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Today's issue
16 pages

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Biman employees
reject pay scale,
stage sit-in

By Special Correspondent
Bangladesh Biman employees yesterday staged a sit-in at its headquarters rejecting the new pay scale proposed for them by the Finance Ministry.

They demanded a special pay structure for the airline employees. Their leaders said airlines all over the world have a specialised pay scale.

The employees later met Minister for Civil Aviation Mosharraf Hossain, who was at the Biman head office at the time, and explained various aspects of their grievances.

BNP hands over
list of 'victimised
partymen' to
US envoy

BNP kept vigil at the Bi-

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Sunken launch
salvaged: Death
toll rises to 13,
100 still missing

PIROJPUR, Jan 25: The sunken launch, MV Baleshwar, was rescued with 10 more bodies on Saturday night two days after it capsized in the river Kacha of the district, raising the death toll to 13, reports UNB.

The rescue workers apprehended that more bodies might be recovered from the river basin of Baleshwar and Kacha as over 100 passengers of the launch were still missing.

Twelve of victims were identified as Rabiu, 6, Maltun Bibi, 55, Joos Begum, 18, Zesin, 11, Nurunnesa, 22, Nawab Jan Howlader, 45, Peyara Begum, 38, Sakina Begum, 35, Rabea, 5, Asma Begum, 8, Bely Begum, 20, and Shahera Begum, 30.

Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner of the district handed over the 12 bodies to their relatives while another unidentified body of a woman has been kept at Pirojpur Adhunik Hospital.

Lailatul Qadr
tonight

Holy Lailatul Qadr will be observed by the Muslims all over the country tonight, reports BSS.

The devotees will offer prayer throughout the night, seeking divine blessings for themselves as well as for the country.

Newspapers will publish special articles highlighting its significance in today's issues while the Bangladesh Television and Bangladeshi Betar will broadcast special programmes on the occasion.

The Islamic Foundation has drawn up elaborate programmes on the occasion.

Inside Today

Article

Will East Asia
export its
Deflation abroad?

Column: Insight
by Kabir U Ahmed
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Focus

Whither equal rights?
and An approach for
reduction of urban
poverty
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Business

BOI chief targets
corruption, red tape
4-point fall in DSE
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Supplements

Today's 16-page issue
of The Daily Star
contains a 3-page
supplement on 'Real
Estate' on Pages 13, 14
& 15 and one page
supplement on
'Australia Day' on
Page 16

Sehri, Iftar timings

Ramadan Jan Sehri Iftar

26 26 5-19 5-44

27 27 5-19 5-45

28 28 5-19 5-45

Industrialists, employers demand

Scrap accord with SKOP on wages commission

By Staff Correspondent

Six leading associations of industrialists and employers yesterday demanded immediate scrapping of the agreement signed on Tuesday between the government and the Sramik Kar-machari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) on formation of a Wages Commission.

The 12-point agreement, among other things, mentioned that the Wages Commission would be formed within one month and the national minimum wages for industrial workers would be announced within six months which would be effective from July 1, 1997. It also stipulated that all regular workers will get a lump sum amount of Tk 1000 in advance and temporary workers Tk 500.

The statement was signed by Rokia A. Rahman, President, Bangladesh Employers Association, Mostafa Golam Quddus, President of Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association, Mohammad Shahjahan, Chairman of Bangladesh Textiles Mills Association, Najmul Huq, Chairman of Bangladesh Jute Spinners Association, Mirza Ali

pending implementation of the Wages Commission Award.

The government would not go for any massive denationalisation programme, the agreement said.

"It is most unfortunate that the democratically elected government yielded to the pressure of SKOP, repeating the mistake which was earlier committed by an autocratic government," the statement said.

The agreement will have far-reaching legal and adverse financial implications.

"It is a well-known fact that the SKOP does not have any legal status. The agreement is a serious blow to rule of law, which has been promised time and again by the government.

