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VOL. VII NO. 345 REGD. NO. DA 781

POUSH 26 1404 BS.

DHAKA FRIDAY, JANUARY 9, 1998

RAMADAN 9, 1418 HIJRI

12 PAGES PLUS MAGAZINE PRICE TAKA 9.00



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Formal talks with Italian PM today

The visiting Italian Prime Minister Prof Romano Prodi will hold official talks with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the PM's office at 10 am today, reports UNB.

Prodi arrived in Dhaka yesterday on a two-day official visit to Bangladesh.

A red carpet welcome was accorded to the Italian Prime Minister at Zia International Airport.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina received him at the tarmac of the airport at 7:15 pm as he alighted from a special aircraft which carried him from India.

Two tiny tots presented bouquets to the Italian Prime Minister and Madame Flavia Prodi.

Prodi was then taken to the presentation line and introduced with members of the cabinet, dean of the diplomatic corps, diplomats and top civil and military officials.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria, Education Minister A S H K Saidque, Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed, Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury were, among others, present.

Law officers call on President

A delegation of government law officers made a courtesy call on President Shahabuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday, reports UNB.

The 33-member delegation, led by Attorney General K S Nabi, apprised the President of some of their professional problems which require immediate attention for speedy disposal of cases.

They also apprised him of their insufficient pay and allowance and other facilities.

The President gave them a patient hearing and said that he would look into these matters.

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Shri, Ifar timings

Ramadan	Jan	Shri	Ifar
9	9	5-19	5-32
10	10	5-19	5-32
11	11	5-20	5-33



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina receiving Italian Prime Minister Prof Romano Prodi and his spouse Madame Flavia Prodi at Zia International Airport yesterday.

Prodi urges Italian businessmen

Explore scope for direct investment in Bangladesh

Italian Prime Minister Prof Romano Prodi yesterday invited Italian businessmen to explore the possibility of direct investment in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

"The characteristics of complementarity of our economies are likely to create forms of collaboration with positive effects for both countries," he said speaking at a banquet at Bangabhaban.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina hosted the banquet in honour of the Italian premier, who arrived in Dhaka yesterday evening on a two-day official visit.

Prof Prodi said the contribution of the main Italian industry for the realisation of

important infrastructural works can be integrated by the strategic role that Italian small and medium enterprises are able to play in Bangladesh.

"Our medium and small sized industry, which was become at world level a model of efficiency and competitiveness, has been at the origin of great expansion of the 'Made in Italy'."

He said, "Over the years, it has proved to be capable to adapt itself to the conditions that regulate the process of industrialisation in the developing countries."

"It's my intention to invite Italian businessmen to explore the possibility of direct invest-

ment in this market."

Prof Prodi said although Italy is deeply tied to Europe and its relations do not end up in Europe. In the last couple of years, more than 44 per cent of the Italian exports were directed outside the European Union boundaries, he added.

"In this context, we consider Asia a priority. It is in this framework I have recently visited several Asian countries."

He said despite different history and geography, Bangladesh and Italy share the same attitude. Both, in their respective spheres, play a positive role in the various international fora.

Prof Prodi appreciated Bangladesh's dynamic role in

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Help for Ganges Barrage sought

Dhaka needs a big push: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday sought support from Italy and other friendly countries in the government's endeavour to mobilise more foreign direct investment and economic assistance, reports UNB.

"Our efforts to attract foreign direct investment have started paying dividends. However, it needs a big push," she said.

The Prime Minister was addressing a banquet at Bangabhaban in honour of Italian Prime Minister Prof Romano Prodi.

Hasina said Bangladesh and

Italy can forge meaningful cooperation in the fields of trade, investment and other economic areas for mutual benefit and the private sectors would play a key role in these areas.

She informed the Italian Prime Minister about the plan to build the Ganges Barrage to harness the augmented flows of the Ganges for irrigation and other related works and sought support from Italy for the project.

Narrating the steps already taken to attract foreign investment in the country, she invited the Italian business community

to take advantage of the favourable investment opportunities which Bangladesh offers.

The Prime Minister said as Bangladesh has a large domestic market of 120 million people, whose purchasing power is gradually increasing, the country is hoping to achieve sustained economic development on the basis of market economy and strong private sector.

She said that to attract foreign investment, the government adopted an export-led growth strategy with necessary

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Senator Harkin in city

US Senator Tom Harkin arrived in the city yesterday on a two-day visit with a mission to hold talks with the government and business leaders mainly on Dhaka-Washington trade and economic cooperation, reports UNB.

He was received at the airport by Ashraf-ud-Doula, Director General (Americas and Pacific) of the Foreign Ministry and US Ambassador John Holzman.

During his stay, the Senator will call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today and hold meeting with the Labour and Manpower Minister.

