

Cold wave on
the wane

Star Report

The cold wave is on the wane
but the mist will continue on
and off.The visibility, however, is
expected to improve further
from 9 am today. But a haze will
shroud the sun again from 3
pm. Meteorological Department
officials said yesterday. Despite
a Met office forecast, there was
no drizzle yesterday. There are
"less chances" of drizzles today.The sky remained overcast
yesterday, the fog reinforcing
the drifting clouds, making
cricket lovers nervous on the
prospect of today's Coca-Cola
Independence Cup cricket tourna-The cold bite lost its intensity
to some extent in the
northern region but still
claimed seven more lives yes-
terday, raising the total to 155
since the cold wave began late

See Page 12 Col 2

President tells Prodi
Italy one of our
dependable
friendsThe visiting Prime Minister
of Italy Prof Romano Prodi
made a courtesy call on Presi-
dent Shahabuddin Ahmed at
Bangabhaban yesterday, re-
ports UNB.Welcoming the Italian Prime
Minister, President Shahabud-
din termed his visit "very sig-
nificant" as it is the first ever
official visit to Bangladesh by
an Italian head of the govern-
ment.He said Italy was among one
of the first countries who
recognised Bangladesh and the
relation between the two coun-
tries has grown over the years
since the establishment of
diplomatic relations in 1972.Both Bangladesh and Italy
have excellent bilateral rela-
tions. See Page 12 Col 417 DB teams to
be deployed
inside stadiumBy Staff Correspondent
Seventeen teams of plain-
clothes police from the Deter-
rentive Branch will be deployed
to maintain security inside the
Dhaka Stadium during the Inde-
pendence Cup Cricket tourna-
ment beginning today.Dhaka Metropolitan Police
in a press release last night re-
quested the spectators not to
bring crackers, explosives or
firearms and to refrain from
exploding crackers or hurling
brickbats inside the stadium.GET ABREAST
with the latest on the
Coca-Cola Tri-nation
Independence Cup
through The Daily Star
Special CricketSupplement today
at no additional cost.ASK your hawker
for your copy.

