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VOL VIII NO. 329 REGD. NO. DA 781 INTERNET: <http://www.dailystarnews.com>

POUSH 10 1405 BS DHAKA THURSDAY DECEMBER 24, 1998 RAMADAN 4, 1419 HIJRI



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Repatriation of Rohingyas stalled again

From Our Correspondent
COX'S BAZAR, Dec 23 : Repatriation of Rohingya refugees has become uncertain once again after Myanmar's unilateral suspension of the process today.

The suspension came at a time when some 50 Rohingyas from Kutupalong refugee camp were scheduled to go back home today. Myanmar showed Ramadan as a pretext for unilateral suspension of the mutually agreed repatriation that began on November 25 after a respite of 16 months, sources said.

Bangladesh immediately responded to Myanmar's decision and asked for an official level meeting on the issue at the bordering township of Mongdu in Myanmar on December 28, said Md Borhanuddin, Refugee and Repatriation Commissioner stationed in Cox's Bazar.

Only 106 refugees could go back home since the current phase of repatriation began. Some 21,305 Rohingyas are still living in two refugee camps--Kutupalong and Nayapara--in the district.

Three officials kidnapped in Rangamati

RANGAMATI, Dec 23: Three officials were abducted allegedly by armed tribals from a bus at Baghaifat in Baghaichhari thana today, reports APB.

Local sources said 15-20 masked gunmen waylaid the Khagrachhari-bound bus, dragged out the three officials said to be Bengalees, and took them away at about 4:30 pm. The kidnappers also damaged the bus.

When contacted, both Rangamati and Baghaichhari police confirmed the incident.

The identity of the victims could not be known till filing of the report at 8:30 pm.

Incinerators BELA serves legal notice

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (BELA) yesterday sent a legal notice to the secretaries of the ministries of health and family welfare, local government, rural development and cooperatives, environment and forest, directors general of the department of health services and the department of environment, and the directors of Dhaka Medical College Hospital and Chittagong Medical College for using hazardous incineration technology for disposal of hospital waste.

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Noor Uddin's new portfolio

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has allocated the Ministry of Science and Technology to Minister Lt Gen (Retd) Mohammad Noor Uddin Khan, Cabinet division announced here yesterday, reports BSS.

Rabindranath Tribedi Press Secy to President

Rabindranath Tribedi has been appointed the press secretary to President Shahabuddin Ahmed, an official handout said here yesterday, reports BSS.

Prior to his new assignment, Tribedi was an Officer on Special Duty (OSD) in the Establishment Ministry (attached to Prime Minister's office).

Inside Today

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Alternatives

Tutoring for life or exams? An alternative school curriculum on water--what our children need to know; and Observations on the curriculum for the mentally handicapped

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Sehri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Dec	Sehri	Iftar
4	24	5-13	5-21
5	25	5-14	5-22
6	26	5-14	5-23

Syria also denies clearance

Iraq bans all UN flights to Baghdad

BAGHDAD, Dec 23: Iraq today banned all United Nations flights into the country, report agencies.

Iraq ordered the UN to cancel a scheduled flight of military observers headed to Baghdad to monitor the cease-fire and demilitarised zone on the Iraq-Kuwait border, AP quoting a UN official said.

Baathist offered no explanation for its decision, which was likely to increase tensions with the United Nations.

The UN official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said he hoped the measure was temporary and that the UN is pursuing the matter with Iraq.

The flight had been scheduled to carry members of the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission from Amman, Jordan, to Habaniya air base outside Baghdad, the official said.

The force was set up after the 1991 Gulf War which evicted Iraqi forces from Kuwait following their seven-month occupation of the tiny oil-rich emirate.

Another UN official said Syria also denied clearance for the flight, whose planned route would have carried it over Syrian air space.

UNIKOM has offices in Baghdad and Kuwait and its officials regularly visit both places for consultations.

UNIKOM flights, routinely

scheduled for Sundays and Wednesdays, were halted last week due to the US-British military airstrikes on Iraq. The four nights of bombardment, aimed at forcing Iraq to comply with UN resolutions to eliminate its weapons of mass destruction, ended Saturday.

