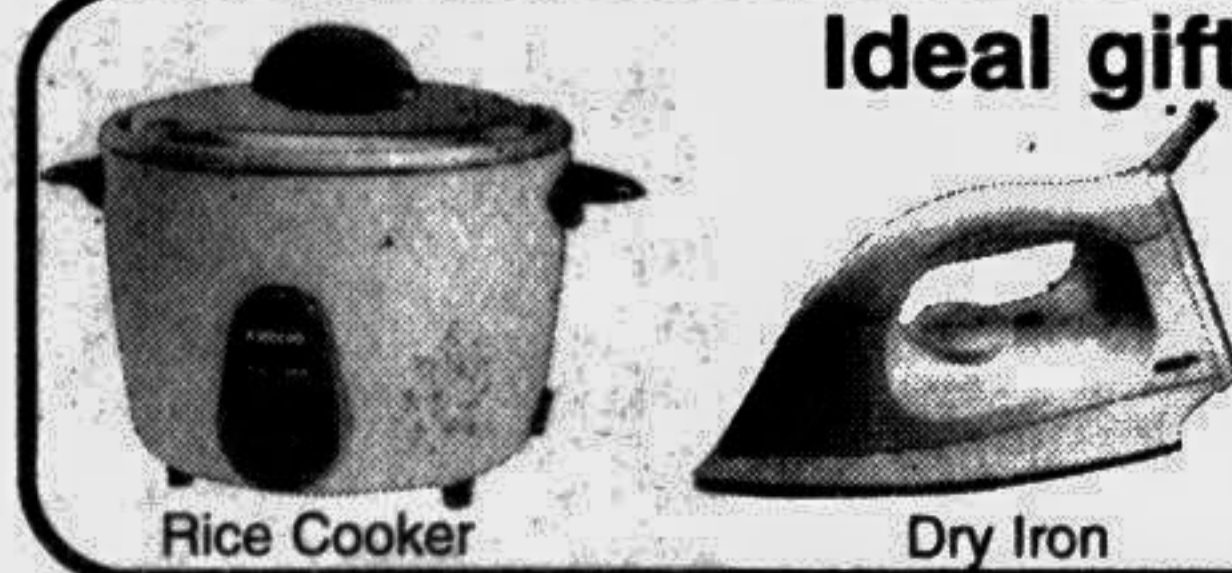


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## Wide-bodied plane lands at Osmani Airport

SYLHET, Dec 20: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today declared Osmani Airport as an international airport and said all formalities to upgrade it would be completed by middle of next year, reports UNB.

"We believe in balanced development of all regions of the country and are taking steps to that end for people's welfare," she said at the inaugural function of wide-bodied aircraft service to Sylhet.

The prime minister said the opening of Airbus service was a step towards upgrading the airport to a world-class one. Soon other formalities would be completed and technical facilities introduced to turn it into an international airport, the country's third after the ZIA in Dhaka and another in Chittagong.

An Airbus from Dhaka, carrying 93 people on board, including the crew, landed at Osmani Airport in presence of the prime minister for the formal launch of the service.

The prime minister witnessed the landing of the big aircraft and disembarkation of the passengers. She also exchanged pleasantries with them.

In initial stages, the Airbus with a capacity of 220 passengers will fly once a week into this northeastern city and the flight frequencies will be increased gradually. Biman officials said.

And on completion of upgradation of the airport to international standard, direct flights from the Middle East and England will be operated regularly.

An 8500-ft runway has been constructed for Airbus landing and it would later be expanded to 10000 feet for bigger airplanes like Boeing-747 to alight here, with lighting and other modern landing systems in place by then.

The prime minister at the function in the airport premises said her government is fulfilling its election pledges one after another and through the opening of wide-bodied aircraft service here, it accomplished another promised task.

The government is also taking necessary steps to complete the formalities needed for a divisional headquarters here, by building infrastructure and expanding the city of Muslim saints, she told the gathering.

