

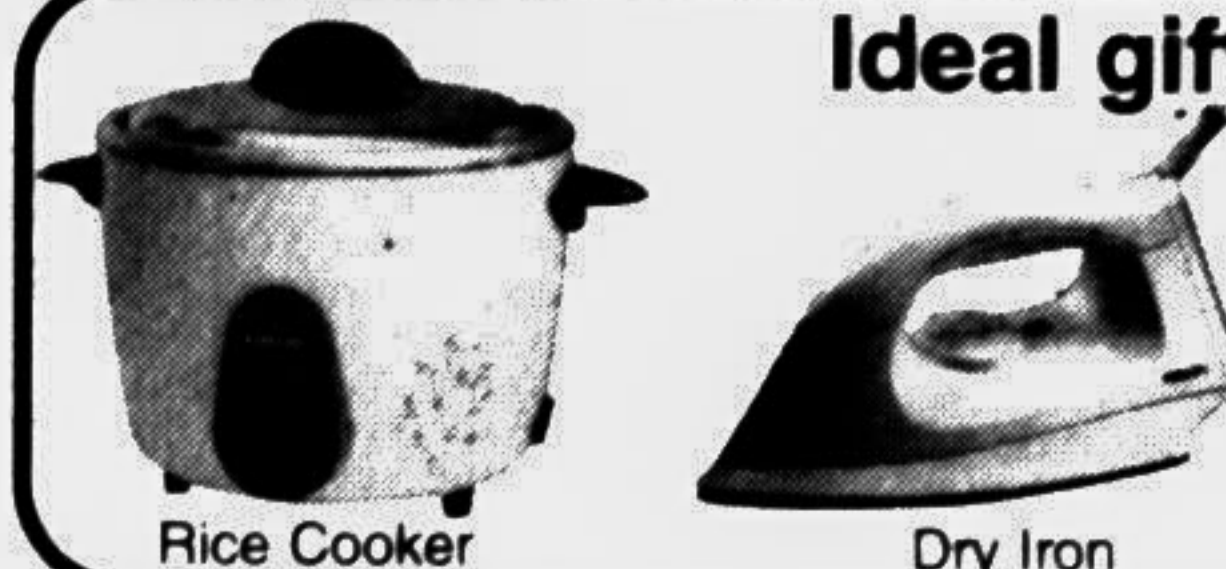


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PHILIPS

Continued Dutch help assured

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the Planning Commission has formed a special cell for the Chittagong Hill Tracts for rapid development of the region...

The Dutch minister, who called on the Prime Minister at her office, praised the economic activities now going on in Bangladesh...

Hartal observed at Pabna

PABNA, Dec 21: Normal life was paralysed in the town today following an indefinite hartal, enforced by the businessmen...

Pabna Chamber of Commerce and Pabna Zilla Boshayee Oikya Parishad called the indefinite hartal following a joint emergency meeting...

The businessmen, however, postponed the strike at 5 pm following the assurance by the district administration...

Kulaura BNP

Awami League also tried to bring out a counter procession. Amid a tense situation, police intercepted the BNP procession...

Police used baton charge and at one stage fired tear gas shells to disperse the BNP men...

A vehicle of PDB was damaged and railway station came under attack. Five policemen, including officer-in-charge of Kulaura thana also sustained injuries...

Two cases were lodged with Kulaura thana while another with Kulaura GRP against the arrested persons.

Law commission

Justice Kamaluddin Hossain should be appointed chairman of the LC. The other section believe that changes should be made in the composition of the LC...

According to them there should be representation in the LC from among academicians and retired senior officials with experience in Banking or Audit and Accounting or Taxation Service...

Golapbagh field

An elderly man from the locality, expressed his disappointment at the present condition of the field and said, "The whole project is a tell-tale story of theft and mismanagement..."

DCC's Zone-1 officials said that under the 1995 project, the field was to be turned into a decent stadium. But the work was half done and then abandoned...

Asked what the project proposal contained as regards its expenses, he replied, "We had Tk 97 lakh and we decided to do as much as possible with that money..."

DCC recently declared Golapbagh field as one of the seven venues for holding public meetings in the city.

Congestion

Shipowners and the CFTC alleged that following the go-slow policy, more than 15 days are now needed for total productivity, which was earlier done within four days...

Port sources said 14 ships waited for loading and unloading inside the port today while 15 others in the outer anchorage...

Bangladesh Master Stevedores Association chairman Tarek Kamal told the news agency that the productivity in the port area now averaged 37.83 per cent because of the slow work...

