The Daily Star

DHAKA MONDAY, DECEMBER 28, 1998

We do our Piece so you can have your peace

FedEx Federal Express
The World On Time

Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.
Licensee of Federal Express Corporation

For more information call-Dhaka, Tel : 9565114, 9883927, 9130647, 894213, 808803 DEPZ 9338931
Chittagong, Tel : (031) 712127, CEPZ (031) 740108
Khulna, Tel : (041) 725008, N'Ganj, Tel : 9714336

Ideal gift for any occasion.

Toaster - 4 Slices

Instalment facility available
only for purchases above Tk. 5,000

Transcom Electronics Limited
Official licensee of Philips Electronics N.V. for lighting products, radio and TV sets
Dhaka : 815307-10, 819625-9 Ctg. : 716353, 723578
Khulna : 720304, Bogra : 6215

Backed by Guarantee

Let's make things better

PHILIPS

Chandrika in Delhi, may sign free trade accord

NEW DELHI, Dec 27: Sri Lankan president Chandrika Kumaratunga arrived in the Indian capital today to cement ties and possibly sign a free trade agreement, reports Reuters.

Chandrika will meet Indian businessmen and officials during her two-day visit. She will also lay the foundation for a new rest house for Buddhist pilgrims in Delhi.

"During the visit, India and Sri Lanka are likely to focus on issues involving the establishment of a free trade area between the two countries and also sign a memorandum of understanding on the setting up of an India-Sri Lanka foundation," a senior Indian foreign ministry officials said.

India and Sri Lanka, members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), have been aiming to forge a reduced-tariff regime known as the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) by 2001.

The idea of a free trade zone was mooted by Indian prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee during the 10th SAARC summit in July. Since then officials from both countries have been working towards it.

Sri Lankan officials said earlier this week that differences remained over what should be included in the negative lists, critical rules of origin and the time frame within which the markets will be opened.

Sri Lanka is demanding that India lower its value-addition stipulation for exports to 25 per cent from the current 50 per cent and plans to include agricultural products in its negative list to ensure local farmers were protected.

Indian officials said there were certain issues which still needed to be fine-tuned before the two sides could seal the deal.

JP (Zafar-Moazzem) faction to merge with party's mainstream today

The Jatiya Party (Zafar-Moazzem) faction will merge with the mainstream of the party led by H M Ershad at a council session today, reports UNB.

Organisers said the council session would be held at the Engineers institution at 11 am with Kazi Zafar Ahmed, co-chairman of his faction in the chair.

JP Chairman H M Ershad will attend the session.

JP Secretary General Naziur Rahman Manzur in a press release yesterday called upon all members of presidium and central working committee of the party to attend the council session at 1 pm.

Shops to remain open on weekly holidays in Ramadan

All shops will remain open on the weekly holidays on the eve of Eid-ul-Fitr, reports UNB.

The government has suspended some provisions of the Shops and Establishments Act of 1965 for three weeks prior to the Eid-ul-Fitr, said an official handout yesterday.

Workers will be entitled to compensatory leave and overtime allowance for extra work during the weekly holidays, it added.

Politicians offer *munajat* at an *ifter* party hosted by Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia at her official residence yesterday. —Star photo

Asian rice farmers

From Page 1

large population base, more new faces would continue to join the march of Asian rice eaters."

For example, the demand for rice in Bangladesh would grow by 51 per cent over the next 25 years. So the question to ponder is that how the diminishing number of Asian farmers would face the challenge in the context of realities that the magic of Green Revolution of the 60s is nearing a saturation and farming has to compete with other 'need-priority' in putting its stake in land, water and labour.

Mechai Verbidi, a trustee member of IRRI, told the conference that when he asked 100 school goers in Thailand about their future career, not any one of them showed interest in farming as a profession.

While visiting a farming village in Patumthani province in Thailand this correspondent talked to a number of farmers all of whom said they would like their children to become doctors, engineers and nurses, but not farmers.

"The re-emergence of the food crisis in Southeast and South Asia cannot be ruled out unless there is an increase in investment in rice research for having further breakthrough in shifting the yield potential for irrigated ecosystems and developing high-yielding varieties suitable for unfavourable rainfed environment", Dr Hossain feared.

He concluded that the conflicting interests of the rice producers and consumers could only be reconciled through strengthening the infrastructure of science and technology and thereby creating a firm base for cost-reducing technological progress.

To Kenneth S Fischer, Deputy Director General for Research, IRRI, the prime question of rice research is how to balance the need for ever-greater food production at prices that poor consumers can afford and that are still profitable to farmers while meeting critical concerns about protecting natural resources and the environment for generations to come.