Inside Today

Article
Not Far from
the FireColumn: Beneath the
Surface
by Abdul Bayes

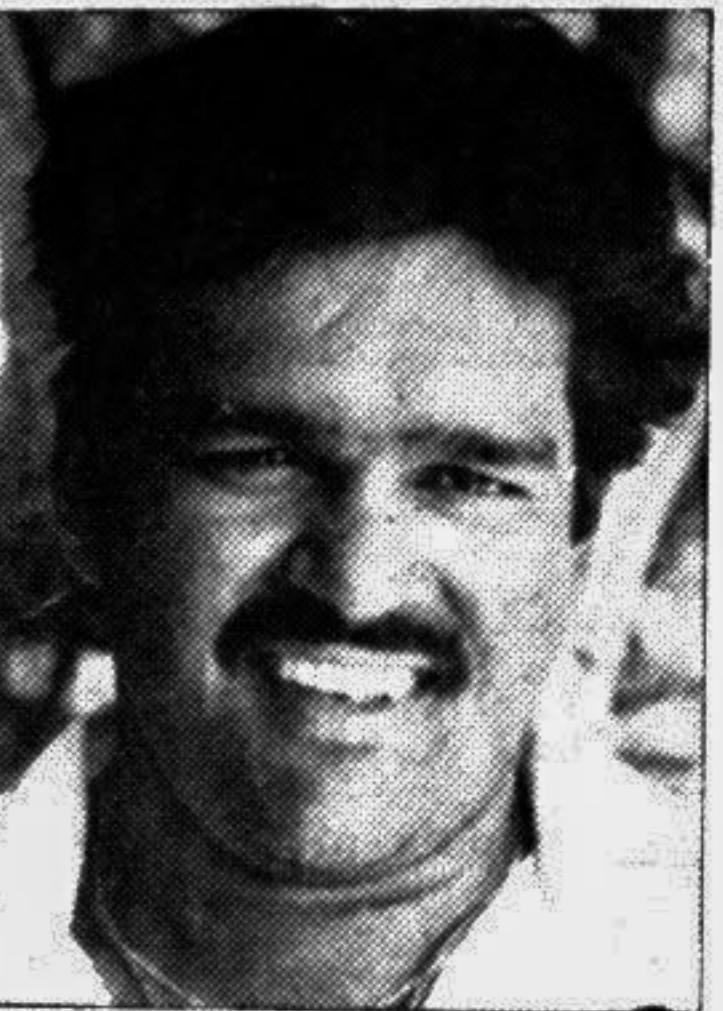
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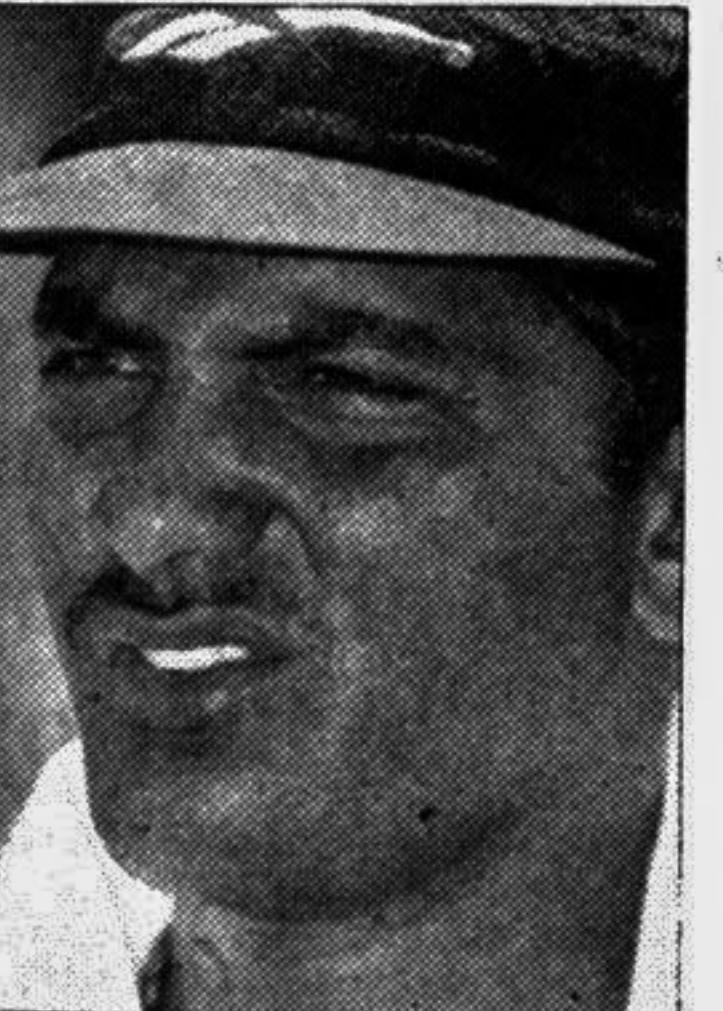
Eliot on 'Prufer' and
A house for Nirad
Chaudhuri
Pages 6 & 7Sehri, Iftar timings
Ramadan Jan Sehri Iftar
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12 12 5-20 5-34

Hosts take on India in opener today

Sports Reporter

Independence
Cup cricketCricket lovers in the country
will wake up to a week-long
cricket carnival today when
hosts Bangladesh take on giants
India in the opening tie of the
Coca-Cola Independence Cup
tournament at the Dhaka Stadium.But a blanket of thick fog
which has been prevailing over
the country for the last few days
threatens to disrupt a smooth
progress of the tri-nation tour-
ney that also includes Pak-
istan.According to a Met Office
forecast, the foggy weather is
likely to prevail. If the condi-
tion does not improve today,
the match is likely to have a de-

