

Launch capsized
2 drown, 150
missing in
Pirojpur

PIROJPUR, Jan 22: Two women drowned and 150 people were missing when a launch capsized in river Kocha near Togra ferry ghat in the district today, reports UNB.

The two women could not be identified immediately.

Survivors said the overloaded launch, MV Baleshwar, sank in the midstream of the river when a cargo vessel, MV Faysal, hit it at about 12:45 pm.

They alleged that the master of the Pirojpur-bound launch, ignored the signal of the cargo to maintain a safe distance from it. The launch with about 200 people on board started its journey from Bargaon.

About 50 passengers, who were on the rooftop of the launch, managed to swim ashore. But the rest, mainly women and children, were feared drowned.

Seven of the survivors were admitted to Pirojpur Sadar Hospital.

Deputy Commissioner A T M Zulfiqar Haider Chowdhury and Police Super Mia Abul Hosain visited the spot, about seven-km south from the district headquarters.

Two crew of the cargo vessel — Babul Molla and Akhtar Hossain — were arrested as they tried to escape after anchoring the vessel at Indurkani ghat.

Rescue teams were continuing their search for the missing persons.

**MOU with French
co to lease
F-28 aircraft**

By Special Correspondent

Bangladesh Biman has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with TAT, a French aviation company, to dry lease a Fokker-28-4000 aircraft, official sources said.

It would replace the similar aeroplane Biman lost in an accident in Sylhet last month.

Biman negotiated the MOU after shortlisting four companies out of 22 companies which offered quotes for the dry lease. But the sources declined to disclose details of the agreement.

They said after the deal with TAT is finalised, the aircraft would be on a dry lease for a year and the agreement can be terminated by either side on three months notice.

The deal is expected shortly as Biman is facing trouble in continuing its service in the domestic route, which is now in disarray following the crash.

See Page 12 Col 4

**Bangladeshi farmers
get back 40-bigha
land along
border with India**

Bangladeshi peasants have regained the possession of 40 bighas of land in the frontier between Meherpur and Nadia in West Bengal, said a BDR press release, reports UNB.

It said the land between border pillars 126 and 127 at Rudranagar has been under the possession of Bangladeshi nationals since independence.

But a recent move by Indian nationals with the help of BSF men to capture the land led to a squabble between nationals of the two countries.

The Bangladeshi farmers got back the right to cultivate the land as per the decision of a BDR-BSF meeting held on January 9, the press release said yesterday.

Inside Today
Article

**Food First: The
Sweat of Other
Men's Faces**

Colum: Do I Dare
by A Z M Obaidullah
Khan
Page 4

Focus

'Participatory' water
management: Towards
a new horizon; and
Netaji: A reminiscence

Page 5

Business

India targets 25pc of
global spices market

DSE index posts
9-point rise
Pages 6, 7

Blast in cosmetics factory in city claims 7 lives



Relatives of explosion victims wailing at the DMCH yesterday.

— Star photo

By Staff Correspondent
At least seven young
men were killed and three
seriously injured in an
explosion in a small
cosmetics factory at Rah-
matganj in the old part of
the city yesterday.

Police said the victims
were workers of Motilal
Chemical Company located
on the first floor of a
two-storey building on
Hajra Bally Road under
Lalbagh than.

The dead were identi-
fied as Sumon, 20; Ali
Hossain, 24; Delwar, 30;
Zakir, 20; Md Hossain, 22;
Md Ali, 20; and Badal, 21.
They succumbed to burn
injuries at the Dhaka Medi-
cal College Hospital (DMCH).

The injured — Zahir,
16; Amir, 14, and Javed,
15 — were admitted to the
DMCH. Their condition was
critical, hospital
sources said.

All the victims suffered
burns. The explosion
was ignited reportedly by
a candle in the congested
factory full of chemicals
at about 1:30 am.

