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## JS discussion on President's address may begin today

**By Staff Correspondent**

General discussion on the presidential address in the Jatiya Sangsad is likely to begin in the House today.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed addressed the inaugural sitting of this year's first session on January 14.

As the Sangsad session resumed yesterday after a four-day recess, Chief Whip Abul Hasanat Abdullah moved a motion of thanks on the presidential address. The motion was seconded by another Treasury Bench Whip, Md Abdus Shahid.

Yesterday's sitting was the third of the eighth session of the Seventh Jatiya Sangsad.

Lawmakers belonging to the major opposition party BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami continued

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## PCP member found dead in Rangamati

**By Special Correspondent**

Police recovered the body of one Ashwini Kumar Chakma, said to be an activist of the PCJSS backed Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP), at Kutubchhari under Naniarchar thana of Rangamati on Sunday night, correspondents in the district said yesterday quoting police.

They said Ashwini was beaten by a group of tribesmen, said to be activists of a faction of PCP led by Prasit Khisa when he went to Kutubchhari bazar on Saturday.

Tension was brewing at the bazar since the other faction of

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## 438 tribunals set up to settle UP polls disputes

**By Staff Correspondent**

The Election Commission (EC) has set up 438 election tribunals to settle the complaints, disputes and cases relating to Union Parishad (UP) elections held across the country last month.

Senior Assistant Judges and Assistant Judges of each district will settle the disputes and cases concerning UP elections in the areas under their respective jurisdiction, an EC press release said yesterday.

Additional District Magistrates, however, will look into the complaints concerning UP

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## Young man shot dead in city

**By Staff Correspondent**

A young man was gunned down by a gang of assailants at South Goran under Shabujbagh thana in the city yesterday.

Police identified the dead as Kamruzzaman alias Wahed, 25. The motive behind the killing could not be known immediately.

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## Inside Today

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## Sehri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Jan	Sehri	Iftar
20	20	5-20	5-39
21	21	5-20	5-40
22	22	5-20	5-41

# Over 25pc employees of NCBs don't work

## All linked with CBAs, says Task Force

**By Inam Ahmed**

More than a quarter of the employees of the country's four nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) do not work because of their links with trade unions, a task force investigation has revealed.

The Task Force on Combined Bargaining Agents (CBAs) formed last year has also found that the trade unions and CBAs of the four NCBs illegally occupy some 94,000 square feet of office space.

The union leaders in Dhaka and Chittagong use between 50 to 60 cars for their personal work everyday without any lawful authority.

The Task Force is likely to submit its findings and recommendations to the government next month. It was formed as a result of the World Bank's drive to exorcise the banks of illegal activities of trade unions.

Even in the central bank, 22 per cent of the employees do not have any work and the unions occupy 6217 square feet of office space. There are some 600 employees linked with the CBA, of whom 375 do not work.

Sonal Bank, the country's largest NCB, has the highest number of employees who do not have any work. Of its total workforce, 47.46 per cent or 6881 employees do not work but take salary. Its CBA has 5736 members.

Some 7500 square feet of office space of the bank in Dhaka is occupied by its CBA. Besides, another 27500 square feet are occupied by the unions in the GM office and regional offices. The trade unions have three to five offices in the regional offices.

Rupali Bank has the next highest percentage of work-force who do not work but take salary. Of the 1425 members of its CBA, 650 do not have to work, who constitute 25 per cent of the total number of employees. The trade unions also occupy 6000 square feet of office space of the bank.

Janata Bank has 1800 employees not working, who are 24 per cent of the total number of employees. Its CBA has 1142 members and occupy 15,000 square feet of office space.

In Agrani Bank, 800 workers or 12 per cent of the total number of employees do not work. Its CBA has 1421 members and occupy 20,000 square feet of office space.

Pubali Bank has over 200 non-working employees — over 10 per cent of the total. The CBA consisting of 700 members has about 5000 square feet of office space under its occupation.

Ultara Bank has 90 employees who do not have anything to do during office hours. Its CBA has 596 members and 3500 square feet of office space at its disposal. Besides, the trade unions of the bank also occupy some office space in three regions.

Bangladesh Shilpa Bank has a 16-member CBA, occupying 630 square feet of office space.

Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha has the smallest CBA with only 10 members. It has 120 square feet of office space.

Besides, Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) has a small CBA workforce — 150. But 30 per cent of its employees do not work. The CBA, though small, occupy 10,000 square feet of office space of the bank.

The ransacked office of the GM of Bangladesh Bank —Star photo

## Clash in BB: GM's room ransacked

**By Staff Correspondent**

A section of employees of Bangladesh Bank gave a death threat to a senior official and ransacked his office room at the central bank's head office at Motijheel in the city yesterday.

At least 10 people were injured as two factions of the bank employees clashed over the incident of attack on Mohammad Shamsuddin, General Manager (administration), at about 10 am.

The demonstration and act of violence in and around the GM's third-floor office created panic in the Bank, halting normal activities for about an hour, police said.

