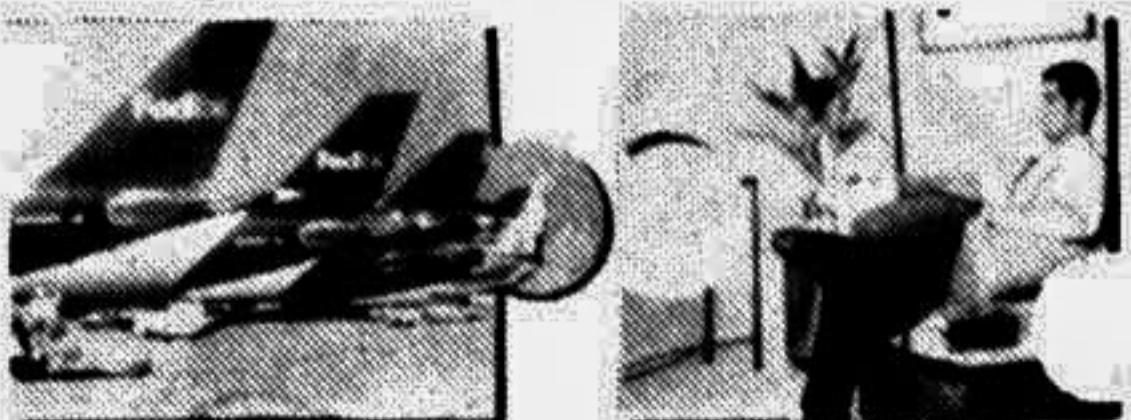


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One burnt alive, 50 shops gutted

One person was burnt alive and 50 shops were gutted in two fire incidents in Pabna and Jamalpur on Saturday night, reports UNB.

A devastating fire gutted some 50 shops and injured ten people at Nandina bazar under Sadar thana of Jamalpur district.

Fire brigade sources said the fire originated from a cotton shop at the bazar and engulfed the area soon.

Fire fighting units from Sharishabari, Sherpur, Mymensingh and Jamalpur rushed to the spot and brought the fire under control after three hours.

Property worth over Tk one crore was destroyed by the fire, local people said.

In Pabna town, a young man was killed in a fire that broke out in a laundry shop.

The victim, Rafik Uddin, 30, was sleeping in his shop at a hawkers market in Pailanpur area when the shop caught fire.

Sources said an electric iron caused the fire as Rafik was to bed without switching it off.

Meanwhile, seven people, including a couple, of Dhad-

DSE brokers

From page 1

They are now saying the new system is not 'investor friendly' and that it does not reflect the actual transaction as no cash is physically transacted.

A four-member (DSE) committee headed by Khatua Abdul Quddus formed three days back suggested the DSE adopt the 'T-4 settlement rolling system.' It means that transactions are cleared and settled through the DSE clearing house from the second and the fourth working day respectively calculated from the date of the contract.

The market went down to a 44-month low on Saturday which prompted the DSE authorities to call an emergency Council meeting yesterday. The meeting, failing to come up with any decision, was adjourned till today.

DSE Chairman Md Rakibur Rahman after taking office last month had a series of meetings with senior government and bank officials and suggested a number of steps to revive the country's capital market.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister's Office yesterday gave approval to the proposal of issuing licences to merchant banks.

The prime minister has signed the files and these banks would soon start functioning after getting licences from the DSE Chairman said.

The bourse leaders are also trying desperately to lift the currently-imposed circuit breaker, which they say is not necessary for this market as prices of most of the issues have dropped below their fundamental.

They urged the law enforcing agencies to rescue the kidnapped PCP members as early as possible.

The leaders also threatened to go for greater movement if their demands were not met.

Independence Cup

From page 1

was stopped for half an hour due to bad light in the morning session. Four overs were curtailed when the umpires and the two captains decided to continue the match under floodlights.

Chasing a mind-boggling Pakistan total, India got off to a flyer with their explosive opener Sachin Tendulkar and Saurav Ganguly extracting 71 runs off only 49 deliveries before the former departed for a whirlwind 26-ball 41 runs. His little cameo innings was studded with seven sweetly-timed fours and a massive sixer against off-spinner Saqlain Mushtaq. The Bombay-born master blaster, who was adjudged player-of-the-tournament later, became the second Indian after his captain Mohammad Azharuddin to score more than 1000 runs against Pakistan.

