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## District judges in 3 hill districts soon

BANDARBAN, Dec 23: The government will soon appoint district judges in three hill districts to ensure quick disposal of civil and other lawsuits, reports APB.

Official sources here said preparations were underway for rearranging judicial process in Chittagong Hill Tracts. Till date, there is no appointed judge in the courts in the hill districts — Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban — where Deputy Commissioners perform as *ex officio* judges of the district and sessions judge court.

The government embarked on a plan to appoint district judges in three hill districts several years back, but the initiative was a victim of different quarters opposed the idea. Sources in the hills said a section of naive tribals then construed that such an arrangement might hamper judicial process in CHT since there was no provision for appointment of judges in the Hill Manual 1900.

On the other hand, a vast majority including the tribal people, and lawyers as well, were in favour of involving judicial officers instead of ad-

ministrative officials in dealing with civil cases.

The government, in 1993, began construction of two storey Judge Court buildings in the three districts, which, on completion, remained unused for the last five years.

Another plan was undertaken after the signing of CHT Peace Treaty last year for stepping up the process of appointing district judges for three hill districts. Ministry of Law and Justice took initiative in this regard, but there was little progress.

Official sources said the ministry recently sent letters to the deputy commissioners of three hill districts asking them to inform about infrastructure and other necessary facilities for the judge courts.

As per planned arrangement there will be offices for one district and sessions judge, one additional sessions judge, one sub-judge and three assistant judges.

The government will take necessary steps for appointing judges in the hill districts only after receiving reports from the DCs, an official preferring anonymity informed.



(Top) Outdoor patients queued up at DMCH as the authorities responded to their demand for treatment while striking intern doctors continued their strike for the eighth day yesterday. (Above) Patients on the hospital corridor chant slogans against the strike.

— Star photo

## Gas production from Sangu increased by 45m cft

Gas production from the Sangu gasfield has been increased by 45 million cubic feet, reports UNB.

The step to increase the extraction from the country's lone offshore gasfield was taken by the authorities on an emergency basis to minimise the fuel crisis across the country in Ramadan.

Sangu used to pump 60 million cubic feet into the pipeline and the present level rose to 105 million cft.

Meanwhile, a high-level meeting on gas supply situation in the capital yesterday observed that the low pressure problem that had been prevailing in the last two days was almost over with the increase.

The meeting, presided over by State Minister for Energy Rafiqul Islam, acknowledged that the crisis was due to low supply and high demand, partly because of a cooking binge in Ramadan.

Petrobranga Chairman Mos-

harraf Hossain said the demand increased by 10-20 million cubic feet during the current winter and holy Ramadan.

At this stage of demand for additional supply, a compressor at Kailashitla field got out of order leading to short supply of 20 million cubic feet. As a result, the crisis of low pressure arose in different areas of the capital city, the Petrobranga chairman said.

However, he said that the compressor had already been repaired. The meeting was also informed that steps had been taken to mend immediately the 12-inch gas pipeline damaged in Turag river.

The Fire Brigade and the Bangladesh Navy are helping the authorities in the emergency work.

## 5 alleged decoits held in N'ganj

NARAYANGANJ, Dec 23: Police arrested five alleged decoits and recovered a foreign-made revolver along with 11 bullets from Galakata bridge area in Siddhirganj thana early Tuesday, reports UNB.

Acting on a tip-off, police arrested the decoits while they were taking preparation to commit robbery near the bridge.

The decoits were identified as Kalam, 28, Dulal, 28, Zakir, 35, Humayun, 27, and gang-leader Anwar.

## Durbar

From Page 1  
or dishonoured, the Naripakkhya statement said.

"Our collective declaration is that women who have become victims of rape must not be called *dhorshita* (one who has been raped)," Mahmud said.

Durbar has submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister on Tuesday in this regard.

Mahmud said Durbar is working to bring together all the 242 women organisations across the country to back its demands. Launched in 1995 with the objective to organise a social movement against all sorts of repression on women, the network is a voluntary organisation and claimed to be free from any political influence.

"Women irrespective of their religion, cast and creed are not free from the threats of attacks at home, outside and in places of work," she said. "The victims find it difficult to get proper justice due to complexities in the judicial system, administrative corruption and party politics."