Witnesses said Shamsuddin took shelter in the BB Governor's office room as a mob of about 30 chased the GM and started damaging furniture in

See Page 12 Col 3

## Occidental's gasfield at Magurchhara abandoned

**From Iqbal Siddiquee**

SYLHET, Jan 19: The Magurchhara gas field has been officially declared abandoned.

Deputy Commissioner of Moulvibazar G K M Nurul Amin, when contacted tonight, told The Daily Star that the General Manager and President of the Occidental, Bangladesh Nigel Hopkins in a letter to him yesterday informed that the US company had abandoned the Magurchhara gas field for at least six months.

The letter also stated that the situation at Magurchhara was not at all risky, though there was leakage of gas through some points, the DC said adding that the company had transported most of its machineries and equipment from Magurchhara to Sylhet.

An official source, on condition of anonymity, informed today that the US company after abandoning the Magurchhara gas field, is now contenting

See Page 12 Col 3

## Canada imposes restrictions on Bangladeshi fish products

**By Shehab Ahmed and Govinda Shil**

Canada has imposed restrictions on import of Bangladeshi fish products, following the European Union (EU), putting further strain on the beleaguered 350 million US dollar frozen food industry, exporters said.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has put Bangladeshi shipments on an "import alert list", joining the EU and Kuwait to shun Bangladeshi fish, they said.

Yakub Sheikh, a Bangladeshi exporter, received a message on Thursday from CFIA official Rick Flohr confirming the "listing of all fish products imported from Bangladesh on our import alert list".

Flohr said the restrictions followed information from EU inspectors who conducted checks on Bangladeshi shrimp processors and imposed similar restrictions last year.

The information indicated that conditions for handling ice in these plants were not acceptable and that fish may be subjected to contamination, Flohr said.

The import alert will be lifted when there is sufficient data to indicate that fish from Bangladesh will meet Canadian requirements. Any plant that has its product rejected will remain on the import alert list as a mandatory alert in accordance with the Fish Inspection Regulations, Flohr noted.

The Canadian action will further jeopardise the jobs of thousands of people in shrimp farms and in the business. Mohammad Golam Mostafa, president of Bangladesh Frozen Food Exporters Association told The Daily Star yesterday.

A number of them have already been forced to close their farms, Mostafa said.

Trouble began when EU sent an inspection team to Bangladesh to identify likely health hazards from Bangladesh frozen food. It was followed by an import ban, India and Madagascar also faced similar restrictions.

In December, EU inspectors returned to Bangladesh to examine six processing plants selected for inspection.

The ban persists despite efforts by Bangladesh to lift it. The EU Standing Committee on Veterinary Affairs was likely to take up the issue yesterday.

Mostafa said unless the EU ban is lifted the Bangladesh shrimp industry will face a bleak future. A Commerce Ministry official declined to make any comment. He said he was waiting reports from Ottawa and Brussels.

Since the EU inspection, the government has helped the shrimp processors with additional

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## Another cold wave in next 48 hrs likely

**By Staff Correspondent**

Another cold wave is likely to sweep over the country within the next 48 hours, the Meteorological Department said in its weather forecast at 6 pm yesterday.

The northern region will bear the brunt of the cold wave, weather experts said.

The cold wave is likely to last for about three days, the Met Office said adding that minimum temperature during the period is likely to range between 6 to 10 degrees Celsius, while the humidity level is expected to range between 50 per cent to 80 per cent.

During the January 2-10 cold wave the lowest temperature was 6.2 degrees Celsius in the Rajshahi Division. The cold wave claimed lives of around 200 people across the country.

## \$110m ADB loan for JMB Rly Project

Bangladesh will receive 110 million US dollars concessional loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for the Jamuna Bridge Railway Link Project, reports BSS.

An agreement in this regard was signed at the bank's headquarters in Manila yesterday, a message from the Filipino capital said.

Besides Bangladesh, a number of donors including the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Canada, France and Spain are contributing to this project whose total cost is 269 million US dollars. It will integrate the gauges of the existing railway lines between the northwestern and eastern regions of the country.

Bangladesh government will provide local cost financing equivalent to 117.6 million US dollars, the message added.

A 99-km dual gauge line will be built from Jamtoli to Joydebpur on the outskirts of the capital Dhaka so that passengers and goods can be transported over the river by train without any interruption.

ADB President Mitsuo Sato and Bangladesh ambassador to the Philippines Reazul Karim signed the agreement on behalf of their respective sides.

An important part of the project is streamlining Bangladesh railways, the executing agency to make it more efficient and cost-effective. The project is expected to generate a substantial volume of new freight traffic including that of the coal and hardrock mines in the western region.

The loan will be from the Bank's special funds resources which is interest-free, the message said. The approval of the loan is subject to the condition that it (loan) would be signed when adequate financial resources are available from the ADB.

## Gunmen stab driver, kidnap businessman in Chittagong

**From Staff Correspondent**

CHITTAGONG, Jan 19: Unidentified gunmen has abducted a businessman from in front of his residence at De-wanjipukur in the heart of the city, along with his car last night, police said.