After the departure of Tendulkar, caught at mid-off by Azhar Mahmood, Ganguly took over from the right-hander and left off. Together with the makeshift one-down Robin Singh, the West Bengal hero produced 179 runs for the match-winning second wicket. Robin, who more than justified his promotion in the batting order, scored a run-a-ball 82, embellished a quartet of fours and two towering sixes.

But it was Ganguly who led the India's never-say-over mission with a scintillating 124, his second century in one-day cricket. The southpaw, an unanimous choice for both the player-of-the-final and most-valuable-player, struck eleven fours and an over boundary in his 139-ball vigil at the crease. Playing under fading light that at one stage threatened a premature end of the match after both the umpires left the field in the 40th over, Ganguly got some small but very significant support from the lower middle order before being out in 43rd over, leaving his side 39 runs short of a memorable victory.

But, thanks to the sport's noble spirit, Pakistan captain Rashid Latif showed his courage to continue the match with the lights on the streets already on and the ICC delegates all set to

hangar area of Sirajganj town were hospitalised with burn injuries yesterday.

The condition of the couple were stated to be critical.

According to family sources, Johora Khatun, 19, doused her body with kerosene and set herself on fire following a quarrel with her husband, Kabir.

Kabir, a day-labourer, and five others also sustained burn injuries when they tried to save the woman.

Ice storm

Bangladeshis in Canada safe

Canadians of Bangladeshi origin living in Montreal and Ottawa, the regions which were seriously affected by the recent ice storm and freezing rain, are safe, reports UNB.

Although 16 people died of chilling cold due to power failure, no Bangladeshis were hurt or injured, said a press release of Bangladesh High Commission in Canada.

It said most of them had moved to their relatives and friends in the safe areas.

Acting Bangladesh High Commissioner to Canada Anwar-ul-Alam visited the members of Bangladeshi community in the affected areas in Montreal and its adjoining areas on Thursday.

Power has been restored in most of the areas and the authorities lifted the state of emergency with the improvement of the situation, said the press release.

Three tribals kidnapped in Rangamati

RANGAMATI, Jan 18: Three tribals, including two activists of Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP), were kidnapped last night by unidentified men from their residences under Sadar thana of the district, reports UNB.

They were identified as ex-chairman of Tilachari Union Parishad Morod Chakma and his son Maja Chakma and Monobashi Chakma of Khaja Chhori. Maja and Monobashi were reported to be activists of PCP.

PCP leaders at a press conference here today claimed that the kidnappers were non-tribals who opposes the CHT peace accord.

They urged the law enforcing agencies to rescue the kidnapped PCP members as early as possible.

The leaders also threatened to go for greater movement if their demands were not met.

Sramik League team calls on Hasina

A 20-member delegation of Sramik League, a front organisation of Awami League, called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office yesterday to discuss the problems of the workers, reports UNB.

The Prime Minister gave them a patient hearing and assured that necessary measures would be taken to solve those.

Sramik League President Abdus Salam Khan and General Secretary Ahsanullah Master MP led the delegation.

Other members included Rehanuddin Rehan, Fazlul Haq Moni, Habibur Rahman Siraj, Abdul Matin Master and Hasan Ali Chandu Sardar.

Anti-arsenic programme discussed

The fourth meeting of the National Steering Committee on Arsenic was held yesterday with Health and Family Welfare Minister Salauddin Yusuf in the chair, reports BSS.

The meeting discussed the anti-arsenic programme of the government and its progress.

It also discussed alternative source of arsenic-free drinking water in the country and treatment of arsenic patients.

The Health Minister urged the research officials to find out solution to the arsenic problem.

Committee members Health and Family Welfare Secretary Mohammad Ali, Water Resources Secretary Dr A T M Shamsul Huda were present in the meeting.

BGMEA polls

From page 1
the president from among its members.

"I will be trying to resolve the current duty refund issue under GSP scheme," Huq said. A 12.5 per cent duty rebate which the exporters and importers enjoyed under the GSP scheme will have to be paid by them due to cancellation of some 15,000 GSP certificates last year at the insistence of the EU.