Iraqi air defences are still on alert for further possible attacks, and the cancellation of the UN flight may be the result of Iraq's fears that it could have come up harm's way.

Iraq had warned yesterday that it won't forgive Kuwait for allowing the United States and Britain to use its military bases to mount last week's airstrikes against the country.

The latest development came while US Defence Secretary

William Cohen and the commander of US forces in the Gulf, Marine Gen Anthony Zinni, were in the Gulf region for a morale-boosting pre-Christmas visit with US troops. They visited an air base in Saudi Arabia and Cohen headed for the aircraft carrier USS Enterprise in the Gulf.

Meanwhile, UN humanitarian workers resumed their normal duties today after returning from Jordan.

Their first task will be to judge the impact of the bombing campaign on the UN-approved oil-for-food programme and other international efforts to help the 22 million Iraqis, said UN officials who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Meanwhile, US defence secretary William Cohen said today up to 9,000 troops and vital aircraft will be withdrawn from the Gulf, but warned that US forces could still strike Iraq hard at any time.

He said US forces in the region would be cut to between 21,000 and 22,000 from the

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Rival interns reject deal with minister

By Staff Correspondent

The indefinite strike called by the Young Doctors Movement Council (YDMC) ran into rough weather as one faction called off the strike late Tuesday night only to be rejected by another.

The faction, which rejected the settlement with the health minister accepting his proposal to raise the remuneration of interns to Tk 5,000 per month, said they would continue their strike for 48 hours ending today.

General secretary of YDMC Dr Hayat Mahmud Russel in a statement last night, said they would suspend their movement from Friday in view of the Ramadan and sufferings of patients.

Earlier, a group of interns at Dhaka Medical College Hospital staged demonstrations on the platform to protest alleged sexual harassment of female students of the university by a section of their teachers.

Their demands also include disclosure of all probe committee reports, severe punishment to the teachers accused in sexual abuse and inclusion of student representatives in any probe committee like this.

Meanwhile, they have submitted a memorandum to the DMCH authorities to restore order. Brigadier Badrul Munir, director of DMCH, told The Daily Star that the situation was under control.

At about noon, a small crowd of patients gathered at the Out Patient Department (OPD) which was closed until an hour ago. Other wards and departments of the hospital were preparing to resume normal operation.

They will hold a protest rally at Aparajeyo Bangla at 11 am today.

At ward No 25, only seven

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Sexual abuse: DU students to stage sit-in in front of VC's office today

General students of Dhaka University united under the banner of Students Protesting Sexual Harassment, will stage a sit-in demonstration in front of the VC's office at 11 am today, reports UNB.

General students of the university have come together on the platform to protest alleged sexual harassment of female students of the university by a section of their teachers.

Their demands also include disclosure of all probe committee reports, severe punishment to the teachers accused in sexual abuse and inclusion of student representatives in any probe committee like this.