Chapal Banik, 51, owner of a jewellery house in the city, was abducted as he returned from his shop at about 9:30 pm.

The gunmen stabbed and forced out the driver of the victim's car and took him away along with the vehicle after exploding some cocktails.

Police later recovered the car from Chandgas area but the victim was yet to be rescued. Four persons were arrested in this connection.

Police said the jeweller was abducted for ransom.

Meanwhile, President of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry Kamal Uddin Ahmed, in a press statement, expressed concern over abduction of businessmen and deterioration of law and order in the city. He urged the home minister to take immediate steps in this regard.

## Tribute to Ziaur Rahman

**By Staff Correspondent**

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) paid tributes to the party's founder and late president Ziaur Rahman on his 62nd birth anniversary yesterday.

The party marked the day by placing wreaths at Zia's mazar in the city and holding discussions and milad mahfils in the city and other parts of the country. Party flag was hoisted atop the BNP central office at Naya Paltan in the capital. Party units across the country also observed the day in a befitting manner.

BNP chief and widow of the late president Begum Khaleida Zia, along with party central leaders visited Zia's mazar in the morning, placed wreaths and offered فاتحه.

Leaders of BNP's front organisations, hundreds of party workers and supporters also

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## Cases filed against 200 JU students

**By JU Correspondent**

Savar police has filed cases against about 200 students of Jahangirnagar University (JU) for their alleged involvement in 'damaging vehicles and putting up barricade on roads' during December 11-17 last year.

Officer-in-Charge of Savar thana Nabi Hossain told this correspondent yesterday that five cases have been lodged against the students.

Investigation is going on and charges are yet to be framed, he added. He however declined to disclose the name of the students.

## Rescue troops couldn't reach Bangabandhu's house

**Maj Gen Shafiullah tells court**

The order was made through Director, Military Intelligence (D.M.I) Col Salahuddin who, earlier at dawn, informed Shafiullah about tanks and force movement from the cantonment to the town.

"Later, I made direct order to rush troops to Bangabandhu's house," Shafiullah said. But he didn't elaborate as to why the force could not reach the Dhanmondi residence of Bangabandhu.

Before giving the order, the army chief said he had telephonic talks with Col Shafaat Jamil who, quoting Major Khandaker Abdur Rashid, informed him (Shafiullah) about the assassination of father of the nation.

"But I couldn't believe it," said the ruling Awami League MP, who was relieved from the charge of army chief on August 24, 1975 and sent on foreign service assignment abroad.

Shafiullah said: I also called deputy chief of Army Staff Major General Ziaur Rahman and CGS Brig Khaled Mosharraf after talking to Bangabandhu and they came to my residence.

The PW-45 further said he asked CGS Brig Khaled Mosharraf to verify what had occurred at Dhanmondi 32 house of Bangabandhu. "I don't know whom he sent."

On security measures of the then Army Headquarters from where he was taken to radio station at gun point, the former chief said it can't be called well-guarded.

"Till then, no armed guard was there (AHQ)," Shafiullah said informing that his residence, 'Senabhaban', was, however, well-protected.

When asked about his job in foreign service, the witness said he was compelled to accept it. Shafiullah discharged the duty till July, 1991.

The retired army chief said he joined his first assignment in foreign service in Kuala Lumpur on January 3, 1976. "Before that, I stayed at Senabhaban under guard."

Replying to a defence lawyer's suggestion, Shafiullah, a sector commander in the country's Liberation War, admitted that he had recommended not to dismiss Major Dalim and Major Noor from army.

Major Noor was an ADC of

See Page 12 Col 6

## New fleets of illegal rickshaws take to city streets as Eid nears

**By Morshed Ali Khan**

Thousands of unauthorised rickshaws have suddenly taken to the city roads with the advent of the coming Eid festival.

According to Dhaka City Corporation officials, these new arrivals have joined other illegal rickshaws in the city — estimated to be around two lakh — and are contributing to serious traffic congestion during the festival period.

DCC sources alleged that despite repeated warnings different trade unions were still issuing their own number plates, further worsening the city's traffic situation.

This year the number of new arrivals is so apparent in the city streets that we ourselves are surprised," said a DCC Revenue Department official requesting anonymity.

It is believed that these new fleets of rickshaws have come from surrounding towns and unions of the city.

A rickshaw garage owner at the city's Agargaon's BNP Bazar, Aleem, said all his 200 rickshaws were on the city streets. "On an average a quarter of our fleet is idle because we cannot find pullers," Aleem said adding, "but with the beginning of the Ramadan rickshaw pullers from different parts of the country have come to Dhaka."

He said this was one of the reasons why so many rickshaws were on the streets these days. In Agargaon where there are at least five large rickshaw garages, local people said under one valid licence up to ten rickshaws were plying.

Moreover, trade unions such as Jatiya Rickshaw Chalak Sramik League and Mahanagar Rickshaw Chalak Samity were

Traffic jam in the busy Motijheel commercial area in the city. —Star photo

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