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Japan praises 3-nation Business Summit

The Government of Japan has highly praised the Business Summit meeting of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan held on January 15 under the initiative of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, reports BSS.

In a press release issued by the Japanese foreign ministry, the Japanese government regarded the business summit as demonstration of the three countries' strong will to work at regional cooperation and trade liberalisation within South Asia.

"The Japanese government also expects that an attempt like this summit will contribute further to promote regional cooperation," said the press release made available in the city yesterday.

The Japanese government also referred to the meeting of the prime ministers of both Pakistan and India during the business summit and said this had indicated two countries' strong intention to continue the series of bilateral talks which resumed in March last year.

The government of Japan appreciates this and hopes that further progress will be made in bilateral talks in future.

Health policy at final stage

A health policy suited to time and need is now at the final stage for approval of the government, reports BSS.

This was disclosed at a meeting of the Estimate Committee of the Parliament yesterday held at Sangsad Bhaban with its president Dr Mizanul Haq in the chair.

Health and Family Welfare Secretary Mohammad Ali informed the committee that Food and Nutrition policy has already been approved by the Cabinet.

The meeting discussed the overall activities and responsibilities of various departments, directorates and organisations under the Health and Family Welfare Ministry.

The meeting was also informed about the progress of different development projects under the ministry.

Committee members A S M Firoz, Prof Mohammad Abdul Kuddus, Dr T I M Fazle, Rabbi Chowdhury, Sultan Mohammad Monsur Ahmed and Akteruzzaman attended the meeting.

Survey of khas land in two hill dists soon

State Minister for Land Rashed Mosharraf yesterday told the Jatiya Sangsad that survey would be conducted in Khagrachhari and Bandarban districts soon to assess khas lands, reports BSS.

The state minister was responding to a supplementary from Awami League member Bir Bahadur (Bandarban) who wanted to know the reason as to why Khagrachhari and Bandarban districts were shown blank in the district-wise list of khas lands tabled in the House.

The state minister said prior to the signing of the peace treaty there was no congenial atmosphere in those two hill districts to conduct surveys of khas lands.

Fish products

From page 1
tional bank credits to refurbish their factories to comply with the EU regulations, Mostafa said.

He said the industry, employing about one crore people directly or indirectly, is surviving on exports to US, Japan and non-EU countries.

Mostafa and some others in the industry said despite commendable steps like extending credits up to Tk 40 lakh to modernise farms, there has not been much effort to lobby in the EU to lift the ban.

The government revamped a 1989 law last year to meet the EU regulations but raised the annual charges on different counts by 100 percent that made the exports costlier and less competitive, they added.

Mostafa said that the shrimp processors, beleaguered by the EU ban, affecting 42 per cent of the exports, are counting the costs of blocked exports with freezing cost and load shedding.

He said the shrimp industry needs a shot in the arm. He demanded of government that the government increase the number of factories qualifying for meeting the EU standard. At least 25 more factories have qualified, spending upto Taka two crore.

The policy must be reviewed urgently to help the industry. Mostafa observed adding that a decision on setting up of a Shrimp Development Board remained in the chiller since 1994.

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Published by the Editor from City Publishing House Ltd, 90 Kakrail, Dhaka-1000 on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd, 52 Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No: 11, Road No: 3, Dhanmandi R/A, Dhaka-1205. PABX: 500092-4, Commercial: 500091, Fax No: 88-02-863035, GPO Box No: 3257, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA. Internet edition address: <http://www.dailystarnews.com> and Email address: dstar@bangla.net



BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia along with other party leaders placing wreaths at the *mazar* of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman in the city yesterday to mark his birth anniversary.

—Star photo

35 injured in post-polls clash in Tarash

SIRAJGANJ, Jan 19: At least 35 people were injured in a post-election clash between two rival groups of supporters at Magurabond Union in Tarash thana today, reports BSS.

Witnesses said the clash took place when the supporters of newly elected chairman of the union attacked the supporters of the defeated candidate in the morning.

Seven of the injured — Khalil, 45, Alal, 32, Rajab, 30, Jalal, 35, Gulbahar, 45, Siraj, 32, and Alauddin, 36, — were admitted to Sadar Hospital in critical condition. Two cases were filed.