Deputy Minister for Shipping Dharendra Devnath Shambu will hold a meeting with the CPA high officials at the CPA conference room tomorrow.

They are out to destroy my marriage: Benazir

KARACHI, Dec 21: After 10 years of marriage, former prime minister Benazir Bhutto said her marriage is strong despite prolonged separations from her husband Asif Ali Zardari...



Benazir Bhutto

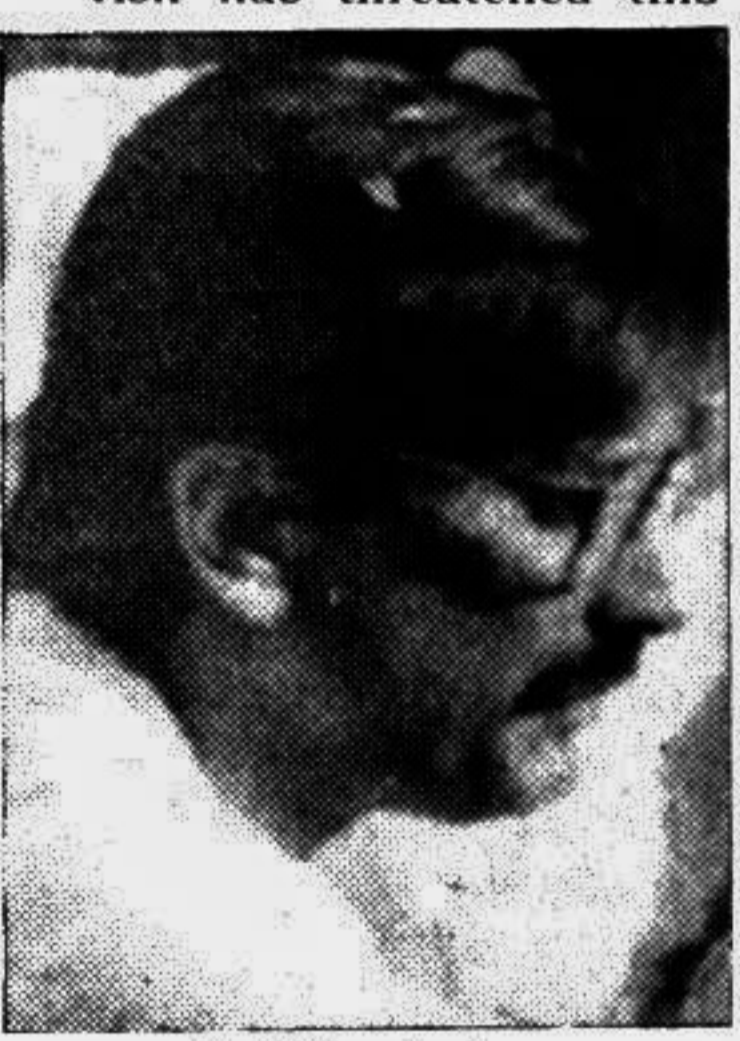
"My husband has spent five marriage anniversaries behind bars, but thank God we still have a strong and vibrant relationship," Benazir told reporters in her hometown of Karachi...

She accused conservatives of conspiring to keep Zardari in jail in the hopes of destroying her marriage and breaking her resolve to remain in politics...

"Because Pakistan is a traditional Islamic society, and because I and my husband broke social norms, that is why we are hated by the male elite," she said.

Zardari's willingness to accept his wife's position of power threatened conservative Pakistanis, who want to see women veiled and kept at home, she said.

"Asif has threatened this



Asif Zardari

concept that a woman should stay behind the four walls of her house," Benazir told reporters. "That is one of the reasons why we have seen this viciousness..."

Zardari has been in jail in Karachi since his wife's government was sacked in November 1996.

He is charged with murder in connection with the 1996 shooting death of Benazir's estranged brother, Murtaza. He has denied the charge.

Benazir was twice thrown out of power on charges of massive corruption and economic ineptitude.

Neither Zardari nor Benazir have ever been found guilty of corruption charges, although their bank accounts at home and abroad have been frozen while the investigations continue.

Benazir who held the press conference to announce her new anti-corruption platform, lashed out at reporters who asked about her personal life.

"I find it extremely horrendous what has happened to our respect to our fundamental rights" she said. "When I spoke about corruption everybody was drooping, but when you ask about the state of my marriage, everybody seems to be alert."

BNP, allies hold meet

Solidarity with movement of CHT people expressed

A meeting of the BNP-led seven party alliance was held at the Minto Road official residence of the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament yesterday...