Representatives from Rajshahi, Bagerhat, Satkhira, Faridpur, Chittagong, Feni, Comilla, Netrokona, Sunamganj and Mymensingh zones were present at the press conference.

"Most members supported this approach today," said Russia's UN Ambassador Sergey Lavrov, expressing hope that the council would reach agreement soon "in order to get the ball rolling."

The council scheduled another meeting on Iraq for today. Crucially, the United States did not oppose either step although diplomats said Washington had some questions about exactly who would carry out the assessment.

Deputy US Ambassador Peter Burleigh said the United States believes "there could well be some merit" in a meeting of the 22 commissioners who oversee the UN Special Commission, known as UNSCOM, which is charged with verifying the destruction of Iraq's chemical and biological weapons and long-range missiles.

The commissioners usually meet once or twice a year and "it seems like one of those steps that the council will probably want to take," Burleigh said.

Clinton

From Page 1  
Lewinsky affair, something the president has resolutely refused to do.

The House of Representatives approved by mostly party-line vote two articles of impeachment covering perjury and obstruction of justice, each of which ended by saying Clinton's actions warrant removal from office.

White House spokesman Joe Lockhart said the letter showed that Republican leaders had rammed impeachment through the House and if they had allowed a vote on censure, as Democrats had demanded, it would have passed.

The Senate would need a two-thirds majority, or 67 votes, to remove Clinton from office and since there are only 55 Republicans it appears unlikely that would happen.

## Interns

From Page 1  
patients were served with lunch. Twenty-two beds remained empty as patients left the hospital since the interns' strike began on December 15.

Dr Nurul Anwar told this correspondent at an *iftar* party yesterday "The health minister has verbally assured us of implementing the six-point demand. The main demand for raising the remuneration to Tk 8,000 from Tk 4,000 has been met following the negotiation. It has now been fixed at Tk 5,000."

Another YDMC leader, preferring anonymity, said it would be given retrospective effect from October this year. The other demands would be met by July next year, the minister assured.

He also said, "The minister has assured us that introduction of a guideline for employment of newly passed doctors in clinics would be met as soon as the proposal is finalised."

About the demand for appointment of more doctors in government hospitals, he said, "The minister assured that from the next fiscal more funds would be allocated to facilitate appointment of a greater number of doctors."

The leader added, "A committee will be formed soon to look into accommodation problem of the interns and introduction of referral system will also be considered."

The more two-hour negotiation with the health minister was held at his official residence. BMA secretary general Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, joint secretary Dr Boduzzaman and treasurer Dr Sarfuddin Ahmed negotiated on behalf of YDMC.

YDMC leaders present at the meeting included Dr Nurul Anwar from DMCH, Dr S M Akmal Ali from Rangpur Medical College Hospital and representatives from Sir Salimullah Medical College Hospital, Chittagong Medical College Hospital and Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

## National export body to discuss GSP today

As the European Union has rejected Bangladesh's appeal for continuing previous GSP rules for the country, the government is now examining ways to leapfrog the situation when the changes in the facilities will come to effect in January, says UNB.

The changes in the Generalised System of Preference (GSP) rules will be on top of the agenda when the National Committee on Export sits in its regular meeting this morning with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair, official sources said.

They said the meeting is expected to discuss the details of the changed GSP rules providing two-stage derogation for knitwear and one-stage for woven garment products.

The EU has unilaterally decided that from January 1, 1999

## UP chairman slaughtered in Bagerhat

From Staff Correspondent  
KHULNA, Dec 23: Akhtar Ali, 45, Chairman of Dema union parishad under Bagerhat Sadar thana was slaughtered by a group of unidentified miscreants at village Mirzapur on Tuesday.

The UP chairman was coming to Khulna by an autorickshaw. The miscreants stopped his autorickshaw, dragged him out and then slaughtered him.

His eldest son Zahidul Islam has filed a case with Bagerhat Sadar thana today without naming anyone as accused.

Police arrested two persons identified as Anwar Farid, 25, and Mostafa Mallick, 30, early this morning suspecting their involvement in the murder.

