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Fog disrupts ship movement at Ctg Port channel

From Staff Correspondent CHITTAGONG, Jan 7: Movement of ships in the Chittagong Port channel has been disrupted for the last two days because of dense fog.

Port sources said ship movement remained suspended since yesterday and it might continue further if the situation remains unchanged.

Clarification about arrest of Golap Barua

The police headquarters has issued a clarification about the arrest of Indian citizen Golap Barua alias Anup Chetia following what it said, misleading and contradictory press reports, says UNB.

In an official release yesterday, it said Indian citizen Golap Barua and his two accomplices — Babul Sharma and Laxmi Prasad Biswas — were arrested on December 21 last on various charges, including trespass into an illegal stay in Bangladesh with forged passports.

Cold-hit people gherao DC

LALMONIRHAT, Jan 7: Several thousand cold-stricken people gheraoed the Deputy Commissioner of the district and his colleagues at Ghuniach village in Sadar thana on Tuesday night, demanding warm clothes, reports UNB.

New JUTA executives

By JU Correspondent

A 15-member executive committee of the Jahangirnagar University Teachers' Association (JUTA) for the year 1998 has been formed unanimously. Prof Jasimuddin Ahmed (Chemistry) and Sheikh Monirul Haq (Geography) as President and Secretary respectively.

Prof Kalipada Kundu, chief union commissioner, for the 1998 polls, announced the new committee in an official notification as there were no contenders for any post following withdrawal of nomination papers on Sunday last.

The other members of the committee are: Vice-president — Md Sirajul Islam (Philosophy), Treasurer — Prof Rabul Islam (Chemistry), Joint-Secretary — Md Samsul Alam (Govt and Politics), and members — Prof Hossainul Haq Khan (History), Prof Syed Abdul Hye (Economics), Dr Abdul Hossain (Physics), Dr Dildar Hossain (Physics), Prof Samiullah Khan (Govt and Politics), Prof Kazi Abdus Samad (Statistics), Dr Syed Quamrul Ahsan (Archaeology), Harun-or-Rashid Khan (Dramatics), Dr Mozammul Haq (Archaeology) and Soma Samtaz (Dramatics).

Gold, cellphones worth Tk 22 lakh recovered at ZIA

By Staff Correspondent

Customs authority recovered 2 gold bars worth about Tk 2.33 lakh and 31 mobile telephones sets at the Zia International Airport (ZIA) yesterday.

Airport sources said, at about 1:30 pm Customs officials found two abandoned parcels wrapped with scotch tapes in a cart near the immigration counter.

The gold bars were kept inside the packets. Later, Customs officials found another packet in which cellphones worth about Tk 2.09 lakh were hidden.

Cricket

From page 1

n sale from yesterday through 10 branches of Al Baraka Bank. Nearly 50,000 gallery tickets, mostly of the first two days, have been sold and a huge number of fans returned from the bank counters without getting any tickets.

All the 24 tickets for the 10-day "Hospitality Boxes" costing Tk one lakh each were sold yesterday, according to JNB.

