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Unicef chief Carol Bellamy due today

By Staff Correspondent
Unicef Executive Director Carol Bellamy will arrive here today on a three-day official visit to Bangladesh.

This will be her second visit as Unicef chief. Earlier, she visited Bangladesh in November, 1997.

During the visit, Bellamy will see the ongoing programmes supported by Unicef. She will also meet with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, ministers and high government officials, said a press release.

The Executive chief of the UN body will review progress made in Unicef supported arsenic mitigation activities implemented by the Department of Public Health Engineering and other partners, including Dhaka Community Hospital, BRAC and the Gramen Bank.

The Unicef chief will also attend the launching of the National Arsenic Mitigation Communication Strategy.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Salah Uddin Yusuf will inaugurate the ceremony.

She will address a press conference before leaving here on Monday.

Police attack: Khaleda warns against consequences

By Staff Correspondent
BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has strongly condemned and protested police atrocity on the activists of her party's student wing and warned that the consequences of this "barbaric attack" would be "dreadful."

In a statement yesterday, she said police all on a sudden and without any provocation laid a siege to leaders and activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal in front of BNP central office when they were preparing to bring out a procession. They resorted to indiscriminate lathi charge, fired tear shells and gun shots that left unspecified number of activists wounded and arrested many others.

The leader of the Opposition in Parliament said beside the atrocities, police arrested JCD president Habibunnabi Khan Sohel, general secretary Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu, top leaders Monwar Hossain Rana, Abdul Khaleque Hawlader, Mahbubul Haq Nannu, Mahjarul Islam and others and beaten them up indiscriminately during the arrest.

She said the JCD and some other student organisations were scheduled to bring out procession in support of today's shut down. Khaleda Zia said police also arrested leaders and activists of Ganotantrik Chhatra League, Islami Chhatra Shibir, Jatiya Chhatra Samaj and other organisations.

She said, under a democratic system, the students have their right to express their opinion and differ with a decision taken by the university authorities, but the government have snatched away the right through resorting to repression and oppression.

She warned the government of tougher action if the government continues such repressive measures and demanded immediate release of all arrested leaders and activists.

Victory Day

From page 1
decorated with flags, festoons and placards. Important government and private buildings were also illuminated in the city on this occasion.

While ships of Bangladesh Navy were open at ports in Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Barisal, bands of armed forces and law-enforcing agencies played in different city corners adding to the festivities.

As march-pasts were held in different district and thana headquarters, President Shahabuddin took salute of a combined parade of the armed forces and law-enforcing agencies at the National Parade Square in the capital.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was present. Top opposition leaders, however, stayed off the combined parade.

Later, the president hosted a reception at Bangabhaban, which was attended by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, freedom fighters, notable personalities, senior journalists, diplomats and political leaders.

V-Day was also celebrated in Bangladesh missions abroad.

Dhanmondi lake project hampered No steps yet to recover encroached land

By Staff Correspondent

Authorities are yet to take any concrete step to recover the 98 kathas (about two acres) of illegally occupied Dhanmondi lakeside public land from 42 occupants in the city.

The inaction has stalled some of the most vital components of the Dhanmondi lake development project, which was scheduled to be completed in the first week of March 2000.

Following the approval of the Tk 16.62 crore 'lake project' by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) on December 1, the LGRD Ministry was supposed to expedite the process of recovering the land with the assistance of the Public Works Department (PWD).

The ECNEC meeting, with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair, also had decided to

remove all illegal establishments from the lakeside area. Knowledgeable sources said that apart from writing a letter to the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and the PWD to execute ECNEC decisions, the LGRD Ministry had not done anything yet.

In response to the ministry's letter, the PWD has 'unofficially' asked for 'more time' to initiate their action for the recovery of the public land and make way for the four-kilometre long 'walkway'.

Sources also said that some of the 42 illegal encroachers have recently begun to build their boundary-walls on the public land. Some occupants, who have already constructed six-storied apartment blocs on the encroached land, have even offered the LGRD and works

ministries to buy the land at a government price of Tk 4 lakh per katha, they said.

Authorities are now 'confused' about possible ways to demolish these apartment blocks and recover the land. Sources said the ECNEC has added another Tk 1.8 crore under the component of 'land development for the walkway'.

'The idea of 'land development' is itself a cover for 'legalising' the encroachment. The walkway component would eventually be completed by filling the lake up — and not removing the encroachers," alleged an official source.