## BNP, JP alliance to be interesting

From Page 1  
About the food stock, Hasina said it is adequate and supply of commodities is also satisfactory.

She said import duties have been withdrawn from onion and rice to keep the market stable. There is no logic behind the increase in the prices, she added and requested the traders not to go for hoarding.

The prime minister said the government has been able to re-deem the country's image abroad and a congenial atmosphere for foreign investment has been created.

She said the government has also solved the problems relating to the GSP and shrimp export that her government inherited from the past.

Asked about any unwritten agreement with the PCJSS on the CHT, Hasina said agreement whatever it is, is clearly written, and "we are implementing the peace accord gradually, there is no unwritten agreement."

She said economic development works would start in full-swing with the functioning of the CHT regional council.

Asked about the Second Round Bidding of gas blocks,

the prime minister said: "We don't want to make the same mistake as done in the case of Magurchara gas field. KAFCO and Raozan power plant. We'll look for the country's interest first."

She said necessary actions would be taken regarding the Vested Property Act following the recommendations of the committee on the affair.

Hasina said the proposed Trans-Asia Railway and Highway is necessary for Bangladesh's trade and commercial interests.

Replying to a question whether India is constructing the barbed wire fences along the Bangladesh border following any understanding, she replied in the negative and said India had started it in the past. "I don't know if there is any understanding with the previous government."

Asked if the government has been moving slowly in dealing with the corruption cases filed against Khaleda Zia and ministers of the BNP government, the prime minister said many cases were filed with the Bureau of Anti-Corruption and legal procedure is being followed.

She described the opposition's performance as "unfortu-

nate" and said despite immense opportunities they have failed to play the desired role in parliament.

"A healthy democracy needs a responsible opposition," she said. "We want a strong opposition to play constructive role identifying the lapses of the government."

But, Hasina said, unfortunately the Leader of the Opposition had not attended the PM's question-answer session in parliament, nor did she raise any single question so far. Since Awami League assumed power, she (Khaleda Zia) has only given threat and ultimatum of dislodging the government.

Responding to Khaleda's comment branding Awami League as the biggest autocrat, the prime minister said she has nothing to say if Khaleda Zia had made the remark to justify her alliance with Ershad.

About her no-hartal announcement, Hasina said she had just given her party decision and it should not be the headache of the opposition. "My party has decided not to call hartal, even if it sits in opposition in future, but I didn't say none can call hartal."

Asked if she is satisfied with

## Missing girl found dead

By Staff Correspondent  
A seven-year-old girl, missing since Tuesday evening, was found dead hanging with a barbed wire fence on Mazar Road at Mirpur in the city early yesterday morning.

The dead was identified as Chadni, daughter of Siddiqur Rahman, a resident of Gudarghat area of Mirpur.

The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy. It bore marks of injury, hospital sources said.

Police said they were waiting for autopsy report.

A case was lodged with Mirpur thana in this connection.

## Police, terrorists gunfight in city: 6 arrested

Police arrested six terrorists after a brief gunbattle at Chair-man Bari in Gulshan thana yesterday, reports UNB.

Police said the gunfight erupted when police went to arrest Nasir, a notorious criminal of the area.

Earlier on the day, they arrested one Shah Alam from the area on charge of terrorism.

As police reached the spot in the evening, the terrorists opened fire on them, forcing police to respond in defence. None was injured in the shootout.

## Gunfight leaves 10 hurt in Satkania

From Staff Correspondent  
CHITTAGONG, Dec 23: A gunfight between two groups of villagers over harvesting paddy left at least 10 people injured, mostly by bullets, at Kanchana of Satkania thana this morning, police said.

The injured were admitted to local health complex.

Police arrested three persons from the spot after the clash.

Police said the fight began at 10.30 am today when two groups of Aatur Rahman Chairman and Ramjan Ali Member chased each other to take possession of paddy fields for harvesting.

At one stage, both the groups were locked in a gunfight that continued for an hour, police and witnesses said.

Police being informed rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

## Direct air links, not road links

Senior Information Officer at the Ministry of LGRD and Cooperatives yesterday issued a corrigendum on a press release on the Nepalese Ambassador's meeting with Minister Zillur Rahman Tuesday, reports APB.

