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BNP-led alliance still grapples with mutual mistrust

By Nazmul Ashraf

Mutual mistrust continues to cast a shadow over the BNP-led opposition alliance that had agreed on a four-point charter of demand including a revamped Election Commission ahead of the local government elections.

Jamaat. Besides, JP chief Ershad's reported remark against woman leadership in politics had also angered the BNP. The alleged government attempts to weaken the opposition unity and yet-to-resolve feuds in the IOJ over its being a partner in the coalition have all the more aggravated the situation, insiders said.

They said the meeting was of the view that none of the coalition partners should do or speak anything that might cause misunderstanding among themselves. It also agreed that the opposition leaders should be careful in making statements to avoid any bitterness and embarrassment.



The homeless people are picking through the rubbles after a devastating fire gutted more than 100 houses and left two persons burnt alive at Gandaria in the city in the early hours of yesterday.

2 killed, 150 shanties gutted

By Staff Correspondent

Two persons were killed and about 150 shanties gutted in a fire at a slum in the city's Gandaria area in the early hours of today.

Demra police confirmed the death of two persons but could not identify the victims. Fire Brigade and Civil Defence sources said the fire broke out at the Guntigar slum in Gandaria at about 1:55.

Eight fire fighting units from fire brigade headquarters, Postagola and Saderghat stations rushed to the spot and extinguished the blaze after two hours. But they could not ascertain the origin of the fire.

Politically powerful in Karachi, the capital of Sindh and the largest city of Pakistan, the MQM represents Urdu-speaking Indians who migrated to Pakistan when British rule ended in 1947.

Feuding factions of the MQM have been blamed for the relentless violence that has terrorised southern Karachi and left more than 1,000 people dead in the past one year.

"We are facing the renewed threat of terrorism and sectarian violence," Sharif wrote in his letter. "Waves of blood have been submerging our fair and tranquil land from time to time."

BNP will eventually take part in local body polls: PM

By Staff Correspondent

NARSINGDI, Jan 11: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today said opposition BNP would eventually participate in the upcoming local body elections whatever their preemptive demands are, reports UNB.

"Although BNP is threatening to boycott the polls, finally it would have to take part in the municipal, city corporation and upazila elections, they'll do it," she told a huge public meeting at local stadium in the afternoon.

Hasina made it clear that the local government elections would be held strictly on time and would said that schedules of city corporation and upazila polls be announced shortly.

She assured that all necessary steps would be taken to ensure free and fair voting so that people could exercise their franchise freely in the local government elections.

"We have fought a long-drawn struggle for ensuring people's right to ballot and we want to see people exercise their right."

Referring to the four-point declaration of the allied opposition, the prime minister questioned its merit and said since it does not contain anything for people's welfare and interests, "there is no possibility of meeting those demands."

Incentive scheme Meeting on to hammer out a solution

By Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 11: The meeting of the special committee formed to resolve the dispute over incentive scheme for dock workers at Chittagong port, ended today without any headway, meeting sources said.

The meeting of the 22-member committee headed by the joint secretary of shipping ministry Abdul Huq, held today at the port rest house twice from 12 am to 4 pm with a break for sometime, meeting sources said.

The meeting will be held tomorrow at 11:30 am again at the same venue to hammer out a solution to the crisis, they said.

Responding to various local demands, Hasina said steps would be taken to set up a 100-bed hospital in Narsingdi and ensure better communication with the capital. She assured that an academic building would be constructed for Narsingdi Govt College.

The cabinet continued reviewing progress of the government's post-flood rehabilitation programmes at its weekly meeting yesterday, an official handout said.

According to cabinet sources, the ministers for Local Government and Rural Development, Education and Water Resources separately briefed their colleagues about the progress of rehabilitation programmes undertaken by their respective ministries.

Oil mill godown gutted in Ctg

By Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 11: A godown of an oil mill was gutted in a fire at Mazirhat in the city at 3 pm today, police and fire brigade sources said.

Fire fighters struggled for over two hours to extinguish the blaze.

The origin of fire could not be ascertained till filing of this report.

The loss of property was estimated at about Tk 60 lakh.

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Scam cases

From Page 1

Sharif had earlier announced that he would give his verdict on the three together.

AKM Shamsuddin of Doha Securities, ASF Rahman, Salman F Rahman and DH Khan of Beximco Pharmaceuticals and ASF Rahman, Salman F Rahman and AB Siddiqi Rahman of Shinepukur would have their bail extended till the next appearance date on February 14.

All the accused appeared as the court took up the cases yesterday after a four-day recess.

The hearing of the cases began on January 3 and continued for four days. The hearing on Doha Securities and Shinepukur concluded while Beximco Pharma remained "part heard".

Eight bills

From Page 1

universities," he said dispelling the dissensions.

He said passage of the bills would enable appointment of one or more than one pro-VC necessary for dealing with the campus matters.

All executions ordered by military courts in Sindh suspended

By Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD, Jan 11: The Supreme Court today ordered all executions handed down by special military courts in southern Sindh province suspended until a hearing decides whether these courts are legal, reports AP.

Two executions have been carried out in the past two weeks. Another four people are on death row awaiting execution by hanging. The executions were temporarily halted on Friday, but it wasn't clear whether the suspension would continue.

In a three-page letter to his attorney general, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif argued in favour of the military courts explaining what he called the extraordinary circumstances under which they were established.

The letter was read out before a seven-member bench of the Supreme Court Monday which in a terse two sentence order demanded the suspension of executions until after a hearing which will begin on February 1.

An ethnic party in southern Sindh province is challenging teacher.

At the meeting, DU Syndicate formed an enquiry committee to look into the matter and serve a show cause notice on Prof Shahiduzzaman as to why his services should not be terminated.