**One beaten to
death in N'ganj**

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Jan 19: One person was killed when he was attacked by an unidentified gang at Rupshi Bazar under Rupganj thana today.

The dead was identified as Fazil Haque, 40. He was severely beaten up when he was setting up his make-shift shop at the bazar, police said. Haque was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries at around 4 am today.

A case was filed with Rupganj thana by the victim's father in this connection.

Bus dacoity on Dhaka-Kapasia road

GAZIPUR, Jan 19: Gunmen in the guise of passengers boarded a minibus and looted the valuables of the passengers in broad day light on Dhaka-Kapasia road in Sadar thana today, reports BSS.

Police said the robbers swooped on the passengers when the Dhaka-bound minibus from Kapasia was passing by Rajendrapur crossing at about 10 am, leaving at least 10 people injured.

The dacoits made off with the booty at Porbari near the National Park. A case was filed with the local police.

Plan to drill

From page 1
plating to drill a new exploration well at a new location about five to six kilometres off the Magurchhara.

The company has preliminarily selected the spot which is situated at Kalapur in the Majdheen Tea Estate area, about four kilometres off from the Moulibazar-Srimangal Road.

Occidental has also completed the design of the proposed new well, the source said, adding that a private construction firm will be instructed to begin the preparatory work for construction of the drilling pad on the new location within a week.

Meanwhile, hundreds of local people were found engaged in collecting scraps from around the burnt-out well and its surrounding areas for the fifth day today. They are working hard to collect the metal scraps, even those that had gone under soil following the huge explosion that occurred in the early hours of June 15 last year.

Officials of Occidental on Saturday asked some local people to collect scraps from the eastern side of the burnt-out well. Later, the company men took some video shots of the situation.

During a visit to the Magurchhara gas field site yesterday, hundreds of people from the nearby areas with crowbars, spades and hammers were seen working hard to collect scrap items even from under the soil.

None of the officials of Occidental, except only a few private security men hired by the company, were found in the area.

Occidental officials were arrested several times by hundreds of local people when they

successful soldier, freedom fighter as well as a successful statesman.

Chaired by BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, the meeting was addressed by Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury, Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Barrister Moudud Ahmed, M K Anwar, Jatiya Press Club President Reazuddin Ahmed, DUTA President Prof Yusuf Haider, Supreme Court Bar Association General Secretary Jainul Abedin, DU teacher Prof Attab Ahmed and Prof Jahana Begum.

Calling Zia a great reformer of politics, the BNP Secretary General said Zia proclaimed independence in 1971 and he had fought actively in the Liberation War.

Bhuiyan accused the present government of tarnishing the image of Ziaur Rahman in many ways. "It will never be possible to make anybody great by dishonoring other," he said.

Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury said Ziaur Rahman had united all the tribal people in the country by introducing 'Bangladesh Nationality'.

He said many people are apprehending that by signing the CHT accord the present government will be forced in the future to sign more agreements like 'Bangabandhu Andolan' amidst pressure by the secessionists.

Later, Begum Zia distributed prizes among the winners who took part in extempore speech and art competitions organised last year on the occasion of the 61st birthday of Ziaur Rahman.

An assistant manager of the Bank filed a case with Motijheel thana in connection with the incident. At that time, the attackers had an altercation with their rivals who were reportedly supporters of the CBA.

At one stage, they chased each other and were locked in a scuffle. They exchanged bricks in which some employees were injured. However, the clash was stopped by Motijheel police who rushed to the spot.

An assistant manager of the Bank filed a case with Motijheel thana in connection with the incident. No one was, however, arrested.

Clause 57 of the Banking Company Act of 1991 prescribes two years imprisonment and a fine of Tk 20,000 for resorting to such violent activities and disrupting normal work in a bank.

Tribute

From page 1
placed wreaths and offered jathaka.

In the afternoon, BNP organised a discussion meeting on the life and achievements of Ziaur Rahman at the Minto Road official residence of Begum Zia, who is also Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad. She attended it.

Gasfield abandoned

From page 1
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None of the officials of Occidental, except only a few private security men hired by the company, were found in the area.

Occidental officials were arrested several times by hundreds of local people when they

tried to transport some of its equipment like, pump sets, generator, caravan etc from Magurchhara area during the last three days.