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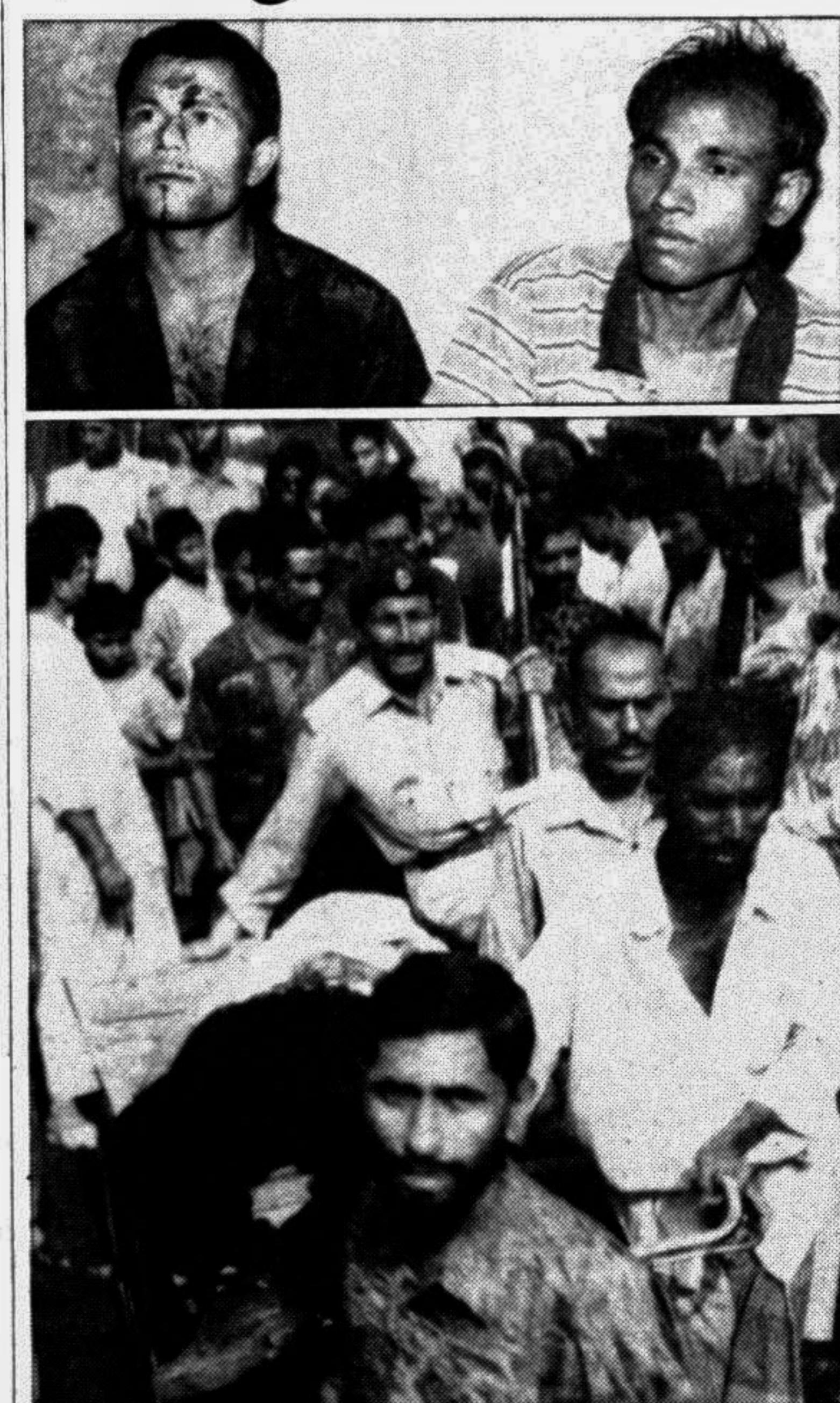
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Young man thrown out of bus?



Death comes so easy!

(Above) Police carry the dead body of a young man crushed under the wheels of a double-decker on Topkhana Road in the city yesterday. The poor man's crime was that he wanted to get dropped right in front of the Press Club, prompting an angry 'helper' to push him out on to the high street where death waited to devour him. (Top) Police arrested driver Mamun and helper Nasir of the double-decker that killed the young man. — Star photo

Death sparks protests

By Staff Correspondent

Angry people hurled rocks at passing vehicles at Topkhana Road and Abdul Ghani Road yesterday, protesting the death of a young man under the wheels of a BRTC double-decker bus after he was allegedly kicked out of it by its conductor near the Secretariat following an altercation.

Riot police rescued the conductor, Nasiruddin and driver Mamun, took them into custody and seized the bus.

Police brought the situation under control taking the arrested operators and the bus inside the Police Control Room at Osmann Uddyan. But the melee left huge gridlock of vehicles in the area for sometime. The incident took place at about noon.

Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) sources identified the deceased as Khalequzzaman, 25, reportedly an employee of an architecture firm in the city's Dhanmondi area. Police, however, could not ascertain the identity of the dead till last night.

Witnesses said people became agitated seeing the young man being thrown out of the double-decker on a crowded link road connecting the Topkhana Road and the Abdul Ghani road.