Hasina further announced that an education board and a teacher-training college would be set up here and some Tk 4.20 crore be spent for embellishing the city into divisional headquarters.

She listed the development steps taken for the newly designated Sylhet division, including the development of roads, construction of bridges and other establishments.

"Sylhet is making a remarkable contribution to the national economy through remittances of foreign exchange by the expatriate Bangladeshis," she said also mentioning further importance of the division for national development.

Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury, Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria, Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Engineer Mosharraf

Hossain, Parliamentary Affairs Adviser to the prime minister Engineer Suranjit Sen Gupta, Dewan Farid Gazi, MP, Whip Abdus Shahid and Civil Aviation Secretary Omar Hadi also addressed the function.

Later, addressing a spontaneous gathering at the airport, the prime minister urged all to work together for the welfare of the people and for national development.

She also asked the party leaders and workers to stand united and build on organisational strengths discarding all sorts of factionalism. "Grouping or conflicts will not be tolerated any way," she categorically said asking all to work only for the welfare of the people.

Chief Whip Abul Hasanat Abdullah, MPs Sultan Mohammad Monzur Ahmed, Nurul Islam Nahid, Emran Ahmed, Shah Azizur Rahman, Mohibur Rahman Manik, Hafez Majumder, Syed Rafiqul Haq, Hosne Ara Wahid and Begum Jebunnahar, and district Awami League President Abu Nasar and General Secretary A N M Shaifiqul Haq were present in the meeting.

The prime minister later offered *fateha* at the mazar of Hazrat Shahjalal (R) and Hazrat Shah Paran (R).

She first went to the mazar of Hazrat Shahjalal (R).

She stayed there for some time and prayed to Almighty Allah seeking divine blessing for the progress and prosperity of the country.

Hasina then went to the mazar of Hazrat Shah Paran and offered *fateha* there.

## Varsity closed till Jan 26 BCL-Shibir gunfight at IU: 12 injured

ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY, Dec 20: Authorities have declared the Islamic University closed till January 26 following a gun-battle between two rival student organisations today, reports APB.

Police said at least 12 students received bullet injuries when the ruling party backed Chhatra League and Islamic Chhatra Shibir traded gunfire during the hour-long clash.

As the two student fronts were locked in the clash, panic gripped the entire campus, witnesses said.

Police lobbed more than 50 tear gas shells and fired rubber bullets to bring the situation under control.

Of the injured, M Bakibillah and Musa of Bangladesh Chhatra League and Zillur Rahman

and Abul Kalam Azad of Shibir and an outsider were admitted to Kushtia and Jhenidah sadar hospitals.

Witnesses said the clash erupted when some BCL activists swooped on a Shibir activist on the campus at about noon.

When the news spread on the campus, the rival Shibir activists rushed to the spot and countered their opponents.

The university authorities, in an emergency meeting with Acting Vice-Chancellor Prof M Mahatabuddin Sarker in the chair, declared the university closed.

Male students were advised to vacate their respective halls by 4 pm today and female students by 10 am tomorrow, campus sources said.

## AL leader killed in Mymensingh

MYMENSINGH, Dec 20: A local leader of Awami League was killed by miscreants at Valuka in Gouripur thana on Saturday evening, reports UNB.

The victim was identified as Idris Ali, 45, of Bhatia village, an executive committee member of Gouripur thana Awami League.

Witnesses said the miscreants waylaid Ali's rickshaw near Valuka rail line and hit him with lethal weapons. He died on way to hospital.

Local people caught one of the assailants, Chand Miah, from the scene and handed him over to police.

The body was sent to hospital morgue for autopsy.

## Feni clash

protest. Police and BDR patrols, however, cleared the roadblocks in the afternoon to end the prolonged traffic halt on the highway.

During the widespread clashes at least 30 people, including eight BCL workers, six Juba Dal and JCD men and 16 passers-by, were injured.

Of them, Chhatra League leader Shamim and Juba Dal worker Hannan succumbed to their injuries at hospital.

