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Prokrichi leaders meet PM tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

A meeting of the Prokrichi-BCS Central Coordination Council yesterday decided to call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina tomorrow to apprise her of their demands, including removal of disparity in salary and cancellation of upgradation of 329 posts of BCS (Administration) cadre to restore parity among the cadre services.

Chaired by M A K Azad, president of the Council, the meeting reviewed the situation arising from the upgradation of 329 posts of the Administration cadre and other issues.

The meeting, held at the Krishibid Institution in the city, See Page 12 Col 3

Arrested 'ULFA leader' sent to jail

By Staff Correspondent

Anup Jetia alias Golap Barua, said to be Secretary General of United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), was sent to Dhaka Central Jail after he was arrested by Special Branch police on charges of entering Bangladesh with false travel documents, police said.

Sources in the central jail last night said that one person named 'Golap' was forwarded to the jail on Thursday. They declined to give details.

Police said he was picked up from a house in the city along with two others at least three days ago. But police did not disclose whether Jetia or Golap is the top ULFA leader or not.

Meanwhile, BBC said, "The Indian government has formally requested Bangladesh for the extradition of Golap Barua."

A BBC broadcast, monitored last night, quoted an India home ministry official as saying "India hopes Bangladesh will hand over Barua to the Indian government on the basis of the understanding reached between the two countries regarding elimination of terrorism in the bordering areas."

See Page 12 Col 8

Bangabandhu murder: Trial resumes today

By Staff Correspondent

The hearing of Bangabandhu murder case is scheduled to resume in the court of District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka today.

The hearing, adjourned on November 26 last because of court holidays, is to resume at 9:30 am.

Prof Khurshid Alam, 43rd prosecution witness, who had already made his deposition in the court when the proceedings were adjourned, will now be cross examined by lawyers of the state defence and the defence lawyers.

Inside Today

Article

Politics in Pakistan

A Tale of the Unexpected

Column: Frankly Speaking

by Faruq Choudhury

Page 4

Focus

Law and Our Rights

Save our children from malnutrition; and Pornography and women harassment through Internet

Page 5

Business

Tk 100 or for ICB likely:

DSE wants market salvation fund

Index falls on higher volume

Pages 6,7

Supplement

One page supplement on the 'Independence Day of Myanmar'

Page 9

Ramadan	Jan	Shri	iftar
4	4	5:18	5:28
5	5	5:18	5:29
6	6	5:18	5:29

The Daily Star


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Biggest bank fraud unearthed Beximco, IFIC do it again

By Inam Ahmed

In what is now thought to be the biggest financial scam of the country, the Bangladesh Bank (BB) has unearthed that the Dhanmondi branch of IFIC Bank has involved itself in illegally purchasing 261 inland bills to channel Tk 155.63 cr fund to companies linked with IFIC directors Salman F Rahman and Sohel F Rahman.

The BB has served a show-cause notice on December 29 to IFIC Bank as to why action should not be taken against its board for activities against the interest of the depositors of the bank and to safeguard public interest.

According to the findings of the BB investigation team, the

Dhanmondi Branch had purchased cheques and pay-orders between January 1, 1996 and August 4, 1997, to create 261 inland bills purchased (IBP) and provided Tk 155.83 cr advances in violation of banking laws and practices.

Of this amount, Tk 147.07 cr was given to companies linked with Salman F Rahman and Sohel F Rahman.

According to banking laws, officials of a commercial bank of the rank of branch manager upto managing director can only create IBP worth between Tk five lakh and Tk 15 lakh. This they can do only by purchasing cheques of government corporations, autonomous

bodies or 'first class' parties.

However, in the latest case of financial irregularities, it was found that only 104 cheques which the branch purchased were within the permissible limits of Tk 15 lakh. The rest were all above the limit.

The Dhanmondi branch of IFIC Bank has been repeatedly used by these two directors — Salman and Sohel F Rahman — in illegal financial dealings to their own benefit. It may be recalled that the Daily Star report on October 17, last year, also found the Dhanmondi branch of IFIC to be involved in similar irregularity dealing especially with Beximco.

See Page 12 Col 4

Armed gangs slaughter 412 villagers in Algeria

ALGIERS, Jan 3: Bearded gangs armed with knives, axes, hoes and shovels methodically slaughtered more than 400 peasants in four poor western villages, the worst massacre of a nearly 6-year-old Muslim insurgency, reports AP.

"We're almost done here," one gang leader was heard saying on a walkie-talkie during the slayings that decimated the hillside villages overnight Tuesday, the first day of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Survivors of the attack, first reported in the Algerian media today, said they fled into the darkness while the gangs, stabbed, hacked and mutilated their victims.