Interrogation of Nurul Absar continues

By Staff Correspondent

Intelligence agencies continued interrogating 'international terrorist' Syed Nurul Absar for the third consecutive day yesterday.

Sources said Absar continued denying the allegation brought against him.

Police said, they are conducting a probe as regards the Interpol message which said Absar was a member of an international terrorist group.

Syed Nurul Absar was arrested by SB at Chawkbazar, Chittagong and brought to Dhaka on Saturday for questioning.

The business tycoon, brought on a two-day remand for the second time since he was arrested on January 6, denied the charges terming those a "conspiracy" against him.

DB continues interrogating Aziz Bhai

By Staff Correspondent

Detective Branch police continued interrogating Aziz Mohammad Bhai yesterday for his alleged involvement in the murder of film actor Sohel Chowdhury, reports APB.

The business tycoon, brought on a two-day remand for the second time since he was arrested on January 6, denied the charges terming those a "conspiracy" against him.

During interrogation yesterday Aziz denied the charge that he had nexus with clandestine business operations.

Aziz is expected to be produced before the court on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Bunty Islam, uncle-in-law of Aziz Bhai and also an accused in the case, is being undergoing treatment in Dhaka Central Jail hospital.

Bomb blasts foil BNP's iftar party at N'ganj

By Staff Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Jan 11: An iftar party of the opposition BNP was foiled today due to bomb blasts around the venue at the party office in the town, reports UNB.

The blasts began just before the iftar.

The local BNP leaders blamed the ruling Awami League for the attack and criticised the role of police, who were reportedly stood in silence at the time.

Later, the BNP leaders and workers had their iftar on the road at Bangabandhu Avenue and brought out a protest procession.

BNP central leader Abdul Matin Chowdhury, who was invited to the iftar party, did not turn up.

Cabinet reviews post-flood steps

By Staff Correspondent

The cabinet continued reviewing progress of the government's post-flood rehabilitation programmes at its weekly meeting yesterday, an official handout said.

According to cabinet sources, the ministers for Local Government and Rural Development, Education and Water Resources separately briefed their colleagues about the progress of rehabilitation programmes undertaken by their respective ministries.

The LGRD Minister and the Minister for Water Resources told the meeting that they have so far received adequate foreign assistance to implement the post-flood rehabilitation programmes.

The ministers also said they are already implementing some projects under the rehabilitation programmes and will start implementing the rest very soon.

The Education Minister echoed them. He, however, informed the cabinet that a certain European donor organisation was interested in spending its money through some local NGOs, not through the government, cabinet sources said.

Cold spell

From Page 1

at Ishurdi. At Chuadanga, temperature fell to 7.2 C, Dinajpur 7.8 C, Rajshahi 8.2 C, Mymensingh 10.2 C, Dhaka 11 C, Chittagong 14.2 C, Khulna 11.6C, Barisal 11 C, and at Sylhet 13 C.

Met Office said the 'ride of a Siberian high' reached the north-western region of the country yesterday. It may contribute to lowering of the temperature in some areas to five C. This combined with the north-eastern monsoon wind is likely to make the weather chilly.

Khulna: 15 held

From Page 1

absconding since the murders.

Police said they foiled an attempt by supporters of Arkam to snatch the two bodies.

VGD programme

From Page 1

actually delivered from the LSD and that the quality of grain is good," the study said.

The beneficiaries were concerned about both the quantity and quality of the grains, it said. "If the quality of the grain is not good, then not only will the value of the subsidy be reduced, but it will be less likely that the women and their families will consume the grain. They will either sell the grain or use it for animal feed."

Cold wave claims 3 in Pabna

From Page 1

PABNA, Jan 11: Cold wave claimed three people, including a child, in Sadar and Faridpur thanas today, reports APB.

The victims of the cold wave, now sweeping across the country's northern districts, were two old men - Shamsuddin of Banglabazar and Ziauddin of Radhanagar. A one-year-old baby, Nabin, of Faridpur thana, also died in the cold wave.

Regular Indo-Pak bus service by early Feb

By Staff Correspondent

NEW DELHI, Jan 11: Indian officials returning from a trial run of bus service to Pakistan said today ordinary citizens from both countries will be making the trip by February, reports AP.

United News of India quoted DS Cheema, managing director of New Delhi's transportation commission, as saying another trial run would be conducted by Pakistani officials Thursday from the Pakistani border city of Lahore to the Indian capital. After that, the date for the first commercial trip would be set, probably in late January or early February, Cheema said.

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Hasina to open Natore Stadium today

From Our Correspondent

NATORE, Jan 11: The newly built Natore Stadium is going to be formally inaugurated tomorrow.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to inaugurate the Tk 2.5 crore stadium, named after late veteran Awami League leader Sankar Govinda Chowdhury. She would also address a public meeting at the stadium.

According to official sources, former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in November '91, had laid the foundation stone of the stadium on a 13.7 acre of land at the eastern part of the town beside Natore-Bogra highway. Four and a half years later, the construction work began.

The work, however, was completed within 18 months. The stadium was handed over to the District Sports Association (DSA) on 20 October '97. It is now going to be formally inaugurated tomorrow.

The Prime Minister is also expected to hand over the barack-style houses, built under the Arayan project, to the homeless people of Singra thana.

Youth leaders

From Page 1

to the chairperson, in which they proposed themselves as president.

Sources said Roy proposed three possible names for general secretary - Moazzem Hossain Alal, Barkatullah Bhulu MP and Khairul Kabir Khokon.

Mirza Abbas did not name anyone for the crucial post.

Frustrated by the bickering of the top two, two other Juba Dal leaders Barkatullah Bhulu and Moazzem Hossain Alal also came up with separate lists naming themselves for the number one position.

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