About 10 workers in
the factory workshop lit
candles to continue work-
ing as the locality plunged
into darkness

See page 12 Col 1

Star photo

Short-term effect of crises in SEA

Bangladeshis will lose jobs, exports to suffer

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi and Reaz Ahmad

Bangladesh is counting the costs of the crises plaguing Asia's so-called tiger economies.

An yet-uncalculated short-term cost is loss of jobs by Bangladeshis in these countries, notably in Malaysia. In the longer run, the country's exports are exposed to a stiff competition from the countries whose currencies have lost value drastically.

A top Bangladesh Bank official said loss of employment by Bangladeshis would reduce remittance from Southeast Asia, but would be "covered by increased receipts" from such

countries as the United States because of improved fund transfers for facilities.

"There hasn't been any impact so far," said Deputy Governor Khondker Ibrahim Khaled.

The central bank officials have also ruled out any direct impact on the Bangladesh currency.

According to Metropolitan Chamber, Bangladeshi ready-made garments and leather products, among others, will feel the pinch. The chamber however doesn't see any major problem for Bangladesh in terms of loss in export revenue as the volume of exports to these countries is quite insignificant.

Meanwhile, the government

See Page 12 Col 2

Arms surrender from Feb 10

Prime Minister may be present on first day

(PCJSS) on December 2.

A NCCHT-PCJSS meeting earlier on January 15 had decided that the Shantibabini men will surrender their arms and ammunition to the government on February 9, 16, 22 and 28.

Meanwhile, the government has constituted a three-member Implementation Committee headed by NCCHT Convenor Chief Whip Abul Hasnat Abdulla to monitor the implementation of the agreement.

The tribals will lay down their arms as per the peace accord signed between the government and Parbattyachar Jana Sanghati Samity

See Page 12 Col 8

Writ challenging legality of CHT accord rejected

By SC correspondent

The High Court yesterday summarily rejected a writ petition challenging the legality of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Agreement signed between the government and the Parbattyachar Jana Sanghati Samity on December 2.

But soon after the rejection of his petition, the writ petitioner, Advocate Shamsuddin Ahmed, said that he would go to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court to challenge the HC order of rejection.

The division bench of the HC comprising Justice Razi Shafiq and Justice Syed JR Modassir Hossain after hearing the petition on the question of issuance of rule refused to ac-

See Page 12 Col 4

Clinton admits he had affair with Flowers

WASHINGTON, Jan 22: President Bill Clinton has acknowledged for the first time last Saturday that he had an affair with Gennifer Flowers during the 1970s, AP said quoting a published report.

The Washington Post says in today's editions that the statement came during the president's six-hour deposition in the Paula Jones sexual harassment lawsuit. The Post quoted

Asked for comment, she said, "I have none at this time," but then added, "it's hard to believe after all this time...," she said. She said she planned to make a fuller statement later today.

The Post said White House special counsel Lanny Davis declined to comment about the testimony on Flowers, citing the gag order imposed by the judge in the Jones case.