Condition of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal workers Babul, Swapan, Nizam, Hanif and pedestrian Joyal, Dulal, Rahimullah, Kanchan, Ruku Mia, Shahidullah and Abdul Aziz was said to be critical.

All shops and establishments in the town kept shutters down throughout the day.

Police reinforcements from neighbouring districts were called in and deployed along with BDR personnel at various points in the town gripped by tensions.

## Watch towers

From Page 1  
Kanchpur bridge, the home Minister said all the traffic control towers (watch towers) will be equipped with wireless sets, telephones and push button traffic signals for ensuring normal flow of traffic in the areas.

He said a centrally coordinated traffic control system will be introduced comprising the DMP and district police.

He said one police sergeant and four constables will work round-the-clock in each watch tower.

## Airstrikes

From Page 1  
Both leaders threatened further military action, if necessary, to force Iraqi compliance.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin said in a statement today that "use of force has complicated the resolution of the Iraqi problem," Interfax news agency reported.

Yeltsin had already expressed strong condemnation of the US-British air raids on Iraq, describing the decision to strike without the backing of the UN Security Council as a violation of the UN charter.

A Beijing report says after condemning the United States for launching military strikes on Iraq, China offered today to help find a diplomatic solution to the controversial UN weapons inspections at the heart of the crisis.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao welcomed the decision by the US and Britain to end the air assault and stressed China's continued opposition to such raids.

"We have taken note of the fact that with the call of relevant parties, the United States and Britain ceased their air strikes against Iraq," Zhu said in a statement carried by the official Xinhua News Agency.

China was ready to work with all interested parties on the weapons inspections, Zhu said.

## Two killed in Ctg incidents

CHITTAGONG, Dec 20: At least two persons were killed and seven others injured, four of them critically, in two separate incidents in Banskhal thana during the last 24 hours, reports BSS.

According to police and witnesses, one person was killed and seven others were injured in a clash between two rival groups over the possession of a char on the bank of river Sangu under Pukuria union of the thana.

Zafar Ahmed, 42, succumbed to his injuries on way to Chittagong Medical College Hospital last night.

Of the injured, four were admitted to Banskhal thana health complex.

In another incident, one Madan Barua, 42, a rickshaw-puller, committed suicide by taking poison at his village Jaldih of Banskhal thana this morning.

## PSC negotiations

From Page 1  
The declining oil prices in the international market has also seriously affected the financial condition of all oil companies.

The sources said that the time was so bad for the oil companies that companies like Mobil and Exxon merged while companies like Shell, drastically retrenched employees and cut the number of projects.

"This is a global hard time for oil and gas companies. Bangladesh has no real attraction for them and by favouring certain companies like TOW, in the second round block bidding, it stands nowhere in the investment scenario," commented a source.

The second round block bidding was initiated in June 1997. It was scheduled to be completed by December 15, 1997. But sources said that the progress was so poor that the PSC negotiation team would not be able to sign a single contract in the next six months.

## No sign of slashing oil price

From Page 1  
low the import price is.

The three ministers who made the promise at the press conference were the then Energy Minister Noor Uddin Khan, Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed and Finance Minister SAMS Kibria. Energy Secretary Towfik-e-Elahi and a host of other high officials were also present.

The price of Arab-Gulf crude oil (which is imported by Bangladesh) has now reached a rock bottom level of 8-10 dollars per barrel. When the government enhanced the prices of petroleum products, oil price in the world market was 24-25 dollars per barrel (as was claimed by Tofael Ahmed at the press conference).

Replying to a question, the public representatives (three ministers) had clarified that the government would "definitely" reduce the price if it comes down to 14-16 dollars per barrel in the international market.

The sources said, price of oil has been sharply declining since January last. The price rallied around 15-16 dollars early this year.

Now it has reached such a



A couple of German Sunday papers' front pages deal with the impeachment vote against US President Bill Clinton yesterday. Headlines read, clockwise, beginning at bottom left: "Clinton Loses Battle on Impeachment", "Will Clinton Be Toppled?", "Parliament votes: Clinton Should Be Impeached" and "Impeachment Debate Starts with a Bang - Livingstone Gives up".