Quddus claimed his team had been successful in reducing insurance premium by about 50 per cent and getting exempted from nationalised banks a one per cent (acceptance) charge on the import value of Letter of Credit. He also claimed credit for getting two bighas of land allotted from the government for constructing BGMEA's own building near Hotel Sonargaon in the city.

Quddus said he would also put on his agenda the issue of reopening of those closed factories.

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BNP dist units suggest

From page 1
spokesman Ehsanul Kabir told newsmen after the Iftar. Begum Zia and party Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan also spoke on the occasion, he added.

No other central leader of the party addressed the meeting convened with the main objective of 'reading the pulse' of the district leaders on the crucial issue of BNP's boycott of parliament, insiders said.

The district leaders also demanded of the party chief to take stern action against anyone violating party discipline, Kabir said.

The demand came in the wake of 'rebel' lawmaker Akhtaruzzaman's recent letter to the party chief arguing for BNP's return to the House. The letter, copies of which were also distributed among all the party lawmakers, sparked off a stormy debate in the rank and file of the party, he said.

The BNP chief also held the ruling party responsible for the current 'anarchism' in the administration which, he said, was the outcome of politicising the administration and placing relatives of those in power in key positions.

He also accused the government of repressing its political opponents, and warned: "If the natural course of politics is halted, the political parties may opt for unconventional path to realise their rights."

She also accused the ruling party of flouting all its election pledges, particularly those regarding the agriculture sector.

It is ruining the country's agriculture by imposing surcharge on agri-inputs."

Hung parliament

From page 1

The CPI-M played a key role in hurriedly forming a United Front coalition after the 1996 polls produced a split parliament, giving no party enough seats to take power on its own.

The United Front, made up of a dozen centrist, leftist and regional groups, eventually took power on June 1 with the legislative backing of the Congress Party.

However, the CPI-M refused to join the government and turned down request to head a ministry. The party's most prominent leader, Jyoti Basu, had been urged by other parties to become the prime minister.

Basu, in a rare public outburst, later called his party's decision a "historic blunder," since then, the hardline CPI-M has been divided between those favouring and those opposed to joining a new federal government.

Basu has been heading a coalition led by the CPI-M in the eastern Indian state of West Bengal since June 1977.

The CPI-M and three other leftist parties held around 50 seats in the 545 seat dissolved parliament. The four are expected to retain the strength in the new house.

PTI quoted Surjeet as saying that Basu would be the natural choice of the leftist block if the

and instructed the district leaders to intensify the anti-government agitation in their respective areas and constituencies.

Opposing the CHT accord, the Leader of the Opposition said it would instigate separatist movement by the Garo and Monpuri tribes and one like the Bangabhumis movement.

She also come down heavily on the Awami League government, calling it a liar, inefficient and anti-people. They are out to blame the Opposition for their failures and are telling lies to hide the actual situation in the country.

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9 Sharbaharamen held in Meherpur

MEHERPUR, Jan 18: Nine

Sharbaharamen, including an Indian national were arrested last night from different villages of Sadar thana and recovered firearms from their possession, reports UNB.

The arrested were identified as Abul Kashem, Kahar, Izarul, Ziarul, Najar, Abul Hayat, Iasnabi, Mamlat and Moju.

Police said they were accused of various criminal offences including murder, terrorism and extortion.

A revolver and 10 bullets were recovered from them.

A case was lodged with Meherpur police.

Recruiting licence cancelled

The government has cancelled the recruiting licence of MS Al-Azhar Tanaga Barkat International of 94, Razi Nazrul Islam Avenue (2nd floor), Kawran Bazar, Dhaka and confiscated its deposit, reports UNB.

The so-called secular parties, they said have simply remained a playground and used the Muslim vote bank for their vested interests.

Under the present circumstances, the only way left for the Muslims was to organise themselves as an independent electoral entity to share the power structure in the country and the two constituents of the Muslim group would fight the polls on a united platform, they added.

The CPI-M and three other leftist parties held around 50 seats in the 545 seat dissolved parliament. The four are expected to retain the strength in the new house.

Meanwhile an expert told this correspondent that the government could recover its compensation for the Magurjhara incident even if the PSC was terminated. "But the question is has the government actually claimed any compensation?" the expert said.

Official sources said that the government actually did not claim any compensation for the damage of the gas