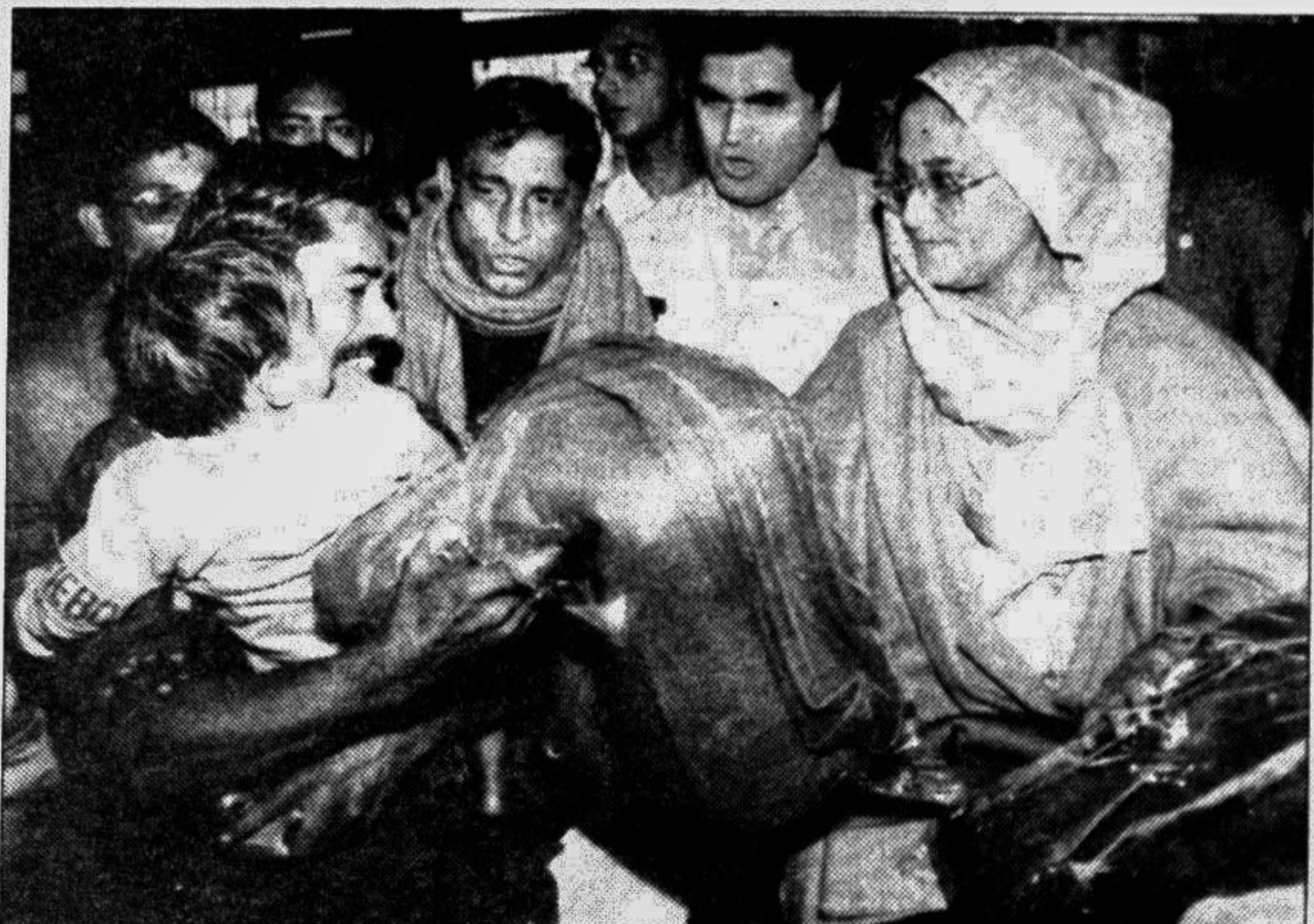
All-party meet

From page 1

address the meeting.

Meanwhile, a meeting of Islamic Oikya Jote was held at the same venue on Tuesday.

Speakers at the meeting vowed to continue their movement on the street till the CHT peace agreement is scrapped.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina distributing warm clothes among poor people at Awami League central office in the city yesterday. — PID photo

Dhaka Metropolitan Court to be set up soon: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government has taken adequate steps to make the judicial system modern and dynamic one so that the common people get justice easily and timely, reports UNB.

"For quick disposal of cases Dhaka Metropolitan Session's Court will be set up soon," she said while talking to the executive members of Dhaka Anjiboli Samity at her office in the morning. The government approved the court last month.

A 22-member delegation of the Samity led by its president Adv Syed Rezaul Rahman met the Prime Minister to discuss various problems of the lawyers.

Earlier, Samity General Secretary Nuruzzaman submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister with a request to give 99-year lease of the existing Bar building and allocate fund for the construction of multi-storied Bar building and residential estate for the lawyers.

Giving a description of the steps being implemented by the Law Ministry, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Abdul Matin Khasru said an ambitious Tk 200 crore project has been taken for the development of judicial infrastructure.

A 22-storied Law Bhaban would be constructed to accelerate the activities of the ministry, he said, informing that the issue of appointing eminent lawyers as honorary members of the bench is under active consideration of the government.

The Law Minister said the vacant 120 posts of Assistant Judges would be fulfilled through Public Service Commission in next two months.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister donated Tk two lakh for the benevolent fund of the Dhaka Anjiboli Samity.

Cold wave death toll

From page 1

The fog, reducing visibility to 20 metres, threw transport services into disarray.

Temperatures will rise before the next bout of cold spell in mid-January. But the fog, enriched by high moisture content is making it felt cold, leaving the poor huddling for warmth, Sajedur Rahman, Director of Meteorological Department, said.