Green Revolution was all about more inputs - water, fertiliser and pesticides. But time has come to provide farmers with the knowledge of better input management, said Fischer.

"During those period, we intensified pests as we intensified rice production and in the process use of pesticides became a habit for many Asian farmers. Time has come to grow more rice using lesser pesticides."

Participants in the conference agreed that throughout Asia rice merchants are rich but farmers are not. So, they felt if farming profession has to sustain, all should come forward to equip Asian rice farmers with cost-effective new technologies.

Toshiko Sunada, a member of Japan Food Journalists Organisation, argued that rice should continue to top the menu of Asians as "rice-eater Japanese live longer. New generation kids in Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya who jump on hamburgers and junk foods suffer from a lot of diet-related diseases".

Other journalists shared the frustration of Tran Van Thai, a senior journalist from Vietnam, over poor media focus on rice. "We are more interested in scandals, Monica, drugs and beauty contests than in rice."

"Indian press takes more interest in corporate trade and service sectors than in agriculture," although China and India together account for 63 per cent of Asia's total rice output, said Kanwaldeep Singh, Agriculture Editor of The Times of India.

Former general may join BNP

By Staff Correspondent

A former major general, who completed his leave preparatory to retirement last week, is likely to join BNP soon.

Mohammad Subed Ali Bhuiyan had an exclusive meeting with the BNP chief Khaleda Zia prior to an iftar party hosted for politicians by the Leader of the Opposition at her 29 Minto Road official residence yesterday.

Talking to Daily Star, Bhuiyan said that he was yet to decide when he would join politics as his LPR had ended on December 2. Bhuiyan had been sent into a premature retirement.

He had served as principal staff officer at the Armed Forces Division when Khaleda Zia was prime minister and defence minister. Bhuiyan said there had been no communication with the former prime minister since her government resigned on March 30, 1996.

"Only Almighty Allah knows when I will join BNP," he said, replying to a question, claiming there was no discussion with any senior BNP leader about his joining BNP till date.

He, however, did not rule out the possibility. "I just ended my LPR ... let me observe the situation," he added.

The general came to the lime light during the May 19-20, 1996 abortive coup after which former President Abdur Rahman Biswas sacked the then army chief General Nasim and some other top army officials.

He said that he received an invitation for the iftar from the opposition leader at about 11 am yesterday. "As soon as I entered the 29 Minto Road, an aide of Begum Zia took me straight to her office room. Even I didn't understand where he was taking to me to," he said.

A senior BNP leader, asking not to be named, gave a different story, however.

"The retired general is "hesitant" because Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain and Bhuiyan hail from the same constituency of Daudkandi," the BNP leader told this correspondent.

"Now his joining is a matter of time. If he joins BNP, he might be given a dignified position in the party," he added.

7-party condemns govt for 'using secret service'

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP led Seven-Party Alliance yesterday strongly condemned the government for "using the secret service for its narrow political interests".

"The government has turned the military intelligence, which is involved in national security, into a weapon to serve its narrow political interests. This is rare and unwanted," it said in a resolution adopted at a meeting held at the official residence of the Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad.

The meeting observed that creating pressure on BNP's Dhaka city joint convenor SA Khaleque to join the ruling party only proved its bankruptcy.

People's rights are being curbed and their freedom of expression is being snatched under the misrule of the government, it said.

Meanwhile, a joint meeting of BNP and its different front organisations at the party's central office with its Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan in the chair yesterday called for making its December 31 'demonstration day' a success.

The countrywide demonstration programme was announced earlier to press its demand for reduction of prices of essentials.

Speaking at the meeting, Mannan Bhuiyan alleged that the government miserably failed to keep prices of essentials within the buying capacity of the commonman.

Ershad's letter to Khaleda

From Page 1

evening, a source close to him said. Similar letters had also been sent to top leaders of the major political parties including the Awami League.

Leaders in the BNP-led Seven-Party alliance were also present on the occasion. But none of the invitees in the AL and the Left parties came.

The absentees included Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Speaker Humayun Rashid Choudhury, Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid, all ministers, MPs and other senior leaders of the ruling party. The Speaker however regretted his absence due to what he said his "preoccupation".

None in the ruling party cared to do the courtesy. But Ershad did.

JP presidium member Kazi Feroz Rashid handed over Ershad's letter to Khaleda Zia. Rashid and Kazi Golam Dastagir, a former major general, represented their party at the *iftar*.

In his brief letter, Ershad addressed Khaleda Zia as "Honourable Leader of the Opposition" and started with *As-salamu Alaikum*. He also thanked the opposition leader for her invitation, the first such gesture from the BNP leader to the military dictator who had grabbed state power ousting the BNP government led by the late Justice Abdus Sattar more than 16 years ago.

