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Local group to buy Peregrine's Bangladesh operations

Star Business Report
A group of local businessmen have reached an agreement with the Hong Kong-based Peregrine Capital Ltd to take over its Bangladesh operations, it was announced yesterday.

The deal, reportedly worth Tk five crore, launching a new company called Union Capital Limited, will merge the Peregrine operations and the SES Company Ltd, a brokerage firm known to have been owned by Peregrine. SES has membership on both bourses in Bangladesh.

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Opposition to demonstrate in CHT on Feb 10

CHITTAGONG, Feb 3: The Chittagong unit of BNP-led Opposition Alliance today decided to move unilaterally to thwart the government's plan to implement the 'so-called' peace accord on CHT and its related issues, reports UNB.

The local unit of the alliance will stage demonstration on February 10 as per previous decision of the central committee of the alliance.

The Chittagong unit took the decision to go ahead with the demonstration programme at its meeting held at Kazi Deuri with City BNP president Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin in the presence of the alliance.

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by Kuldeep Nayar

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Call for immediate countrywide study to assess impact

By Staff Correspondent

Experts have called for an immediate countrywide field level research to assess the impact of arsenic pollution in the country.

Though there has been partial research by government and non-government agencies, severity of the problem declared a national disaster in May last year, is yet to be ascertained. Till today, there has been no overall strategy to combat the problem.

ground water arsenic poisoning, tubewells in 52 have been found to contain the poisonous metal more than the permissible level (0.05 mg/L) recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO) that gradually kill its patients.

Bangladesh has the largest group of people at risk of the arsenic poisoning. Millions of people are at risk in Bangladesh whereas in countries like Taiwan, Japan, Canada, USA and

Star Roundtable on Arsenic Pollution

This view was expressed by some 20 experts in a Daily Star Roundtable held in the city yesterday.

According to statistics revealed by the Dhaka Community Hospital (DCH) at the Roundtable on "Arsenic Pollution: Immediate Tasks and Future Vision," about 76 million people across the country are at risk of arsenic poisoning. DCH data also shows that out of 60 districts so far surveyed for

Chile, where similar problems exist, the number of people at risk is in thousands only.

As there was no global experience about the problem of such a magnitude anywhere else in the world, some speakers underscored the need for finding solutions from its own experience.

"Policymakers are responsible for today's fate of ground water arsenic contamination,"

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The participants in The Daily Star Roundtable on 'Arsenic Pollution: Immediate Tasks and Future Vision' at Hotel Sheraton yesterday.

AL for Speaker-mediated dialogue with BNP

By Nazmul Ashraf

In a major breakthrough in the long-persisting stand-off between the ruling Awami League and the major opposition BNP, the government has agreed to give further concessions as regards BNP's preconditions for going back to the Jatiya Sangsad.

"We've agreed to obtain a High Court permission for holding public rally at the eastern part of the National Eidgah field as the BNP demanded for a venue adjacent to the Jatiya Press Club for the purpose," AL's key negotiator Mohammad Nasim told The Daily Star last night.

"I called BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan over telephone and invited him to sit across the table with the

Speaker to mediate the proposed dialogue," Nasim, also the Telecommunications and Works Minister, said referring to his talks with the BNP leader yesterday morning.

The ruling party's move came four days ahead of resumption of the Sangsad session.

During a five-day meeting of the BNP Parliamentary Party, held with the beginning of the Sangsad's eighth session on January 14, most of the BNP MPs suggested that the party end its indefinite boycott of parliament session. The party started the boycott on August 30 last year.

Nasim further said he proposed to the BNP Secretary General that the two parties sit for

a fresh dialogue at the chamber of Speaker Humayun Rashid Choudhury or any other place to be chosen by the opposition party.

Meanwhile, Speaker Humayun Rashid Choudhury has expressed his desire to broker another round of government-opposition talks to break the JS stalemate caused by BNP's boycott of parliament.

A BNP legislator, Prof Shahidul Islam yesterday quoted the Speaker as telling him on Monday that he (Speaker) was ready to mediate a dialogue between the government and the Opposition.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, Islam further quoted the Speaker as saying that he

Progress in talks to resume Rohingya repatriation

By Special Correspondent

Bangladesh and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees have made progress in talks over resuming repatriation of Rohingya refugees, UNHCR officials said yesterday.

"We have made good progress," a senior UNHCR official said after two days of talks between government officials and a UNHCR team, which arrived in Dhaka Sunday.