The massacre took place just as the inhabitants were breaking their daily Ramadan fast at sunset. In violence that lasted until dawn the next morning, the militants slit people's throats, cut off their heads and bashed children to death against walls, villagers said on customary anonymity.

The killings took place in four hamlets around the town of Relizane, 300 kms west of Algiers. Hospital sources, and rescue workers and cemetery workers confirmed 176 dead in Khourba, 113 in Sahoun, 73 in El Abadel and 50 in Ouled Taieb.

The total death toll of 412 was first reported by the independent daily Liberte. Govern-

ment radio reported 78 villagers killed and 68 wounded, though officials figures are usually lower in an apparent effort to downplay the seriousness of the militants' attacks.

The aftermath of Tuesday night's showed how the gangs grouped their victims together before killing them.

"I pulled out 50 mutilated bodies from one house and 30 from another," said Hadj Mohammed, a villager in Khourba, home to about 200 families.

Rescue workers stitched slashed victims back together or quickly buried the victims in accordance with Muslim law.

"I can't get rid of the smell of blood," said a nurse, her blouse See Page 12 Col 8

Two gruesome murders in Keraniganj

By Staff Correspondent



Family members of Tarikullah wailing after hearing the news of his killing. — Star photo

A newly elected Union Parishad chairman was gunned down while another person was burnt to death at Aganagar in Keraniganj near the city within a span of about two hours yesterday afternoon.

Keraniganj police said Chairman of Aganagar UP Hazi Torikullah, 45, was shot and stabbed to death at about 2:45 pm.

The man burnt to death by Torikullah's rivals was said to be Nurul Islam, known in the area as Commander Nurul Islam, a freedom fighter. The 50-year-old man was bundled in a jute sack, wrapped with bamboo mats soaked with kerosene and torched at about 4 pm.

Police could not give identity of the body till filing of this report last night. The duty officer of Keraniganj thana said they brought the body to the thana and asked Nurul Islam's family members to come to the police station for identification of the body.

Local people claimed that the killings were sequel to previous rivalry between Torikullah, a local BNP leader, and Nurul Islam for a long time. The rivalry intensified after Torikullah won the UP election.

See Page 12 Col 1

Cold wave claims 9 lives, mercury may fall below 6°

By Staff Correspondent

The cold wave that has been sweeping the country claimed nine lives in four districts — Pabna, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram and Nilphamari — during the last two days.

Of the victims, two died in Pabna, three in Lalmonirhat, two in Kurigram and two in Nilphamari.

Our Pabna Correspondent reports: Cold weather disrupted the normal life in the district since Thursday.

Two persons died of cold yesterday and 30 children have been attacked with pneumonia.

The persons who died of cold were identified as Jobeda Begum, 66, of village Bhangoora and Alamgir Fakir of village Bishakob under Bhangoora thana of the district.

UNB adds: The prevailing cold wave may continue for another three days and the temperature is likely to fall below 6 degree Celsius.

However, the mercury will rise gradually within 5-6 days.

Met Office Director Sajedur Rahman told UNB last night.

Country's lowest temperature recorded at Jessore yesterday was 6.2 degrees Celsius.

Meanwhile, frontier villages of Patgram and Burimari experienced mild snow fall amidst severe cold wave that is sweeping the country's northern region since yesterday morning.

Witnesses said the snowflakes were seen falling in Patgram and Burimari villages at 5 in the morning. The snowfall continued for about half-an-hour.

The Patgram Thana Nirbahi Officer said they have heard of the snowfall. A local NGO recorded the day's temperature at four degrees Celsius.

In the wake of shivering cold, about 25 distressed people of Haldibari village in Hattibandha thana looted straw from a Joardar's house yesterday.

Letter to govt PCJSS for talks to implement accord

By Shehab Ahmed

The Parbatya Chhatragram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) has proposed a meeting with the National Committee on Chittagong Hill Tracts (NCCHT) on January 15 at Khagrachhari to sort out implementation of the CHT accord.

A letter from PCJSS leader Ushatan Talukder addressed to the government containing the proposal was sent through Haisadhaba Chakma, Convener of the Liaison Committee, at 11 pm on Friday. It was faxed yesterday, highly placed sources said.

The meeting would sort out the details of submitting the list of weaponry with the Shantibahini, the military wing of the PCJSS, and set a date for formal surrender of the group, the sources said.

Ceremonial surrender of the Shantibahini is likely to be held at Khagrachhari Stadium. The meeting is seen as crucial.