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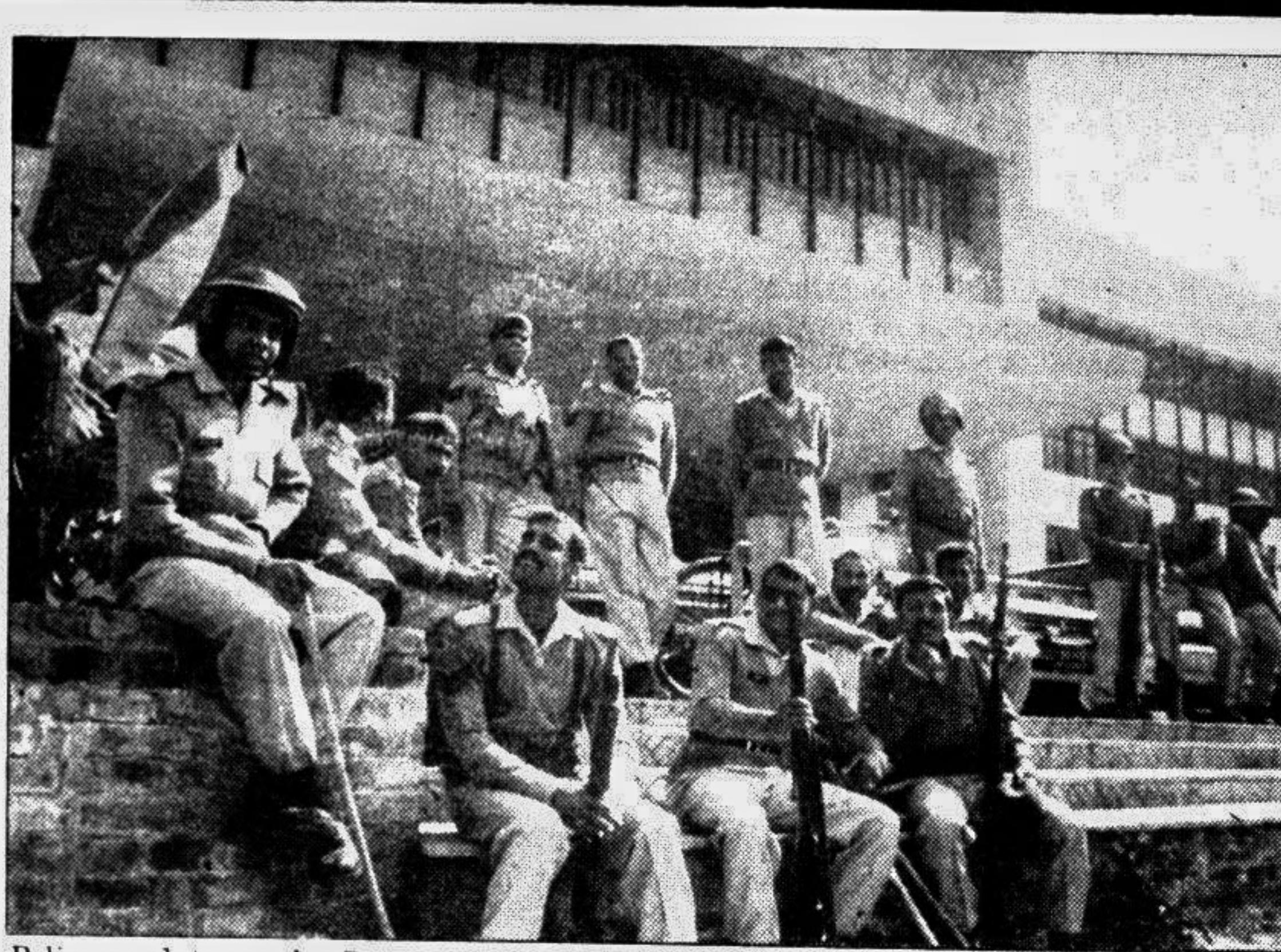
Behrouz Ispahani, Chairman of Bangladesh Jute Mills Association and Samson H Chowdhury Vice-President of Bangladesh Aushad Shilpa Samity.

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Police on duty on the Bangladesh Bank premises following a clash between rival trade union activists recently.

— Star photo

By Nazmul Ashraf

The main opposition party BNP has handed over to US Ambassador in Dhaka John C Holzman a list of its lawmakers and other leaders allegedly victimised with political cases and other 'acts of government repression'.

The list was given to Holzman during his one-hour meeting with BNP chief and Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia and three other party leaders at her Minto Road official residence in the city last night, meeting sources said, adding the list was also backed by relevant documents.

At the meeting that began at 7 pm the BNP leaders also cited incidents of "human rights violations" during the Awami League rule and explained their party's grievances blocking its return to parliament.

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Mirza Hafiz, Rafiq dropped from BNP NSC

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chief Begum Khaleda Zia has revived the process of recasting the National Standing Committee (NSC), the highest decision-making body of her party.

In the process, she dropped Mirza Golam Hafiz and Rafiq Islam from the powerful NSC on Thursday. Golam Hafiz was dropped due to his old-age complications and Rafiq for his long absence from party activities.

According to law, the lone recognised CBA of the Bank is entitled to one office in the headquarters.

"We will later decide which room to be given to the CBA," said a BB source. "But until then all offices would be kept under lock and key."

Meanwhile the investigation report identified 19 employees responsible for Monday's incident in which a General Manager of the Bank was manhandled and ten persons were injured in a clash between two factions of trade union activists.

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BB authorities put TU offices under lock and key

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) authorities yesterday put all the offices of trade unions (TUs) and the CBA in the Bank under lock and key in a bid to clamp down on trade union activities.

The BB went into action in the afternoon after reviewing the investigation report on last Monday's incident of violence in the Bank.

In line with the government's previous decision of not allowing any gathering on the city street, the authorities took the decision to ensure free movement of vehicles in the city and uphold the significance of the great Ekushey February with due solemnity.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the month-long Book Fair on the day at 10:30 am on the Academy premises.

In previous years, stalls on other items and using of mike spoiled the atmosphere of the Ekushey Book Fair.