Ershad told Khaleda Zia that his absence was due to his preoccupation with a similar programme coinciding hers and delayed receipt of the invitation.

"Despite my sincere willingness to attend your *iftar* party, I regret my absence ... We hope to meet in future," Ershad said wishing her "good health and a long life".

During the *iftar*, Khaleda invited the two JP representatives to her table. "We exchanged greetings and took *iftar* together. The opposition leader also said *Khoda Hafez* to us before leaving the table," Rashid told The Daily Star.

Khaleda accuses ruling party of hijacking political leaders

BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday accused the ruling party of hijacking political leaders and called for holding midterm election to test its popularity, reports UNB.

Referring to the recent episode by S A Khaleque she said, Awami League realised its decaying popularity and due to shaky position it resorted to hijacking political leaders.

She was inaugurating the 20th founding anniversary of JASAS, cultural wing of BNP, in front of Ramna Restaurant in the afternoon.

"We feel pity at your distressed condition," she said pointing at the ruling party. "Give up power, hold polls and relieve the people of your misrule."

Iftar over, Dastagir told this paper: "The JP (of Ershad) was invited to the iftar. One can't ignore an invitation during the holy month of *Ramadan*."

Asked if there was any chance for a Khaleda-Ershad meeting soon, a close aide of Ershad said, "Maybe, it will happen. You know there is no last word in politics ..."

Reached by telephone, Awami League leader Mohammad Nasim said his party had decided in principle not to host any iftar party this year.

Earlier, the AL chief and prime minister Sheikh Hasina announced her decision not to host any official *iftar* party in view of this year's devastating flood and the subsequent austerity measures by her government. She also directed all ministries and government organisations not to host any *iftar* party.

"As we're not hosting any *iftar* party (this year), so we're not attending any such programme," Nasim, the telecommunications minister, told The Daily Star.

Asked to comment on the Khaleda-Ershad contact, Nasim said, "AL is not worried about their collaboration."

UNB says: Taking offence at the mode of delivery of the invitation, Ershad abstained from attending yesterday's *Iftar* party hosted by Khaleda Zia, JP sources said.

"Ershad felt insulted as his invitation was sent through a BNP deliveryman and instantly decided not to joint the *Iftar*," one source told UNB.

Protesting students attacked at DU

From Page 1

Stopped by police near the Lecture Theatre (LT), they came back to the Central Library area.

They made a second attempt to parade the campus but were intercepted again by police in front of the LT and came back to the DUCSU building area to burn the effigies.

On the other hand, the members of the "conscious" group started to gather at the *Aparajeya Bangla* from 10 am. They held a rally there and planned a similar programme with an effigy representing the students participating in the campaign against alleged sexual abusers at around 12:01 pm.

The "conscious" group suddenly postponed the programme and decided to bring out a procession on the campus. Police stopped the procession near the Lecture Theatre.

The group came back to *Aparajeya Bangla* and headed for the DUCSU building where the other group was preparing to set fire to the effigies of alleged sexual abusers.

The police near the DUCSU building stopped them. The "conscious" students then damaged a bamboo fence around the DUCSU building and, took bamboo sticks in their hands.

Divided in several groups, the conscious students at this stage attacked the SPSH activists with brickbats as they set fire to the effigies at around 12:15 pm. The attackers hurled abusive words at the victims.

Abu Bakar Ripon, a student of the department of Finance and Banking received injuries on his face. Three female students Bonnhi, Sharmin and Rahima also received injuries during the attack.

While the SPSH was preparing for a press briefing in front of the DUCSU building, the conscious group encircled them and asked for their identity cards.

Following an altercation, the conscious group attacked the students again. Moin, a member of the SPSH, was severely beaten up by a waist belt. They also damaged the windowpanes of the DUCSU building.

The female members of the SHSH were chased into the Central library. Some of the attackers also entered the central library following them. Later, police forced the chasers out of the library.

At around 1:30 pm, the SHSP members were taken out of the campus by an ambulance under police protection. They were taken to a private clinic at Dhanmondi for treatment.

The Vice Chancellor at the press briefing at his office appealed all to show restraint. "Nothing has happened in the university so far for which effigy would have to be burnt."

He said the activities of both the groups were disrupting academic atmosphere of the university. He assured that the inquiry report would be published within 10 days.

Replying to a question, the VC said there were no plans to slap a code of conduct on teachers.

He argued that the planned code of conduct of the Jahangirnagar University would be for the students, not for the teachers.