## Clinton won't quit

From Page 1  
The vote was 228-206 in favour of impeachment. Five Democrats sided with Republicans and five Republican lawmakers backed the Democratic president.

In rapid-fire order, the other three articles were voted on, all of them stemming from Starr's eight-month investigation and the politically drenched House impeachment inquiry that followed this fall.

The second article, alleging Clinton lied in a deposition in the Paula Jones sexual harassment case, was rejected, 229-205.

The third article, alleging obstruction of justice, cleared narrowly, 221-212, and needed the votes of five Democrats to pass. It cited Clinton for efforts to influence grand jury testimony by Ms Lewinsky and Betty Currie, his secretary, as well as other actions.

The fourth article fell, 285-148, on a bipartisan rejection. It would have impeached Clinton for abuse of his office in lying to Congress in written responses to 81 questions that the House Judiciary Committee posed to him as part of its impeachment inquiry.

All but one of the 435 was present. Democratic Rep George Miller is recovering from hip replacement surgery in California.

The galleries were full, and a crowd gathered outside the Capitol on a day unlike any other in over a century.

Livingston's bombshell aside, the nation was absorbing news of the latest round of airstrikes against Iraq, a campaign that prompted some Republicans to openly question whether Clinton was using his powers as commander in chief to try to manipulate the impeachment process.

On the White House lawn after the vote, dozens of Democratic lawmakers gathered around the president in a show of support. Clinton emerged from the building arm in arm with his wife.

"I have accepted responsibility for what I did wrong in my personal life," he said in his first appearance before the nation as an impeached president.

"I have invited members of Congress to find a reasonable, bipartisan and proportionate

response."

Moments after the final vote on the floor, Judiciary Committee Chairman Henry Hyde led a somber procession across the Capitol grounds to the Senate, delivering the impeachment papers to officials there.

A trial will follow in January, and already Democrats are digging in.

"We cannot allow any president - Republican or Democrat - to be forced from office on a party-line vote in the House of Representatives. In America, the president serves at the will of the people, not at the pleasure of the house," said Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle.

The Senate trial will be the first since Andrew Johnson was president. He was acquitted in 1868, when the Senate fell one vote short of the two-thirds majority needed to remove him in a proceeding that arose from the bitter residue of the Civil War.

The impeachment of Clinton arose instead from his personal behaviour and his attempts to cover up the relationship with a White House intern scarcely older than his daughter.

The only other president subjected to serious impeachment proceedings was Richard Nixon. Unlike Clinton, he faced articles of impeachment approved by a bipartisan majority of the House Judiciary Committee. His support among congressional Republicans eroded, he quit in 1974 rather than face impeachment in the full House.

## Impeachment unfair, says Hillary

WASHINGTON, Dec 20: First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton chose personal words - "I love and care deeply about my husband" - as she strove Saturday to salvage President Bill Clinton's presidency and the legacy of their shared tenure in the White House.

Hillary, who responded in the first days of the Monica Lewinsky furor last January with bitter charges of a "vast right-wing conspiracy," told the Democrats that she did not believe her husband had received a fair case before the Republican-controlled House.

## Two wanted criminals held with arms in city

Police, in separate drives, arrested two wanted criminals, one with a foreign-made gun, from the city's Hatirpool and BCC road areas yesterday and the day before, reports APB.

Acting on a tip-off, DB police raided Hatirpool bazar under Dhanmondi thana at about 8:20 pm on Saturday and arrested S M Kaysar alias Tushar in front of a fast food shop.

Sensing police presence, Tushar and his accomplices equipped with firearms, were trying to flee the scene, but detectives caught Tushar with a foreign-made revolver, police said.

In another drive in BCC road area, a police squad yesterday arrested one Mohammad Nahid and seized an illegal firearm loaded with six bullets after searching his body.