His skull was crushed, blood and brain were scattered on the street. A police officer gathered the remains of the brain on a polybag and sent it with the body to DMCH for autopsy in a rickshaw van. The gory scene enraged the people in the area.

Witnesses said Khalequzzaman wanted to get down at the Jatiya Press Club stoppage. But the bus on its way to Shantir Akhra from Mirpur did not stop. This led to arguments with the conductor.

Conductor Nasiruddin grabbed his neck, shoved and kicked him saying 'get out now', witnesses said. Khalequzzaman was thrown out and his head was crushed com-

Hold rape-related trial in camera, asks women's group

By Staff Correspondent

Durbar, a network programme of women's group Naripakkha, has demanded that trial of rape cases be held in camera to spare victims of embarrassment during questioning.

The coalition of women's groups from across the country has also called for changes in the phrases that describe repression and torture on women during the Liberation War in official documents.

During "camera trial" or "closed-door trial", presence of representatives of victims of rape or sexual assault should be allowed in the court, Durbar Project Co-ordinator Mahbuba Mahmud told a press conference in the city yesterday.

All War documents should replace the phrase "dishonouring of women" with "rape and sexual assault" and that the government should announce the change through a gazette notification.

The documents should state that more than one hundred thousand women were raped or sexually assaulted during the Liberation War and instead of saying that they were violated

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WASHINGTON, Dec 23: A handful of Republican congressmen who voted to impeach President Bill Clinton joined yesterday with those seeking presidential censure in the Senate instead of removal from office, reports Reuters.

The Senate faces the prospect of only the second presidential trial in history and since the last was 130 years ago there is little precedent, senators were debating how to go about trying Clinton on two articles of impeachment.

The White House, where Clinton was going through the typical holiday motions of

BNP, JP alliance to be interesting, says Hasina

By Reaz Ahmad and Shaikh Nazrul Islam

The Department of Narcotics Control has suspended one of its inspectors, Fazlul Haq, in charge of Gulshan-Banani area for his alleged negligence in checking unauthorized liquor trade.

The policeman, who declined to be named, listed a few names involved in the illegal trade and said they have "good ties with the upper echelon of the police administration."

Talking to these correspondents at his residence adjacent to Tramps club, mother of Sohel Chowdhury said that her son's membership of the club was cancelled three months ago following feud with Bunty Islam, its proprietor.

"Sohel had also conflict with Aziz Mohammed Bhai, husband of Bunty's niece. However, days before his murder, Aziz came at Sohel's place for reconciliation", she added but expressed her ignorance about the matter of conflict.

The elderly mother of Sohel asserted that if police want, they can catch the assailant. "There were two policemen on duty in the vicinity of Tramps when the incident took place".

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said her government is not at all worried about any possible simultaneous movement by BNP and Jatiya Party, reports UNB.

She said it will be rather interesting to see an alliance of Khaleda Zia and Ershad, as once Khaleda had identified Ershad as the killer of her husband Ziaur Rahman and staged movement against his autocracy.

Briefing members of the Overseas Correspondents Association, Bangladesh (OCAB) at Hotel Sonargaon yesterday over the country's latest political and economic developments, the prime minister indicated that the next general elections might be held in the year 2000 and ruled out the demand for mid-term poll.

Asked about the opposition threat for a co-staff government, she said: "We are ready to face it with the support of the people since my government is engaged in ensuring public welfare."

The government, she said, has decided to continue its food support to more than two crore vulnerable people affected by the devastating flood till the end of Ramadan.

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Hasina said that in the past she had two objectives of the movement: establishment of people's rights to ballot and bread. "Through long drawn movement, we've established people's voting rights, now we're working hard for their economic welfare."

About the post-flood rehabilitation, she confidently said the government has been able to face the flood fallout through efficient management and averted "deaths of two crore people feared by international agencies, media and opposition parties."

The government, she said, has decided to continue its food support to more than two crore vulnerable people affected by the devastating flood till the end of Ramadan.

Police said the assailants