Akram Khan



Mohd Azharuddin

layed start. But Mike Denness,
the match referee and former
England captain, is still hope-
ful of a full 50-over-a-side af-
fair.Foreign Minister Abdus
Samad Azad will formally in-
augurate the tournament and the
match is scheduled to start at
9 am.Both the state-run electronic
media — Bangladesh Television
and Betar — will provide the
ball-by-ball commentary of the
match from the big bowl.The stage is all set to take the
heat of the big time cricket.
Bangladesh Cricket Board
(BCB), organisers of the tourney
to celebrate the country's Silver
Jubilee of Independence, has
completed all the necessary
preparations to make the gala
event a success.However, Bangladesh skip-
See Page 12 Col 1

Homecoming : Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman waving at the jubilant crowd on his way to the then Race Course Maidan from the airport. He returned home this day in 1972 after nine months in Pakistani jail.

— PID file photo

Bangabandhu's
home-coming
day todayThe Home-coming Day of
Father of the Nation Banga-
bandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rah-
man will be observed today, re-
port agencies.The Father of the Nation was
confined in Pakistani prison
during the entire nine-month of
the liberation war. The Paki-
stan authority was forced to re-
lease him after Bangladesh
emerged as an independent nation.Bangabandhu was arrested
on the black night of March 25
in 1971 from his Dhamondi
residence and flown to Paki-
stan by the Occupation Forces.The then Dhaka Airport
turned into a human sea to wel-
come the leader as people from
the remote areas poured in to
the city.President Shahabuddin
See Page 12 Col 4

Italy to join feasibility study on Ganges Barrage project

Private sector to play vital role
in expanding trade: Prodi

Italian Prime Minister Prof Romano Prodi addressing a joint press conference at the VVIP lounge at Zia International Airport yesterday. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina looks on.

— Star photo

Explore trade potential, Prodi tells FBCCI
Italy can help build telecom &
energy sector infrastructure

By Staff Correspondent

Italian Prime Minister Prof
Romano Prodi yesterday said
that his country could con-
tribute in building infrastruc-
ture in the telecommunication,
energy and public utility sectors
in Bangladesh."Moreover a very positive
role can be played (in
Bangladesh) by our small and
medium enterprises," the visiting
Prime Minister said in a meeting
organised by the Federation
of Bangladesh Chambers
of Commerce and Industry
(FBCCI).Although Bangladesh enjoys
a positive trade balance with
Italy, the Italian Prime Minister
expressed his belief that the full
potential of the mutual trade ties
remained largely unexplored.The totality of our business
activities does not reflect the
true potentialities of our
economies. "Our complemen-
tarities should be better ex-
ploited," he said.There might be a lack of
reciprocal knowledge among our
business communities, the visiting
Prime Minister said emphasising
on mutual exchange of trade
information.The meeting was attended
among others, by Foreign Min-
ister Abdus Samad Azad, Fin-
ance Minister Shah A M S
Kibria, Commerce Minister
Tofael Ahmed, Energy Minister
Noor Uddin Khan, Shipping
Minister A S M Abdur Rab,
State Minister for Foreign Af-fairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury
and FBCCI president Yusuf Abd-
dullah Harun.Prof Romano Prodi noted
the usefulness of the small and
medium-scale industries that
can present excellent possibil-
ties of co-operation in the form
of joint ventures.He said that Italy, one of the
major exporters in the world,
was now concentrating on im-
proving trade relations with the
Asian countries.Yusuf Abdulla Harun as-
sured the Italian businessmen
of all possible assistance from
the FBCCI.Referring to the trade link
with Italy, Harun noted, "trade
volume (with Italy) remains low
See Page 12 Col 8'Democracy can
flourish thru'
govt-Opposition
cooperation'BNP chairperson Begum
Khaleda Zia met the visiting
Italian Prime Minister Prof
Romano Prodi in the city yes-
terday and urged him to promote
Italian investment in
Bangladesh, reports UNB.During the meeting at the
residence of the Italian Ambas-
sador in Dhaka, she extended a
heartly welcome to Prof Prodi
and hoped that the excellent
relations that happily exist
between the two countries will
be further improved in the days
ahead.The opposition leader also
apprised him of the current po-
litical stalemate in Bangladesh,
said a BNP press release.The Italian Prime Minister
said democracy can flourish
only through cooperation be-
tween the government and the
opposition parties. A political
See Page 12 Col 7New ferry service in Chandpur
Congestion at Aricha
to reduce by 40 pc