"The culprit is a sudden change in gear by the usual westerly north-westerly wind in the upper atmosphere this time of the year. It veered off-course, changing to south-westerly a direction letting warm, high moisture from the Bay of Bengal getting into the system, shooting up from 5,000 feet to 40,000 feet," Rahman said.

Basically the sun burns out the fog by mid-day but the southern inflow of warm moisture from the bay is brewing the dense fog when it is mixing up with the cool air from the north, he added.

It is going to be bad for the winter crops specially tomato, potato, chilly and other vegetables and mango. Such weather makes a perfect match for the pests to thrive, Rahman said.

Our Staff Correspondent in Chittagong reports: A cold spell prevailed in the port city for the past few days, mounting sufferings of the people.

Delayed reports said four aged persons died here on Monday night from serious cold here.

Of them, two floating people died in Chittagong railway station area, police said.

Two persons died at Sitakundu, other sources said.

Commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police Asraful Huda distributed some winter clothes among the floating people in different parts of the city on Tuesday night.

Our Lalmonirhat Correspondent adds: Bangladesh Railway (BR) has suspended, until further order, 12 passenger trains and all goods trains in Lalmonirhat and Pakshi divisions of its Western Zone due to dense fog.

Lloyds

From page 1

optimism that with the start of payment to the passengers, Biman's insurance claim for the aircraft would be expedited.

The Biman is hoping to streamline its beleaguered domestic service, now limping with only one aircraft, a propeller-driven ATP, by taking lease of an aircraft from the Australian National Airlines.

Two officials from the Australian Airlines are expected to arrive Dhaka today to finalise details with Biman officials to dry-lease one of their F-28 aircraft, similar to the damaged aircraft.

Biman sources said they are keen on procuring an aircraft for its domestic service because the damaged F-28's twin, now in Amsterdam for D-check, will not be available for at least six weeks. The D-check will cost 0.7 million US dollars.

They said per hour operational cost of the F-28 to be taken on dry-lease will be less than that of its own F-28.

The airline operated four domestic flights yesterday, cancelling only one due to fog.

With the fog hanging on, it has been forced to reschedule a number of its international flights today which will have a cascading effect on tomorrow's schedule.

Biman officials said its London flight will leave Dhaka at 3:45 am, Calcutta flight at 4:30 pm, Karachi at 12:30 pm, Kuala Lumpur at 10:30 pm, Tokyo at 10 pm, Riyadh at 8:45 am, Kathmandu at 11 am, Bombay-Dubai-Chittagong and Dhaka at 1 pm today. The Riyadh and Jeddah flights tomorrow leaves at 12 noon.

Dhaka's French Bean enters UK market

By Govinda Shil

Bangladesh's vegetable exporters have introduced a new product, French Bean, in the international market.

A Bangladesh Biman flight took-off from Zia International Airport for London with 500 kg of this farm product yesterday.

"This new vegetable is produced in Comilla, Chandina, and Joydevpur areas," said Salahuddin Mamun, an exporter of French Bean. He said this item would be sold at about 2.50 US dollars a kilogram in London.

According to the Bangladesh Vegetables Exporters' Association, this new vegetable is being cultivated by setting up joint venture linkages, seeking scope for investment and expansion of bilateral trade in diverse fields.

During his stay here, the Italian premier will call on President Shahabuddin Ahmed while the Foreign Minister will call on him.

Sheikh Hasina will host a banquet in honour of the visiting Prime Minister.

Romano Prodi will address the local business community at a programme organised by the FBCCI at Sonargaon Hotel tomorrow at 10.45 am.

He is due to address a press conference at the end of his visit at 3:30 pm tomorrow at the airport.

ULFA leader

From page 1

rest of Barua, said to be the general secretary of United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), on December 21.

The case was lodged under clause 25(B) of the Special Powers Act. Earlier, on Monday three cases were filed against the Indian nationals Barua and two of his accomplices — Laxmi Prasad Goswami and Babul Sharma.

Meanwhile, the Investigating Officer (IO) visited the house at Adabar in Mohammadpur from where Golap Barua and his accomplices were arrested by the Special Branch. The IO interviewed neighbours of Barua and some others in the locality.

PM: Iftar party

From page 1

winter clothes to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund for distribution among the cold-stricken people.

Hasina has already instructed all district administrations to take care of the poor people who are suffering from the cold weather.

Sheikh Hasina yesterday distributed warm clothes among the cold-hit distressed people of the city at Awami League central office.

Meanwhile, in an inter-ministerial meeting, the government yesterday urged private and voluntary organisations and NGOs to come forward to supplement the government's initiative in relief operation for the people hit by severe cold wave in the country.