See Page 12 Col 1

Khaleda asks govt to seek people's mandate 'Oust-govt movement after Eid if CHT accord not scrapped'

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday said if the 'anti-people agreement' on CHT is not scrapped, her party will be forced to launch a movement to oust the government after Eid, reports UNB.

"It will be a movement on one-point demand... and there is no alternative," she said while addressing a meeting, organised by the BNP's student wing, Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) in observance of its 19th founding anniversary.

Begum Zia threw a challenge to the government asking it to seek people's mandate over the peace agreement on the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). "Seek people's mandate... it will prove that they are against the accord."

Terming the CHT accord "more dangerous than the Ganges water-sharing treaty,"

she said, "We'll take part in discussion if the accord is repealed. We don't want to discuss it in the parliament only to give the accord legal coverage."

The BNP Chairperson said her party is willing to accept any resolution of the CHT problem under the constitutional framework. "We want peace, but not sacrificing the country's sovereignty and integrity," she asserted.

Referring to the peace process during her rule, the former prime minister said her government worked ceaselessly for five years to establish peace in the CHT, but did not sign any agreement as it never wanted to sacrifice the country's interest.

"This government is signing agreements one after another, but does not evaluate their outcome. They can only reach agreements but cannot implement those, because they do not have the authority to do so."

Criticising different provisions of the CHT accord, she said the powers of the President and the Prime Minister have been curtailed through the accord endangering the country's territorial integrity.

Begum Zia alleged that the CHT agreement virtually created an alternative government within the state empowering the hill council to have the unilateral control over the region enriched with natural resources.

She said, "They're planning to sell the natural gas to another country through pipelines when the local fertiliser factory and power plants had to be closed down due to lack of gas supply. We cannot allow them to sell gas before meeting local requirements."

The Leader of the Opposition was also critical about the government's decision of a two-day

See Page 12 Col 8

Ferry service may become normal by tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

Traffic congestion at three ferry ghats — Aricha, Daulatdia and Natakola — that persisted for the last few days eased to a great extent yesterday.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) officials at Aricha said favourable weather helped quick operation of ferries to clear off most of the waiting vehicles.

"We were able to ferry more than 1200 vehicles till 6 pm from the three ghats. A total of 870 vehicles, mostly trucks, were still waiting at the ghats to be ferried across the rivers Padma and Jamuna," a BIWTC official said over telephone from Aricha ghat yesterday.

Ferry service will be normal by tomorrow, he hoped.

Some sources, however, said traffic congestion at the ghats eased because lesser number of vehicles arrived on the weekly

See Page 12 Col 5

Gram Parishad polls likely in March

Star Report

Election of Gram Parishads, the lowest tier of local governments, is likely to be held in March, according to official sources.

The government is now finalising rules for holding the election and determining the powers, functions and financial authority of the proposed parishads in the light of the Gram Parishad Act, 1997. Law Minister Abdul Matin Khoshru held a meeting with the secretaries of the law ministry and the LGRD ministry Thursday and discussed details of the draft rules.

The Gram Parishad will have twelve members including three females, directly elected by the people. Elected members of the Union Parishads will be ex-officio chairmen of the proposed Gram Parishads, the sources said.

Talking to The Daily Star Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) and Coop-

eratives Minister Zillur Rahman informed that a report on rules for holding the elections and powers, functions and financial authority of the proposed Gram Parishads will be ready by today.

The report will be sent to the Law Ministry for vetting after approval by the cabinet, the minister said and hoped that the GP elections would be held by early March this year.

A careful scrutiny of the whole matter is therefore very essential. It has to be ensured that powers and financial authority of the Gram Parishads do not overlap those enjoyed by other local government bodies like union parishads, he said.

Law Secretary Aminullah said the rules would be vetted as soon as those are sent to the ministry.

According to the draft rules which are still under scrutiny, the government is considering

See Page 12 Col 3

DB takes up case against Mohd Ali, 14 others

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Jan 3: Detective Branch police has started investigation into a fraud case against Mohammad Ali and 14 other directors of the Dhaka Vegetables Oil Industries, filed by a local branch of the Sonali Bank.

A DB team, that took over the case on Thursday, visited the factory twice — on Thursday and today — but found no official there. As a result, said the team leader Inspector Abdul Mannan, they failed to make any progress in the investigation.

The Sonali Bank filed the case with a petition last week, accusing Ali and others of misappropriating mortgaged goods worth about Taka 49 crore.