By Naimul Haq

A new ferry service will be
opened across Meghna river in
Chandpur that will reduce the
roadway from Chittagong divi-
sion to the south and south-
western districts by at least 130
km and the load of vehicles at
Aricha ghat by about 40 per cent.The ferry service is expected
to be opened in mid-June, ac-
cording to official sources.The 7 km ferry route will be
from Bagadi to Aloo Bazaar,
both in Chandpur district. Ap-
proach roads are being con-
structed on both sides of the two
proposed ferry ghats. Some
portion of the highway in
Shariatpur is also being devel-
oped for this. Vehicles avail-
ing the ferry service will not need
to cross Dhaka to go to the south
See Page 12 Col 2and south western districts in-
cluding greater Khulna and
greater Barisal districts.Officials of the ministries of
communications and water re-
sources visited the spots re-
cently to see the progress of
work, they said.Meanwhile, a BBC broad-
cast last night said that the ULFA
guerrillas enforced a general
strike (bandh) in Assam yester-
day demanding release of Golap
Barua.Quoting officials in Assam,
BBC said the strike did not af-
fect much in the Bangladeshi-dom-
inated Barak valley and two
hill districts inhabited by
tribals. The BBC however
quoted an ULFA spokesman as
claiming that the strike was
successful.48 injured in
Delhi blastNEW DELHI, Jan 9: A bomb
exploded in the midst of a
lunch-time crowd just 100 meters
(yards) from the New Delhi
police chief's office today, in-
juring 48 people, sending bloodied
office workers running in
terror, and raising question
about police efficiency, reports
AP."It's a matter of shame that it
took place right in front of the
police chief's office," said Chief
Minister Shahib Singh Verma,
the capital's top politician. He
called on city police chief Tilak
Raj Kakkar to accept personal
responsibility and resign.Kakkar had no immediate
comment.5 Nepali
ministers
resignKATHMANDU, Jan 9: Five
dissident ministers of Nepalese
Prime Minister Surya Bahadur
Thapa's cabinet resigned today,
state radio announced, reports
AFP.Among them was Defence
Minister Satya Singh Tharu, it
said. "The King has accepted the
resignations submitted through
Prime Minister Thapa," the re-
port said.The others are ministers
without portfolio Prem Ba-
hadur Bhandari, Ram Krishna
Acharya, and Mahendra Raya,
and Rajiv Parajuli, Minister for
Science and Technology, the of-
ficial announcement said.They poison canals in the
Sundarbans for catches

An alleged poacher in a canal in the Sundarbans.

— Star photo

Benazir challenges accusers

Islamabad, Jan 9: Accused
by the government of massive
fraud, former prime minister
Benazir Bhutto today issued a
challenge to her accusers: "Come
forward with your evidence. I am
not running away. My conscience
is clear," reports AP.The 44 year-old Oxford-edu-
cated Benazir has steadfastly
maintained her innocence and
today accused Prime Minister
Nawaz Sharif of launching awitch-hunt to hide corruption
within his own ranks.She called the government's
anti-corruption commission a
"get-Benazir operation funded
from state resources."The commission set up last
year to root out corruption has
prepared at least 12 cases of
fraud against Benazir.It also has had several of her
See Page 12 Col 6More than one year after her
government was dismissed from
power, disgraced by re-