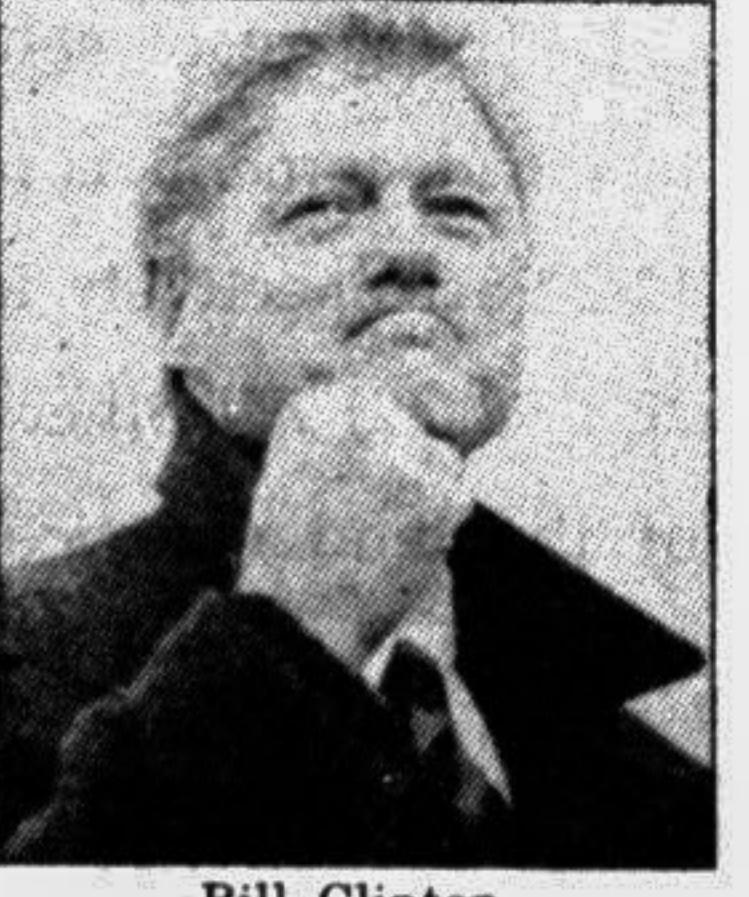
Reuter adds: British newspapers today raised the spectre of the Watergate scandal that toppled Richard Nixon in reporting new accusations of sexual impropriety against President Clinton.

The tabloid Daily Star pro-

See Page 12 Col 5

— Star photo

See Page 12 Col 5



Bill Clinton

Sharif to punish
those responsible
for 71 'tragedy'

KARACHI, Jan 22: Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif promised today to punish those responsible for the 1971 "tragedy" when East Pakistan broke away to become the independent state of Bangladesh, reports AFP.

"This is unfortunate that nobody was punished for that tragedy," he said in a speech.

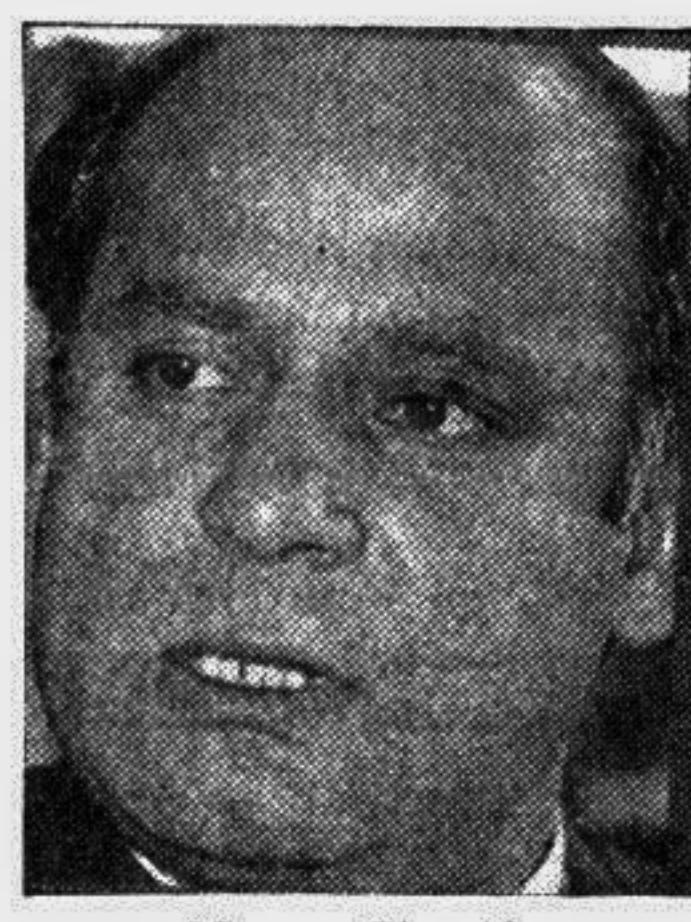
"But we have four years with us and we will definitely do that," Sharif said, addressing a gathering of an allied party, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM).

Sharif, elected in February for a five-year term, said it was tragic that those who "dismembered" Pakistan had become its "respectable citizens."