He will also meet with BGMEA officials and visit a garment factory and child labour school jointly run by BGMEA, ILO and UNICEF.

The Senator is expected to call on Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleida Zia.



US Senator Tom Harkin being received by Foreign Ministry DG (Americas and Pacific) Ashraf-ud-Doula and US Ambassador John Holzman at Zia International Airport yesterday.

Admin cadres under fire from 3 other assocs

By Special Correspondent

The newly formed BCS Administration Cadre Action Committee came under fire yesterday from foreign finance and livestock cadres.

The three cadres expressed their satisfaction at the 'suspension' of upgradation of 321 administration cadre posts.

The issue had triggered protests from the administration cadre, who staged demonstrations at the Finance Ministry and the Cabinet Division in the past three days.

They have been agitating in demand for immediate implementation of the upgradation

order, which, they said, was given by the Prime Minister and putting deputy secretary's in the Tk 7100 scale and widening scope for promotions for their cadre in higher positions as per the Matin committee report.

They met at the Finance Ministry yesterday to take stock of the situation and chart their next course of agitation. They have given an ultimatum to the authorities to accept their seven-point demand by Monday. They are scheduled to meet the Finance Minister on the day to appraise him of their

grievances, holding him responsible for 'withholding' the upgradation order, committee sources said.

Action Committee Convenor Dr Mujibur Rahman last night dispelled reports in some newspapers that they decided to prevent officials of other cadres from entering the Secretariat. It is a fabrication and an example of yellow journalism, Dr Rahman said. "We have nothing against other services," he said, adding that their demands have been misinterpreted by other cadre associations.

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Meeting tomorrow for decision on calling off strike at edn boards

By Staff Correspondent

An emergency meeting of the Inter-education Board Employees Federation will be held tomorrow to take a decision regarding calling off the indefinite strike by board employees that began on January 4, sources in the Federation said.

A delegation of Federation leaders led by its president Amjad Hossain Bakshi held a meeting with officials of the Education Ministry and the boards at the ministry in the Secretariat yesterday, official sources said.

"I will try to convince my colleagues to call off the strike," Bakshi said talking to The Daily Star yesterday. He also said that he was satisfied at the outcome of yesterday's meeting.

The Federation had called the indefinite strike demanding cancellation of the Task Force

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Talks on Block 9 end Chevron-Texaco to review Tullow's offer

By Staff Correspondent

The government-mediated talks between Irish company Tullow and US joint venture Chevron-Texaco over oil and gas exploration in Block 9 ended Wednesday with a positive note, official sources said yesterday.

The US joint venture did not yet agree to join Tullow, but said it would review Tullow's exploration proposal and financial offer for the block.

Chevron-Texaco told the

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Baghabari Power Plant: Midland lowest bidder

The Power Cell of the Energy Ministry on Wednesday opened financial offers of two foreign companies participating in the bidding for the 100 MW Baghabari Power Project.

Midland Powers, UK, was found to be the lowest bidder in this scheme. It offered a levelised tariff of Tk 1.95 (or US 4.35 cents) per unit for 22 years.

The other bidder — Unocal — offered a levelised tariff of Tk 2.32 (for 5.17 cents) per unit for 22 years.

Five companies were pre-selected to participate in the bidding for Baghabari Plant, which will roughly cost 200 million US dollars. The short-listed companies were: Unocal Corp (US), Midland Power International (US), Tractebel Electricity (Belgium), Coastal Power (US) and Marubeni

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10 insurgent groups active in Bandarban

CHITTAGONG, Jan 8: As many as 10 small insurgent groups involved in arms racketeering, drug smuggling and other subversive activities in Bandarban hill district and bordering areas are now planning to intensify subversive activities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, reports BSS.

According to sources of national intelligence agencies, the activities of these organisations are intensified in the wake of recent peace accord signed by the government and Parbatya Chittagong Jana Sanghat Samiti (PCJSS).

The 10 organisations, backed by basically Pakistan army intelligence since the in-

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Proposed roundtable on CHT BNP blames govt for President's 'failure'

Opposition BNP yesterday blamed the government's non-cooperation for President's 'failure' to convene a roundtable on present political crisis over Chittagong Hill Tracts, reports UNB.

"The President is the most respectable person... an impartial person. But he could not call the proposed meeting due to non-cooperation from the government," said BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, MP.

The BNP's reaction came after President Shahabuddin announced Wednesday that he himself will not call the conference proposed by the opposition legislators, but reiterated that the issue may be discussed both in and outside Parliament.

"We are ready to talk about the crisis both in and outside the Parliament," Bhuiyan said. "But before that the government would have to scrap the accord on the CHT as the issue is a national one and should be solved only with national consensus."

Talking to a group of newsmen at the official residence of

Leader of the Opposition in the evening, the BNP secretary general said they would return to Parliament only after fulfilling the opposition's 14-point.