The meeting expressed solidarity with the ongoing movement of the people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and protested the detention of the 7-party delegation by police during its recent visit to CHT and imposition of section 144 at Matiranga.

It hailed the opposition MPs for bringing out a procession wearing black badges and carrying black flags in the capital yesterday protesting the "black accord" on the CHT.

The meeting was attended, among others, by Jatiya Party (Z.M) co-chairman Kazi Zafar Ahmed and secretary general Shamim Al Mamun, Mohammad Kamaruzzaman and advocate Ansar Ali of Jamaat-e-Islami, Democratic League president Ohi Ahad, JAGPA president Shaiful Alam Pradhan, PNP chairman Sheikh Shawkat Hossain Nilu and NDA chairman advocate Nurul Haq Majumdar.

Sirajganj BNP

Chase and counter-chase between BNP activists and the police at different parts of the town left at least 15 people injured.

Meanwhile, BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan has condemned the attack on its workers and the party office at Sirajganj by ruling party activists. Bhuiyan in a statement today strongly condemned the attack and demanded immediate arrest of those responsible for it.

Water levels

usual" at this time of the year. But they could not give any reason for this. They however said that this might have been caused by heavy rains in the upstream of the Ganges or by opening up of some gates of the Farakka Barrage.

Sharing of Ganges waters between Bangladesh and India will begin from January 1.

Zillur

"Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is an integral part of the country... we want to develop the region utilising its natural resources," Zillur said.

Kalapanjan Chakma MP, Dipankar Talukdar MP, Chittagong City Mayor A B M Mohiuddin Chowdhury, former addressee to the President B K Dewan, Rangamati Local Government Council Chairman Ching Kiu Roaza and Chittagong Divisional Commissioner Sakawat Hossain also spoke at the meeting. Rangamati Deputy Commissioner Shah Alam presided.



A four-storey residential building at Maddhya Bashaboo in the city tilted yesterday afternoon. The structure tilted by about three feet when construction work for second and third floors was going on. No casualty was, however, reported till last night. Police said the ground and first floors of the building were constructed in 1980.

Star photo

Blue, white panels to contest DUTA polls

By DU Correspondent

Election to the Executive Committee of the Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA) will be held on December 28. Pro-Awami League Blue panel and pro-BNP White panel are contesting for 15 posts of the executive committee.

Left-Leaning Pink panel and pro-Jamaat White panel are not contesting the election this year. Sources in the university hinted that most members of the Pink panel would cast their votes for the Blue panel candidates, while the votes of the Jamaat backed White panel would go in favour of the pro-BNP White panel candidates.

The candidates of the White panel for the other executive posts are: Rashidul Hasan of the Department of Marketing - Vice President; Prof Rahim B Talukdar of the Institute of Business Studies - Treasurer; Dr Yousuf Kabir of the Department of Physics and Prof Nazrul Islam of the Department of Psychology are contesting from the White panel.

The candidates of the Blue panel for the other executive posts are: R I M Aminur Rashid of the Department of Physics - Vice President; Dr Habibur Rahman of the Department of Marketing - Treasurer; Dr Abu Sara Shamsur Rouf of the Department of Pharmacy - Joint Secretary; and member candidates are: Prof Abdul Kalam Monzoor Morshed of Bengali, Prof U A B Razia Akter Banu of Political Science, Dr A K M Nazrul Islam of Botany, Dr A K M Sirajul Islam Khan of Microbiology, Prof Kamal Ahsan Chowdhury of Sociology, Dr Md Abul Kaiser of the Institute of Fine Arts, Md Khalilur Rahman of Statistics and Saidur Rahman of Bengali.

Pragmatic health policy soon: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her government was determined to reach medicare facilities at the doorstep of people, particularly of those living in the rural areas, report agencies.

Speaking at a silver jubilee and reunion function of Sir Salimullah Medical College in the city, she said, "We must not concentrate our activities in urban areas only, we have to look after the interest of the rural population."

She said, "The government is going to introduce a pragmatic national health policy soon to ensure proper medicare services for all."

The formulation of the national health policy is nearing completion, she said, adding that the new policy will be implemented through discussion with the people concerned to ensure the best possible medicare services.

Expressing satisfaction over the congenial academic atmosphere of the Sir Salimullah Medical College, she said, "I am happy that there is no session jam in the college. But the government is concerned about session jams in some of the institutions of the country and taking effective steps to remove the problem."

"Not only in the health sector, the government is also taking effective steps to remove the problems of each and every sector. We are working relentlessly for rapid development of the nation."