## DU teacher

From Page 1

university." A female student of the Public Administration filed a complaint with the Vice Chancellor on November 30 alleging that Prof. Shahiduzzaman had sexually harassed her at his room on November 29.

The committee sources said that they received two other similar allegations against Shahiduzzaman - one from a female colleague of Shahiduzzaman and another from a female student of the department.

Prof. Shahiduzzaman, however, denied the allegations and said that he would go to the High Court Division of the Supreme Court for justice. "This is absolutely illegal and a result of a conspiracy against me," he said.

Meanwhile, a section of general students of the Dhaka University under the banner of 'Students Protesting Sexual Harassment' brought out a procession and held a rally at the Aparajo Bangla on DU campus yesterday noon.

Later they sieged the VC office for sometimes and met the VC, Prof. A K Azad Chowdhury. They demanded exemplary punishment to the teachers involved in sexual offenses on the campus and inclusion of a female student in the probe committee.

The students urged the VC to form a cell with the female teachers and students of the university for fair investigation of the sexual offenses on the campus.

They would form a human chain on the DU campus tomorrow and observe sit-in strike in front of the VC office on December 24.

## Bus service

From Page 1

Ministry. "Let passenger bus traffic move first to break the communication and psychological barrier that has densely enveloped our neighbourly relations in a mist of suspicion. If passenger buses start moving, can cargo trucks be far behind?" said another official.

A senior official of the communications ministry involved in the negotiations however expressed optimism and said, "We are expecting a positive response from India to the draft proposal shortly."

If Bangladesh government's move to connect Dhaka and Calcutta by bus becomes successful, it may ultimately help open up routes to other countries.

"It could lead to opening up of other routes linking Myanmar, Thailand and several other Asian countries through the Asian Highway," said another foreign ministry official involved in the preparations for the recently held BIMSTEC ministerial meeting in Dhaka.

According to estimates, nearly half a million people from Bangladesh side alone are expected to avail the proposed direct Dhaka-Calcutta bus service in the first year of its operation.

## Asma's mother scared to donate kidney

By Staff Correspondent

Asma Begum's mother is afraid to donate one of her kidneys that may save her daughter's life, fearing she may meet the same fate as did her daughter who had her only functioning kidney removed in an operation.

"Although I want to donate one of my kidneys, I feel very insecure due to the fact that doctors may cut off my kidneys and cripple me like my daughter," said Zahura Begum who is suffering from phobia ever since doctors at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical Hospital (BSSMUH) talked to her to donate one of her kidneys.

"I am willing to donate a kidney only if they assure that they will not do any harm to me or my daughter," she added.

Asma is surviving on haemodialysis that is done at least thrice a week at the hospital.

Doctors said she is ready to undergo the kidney transplantation. Any delay may now lead to putting off the planned surgery.

"My daughter's life has already been ruined. Do they want to destroy my life as well?" Zahura Begum asked.

Onaesthesiologists at Dhaka Medical College Hospital had removed the only functioning kidney of Asma during an operation on August 11. The doctors claim they had removed a 'diseased' kidney for safety of the patient.

It was later found that Asma had only one functioning kidney while the other kidney tissue had been absent since her birth.

Meanwhile, Asma is continuing to lose weight. She had weighed 40 kg when she was admitted to BSSMUH, but now she weighs 36 kg.

Asma said that she was feeling better yesterday and that she had partially regained her appetite. She had developed severe distaste for food and used to vomit while taking solid food.

"Asma is much better now," a doctor said yesterday. "Her condition is stable since yesterday," the doctor added.

Asma who hails from Shariatpur district and was a garment factory worker, yesterday said, "It has been over four months since I have been tied to the hospital life. I would love to return home but I understand that until my surgery is done this hospital is my home."

Asked if she is ready to undergo the surgery, she said, "Before my surgery I want assurance from the doctor (Professor Mahmuda Khatun) that she would provide me or any of my sisters with work. Professor Khatun made my life miserable. She should be the one to arrange permanent employment for me and, at the same time, compensate the damage she has done to me."