When his attention was drawn to a comment by minister Mohammad Nasif that the demands were fulfilled, Bhuiyan said: He could say it, but the reality is that the demands were not fulfilled to create an environment for our return to Parliament.

Regarding the opposition proposal to convene a roundtable meeting by the President, the BNP leader said it was a great opportunity for the government to rectify themselves. "But they missed the chance for lack of good intention."

Asked how he considers that the government was not interested about the conference, Bhuiyan said, "It was clear when the Prime Minister, a day after we proposed to the President to hold the meeting, opined that there was no necessity of a roundtable."

Some 100 opposition MPs

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Sun remains virtually hidden for a week

By Special Correspondent

The cold spell is on the wane and the chilly weather is going to improve in the next 48 hours, Meteorological Department officials said yesterday as fog blanketed almost the entire country for a week.

Biting cold and dense fog made life miserable for the poor. Fifteen lives were claimed by the cold wave since Wednesday night in the northern districts, raising the death toll to 153 in two weeks.

The 15 deaths were reported from Rangpur, Sirajganj, Kurigram, Bogra, Nilphamari and Gaibandha districts.

The northern region is now experiencing the coldest temperature in five years, as low as four degree Celsius. Many of those who died used to sleep on streets or were old people and infants, officials said.

Fog disrupted road transport in different areas of the country delayed or led to cancellation of some flights and caused havoc with ferry schedules.

Nearly 5,000 buses, trucks and other transports have been stranded for days at Aricha and Natakholia ferry ghats.

Thick mist accentuating the biting cold disrupted normal life. The poor huddled before fire on street corners. At nightfall, they fought for preferred warm corners under the shades of markets and commercial buildings, railway terminals and bus stations.

Met officials forecast that the sun, shrouded by fog, may be visible by tomorrow.

Moisture flow from the Bay was brewing the dense fog.

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Pak, Indian cricket squads in city

Sports Reporter

Indian and Pakistani teams arrived in the city yesterday to participate in the Coca-Cola Independence Cup.

The three-nation tournament also involving Bangladesh, begins with the hosts taking on India at the Dhaka Stadium tomorrow.

Pakistan's newly appointed cricket captain Rashid Latif expressed his optimism on his team's chances after his 14-member Pakistan team arrived at ZIA.

"I am very happy to come here in Bangladesh and join the country's silver jubilee of Independence. We have a good side as far as bowling and batting is concerned. I think we will enjoy playing here," said Latif who was surprised when he heard that he was named captain.

When asked about their main rival India, Latif said, "I think they have a side which is very well composed. They have a solid batting order and some

See Page 12 Col 4

7 killed in Jhenidah gunfights

By Staff Correspondent

At least seven persons were killed in two incidents of gunfights between the activists of Furbo Bangla Communist Party and Gano Mukti Fouz and also with the police in sadar thana of Jhenidah yesterday and the day before.

Our Jhenidah Correspondent reports: Four activists of Biplobi Communist Party were killed when the activists of Gano Mukti Fouz attacked the BCP men at village Konepur in sadar thana Wednesday.

Both the groups were locked in an hour-long gunfight for establishing supremacy over the area, resulting in deaths of four BCP men.

The dead were identified as Omar Ali, 35, of village Muradaha, Minto, 26, of village Baladanga, Milon, 27, of village

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Arrest of ULFA leader Border checkpoints in N dists on maximum alert

LALMONIRHAT, Jan 8: Border check posts in the northern districts, including Lalmonirhat and Kurigram, have been put on high alert following the arrest of ULFA leader Golap Barua alias Anup Chetia in Dhaka, security sources said, reports UNB.

All the law enforcement and intelligence agencies became active in the region which borders the Indian state of Assam, where United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), an underground group fighting security forces demanding greater autonomy for the tribes people.

Immigration officials have been strictly checking documents of people coming through different border points to avert possible infiltration by the ULFA activists into Bangladesh territory.

Nine border check posts of Bangladesh Rifles in Roumari and Rajibpur thanas of Kurigram district adjacent to ULFA strongholds were put on high alert. BDR Commander Lt Col Parimal Bikash Chakma told UNB.

Prisoner dies at Dhaka jail

By Staff Correspondent

A prisoner of Dhaka Central Jail died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) Wednesday night.

Police said the dead was identified as Zakir Hossain, 22, son of Taib Ali of Haricharan Das Lane in the city.

Zakir had been suffering from tuberculosis, jail sources said. He was unwell at the Central Jail Hospital. As his condition deteriorated, he was shifted to the DMCH at about noon on Wednesday. He died there.

Hospital sources said Zakir was an accused in an arms case lodged with Shtrapur thana. Shtrapur thana, when contacted last night, could not confirm it.

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