"Teachers are under an obligation to follow some rules as part of their job responsibility. There is no need for a new code of conduct for them," the VC added.

The VC also rejected the demand to include female students in the inquiry committee calling it illogical. "The committee will lose its legal basis if students of the university are included," he said.

The VC said he felt sorry for the incident on the campus and claimed that he had made efforts to stop the effigy-burning programme.

"I requested some female teachers of the university to prevent the SPSH from burning the effigy of the alleged sexual abusers."

He however declined to name the teachers who he had requested and evaded a question whether he believed the teachers might have had a hand in it.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) at a press conference at the Madhu's canteen said that the BCL had no involvement with any group now campaigning against alleged sexual harassment.

The party's DU unit president Sazzad Hossain said that BCL wanted punishment to the teachers involved in sexual harassment. "But that should be done through a proper procedure," he said adding, "The university authorities have already formed a committee to investigate the incident."

He urged all not to take up any programme that might tarnish the image of the university. The ongoing programme of the students is tarnishing the image of the university, he said.

Bangladesh Chhatra Federation at a rally in the evening condemned the attack on the students burning the effigies of alleged sexual abusers. They held the rally at the TSC area.

The "Conscious Students" has postponed its activities till January 8, says a press release. They claimed that none of its activists were involved in the attack on the SPSH.

Some Dhaka University students set afire an effigy of an alleged sex abuser yesterday, leading to an attack by rivals that left eight hurt on the campus. —Star photo by Sk Enamul Haq

Intensive care unit

From Page 1

The beds are not cleaned regularly. Sometimes relatives who attend their patients have to make their own arrangements to keep things clean.

"I paid a cleaner Tk 40 to wash the bed sheets," an attendant of a patient told this correspondent during a visit to the ICU yesterday.

There is no stock of drugs at the ICU. If any emergency patient needs any life-saving drug, the attendant is asked by nurse or doctor to procure it from outside. The attendant has to run for it, no matter what hour of the night it is.

But doctors say they have nothing to do. "We can not set up a pharmacy here on the ninth floor. People would then start charging us for setting up business here for profit," one doctor said. There are instances that patients died at the ICU waiting for life-saving drug, the sources said.

Fauzia Haq who attended her husband A. K. Fazlul Haq narrated how much she had to suffer when her husband was at the ICU. Her husband died there last month.

"His condition started deteriorating after he was admitted to the ICU. We felt very uncertain and helpless. Doctors hardly communicated with us. All we were told was that at least one person would have to stay at the ICU to look after our patient," said Ms Haq.

"During my stay at the ICU the nurses would ask me to procure drugs and to keep an eye on the monitor behind the patient's bed. At night, the situation turned worse in absence of any nurse or doctor. I complained but things did not improve."

She further said, "There were occasions when I had to take temperature of my husband and report it to the doctor next morning. Nurses would hardly attend my husband despite repeated appeals. One day, one of the ward boys had given overdose of saline. But complaints hardly improved things."

The hospital authorities, when contacted ,said the ICU is in a "premature stage" and so patients should not expected to get the type of treatment given elsewhere in the world.

An ICU is a multi-disciplinary unit. Patients whose cases are considered "potentially reversible" are taken to ICU. It is very expensive. Citing examples, one doctor said, "In the US a patient has to spend about 4000 Dollars a day if taken to ICU while in UK the rate is about 400 Pounds."

Explaining the plight of the ICU at the medical university, Prof. K M Iqbal, Head of the Anestheology Department said, "The ICU is not recognised as an individual entity. We do not have separate funds and infrastructure for its development. It was developed by the doctors here. Whatever we have achieved is the contribution of our doctors'."

Referring to the specific allegations, Dr Nizamuddin said, "Yes, we allow attendants to look after their patients as we run short of nurses. We have three nurses in every shift.

"We have programmes so that attendants of patients get familiarised with the activities at the ICU".

Referring to nurses and doctors he said, "The nurses are just leaning. Neither the nurses nor the doctors have been properly trained as per requirement of an ICU. They are in the process of learning ICU activities. It will take a long time to have a well trained team."

Dr Nizamuddin said, "Many patients die at government hospitals simply because of the absence of ICU. None of the government hospitals except the Dhaka Medical College Hospital has proper provisions for ICU."

Vice- chancellor of BSS-MUH Professor M A Quaderi was asked about allocation of funds for the ICU. He said, "The ICU is not on our priority list. We do not see the ICU as a separate entity."

During the visit this correspondent found four patients being treated free of cost. Out of 12 Artificial Ventilator machines, four were out of order. There was no radiograper to operate the only portable X-ray machine at the unit. The 'mini lab' for 'quick investigation', set up at doctors' initiative, also lacked a technitian to do investigation.