Principal of the college Prof M A Shaqur presided over the function, which was also addressed by Health Minister Salah Uddin Yusuf, Dhaka City Mayor Mohammad Hanif, BMA secretary general Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Haji Selim MP, and former students of the college, including Dr H B M Iqbal MP and Dr Rustam Ali Farazi MP.

Solarz

the American market," said BGMEA Vice President Nurul Huq Sikder. Solarz may also suggest a way out from the stalemate on Bangladesh's quota, he added.

Bangladesh had earlier urged the US government for enhanced quota this year because the RMG exporters have already exhausted their US quota.

The US Commerce Department is yet to respond. RMG export from Bangladesh is growing by 20 per cent per year. The country has now become the fifth largest apparel exporter to the US, earning more than one billion dollars annually.

UP polls

Meanwhile, the Election Commission yesterday directed repolling in two centres of Siddhirganj union under Narayanganj Sadar Thana.

The two centres are Mizimizi Government Primary School and Painadi Government Primary School.

The EC gave the directive following investigation into an allegation that the two polling centres were not set up at the 'appropriate' places.

The EC has also directed the authorities concerned to take legal actions; immediately against the presiding officers concerned and other officials responsible for selecting the polling centres at the wrong places.

BSS adds: Sonargaon police yesterday recovered a gun loaded with six bullets, a dagger and a bottle of foreign liquor from near a polling centre - Masura Kandi Primary School - under Sammandi union during the election.

According to TNO of Sonargaon, six persons were arrested in this connection.

CHT hartal

terday banning meetings and processions, to avert any outbreak of violence.

Traffic movement came to a halt in Khagrachhari and Bandarban and shops and markets remained closed today due to the hartal. All economic activities were hampered. Prices of essentials went up sharply due to non-supply, there causing sufferings to people.

UNB adds: Some 15 to 20 women showed black flags when LGRD Minister Zillur Rahman went to address a public meeting at Manikchhari.

Oikya Parishad activists staged demonstrations at Matiranga and Ranggarh, but no untoward incident was reported.

Witnesses said a bomb was hurled at the house of Khagrachhari district Awami League president Nurunnabi Chowdhury around 10:15 pm, but none was injured.

Accident

In another accident, an elderly man was killed near Goulanda bus station of the Rajbari district.

The victim, identified as Sohrab Bepari, 65, died on the spot as he was run-over by a Dhaka-bound truck from Khulna, witnesses said.

Police seized the truck bearing number Khulna T-1224, but the driver managed to escape arrest.

In the capital, a 22-year-old woman was killed at Uttara yesterday morning.

Police identified the dead as Anwara Begum, daughter of Abdul Monnal, a resident of Zainal Market area.

Anwara died on the spot when a speeding truck hit her from behind just after she got down from a rickshaw at Azampur bus stand at about 6 am. Anwara was a winter pitha vendor, police said.

Oil giants to re-enter talks

drill 10 exploratory wells in that time frame?" observed a geologist requesting anonymity.

Executives of three oil companies, on condition of anonymity, also expressed similar opinion. "If the government finds Tullow the best bidder, why is it hesitant about giving these blocks to Tullow alone? Why call the bigger companies at all? Does it mean that government is not confident about this company?," one executive observed.

Tullow, on the other hand, expressed its confidence about carrying out the work programme all by itself and criticised the critics of its proposals. "The criticisms were made in favour of bigger companies which lacked any commitment for Bangladesh," an official of Tullow said.

Yesterday, the president of Chevron and his colleagues met the Prime Minister and made a presentation of the Chevron-Texaco proposal.

Now the government is thinking about inviting Chevron for talks soon, but the sources said there is hardly any chance for that before the first week of January.

Earlier on Friday, the government held a 95-minute talks with French oil giant Total. The negotiators did not discuss any block and suggested Total to revise its proposal. Total may be invited for talks in the near future.

President to mediate dialogue

they had cordial discussions with the President on various issues including the CHT accord, "state-sponsored terrorism, repression on the opposition MPs and the parliamentary deadlock."

"We proposed to the President to call a round-table meeting between the government and the Opposition after scrapping of the CHT accord... We'll attend such meeting if the accord is repealed and we'll accept whatever is decided there unanimously," Bhuiyan said.

Later, a press release issued from the Bangabhaban said that the President would talk to the authorities concerned about the BNP proposal for a government-opposition round-table.



Students of the Government Music College rendering songs at the inaugural ceremony of National Music Conference '97-98 on the college premises yesterday.