The meeting was informed that 23,000 blankets and other warm clothes have been allocated from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund to the Disaster Management and Relief Ministry has so far distributed 20,000 blankets and other essential commodities till Tuesday.

Import of perishable items thru' Tamabil to be suspended from today

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Jan 7: Coal import through Tamabil border remained suspended for the seventh day today due to strike called by truck labourers and Coal Importers.

The truck labourers began work stoppage since January 1 demanding 'genuine wages' for unloading coal from the Indian trucks and loading the same in the Bangladesh trucks at the border while the Coal Importers went on strike for an indefinite period protesting extortion and terrorist activities.

The importers will also stop importing all perishable items like orange, onion etc, from tomorrow.

Italian PM

From page 1

Augusto Fantozzi, Diplomatic Adviser to the Prime Minister Roberto Nigido and Diplomatic Adviser on External Trade and Economic Co-operation D Volpeccelli.

Official talks between Sheikh Hasina and Romano Prodi will be held at 9.30 tomorrow morning.

The talks will focus on exploring areas of economic cooperation for setting up joint venture linkages, seeking scope for investment and expansion of bilateral trade in diverse fields.

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Nasim

From page 1

House ... their return does not depend on the will of the government," he said. "I hope BNP will return to Parliament and put their opinion on record."

Talking to newsmen at the Jatiya Press Club, Nasim, who is assigned to talk to the BNP leadership, said he would continue to maintain his contacts with BNP and try to resolve the problem.

He rejected the BNP's plea for cancellation of the peace agreement, but said the BNP MPs can give their opinions and objections in the parliament.

"There is scope of reaching consensus through discussion in Parliament on the peace accord," the minister said.

Replying to a question, Nasim said almost all demands of BNP have been met. The government has accepted the BNP's original demand for inclusion of 113 MPs in the parliamentary standing committees.

He said the government may consider BNP's demand for withdrawal of cases excepting those related to murder or illegal arms.

Khaleda hosts iftar for envoys of Muslim states

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia, hosted a iftar party for the Ambassadors of Muslim countries yesterday, reports UNB.

Some 15 Ambassadors joined the iftar party at a city hotel. A dinner was also arranged for them, said a party press release.

The Leader of the Opposition exchanged views and good wishes with the foreign dignitaries on the occasion.

The Ambassadors of Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Egypt and Morocco were present at the party.

Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury, Saifur Rahman, Oli Ahmed, Khandaker Delwar Hossain, Dr Mossaraf Hossain, Moudud Ahmed, Shamsul Islam, MM Rezaul Karim, Mir Nasiruddin, Shahidul Hoq Jamal and Ehsanul Kabir were, among others, present.

Rejoinder

From page 1

tional daily 'The Daily Star' on January 2, '98 has drawn my attention.

The report was started with the question, how I had been the director of three govt banks. But it is impossible to hold a position of a director without complying with the due rules of government, specially without the advice of chamber and federation.

The loan that I have got for my 12 industries & trading business stands at Tk 117 crore, of which 25 crore is interest. The news of billions of Tk is not at all true.

Is it a sin to be an entrepreneur member of Prime Minister? I was selected by Prime Minister's Secretariat. I have not been a rich man overnight rather I'd struggle a lot to reach this position.

The banks have not waived the interest of the loans violating the rules. Due to the price fall of coconut oil in the international market, the banks have done so. Other businessmen also availed this opportunity.

The Finance Ministry on March 3, 1986 released a instruction that, different financing companies and nationalised commercial banks, can write off the interest or loan considering the circumstances.

I've paid Tk 2,27,00,000 after the rescheduling of IFIC Bank and also applied for time-extension which remains under the consideration of the bank. The bank didn't waive my interest out of banking rules. I've paid a part of my loan with interest. The total interest amounted to Tk 1,90,43,898 and the bank had remitted 40.43% of it and now I owe Tk 77,43,184 to the bank. I applied to the bank for the extension of time.

The bank approved me a one year extension and suddenly I've adjourned it last year and I applied further for their consideration.

The report in your daily has concocted a false story to bring down my status in the society. I was not a genuine businessman then the FBCCI did not send me to Karachi to a meeting of Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Hearing the message that, Bangladesh Bank has issued a letter on the August 13, '97 to all banks along with the directives to stop giving me loan, I went to the Governor of Bangladesh Bank, and the Governor asked to adjourn the notice. But on November 27, last year, the Bank has issued further notice to four banks to stop giving me any form of loan.