'If they are successful in recovering the public land from these influential ones, this would be a milestone in our history of our administration,' said the official requesting anonymity.

Vital evidence in Sharif's case handed to court

KARACHI, Dec 17: Pakistani prosecutors today handed over to an anti-terrorism court transcripts of audio recordings and a witness confession in the treason case against ousted premier Nawaz Sharif, reports AFP.

Judge Shabbir Ahmed ordered the court should hold onto the evidence, which includes the testimony of Amin-ullah Chaudhary, the former head of the Civil Aviation Authority, who was accused but will now give evidence against Sharif.

He then adjourned the hearing until Monday after the defence said some of their senior lawyers were not available.

'Now we have provided the transcripts of important evidence in the case to the court. But the defence counsels are adopting delaying tactics,' said

public prosecutor Raja Qureshi. In the last hearing on Monday the court delayed bringing formal charges against Sharif because of disputes over the evidence.

Murder case filed against Benazir

ISLAMABAD, Dec 17: Pakistani police officials said today they have registered a murder case against former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, linking her to the deaths of two activists from a rival party, reports AFP.

In the complaint lodged at a police station in Rawalpindi, See page 11 col 8

Sharif, his brother Shahbaz, and five senior officials face the charges of treason, hijacking, kidnapping, criminal conspiracy, attempted murder and collecting arms to wage war against Pakistan.

They face the death penalty if they are convicted.

The case against ex-premier relates to the night of the coup, when Sharif is accused of preventing the landing in Karachi of a Pakistan International Airlines flight carrying army chief General Pervez Musharraf and nearly 200 other passengers from Sri Lanka.

The plane only landed after the army seized control of the airport. Within hours Musharraf had assumed sweeping powers and detained Sharif.

Sharif has denied the accusations, which he described as a "concocted story."



A colourful gate in front of the convocation venue on DU campus.

— Star photo

DU convocation

From page 1
and also the last one of the millennium. Prof Amartya Sen will be present at the function as guest of honour.

Convocation has been a regular academic feature of the university until 1970 when the last one was held.

Some 1,600 graduates and post-graduates will attend the convocation ceremony that will begin at the Physical Centre (playground) of DU at 10 am.

Massive face-lift in dormitories and academic buildings including renovation and whitewash and road marking on thoroughfares gives the entire university campus a clean, colourful look.

Modern lighting system has been installed in and around the campus. The dormitories will also be decorated with colourful lights.

Four gates have been erected at different strategic points on the campus, including one, the most attractive, in front of the convocation venue. The convocation gate has been erected at Shahbagh crossing. A 3,500 capacity convocation pandal has also been set up at the playground of the university.

However, some teachers belonging to the opposition BNP-backed 'White Panel' have decided to stay off the convocation ceremony because they said 'the (university) decision to confer the degree on the prime minister was taken hastily by virtue of a controversial procedure in Academic Council meeting without prior notification.'

They have decided to boycott the convocation following 'indecent remarks' by Sheikh

Hasina aimed at BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

Pro-BNP Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal will enforce a 6 am-12 pm hartal across the capital to protest conferring of the degree on the prime minister.

Skin-tight security blanket covers the campus with deployment of some 6,000 police and paramilitary personnel, according to officials.

The convocation will have two sessions. In the first session, Hasina will be conferred on the degree for her 'contribution to establishment of regional and world peace, alleviation of poverty, empowerment of women and democratisation of the country'.

In the second, Prof Sen will receive the degree for his 'outstanding contribution to human knowledge in general and to the discipline of economics in particular'.

A small booklet will be available at the function giving a profile of the university and its achievements along with future development plans. A souvenir is also to be released on the occasion.

Vice-chancellor Prof Azad Chowdhury in a press briefing yesterday at his official residence called upon all students, student leaders, teachers and people in general to make the gala ceremony a success.

'We can have difference of opinion but such differences should be minimised for greater interest of the nation,' the VC said.

Among others, Pro-VC Prof M Shahadat Ali, Treasurer and proctor Prof AKM Nurunnabi were present at the briefing.

1999 was Earth's 5th warmest year

LONDON, Dec 17: This has been Planet Earth's fifth warmest year since consistent global records began in 1860, British meteorologists said today, reports Reuters.

Temperatures around the world in 1999 were about 0.33 degrees Celsius (0.6 Fahrenheit) higher than the average for 1961-1990 and about 0.7 degrees Celsius (1.25 Fahrenheit) higher than temperatures at the end of the last century, the Meteorological Office reported.