The local people created barricade by putting logs on the road and asked the Occidental officials for immediate repair of the Bhanugachhi-Srimangal Road which was badly damaged after the June 15 explosion and has been lying unusable for the last seven months. The agitating people even put barricade on the way of a bulldozer Sunday.

Meanwhile, gas leakage through many points near the burnt-out well continued yesterday. Bubbling of gas on the pond-like spot at the eastern side of the well and that on the northern side of the nearby rail track was clearly visible yesterday afternoon.

Occidental began drilling of the relief well on its third location at Magurchhara with a view to sealing the burnt-out well from October 6 last year.

The company completed the task by capping the mouth of the damaged well through diagonal drilling and immediately after this the company started transportation of the huge machineries and equipment from the location, abandoning the gas field area without informing any of the authorities like district administration, Railways or Petrobangla, sources alleged.

It caused strong resentment among the people of the nearby areas who suffered due to the explosion. Occidental did not even repair the Bhanugachhi-Srimangal Road, pay compensation money to the Khasias or the tea gardens.

Occidental officials were arrested several times by hundreds of local people when they

Binman to procure two aircraft, JS told

Binman Bangladesh Airlines plans to take lease of two aircraft in the current fiscal year, parliament was told yesterday, reports UNB.

One aircraft will be procured for operating in the domestic routes and another wide-bodied plane for carrying Hajj pilgrims, said State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Engr Mosharraf Hossain while replying to a starred question of Master Mujibur Rahman (AL-Sharlatpur).

On a separate question from Tajul Islam (AL-Comilla), he said the government and the Binman Management would take necessary steps to expand the fleet as per recommendations of the Fleet Planning Committee of Binman.

A six member enquiry committee has been investigating the F-28 accident which occurred at Sylhet on December 22, the minister said, adding that the extent of damage can be ascertained after submission of the enquiry committee report.

He said the damaged F-28 aircraft is not repairable according to preliminary observation by the insurance company which agreed to pay the total compensation money for the accident.

Engr Mosharraf said steps have been taken to provide compensation to the passengers of the ill-fated aircraft through the insurance company both for physical injuries and mental sufferings.

**Cabinet meet
held**

The regular weekly meeting of the Cabinet was held at the Jatiya Sangsads Bhaban yesterday, reports UNB.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina chaired the meeting, said an official handout.

**Policy formulated
for distribution
of farm khas
lands: Minister**

State Minister for Land Rashed Mosharraf yesterday told the Jatiya Sangsads that present government had formulated a national policy for distributing farm khas lands in 1997, reports BSS.

Replying to a question from Awami League member Md Wazid Uddin Khan the state minister said national level, district level and thana level farm khas land distribution committees had already been formed to properly distribute those lands among landless, destitutes and crippled freedom fighters.

Replying to a question from Awami League member Md Selim the state minister informed the House that measures were taken to recover illegally occupied khas lands across the country.

JS discussion

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their abstention from Parliament.

Other business transactions during yesterday's brief sitting include, introduction of a bill by Finance Minister, and a one-hour question-answer session.

The bill, styled 'The Comptroller and Auditor General (Remuneration and Privileges) Bill, 1997', seeks to provide the Comptroller and Auditor General with 2.5 per cent higher salary than that of a secretary of the government.

There would be no income tax on the payable salary of the Comptroller and Auditor General. Under the provisions of the Bill, he would be provided with a full-furnished house, and other facilities and privileges as enjoyed by a Secretary.

Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria in his statement said that the bill was aimed at simplifying the complex procedures of the fixation and settlement of salaries and remuneration of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The bill also seeks to repeal the Comptroller and Auditor General (Remuneration and Privileges) Ordinance, 1976, but included an especial provision of giving monthly salary at the rate of Tk 10,762.50 from January 1 to June, 1995 and Tk 11,275 from July 1, 1995 till the enactment of the bill.

The two-hour sitting, chaired by Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury was adjourned at 1.10 pm. The House will resume at 11 am today.

Young man

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ately.

Fatally injured Wahed was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the on-duty doctors declared him dead. The body was sent to hospital morgue for autopsy.

Hospital sources said the gang of about four young men fired on Wahed when he