Sharif did not specify whom he blamed for the dismemberment, which followed a military crackdown against Bengalis under military President Yahya Khan and a war with India which sent its troops into Bangladesh.

A high-level judicial inquiry was held into the 1971 debacle but the report has never been made public.

The MQM, which represents immigrants to Pakistan from India after the subcontinent's partition in 1947, has been demanding the repatriation of more than 200,000 Pakistani nationals who have remained stranded in Bangladesh since 1971.



Nawaz Sharif

The issue of repatriation came up during Sharif's visit to Bangladesh recently. Sharif said repatriation would start when funds were available. A Saudi Arabia-based religious body, Rabita Al-Islami is reportedly trying to raise the money.

A few hundred stranded Pakistani were repatriated from Bangladesh during Sharif's earlier term as Prime Minister from 1990 to 1993.

At the MQM function today, Sharif distributed cheques to children of MQM activists killed in Karachi during former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's rule.

The injured were identified as Swapan and Al Amin. Five rounds of gunshots were heard during the incident from Mohsin Hall area of the university.

The activist of the rival BCL factions damaged chairs and window panes of the first floor of the building where the office of the Marketing Department is located.

The tender box was closed following the clash.

Police conducted a raid in

Low turnout
JS session
adjourned
till Feb 8

By Staff Correspondent

The current session of the Jatiya Sangsad was adjourned yesterday till February 8.

Yesterday was the fifth working day of the seventh session that began on January 14.

The House witnessed a dull business yesterday with a very low turnout of lawmakers from the ruling Awami League and the Jatiya Party. The opposition BNP legislators were continuing their boycott. It was private members' day yesterday.

Lack of quorum in the House yesterday forced the Chair to suspend the business briefly and ring the bell to have the out-of-House lawmakers inside.

After the question-answer

See Page 12 Col 6

**BCL factions
clash over
tender at DU**

By DU Correspondent

Two persons were injured when rival factions of the ruling party-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) clashed on the Dhaka University campus yesterday.

The rival groups clashed with brickbats and stones near the Commerce Building of the university over submitting tender forms for buying computers worth Tk 25 lakh for the Department of Marketing, campus sources said.

The injured were identified as Swapan and Al Amin. Five rounds of gunshots were heard during the incident from Mohsin Hall area of the university.

The activist of the rival BCL factions damaged chairs and window panes of the first floor of the building where the office of the Marketing Department is located.

The tender box was closed following the clash.

Police conducted a raid in

**Attack on Ctg
BNP office**

CHITTAGONG, Jan 22: Unidentified gunmen attacked the BNP office at Nur Ahmed Sarai in the port city early today, leaving two people injured, reports UNB.

Police said the miscreants fired shots at the office at about 5:30 am, injuring Jasim, 20, son of the security guard of the BNP office at Nasir Bhaban, and Mohammad Jasimuddin, 22.

The victims, who were sleeping during the attack, were rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital with bullet wounds.

Meanwhile, city BNP at a rally today blamed Awami League and its student wing Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) for the attack, and demanded punishment to the persons responsible.

Severe traffic jam at 3 ferry ghats again

MANIKGANJ, Jan 22: A severe traffic congestion was created at Aricha, Nagarbari and Daulatdia ghats following disruption in ferry services due to thick fog today, reports UNB.

BWTC sources said about 8,000 vehicles were stranded at the three ghats as the ferry services were suspended for 11 hours since early Wednesday.

They said a seven-km-long queue of vehicles was formed on Dhaka-Aricha highway while a three-km line at Natarkhola and a two-km queue at Daulatdia ghat due to the congestion.

The problem worsened further when three ferries went out of order, disrupting road communication between Dhaka and north and southern regions of the country.

Today, a total of 454 vehicles were ferried while 1750 were waiting in queues to cross Padma and Jamuna.

The sources apprehended that the traffic jam at the ghats may take a serious turn as the Eid festival is drawing near