Seven of the world's 10 warmest recorded years have been in the 1990s, the Met Office said in a statement.

'The rapid cooling of temperatures in the equatorial Pacific, the so-called La Nina, has contributed to 1999 being significantly cooler than 1998, the hottest year on record,' said the Met Office's David Parker.

'This large natural year-on-year variability is exactly what we expect to see superimposed on a long-term warming due to man-made greenhouse gas emissions.'

'Our forecast for 2000 shows a high probability of it being warmer than 1999 as the cold Pacific warms again naturally, but only a low probability of beating the 1998 record,' he added.

The Met Office said it believed the 1990s were the warmest decade of the millennium.

In England, barring a late cold snap, temperatures were on course for 1999 to be the warmest year since records began in 1659, beating the previous warmest year, 1990 the Met Office said.

Traffic jam near Smriti Soudha

By Staff Correspondent

Hundreds of vehicles were caught in an unusual congestion near the Dhaka-Aricha highway near the Jatiya Smriti Soudha at Savar on the Victory Day.

Long distance passenger buses, trucks and cars had to wait for hours in queues stretching for miles on both sides of the highway.

The situation worsened as motorcades of the President and the Prime Minister left the site after placing wreaths at the Soudha in the morning.

Hired buses and private cars carrying people who wanted to go to the Soudha to pay homage to the martyrs of the Liberation War were parked on both sides of the road. People got off the buses and walked towards the Soudha. Rows of people were seen on the road.

Hundreds of auto-rickshaws were also seen haphazardly parked on the road.

Traffic sergeants and constables had a tough time controlling traffic. 'It's the worse jam I have ever seen,' said one sergeant.

Liaison body condemns police action on students

By Staff Correspondent

The Liaison Committee of the BNP-led opposition alliance has strongly condemned and protested 'barbaric police attack' on agitating students, who have called a 6-hour hartal in the city today.

Briefing newsmen after a meeting yesterday at 29 Minto Road, the official residence of the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, BNP vice chairman M Shamsul Islam MP said the police attack on students again proved that the Awami League government is trying to cling to power through repression and other means.

The BNP leader said all student organisations, excepting the pro-government Chhatra League and some university teachers, have opposed the conviction to confer honorary degree on the prime minister. The DU authorities have organised it ignoring all protests and opposition, he added.

He said the hartal called by the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and other student organisation is 'very much logical' and called upon the city dwellers to observe it spontaneously.

The BNP leader said police arrested and brutally tortured some 50 JCD activists, including its president Habibunnabi Khan Sohel and general secretary Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu, when they assembled to start a procession from the BNP central office in the afternoon in support of the hartal.

JP leader Kazi Firoz Rashid said police confined the Chhatra

Crackdown

From page 1

JCD president Manjur Elahi told UNB over phone shortly after the arrest of JCD president Habibunnabi Sohel.

JCD activists, led by Sohel and general secretary Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu, picked up an altercation with police officers near the BNP central office. Soon, a bomb exploded touching off a clash that spread over Bijoynagar, Kakrail and surrounding areas.

Police in riot gear then charged baton and fired tear-gas shells on JCD men who pelted stones and exploded crude bombs.

At one stage, JCD activists went on the rampage damaging and torching vehicles.

Meanwhile, chase and counter-chase between police and activists of Jatiya Chhatra Samaj, student front of Jatiya Party, took place in Kalabagan area as the law-enforcers picked up some 15 supporters.

Arrest of top JCD leaders sparked wild protest in different parts of the capital, including Motijheel, Pallabi, Lalbagh, Dhanmondi, Demra and Ramna.

The protesters exploded a series of bombs and set fire to vehicles, including a state-run BRTC double-decker bus.



People flock to the National Mausoleum carrying national bi-colours on the Victory Day. — Star photo

8 killed as bus, truck collide in Rajshahi

RAJSHAHI, Dec 17: Eight persons were killed and ten others injured when a Rajshahi bound micro-bus from Chapinawabganj collided with a speeding truck at Shahabpur under Godagari thana of Rajshahi district yesterday, reports BSS.

Police and hospital sources said, four persons died on the spot while four others succumbed to their injuries at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

Ten persons were admitted to the hospital in a critical condition.

Five of the dead were identified as Health Officer of Rahanpur Ansuruzzaman, 35, driver of the microbus Sentu, 26, Mamon, 32, three-year-old Ekin and businessman of Rahanpur Fazlur Rahman, 32.