Harun-ur-Rashid, head of nephrology department at BSSMUH said, "Asma is doing fine and her condition is appropriate for the planned operation. However, her mother has a different opinion on donating one of her kidneys that stands in the way of the planned surgery."

## India seeks accord on regional energy coop

India seeks a regional agreement on energy cooperation enabling countries in the belt to sell or buy their energy resources, such as gas, among themselves, reports UNB.

Indian State Minister for External Affairs Vasundhara Raje said in the city yesterday in reply to a question whether India was trying to buy gas from Bangladesh.

"Myanmar and Bangladesh have big reserves of gas. They can be sellers and India a buyer," she told newsmen at Sorigaon Hotel prior to leaving for home after attending the BIMSTEC conference.

"However, we are looking for a regional agreement in the energy sector through which all these things could be done," she said.

The Indian minister also said India prefers a Free Trade Zone encompassing the BIMSTEC member countries for greater cooperation, apart from the planned one in SAARC region.

"I am very hopeful about the future of the BIMSTEC. It can emerge as a free-trade zone," Vasundhara told UNB India.

Vasundhara told UNB India has already offered to sign the SAFTA deal for setting up free-trade zone binding the SAARC countries in year 2001. "BIMSTEC could be a free-trade zone, too."

Regarding barbed-wire fencing of its border with Bangladesh, the Indian state minister said it would not affect the bilateral relations between Bangladesh and India as "every-

## Khandakar

From Page 1  
Officer, ADM of Pabna, prepared the post poll report after the CEC had asked him to probe into the BNP allegations that polls had been rigged in 15 out of 81 polling centres. The complaints were sent directly to the CEC on the election day.

The ADM asked all the presiding officers, assistant presiding officers and the polling officers who were on duty in the 15 controversial centres to appear before him. He also asked the BNP candidate to appear before him with his polling agents who were present at the centres during elections.

The officials submitted written statement to the ADM claiming that the polls were not rigged. They also said that none of the polling officers of the 15 centres had received any written allegation from the BNP candidate.

However, the BNP candidate failed to appear before the Returning Officer. But in a fax message sent to the CEC on 14 December, he said that it was not possible to appear with all the polling agents in such a short period of time. The BNP candidate did not, however, asked for a fresh date.

In that letter, the BNP candidate demanded that the ADM's report was unacceptable to him and demanded a fresh for a probe into all the 81 centres by a 'high power probe body'.

Contrary to the central leadership of the BNP, the party's candidate did not demand for declaring the December 10 by-elections null and void.

Asked to comment on Khaleda Zia's demand for repolling in all the 81 constituencies, Chief Election Commissioner Mohammad Abu Hena told The Daily Star last night: "I have not received any such written appeal so far."

thing is being done through understanding."

She denied getting any formal reaction or protest from the Bangladesh government in this regard.

On reestablishing the missing road and rail links between the two countries, Vasundhara said at present they were restoring such links with Myanmar.

"We are looking forward to discussing the issue with Bangladesh, too," she said. The Asian Highway was still at conceptual stage.

Regarding Dhaka-Calcutta bus services, Raje said they have got Bangladesh's proposal on how to operate the route. "The bus service would start soon."

On the apprehension that some of the tribal groups are using Indian territories to disrupt peace in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, she said there was none doing so. "However, if there be any such activities, stern action will be taken against those people."

Replying to another question, she said India has introduced a multi-entry visa for businessmen.

## Settlers

From Page 1

chief, who also spoke at the seminar, refrained from divulging the much-talked about 'unwritten agreement' with the government but echoed the views of Gautam.

He said: The Bengali settlers should be honourably rehabilitated outside Chittagong Hill Tracts. This should be done simultaneously with rehabilitation of internal (tribal) refugees who returned from across the border.

The two-day seminar adopted 'Rangamati Declaration' and called for withdrawal of Bengali settlers from CHT region.

A copy of the Rangamati Declaration was available