The corrigendum said that the press release inadvertently mentioned road links instead of air links between Dhaka-Colombo-Kathmandu proposed by the envoy.

The Ministry's Information Officer deeply regretted the mistake and confusion it created.

## Young man

From Page 1  
pletely under the rear wheels of the double-decker near the Secretariat mosque.

The bus driver tried to escape with the bus. But he was forced to stop as angry passengers started shouting drawing passersby while the bus slowed down to take turn at the link road crossing near Gate No 4 of the Secretariat.

But the operators did not stop the vehicle and at one stage one of them kicked Khaleda out of the bus when it arrived near Gate No 4 of the secretariat at about noon.

An unnatural death case was lodged with Ramna thana in connection with the incident.

After independence, the Bangabandhu's government enacted several laws to try the war criminals and killers of the intellectuals, but the Zia government had abolished those laws by Martial Law ordinance, she said.

OCAB president Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury introduced the Prime Minister in the briefing while general secretary Na-deem Qadir gave vote of thanks.

## Road accidents in 4 districts kill 10

Ten people died and 67 injured in road accidents in four districts, report agencies.

Two persons were killed and 20 injured, five of them seriously, when a minibus fell into a roadside ditch near Darshana rail gate in Chuadanga yesterday.

Nazim, 11, and Abdullah, 15, of Dugdugi village died on the spot as the Darshana-bound minibus from Chuadanga met the accident at about 9 am. The seriously injured passengers were rushed to Chuadanga hospital.

Four persons were killed and 15 others injured in another road accident Tuesday night near Bagat under Madhukhali thana on Dhaka-Khulna highway, 18 miles off Faridpur town.

According to Madhukhali police, the accident occurred when a Khulna-bound passenger coach collided with a truck coming from the opposite direction. Three passengers died on the spot.

The other critically injured passenger died on way to hospital.

Another report says, three bus passengers were killed and 20 others injured in a truck-bus collision at Maigekandi on the Dhaka-Magura highway on Tuesday night.

Police and witnesses said the Dhaka-bound truck hit the

Magura-bound bus at about 10 pm.

One of the dead was identified as Manzur Ali, 55, who succumbed to his injuries at Magura General Hospital.

The identity of two others who died on the spot, could not be known.

Of the injured, six were admitted to Magura General Hospital while others given first aid.

In Khagrachhari, one person was killed and 12 others injured when a bus skidded off the hilly road and fell into a 200-feet deep ditch yesterday morning.

Police said the accident took place near the Chingri Bridge near the town. Witnesses said the driver of the bus was unhurt and fled the scene after the accident.

Another job for Pak army

ISLAMABAD, Dec 23: The military has been given sweeping powers by the Pakistani president to arrest, investigate and try people involved in electricity theft, newspapers reported today, reports AP.

President Rafiqe Arar announced the law Tuesday to slash the massive losses of state-run utilities. The trials will be conducted by military courts which have already been set up in violence-plagued Karachi to try those responsible for killings and alleged terrorists activities.

The opposition said the government intends to extend the army's role in other parts of the country as well.

"The menace of stealing of electricity is rampant" which has made it necessary to call upon the Armed Forces to help civil government, the announcement said.

In a separate law, Tarar raised the penalty for electricity theft to 5 million rupees from 5,000 rupees.

The state-run Water and Power Development Authority and the Karachi Electric Supply Corporation suffers billions of rupees in losses every year due to theft. Between 35 to 40 per cent of the total power distributed by those two utilities is stolen.

The main opposition Pakistan Peoples' Party has bitterly opposed using the military saying that modern democratic governments seldom use military courts in civilian matters.

## Sohel murder

From Page 1  
no idea about the killing.

A garments executive said, he used to see many high-ups including ministers visiting the Tramps. "Tramps, in liaison with another yet-to-be-born club -- Atlantis -- was scheduled to hold a '31st Night' celebration in advance on December 19. But, later it was cancelled and customers were refunded."

Meanwhile, operation of cable network remained suspended throughout the country for three hours yesterday to condole the death of Sohel, who was a leader of Bangladesh Cables Operator Association.

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