CHT agreement anti-constitutional, says Biswas

Former President Abdur Rahman Biswas yesterday called the CHT accord 'anti-constitutional' and said that people's rights were violated by this agreement, reports UNB.

Addressing an exchange of views meeting on the Chittagong Hill Tracts accord at Jatiya Press Club, he said any decision regarding interest of the country should be taken with consensus of people.

"Opinion can't be sought from people individually. But there are their representatives — the MPs. The government should take decision considering the opinion of the MPs and experts," he said.

Biswas, who was the President from 1991 to '96, said that "the government alone can't do everything, it shouldn't."

The former President said people's rights were violated by the CHT accord, but said that

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Plan for separating under-trial and convicted prisoners

By Mizan Ali

The Home Ministry has taken up a project for separating the under-trial and convicted prisoners in the eight central jails and two of the district jails, according to official sources.

Separate 'factory units' have also been planned for all those jails.

The eight central jails are Dhaka, Rajshahi, Comilla, Jessore, Barisal, Mymensingh, Sylhet and Rangpur jails and the two district jails which are expected to come under the project are Chittagong District Jail and Bogra District Jail.

The jail administration has been asked to estimate the financial involvement of the

government for implementing the project. "It is expected that the project will be included in the Annual Development Plan for the next fiscal," said a ministry source.

The home ministry has taken up the project as part of its initiative for jail reforms on the basis of the 13 decisions agreed upon during a meeting of the ministry officials with the Prime Minister last year.

The other decisions taken at the meeting including creating more accommodation facilities for prisoners and increasing the number of kitchens and interview rooms in various jails as well as prison staff.

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7-party alliance
'demonstration
day' Feb 10

The seven-party alliance yesterday announced the countrywide 'demonstration day' on February 10 to press for cancellation of what it called black agreement on the CHT, reports UNB.

The alliance also asked for holding special prayers at mosques tomorrow and at temples and churches on February 1 seeking divine blessings for safeguarding the integrity of the country.

It will conduct mass contact

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Jewellers sell gold at much higher price

By Govinda Shil

Beware of unscrupulous jewellers if you are going to purchase any gold ornaments!

Dishonest jewellers are pocketing huge amount of money through their greedy sleight of hands by charging much more than the actual price of the bullion in the international market.

The unscrupulous ornament

sellers have fixed gold price at Tk 5,950 per tola (bhort) or 11,664 gm against its current international price of Tk 4,814 only (one ounce or 31 gm for 280 US dollars).

Ornaments sellers cannot give any satisfactory answer why the big difference still exists between the local price of gold and its international price.

"Until now, they have been careful not to demean Lewinsky's character, lest they offend her and send her into Starr's arms. But sources say they are prepared to call her integrity into doubt if she contradicts Clinton's denials, according to the Post.

Clinton advisers are bracing for a possible deal between Ginsburg and independent counsel Kenneth Starr. The Post said, such a deal would grant

"Yet lawyer William Gins-

guaranteed by these traders. Here also the customers are being cheated. Every jeweller in the city hangs a notice in his shop saying all gold items contain 21-karat.

"In most cases, buyers are cheated," said Aftab Ahmed of the Guinea Exchange Jewellers. He said many jewellers do not maintain 21-karat standard at all. The helpless buyer has to simply believe in what the seller claims as regards his merchandise. There is no other way to ascertain the purity unless the gold is melted and separated from the mix.

"This is another way of pocketing and appropriating money from the innocent people," Ahmed said claiming that he sells 22-karat guaranteed gold ornaments in the city. "They claim 21 karat and the customer sometime gets less than 18 karat," he alleged.

Any incoming Bangladeshi can bring in three kg of pure gold or equivalent gold ornaments with him under the present 'baggage rule', paying Tk 420 duty on each 11,664 gm.

"You can bring baggage of gold from abroad but you cannot sell or even display it under the existing law," said M A Wadud, President of Bangladesh Jewellers Association. "This law must be changed for the sake of easy procurement of gold for the jewellers."

Wadud, however, could not explain how pure gold was being procured for the ornaments industry. One source said gold bar is purchased from some illegal

See Page 12 Col 2

BCL activist stabbed on DU campus

By DU Correspondent

An activist of the ruling party-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League was stabbed on the Dhaka University campus yesterday by activists of a rival faction, witnesses said.

The victim was identified as Ismail Ahmed Raju, a third year student of the Department of Political Science of the Dhaka University. Raju belongs to the Tomi-Ratan faction of the BCL.

The activists of Shamim Group attacked him with *chappati* at around 12:10 pm in front of the Central Library, the witnesses said. Raju received three stab injuries in his back.

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Toll collection 3 BCL activists beaten up in Savar

By JU Correspondent

Five activists of the ruling Awami League-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League of Jahangirnagar University were assaulted when they allegedly demanded toll from traders at cattle auction at the Dairy Farm in Savar Saturday.

Witnesses said that the BCL activists came to the Dairy Farm, adjacent to the university, at around 11 am and asked the farm officials to stop the

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