Led by Francois Foinat, director of the agency's Asia Pacific operations, the team held meetings with Home Minister Rafiqul Islam and high officials to resume repatriation of some 21,000 Rohingya refugees.

"We looked at the possibility of restarting the repatriation as soon as possible," said the UNHCR official who declined to be identified. "We stressed on a voluntary repatriation and on peaceful resolution of the standoff at two refugee camps in

See page 12 Col 7

BJP vows to build temple on Babri Mosque site

NEW DELHI, Feb 3: The right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party said today that if it wins power in parliamentary elections later this month, it will not compromise on core issues such as building a Hindu temple on a site where its followers razed a mosque six years ago, reports AP.

In its manifesto, the BJP pledged to build a "magnificent" temple in honour of the Hindu god Ram in Ayodhya, 500 kilometres (300 miles) east of New Delhi.

"Ram lies at the core of Indian consciousness," the BJP manifesto said. "The BJP will explore all consensual and legal and constitutional means to facilitate the construction of the Ram Mandir (temple) at Ayodhya."

The demolition of a mosque at the site where the BJP wants to build a temple touched off Hindu-Muslim riots across India that killed 2,000 people, mostly Muslims.

The BJP state government in Uttar Pradesh, where Ayodhya is located, on Monday withdrew criminal charges filed against its supporters by a previous socialist government for demolishing the mosque.

The BJP manifesto also touched on its main rival, the Congress Party, which has looked to the Italian-born widow of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to drum up support.

"In the coming election, the

US State Department report on Bangladesh

Govt continues to restrict or deny many fundamental rights

By Special Correspondent

A 1997 human rights report by the US State Department has chided Bangladesh for its alleged violations of fundamental rights, but praised the country's judiciary for a 'high degree' of independence.

The report made available to reporters yesterday mentioned political violence, intimidation, custodial deaths and frequent abuses like torture and rape.

The government continues to restrict or deny many fun-

damental rights. Police committed extrajudicial killings, and some people died in police custody under suspicious circumstances," the report alleged.

US Embassy spokesman John Kincannon, presenting the report at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club, said it had been prepared on the basis of newspaper reports, interviews with hundreds of people, including human rights activists, journalists and intellectuals.

The report may seem harsh but comparing it with those on other nations, it would not seem that harsh, he said, noting that in presenting this year's report to Congress, Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott and Assistant Secretary for Human Rights John Shattuck

singled out Bangladesh's efforts to combat child labour as a "notable and praiseworthy human rights endeavour."

Their comments came in the midst of critical comments on aspects of the human rights performance of some other countries. Kincannon added in his opening remarks before presenting the report to reporters.

"We hope to share our views with you on the human rights situation in Bangladesh, praising it where Bangladesh has made accomplishments, and noting our views where Bangladesh has sometimes not lived up to the commitments it undertook in signing the universal declaration (on human rights)," Kincannon said.

He said the US congressional

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Prof Yunus awarded honorary degree by University in Belgium

By Staff Correspondent

Prof Mohammad Yunus of Grameen Bank on Monday received the degree of Doctor Honoris Causa from the Catholic University of Leuven in Brussels, Belgium.

The degree was conferred in

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Tk 140cr silk development project starts next month

Govinda Shil, back from Manikganj

The Textile Ministry is going to implement a World Bank-financed project from next month to promote silk products in the country.

The Tk 140 crore (30 million US dollars) Silk Foundation project is aimed at boosting production of quality silk worm, ensuring training for the growers and helping the farmers from cooperatives.

AKM Zahangir Hussain, State Minister for Textile, told The Daily Star at the Manikganj Aysha Abed Foundation yesterday that the main field level work under the project will be in the silk producing zones of Rajshahi, Jamalpur, Sherpur and Manikganj. The head office of the project will be in the capital.

The minister was enquiring into the reasons why the public sector silk production projects were incurring losses. As a part

of his investigation, he will visit some projects in Rajshahi today.

He said that he also talked with official of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee — the lone non-government organisation which produces the country's 40 per cent silk yarn — to know their profit earning mechanism.

Along, BRAC's sales and display centre, markets its own silk products like Saree, Punjabe, Selwar-Kamij and other wears and wall decoration pieces produced by their contract growers and weavers.