Now I'm in a great anxiety and my import has stopped. I cannot import raw materials, and the spinning mill cannot go on production. Consequently, it becomes impossible to pay the wage and salary to my employees.

The Daily Star, however, stands by its story.

Admin cadres continue agitation Cabinet Secretary agrees to convey grievances to PM

By Special Correspondent

The BCS administration cadre continued their protests yesterday demanding widening scope for promotions and implementation of a government order upgrading 321 posts.

More than 300 officials gathered in front of Cabinet Secretary Ataul Huq's office in the Secretariat yesterday, to express their resentment.

Later, the Cabinet Secretary held a meeting with them at the Cabinet room and said that he would convey their grievances to the Prime Minister. He would also take up the matter of shelved upgrade order with the Finance Minister, according to meeting sources.

A leader of the Action Committee, formed by the administration cadre to spearhead their agitation for realising a seven-point demand, told The Daily Star last night that they reminded the Cabinet Secretary of their ultimatum to meet their demands by January 12.

Among others, Convenor of the Action Committee Dr Mujibur Rahman, Joint-Convenor Khan Mohammad Belayet, member-secretary Abu Alam Shahid Khan, explained their demands.

The Cabinet Secretary was quoted as saying that it was too early to resolve the issues within that period.

He, however, agreed to meet the officials again for further talks. But it should be a small group instead of a large one, he said.

The Action Committee will meet in an extended session at 1 pm today at the conference room of the Finance Ministry to review the situation and decide their next course of action. They are scheduled to meet the Finance Minister at 10 am on Monday.

They also held talks with a couple of other cadre services to explain their demands, saying it was not directed against other services. Formal talks with other cadres will take place soon, one leader of the committee said.

The administration cadres staged demonstration in front of the Finance Secretary's office on Monday last, protesting the Finance Ministry's action, what they said, putting on hold an order by the Prime Minister on December 21 to upgrade the 321 posts.

Aricha ferry ghat Queue of vehicles growing longer every hour

By Staff Correspondent

Hundreds of vehicles, mostly trucks, forming a more than eight-km-long queue, were stranded at Aricha ghat till 7 pm yesterday.

Ferry service remained suspended till 10 yesterday morning as thick fog blanketed the entire area around Aricha ghat.

Operation of all the 24 ferries running in two routes, Aricha-Daulatdia and Aricha-Natakholia, was suspended till then.

"Vehicles formed a long queue which was growing longer every hour," an official of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) said over telephone from Aricha last night.

Day and night coaches carrying thousands of passengers and hundreds of private cars got stuck up forming long queue. But officials said they were making their best efforts to ferry the passenger buses and private cars on priority basis.

Sources at the city's Gabtoli bus terminal said some of their scheduled bus services were cancelled because of the situation in Aricha.

Meanwhile, reports from Natakholia and Daulatdia also said that traffic congestion at Aricha last night.

"The Federation will reason and call off the strike," Sadek later told The Daily Star without elaborating.

"A meeting between the Federation will be held today in presence of officials of the ministry and the eight boards. The strike may be called off on the basis of the outcome of the formal meeting," Amjad Hossain Bakshi who led the Federation team during yesterday's meeting with the minister told this correspondent.

The indefinite strike at the call of the Federation that began on January 4 has virtually paralysed the functions and activities of the education boards, said a mid-ranking official of the Dhaka Board. "Excepting the offices of the Chairman and the Secretary of the Board, other office rooms have been kept under lock and key," he added.

The top officials of the eight boards who were mediating between the Ministry and the Federation had no prior knowledge about the yesterday's meeting between the Federation and the minister, sources said.

"We went to see the minister of our own," Bakshi said. He, however, did not say whether they received any formal invitation from the ministry for the meeting.

Bakshi also said that their demands were "misinterpreted" to the minister and that they were not opposed to the implementation of the Task Force report.

"We demanded cancellation of those recommendations of the Task Force which were opposed to the interests of the board employees," he said.

Decision to expedite creation of tribal affairs ministry

By Special Correspondent

A high level meeting yesterday decided to expedite creation of a new ministry to deal with Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs.

Chaired by the Cabinet Secretary, the meeting directed the Establishment Division to create posts of one additional secretary, joint-secretaries and four deputy secretaries.

There will be a new Secretary in the proposed ministry as the incumbent Secretary for Special Affairs Division is going on leave preparatory for retirement. The Special Affairs Division is going to be converted into the CHT ministry, highly placed sources said.