Iraq to fire on jets

From Page 1

their speeches for the lifting of the embargo against Iraq," Abdel Hadi Majali told reporters after the closed-door working session of members of the Arab Parliamentary Union (APU).

The representatives of 14 of the 16 countries taking part gave speeches during the session.

Earlier, crown prince Hassan Ibn Talal of Jordan opened the APU meeting, which is being boycotted by Kuwait, with an expression of "solidarity with the Iraqi people."

Prince Hassan, who is serving as regent as King Hussain undergoes cancer treatment in the United States, also called for the sessions to be a "success for Iraq rather than serve to provoke others against it and against US."

Iraq's representative, parliamentary Speaker Saadoun Hammadi, criticised the failure to specifically denounce the 'US-British aggression against Iraq' as the theme of the meeting.

The banner for the 33rd extraordinary APU meeting in the conference hall here only mentions "solidarity with the fraternal Iraqi people."

"The delegations have been summoned to discus the US-British aggression against Iraq and the lifting of the embargo," Hammadi complained, calling on Arab MPs to 'fulfill the desires of the Arab peoples' by lifting sanctions.

Bunty

From Page 1

trate's Court, Dhaka, by December 31 and pay for bail in usual course.

It ruled that Bunty Islam may be questioned by the investigation officer in the criminal case against him.

The vacation bench of the high court division presided over by Justice Mohammad Fazlul Karim passed the order when Bunty Islam surrendered before the court with anticipatory bail petition. The petition was moved by Barrister Amirul Islam on behalf of Bunty Islam.

Deputy Attorney General Barrister Iman Ali opposed the petition saying there is a specific charge against Bunty Islam of killing Sohel Chowdhury.

Following the murder of Sohel Chowdhury on December 19 in Banani, the police were looking for Bunty Islam, an accused in the murder.

It still happens!

From Page 1

house. "He told me to contact Assistant Sub-Inspector of police Abdul Aziz at the airport to get my luggage back," Manzoor recalled.

By 9.30 pm, Manzoor reached ZIA and met ASI Abdul Aziz. The ASI showed him his bags and asked him to check those.

"When I checked those I was stunned that everything was in order," he said.

According to the ASI, the microbus driver found the bags in the boot when he reached Gazipur with the passengers in the evening. When he came back, he returned the bags intact to Airport Police. Police searched the bags and collected Manzoor's home address from the passport and called Mirpur police to contact the bags' owner.

"I thank the policemen for everything they did. I wanted to thank the microbus driver, but I could not trace him," Manzoor said.

DU library linked with foreign libraries

By DU Correspondent.

The Dhaka University Library Automation Project (DULAP) was inaugurated yesterday, linking the DU Central Library with other libraries of the world.

Vice-chancellor of the university Prof A.K Azad Chowdhury inaugurated the automation project on the ground floor of the Central library.

The Tk 1.24 crore project has been funded by the United Nations Development Programme(UNDP), University Grants Commission(UGC), the government and DU authorities.

The project enables people from across the world to know about the library, university and the country. Teachers, students and researchers of the university will also be able to search the other libraries of the world.

Meanwhile, a DU press release said yesterday the project would be completed by June, 1999.

Traders at Feni

From Page 1

Bazar Byabsahi Samity (Traders Association).

Several bomb blasts and gunshots rocked the town this afternoon despite reinforcement of police patrols on all the roads of the town.

Another trade body, Town Byabsahi Samity, in a press briefing today said they did not support the two-day hartal. They said they would launch a greater movement soon demanding "removal of the police super for his failure to ensure security of the businessmen".

Ship breaking

From Page 1

ship — generators, motors, furniture, cables, electrical fittings, toiletries and fuel is reused. Many businessmen became multimillionaires overnight from this business earlier due to high rate of return and low labour cost, sources said.

Workers, who face the risk of a gas explosion or other accidents during ship breaking earn between Tk 70 and Tk 150 a day.

The ship breaking business started in 1960 when a foreign ship ran around at Sitakundu during a cyclone and the crew put it on auction after failing to refloat it.

Editor : Mahfuz Anam

Published by the Editor from City Publishing House Ltd., 90 Kakrail, Dhaka-1000 on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd., 52 Motijheel C.A., Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No: 11, Road No: 3, Dhanmandi R/A, Dhaka-1205. PABX: 866772-4, Commercial: 866771, Fax No: 88-02-863035, GPO Box No: 3257, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA. Internet edition address: http://www.dailystarnews.com and Email address: dstar@bangla.net