The State Minister visited different raw silk producing units and also handlooms producing silk products in the district Dr Makbul Ahmed Khan, Textile Advisor to the Ministry, Dr Riaz Khan, head of BRAC's silk project and a group of jour-

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NOTICE (Regarding Audit of Firms Registered under Value Added Tax)

"জাতীয় রাজস্ব সংরক্ষণে অংশ নিই"
"পুসক অভিতে সহযোগিতা করুন"

Value Added Tax (VAT) system has been introduced from 1st July, 1991. Under this system, a tax-payer himself calculates the payable tax at the time of delivering/providing the goods or service to the consumer and deposits in the government exchequer. That is a goods manufacturer/service provider realises this tax from the consumer at the time of selling goods/providing service and deposits in the government exchequer.

The responsibility of VAT management is to verify whether this tax is properly calculated and paid in due time & due amount and maintain the national revenue paid by the consumer.

To ensure realisation of the due amount of revenue in due time, the VAT management often undertakes audit of some activities of some selected tax-payer firms. For this, the firm selected for audit is earlier informed to keep ready such documents of account as may be required for audit. Therefore, it is not possible to complete the audit smoothly & effectively within the prescribed time without sincere cooperation of the authorities of registered firm.

Under Rule 34 of VAT Act 1991 any registered tax-payer firm is bound to produce any kind of document of accounts to the audit officers on demand; otherwise it is considered as punishable offence under Rule 37.

Under the circumstance, all the tax-payer firms registered under VAT Act are requested to actively cooperate in the auditing. The respective firm may ensure, prior to auditing, whether the audit officers are carrying proper ID Card & audit order issued by the Commissioner concerned.

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National Board of Revenue

Is the Oslo Accord dead?

From Azizur Rashid

NEW DELHI, Feb 3: Is the Oslo Peace Accord between the PLO and Israel dead?

Posing this question, now at the heart of many, Phyllis Bennis of the Institute for Policy Studies, USA, and panelist at the 'Regional Seminar for Journalists on the Question of Palestine' that opened here today, said, "Peace is not lowering of conflict, it is bringing of justice."

The UN has created Israel, so it should continue its fight against Israel and also for peace, she added.

Reacting instantly to her remark, Dr Ron Pundik of Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace in Israel,

and an architect of the Oslo Accord, protested saying, "The Oslo Accord is not dead. It's a continuous process."

Claiming that he is not a government representative at the seminar, he said "the clear and basic idea of Oslo Accord was self-determination of the Palestinians."

The two-day regional also discussed "Retrospective Review of the Peace Process" and "The Economic Picture" of Palestine in two sessions.

After the opening remarks by Mian Qadri-Din, Director, DPI, UN, K Raghunath, the Indian Foreign Secretary, in his welcome address reaffirmed India's support to the peace process.

He said the talks for peace must continue and the implementation process should be time-bound.

The moderator of both the sessions was Peter Hansen, Commissioner-General, UN-RWA.

Replying to Pundik's views, Chimmaya Garekhan, UN Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, said "The Oslo Accord is in a coma, not dead, for lack of mutual trust."

There is no alternative to the revival of the Oslo Accord for an independent Palestine, he said. "The peace process has brought legitimacy to the

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Illegal trade in wildlife DCC issuing 'permission' to keep endangered species as pets

By Morshed Ali Khan and Inam Ahmed

The Dhaka City Corporation is issuing so-called 'permissions' to keep endangered species as pets.

A Daily Star investigation reveals that the DCC is issuing these 'permissions' on the basis of the DCC Ordinance which obliges one to seek permission from the City Corporation to keep a pet.

In one such instance, a resi-

dent of Gulshan procured a pair of bears for which the DCC's Chief Vet Dr M A Ali issued the permission on November 24 last year defying the law of the land.

Bear is a protected animal listed in the "Third Schedule" of the Bangladesh Wildlife (Preservation) (Amendment) Act, 1974. Animals and birds listed under this schedule "shall

not be hunted, killed or captured."

A top Forest Department official of Dhaka Division said, "It is totally illegal to keep bears as pets."

According to the Act, authorised Forest Department officials may, "pending legal action, seize any wild animal which has not been legally ac-

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5 of a family die of mysterious disease in Lalmonirhat

LALMONIRHAT, Feb 3: Five members of a family died of a mysterious disease at Saralkhan village in Aditmari thana of the district in last six days, reports UNB.

Some other people were also attacked by the disease with symptoms of fever, dysentery and blood vomiting.

Panic stricken people started fleeing the villages of the area.

One of the affected people is now undergoing treatment at Lalmonirhat Sadar Hospital while two others returned home without treatment.

Of the dead, four were identi-

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Girl burnt alive, 15 houses gutted in Sirajganj

SIRAJGANJ, Feb 3: A minor girl was burnt alive and 10 others received injuries when a fire broke out at a village in Royganj thana in the district on Monday night, reports UNB.