Kalpanaraj Chakma, MP, made a ministerial visit without any portfolio, is going to head the ministry soon, before the creation of a full-fledged ministry, the sources added.

Officials of the Narcotics Department and other government agencies were searching different hospitals and clinics in the city for bodies of the victims till yesterday, sources said. Local people claimed that the other bodies were buried in different places in the city.

Police said they continued raiding the slums in Tejgaon local crossing and adjoining areas to arrest the other persons accused in the case.

At least 50 people had drunk the home-made liquor illegally sold from three makeshift shops allegedly run by Tuku and Dulal at the slum near Tejgaon level crossing.

Police said at least 30 people, mostly floating slum dwellers, were involved in illegal trading of locally made liquor in Tejgaon area. Such liquor was sold in at least 20 makeshift dwelling houses in different slums in some railway lands and beside city roads.

In May 1996, eight people died and more than 30 fell sick after taking adulterated liquor in the city's Rampura-Badda area. The liquor was sold from a homeopathic medicine shop near Rampura bridge.

Liquor poisoning

From page 1

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Tk 2.29 lakh snatched in city

By Staff Correspondent

Muggers stabbed an employee of a business house and snatched Tk 2.29 lakh in city's Kauran Bazar area under Tejgaon thana yesterday morning.

Police said four muggers attacked Ruhul Amin, cashier of Bengal Trading Corporation, and his assistant Sanaulah near the National Credit and Commerce Bank at about 10 am. The two employees were going to the bank to deposit the money.

The muggers stabbed Ruhul Amin in his hand and snatched a bag containing Tk 2,29,800 from him. They left the place after exploding a number of cocktails in which one person was injured. He was identified as Mohammad Ali, 22. He was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Police arrested one person, identified as Kaum, 32, in connection with the incident.

Heroin worth Tk 1 cr seized at Manikchhari

From Our Correspondent

KHAGRACHHARI, Jan 7: Police recovered heroin worth about Tk one crore from a boarding at Manikchhari bazar in the district on Tuesday night.

Acting on a tip-off, Manikchhari police raided a room in Master Boarding, and seized the contraband, weighing about one kg.

Police could not arrest the boarder, identified as Momin Uddin of Fatikchhari thana.

A case was filed with Manikchhari thana in this connection.

Drug

From page 1

side effects of the drug. We have discussed the issue in the Standing Committee and decided to give necessary instructions."

When contacted, a WHO official confirmed alerting the Drug Administration. "Yes we have warned the government about the harmful effects of the drug," the source said.

Dr Ismail, a member of the Drug Control Committee representing Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA), while giving his expert opinion about the issue said, "The pharmaceutical product — well known as terfenadine (generic name) during its post market surveillance 'clinical trial' in the West over last one year showed that the drug had severe side-effects."

He said, "A patient taking the drug for a long time can acquire arrhythmia which causes irregular heart beats and consequently lead to loss of life. The drug also interacts with other drugs. For this reason, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of USA and the Committee for Safety of Medicine (CSM) of UK advised reduction in the use of the drug."

The drug was first introduced globally about four years ago. It gained popularity as the drug did not cause drowsiness which is considered the greatest positive side of the drug.

Meanwhile, the drug administration has asked the companies manufacturing the drug to inform the latest stock position of the drug in their respective stores.

Follow-up meet

From page 1

CHT peace agreement.

The two sides are also expected to fix the date, time and place for surrendering the arms and ammunition.

Earlier, the NCCHT and the PCJSS agreed to hold the meeting on January 16, but the date has been re-fixed to comply with the provision of the peace agreement.

Liaison Committee convenor Hangshadhaja Chakma said both the sides have now agreed to hold the meeting on January 15 when the PCJSS leaders are expected to hand over the list of its armed cadres and of the arms and ammunition.

Senator Harkin

From page 1

Senator will meet government and business leaders.

He will also visit some schools, for child workers re-trenched from garment industries.

Following the Harkin's Bill, the US law forced the garments producing countries, including Bangladesh, to terminate under-age child workers from garments industries and arrange schooling for them.

In 1995, BGMEA, ILO and UNICEF signed an MOU facilitating the under-age garment workers for schooling.

During a meeting with Senator Harkin on Friday, BGMEA leaders will make a plea to raise by 30 per cent the Bangladesh quota of apparels in the United States.

The senator will also meet the press at Dhaka airport before his departure on January 9.