Railway officials said about 300 train drivers and 200 guards enforced the strike demanding full allowance for them as per the new National Pay Scale.

Official sources said two inter-city trains — Chandpur-bound Meghna Express and Sylhet-bound Jalalabad Ex-press — could not leave the Chittagong station.

On the other hand, Urmi Godhuli and Karnaphuli Express from Dhaka and Sagarika Express from Chandpur could not reach the port city in the evening.

Meanwhile, railway authorities here are trying to hold talks with the striking drivers and guards to resolve the problem, official sources said.

An official said the demand for payment of allowance put See Page 12 Col 4

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