Police said Anjana, 11, daughter of Fazar Ali of Alakdia village in the thana was killed and 15 houses were gutted in fire.

Property worth about Tk 15 lakh was damaged, villagers said.

The injured people were admitted to the local health complex.

Anup Chetia not produced in court

By Staff Correspondent

Anup Chetia alias Golap Barua, said to be the secretary general of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), who was scheduled to be produced in the court of the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM), Dhaka yesterday, was not brought there as the prosecution claimed that he was suffering from 'blood dysentery'.

A fresh date for producing him in the court will be fixed by the CMM's court when the jail authorities submit their report on his recovery from the ailment, the CMM ordered.

Arrested on December 21, 1997 under Section 54 of the

See page 12 Col 2

One killed, 10 hurt as villagers clash in Faridpur

From Our Correspondent

FARIDPUR, Feb 3: One person was killed and 10 others were injured, five of them seriously, in a clash between two rival groups of villagers in Sonapur union under Nagarkanda thana today.

According to witnesses, the clash took place after a cow damaged crops on a land at village Rang Rayer Kandi.

Both the groups equipped with arms locked in clash that left 10 persons injured.

Of the injured, one Chhiru Mia, 34, succumbed to injuries on way to the hospital while four others were admitted to Faridpur general hospital in a critical condition.

They are Chhunnu, 32, Bishu Mia, 28, Alauddin, 32 and Shuruj, 33.

A tense situation is prevailing in the area.

Murder of ex-principal Faruk placed on 2-day remand, Marriage Registrar sent to jail

By Staff Correspondent
The principal accused in the Toufika Begum murder case, Faruk, was placed on a two-day remand while the bail prayer of Anwar Ali, the other accused in the case, was rejected yesterday. There was no bail petition moved in favour of Faruk, the 25-year-old husband of Toufika Begum, 61, a former principal of Kurigram Degree College, police said.

Faruk, who hailed from Shibpur thana of Bhola district, strangled Toufika Begum.

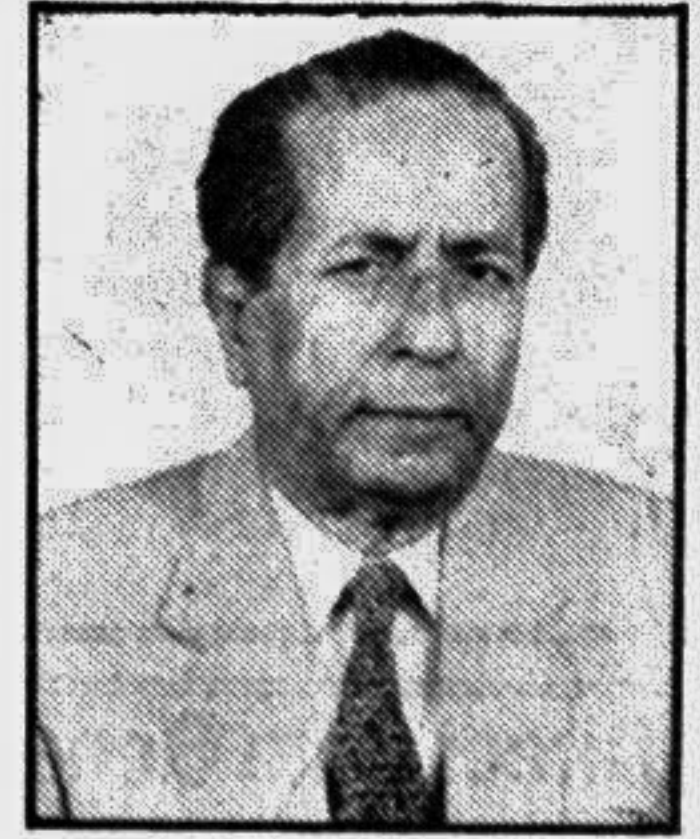
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Sawdust tank explosion 5 Bangladeshis suffer serious burns in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 3: Six foreign workers suffered serious burns when a sawdust collection tank exploded at a sawmill factory about 27 kilometres (17 miles) northwest of here, a report said today, according to AFP.

The victims, five Bangladeshis and an Indonesian, aged between 25 and 30,

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We deeply mourn the untimely demise of Kazi Kamrul Hoda

who had been associated with our Group for a long, long time. His death has left a void that can never be filled.

We pray to Almighty Allah for the eternal peace of the departed soul.

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