1091 more tribal refugees return

From Our Correspondent

KHAGRACHHARI, Jan 3: A total of 1091 tribal refugees belonging to 193 families returned home today the third day of the sixth phase of repatriation of refugees from Tripura.

With this, 3002 tribal refugees of 571 families returned home in three days through Ramgarh frontier point of the district.

Today's returnees were sent to their village homes in Manikchhari, Ramgarh and Matrangha thanas.

On the fourth day tomorrow, some 914 more tribal people of 185 families are expected to return home.

Coal import thru' Tamabil border resumes

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Jan 3: Import of coal through Tamabil border resumed today after remaining suspended for two days due to a strike by the truck labourers.

About one thousand labourers engaged in unloading coal imported from India went on strike on January 1 demanding minimum wages.

Local sources said the labourers have been demanding proper wages for long.

On December 31, the situation became tense when some importers filed a case with the Gowainghat thana against 30 labourers on charge of creating chaos.

Local officials held a meeting with the striking labourers yesterday afternoon and reached an understanding to end the crisis.

PM's gifts for Shaikat Osman

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina sent a bouquet and a silk *punjab* to elderly litterateur Shaikat Osman yesterday and wished him a happy birthday.

A protocol officer of the Prime Minister's secretariat carried the gifts to his house at 1:15 pm yesterday. Shaikat Osman turned 82 on Friday.

In reciprocation, Shaikat Osman gave a message wishing the prime minister good health and long life. The Daily Star received the message through a telephone call from Shaikat Osman last night. The message said: "Reach my age and carry on for another 180 years" (Amar Hayate Pouchhaa, Otopar Aro Atharo Bachhar Shachhande Boye Jao).

9 BCL activists at JU expelled

By JU Correspondent

Bangladesh Chhatra League (S-P) has expelled nine activists of its Jahangirnagar University Unit for their alleged involvement in killing one of its activist Ananda Kumar Ghosh in October last year.

The expelled are: Shamsad Touhid Kakar, General Secretary of JU Unit, Nahid Hasan, Monir Hossain, Arif, Sanjoy, Imrool, Ripon, Kabir and Munna, said a press release

See Page 12 Col 4



Noted litterateur Shaikat Osman inaugurating an art exhibition on his life and works at the children's auditorium of the National Museum yesterday. — Star photo

Tendulker denies he had cracked under pressure

BOMBAY, Jan 3: Sachin Tendulker, retained as a frontline batsman by India here today, hit back after the selectors said he had been axed as captain for failing to handle the pressure, reports AFP.

Tendulker, picked to play under Mohammad Azharuddin in a three-nation limited-overs tournament in Bangladesh next week, denied that he had cracked under pressure but said he would have no problem returning to the ranks.

The 24-year-old Tendulker, one of the world's best batsmen but whose career as captain proved a disaster, said: "I don't think I was under pressure at all."

"I was under pressure, I would not have been able to score 1,000 runs last year in both classes of cricket."

He was sacked Friday after failing to win a Test match throughout 1997 and replaced by his predecessor Azharuddin.

Chief selector Ramakant Desai had said: "We removed Tendulker because he could not take the pressure of both batting and captaincy."

Tendulker, who admitted failing to live up to his own expectations in the second half of 1997, added he would not have any problem playing under Azharuddin.



"I have played under him before so there is no problem between us. We have never had any rift," he said.

Under Tendulkar, India won just three of 17 Tests and 17 of 54 one-dayers.

India clash with arch-rivals Pakistan and Bangladesh in the January 10-19 tournament in Dhaka.

Meanwhile, selectors today snubbed three established stars hoping for recalls after being dropped in the wake of India's disastrous showing in the Shar-

jah Champions Trophy in December, when the side lost all its matches.

Pace bowler Venkatesh Prasad, leg spinner Anil Kumble and top-order batsman Rahul Dravid were all left out. They were also dropped for a one-day series against Sri Lanka in the past fortnight.

Chief selector Ramakant Desai said Prasad was a "very important player for Test cricket" but was being rested. He added Kumble was not considered and "there is no place for Dravid."

Left-arm spinner Rahul Singhvi was the one change after the drawn series against Sri Lanka, replacing off-spinner Rajesh Chauhan.

India return from Bangladesh for a home three-Test series against Australia in February and March and a tri-nation one-day tournament against Australia and Zimbabwe in April.

Azharuddin, removed as Indian captain in August 1996 to make way for Tendulkar, has already been named captain for both series. No team has yet been announced.

"We have to win matches, that is the bottom line and for this it is 100 per cent certain that all of us have to put in a lot of hard work," Azharuddin told

See Page 12 Col 3