Godagari police seized both the microbus and the truck from the spot. A case was filed in this connection, but none was arrested.

In another accident on the

Natore-Rajshahi highway at Tarapur in Puthia thana, two motorbike riders — Lalon, 20, and Sohel — were killed and Lenin, 24, suffered injuries as their bikes were rammed by a microbus from opposite direction at about 4 pm yesterday.

Lenin was admitted to the RMCH. Separate cases were filed with Godagari and Puthia police.

In Chittagong, two persons were killed in two road accidents today.

Police sources said, an unidentified old man died on the spot when a bus ran over him near Sholahashar Rail Gate No 2 this afternoon. The driver fled the scene with the bus.

In another accident, a minor boy was crushed under the wheels of a Chittagong-bound speeding bus a Dhariya on Hat-hazari-Nazirhat road. The victim was identified as Jewel Chowdhury, 8, son of Subash Chowdhury of village Chikdair under Rowzan thana.

40 shops looted, 20 traders injured in Pabna town

PABNA, Dec 17: At least 20 traders were injured and 40 shops looted amid a reign of terror let loose by two armed smugglers' syndicates in the town yesterday, reports UNB.

The armed thugs fired guns and threw bombs at the traders and looted goods worth over Tk 20 lakh. They also ransacked some 40 shops.

Witnesses and local traders said that the hoodlums fired at least 25 gunshots on the traders as they tried to resist the miscreants.

Clashes ensued in sequel to looting of 33 sacks of smuggled sugar from the members of a racket in Kalachandpara area by another gang of smugglers of Gobinda area on the road near Pabna Mental Hospital on Wednesday.

Traders alleged that the two groups of smugglers having political backing were involved in cross-border trade in sugar for last three years.

The armed terrorists attacked various markets, including Bara-Bazaar, Alhaj Market, New Market and Humaira Market when all were busy celebrating the Victory Day,' say witnesses.

Chandrima project

Ctg AL leaders allege massive irregularities in allotment of plots

From Our Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 17: Some leaders of Chittagong City Awami League alleged massive irregularities and nepotism in allotment of plots of Chandrima Residential Project.

They sought the Prime Minister's intervention in this regard and demanded probe into the matter.

The leaders in a statement here today alleged that the allotment of plots of this project by Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) was similar to the scandalous allotment of Uttara plots in Dhaka.

They said that the allotment was biased. It was a 'heinous plot' to tarnish the image of the present government, they added.

Signatories of the statement are: Abul Kalam Shawadgar, vice president, Dr Syedur Rahman, vice president, AKM Baylayet Hossain, vice president, Quazi Enamul Haq Danu, joint secretary, Dr Afzarul Amin, organising secretary, Badiul Alam, press secretary, and Khorshed Alam Sujon.

Jubo Dal leader shot dead in Jessore

JESSORE, Dec 17: A Jubo Dal leader was shot dead by unidentified assailants at Sundali Bazaar in Monirampur thana last night, reports UNB.

Ekram Ali Gazi, 28, son of Monsef Gazi of Kuchlia village in Abhaynagar thana, was a leader of Monirampur thana Jubo Dal.

Police said that a gang of gunmen called Ekram out of a stall where he was taking tea.

'The miscreants shot in his head and fled chanting slogans in the name of Purba Banglar Communist Party,' witnesses said. Ekram died on the spot.

Police sent the body to Jessore General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

A case was filed in this connection.

8 lose eye sight after operations at a hospital in Khulna

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Dec 17: Riot police have been deployed in and around Abdul Wadud Memorial Eye Hospital at Tilok village under Rupsha thana after eight patients lost their eye sight due to wrong diagnosis.

The patients are Halima, 45, Kulsom Khaton 50, Shah Syed Ahmed, 60, Nasrin Begum 45, Nagendra Nath Mondol 65, Nirmala Datta 45, Halim Ghazi 45 and Sufia Begum, 35.

All of them are now blind, said a source in the hospital which was inaugurated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in 1997.

Christian Service Society (CSS), a non-government organisation, runs the hospital.

According to a reliable source, the hospital authorities took Tk 3,000 from each of the eight patients on December 9 for cataract operation.

They were operated upon by two doctors who are private practitioners.

When contacted, one of them said that a germ identified as 'Staphylo Coccus Aureus' has damaged their eye sights due to infection during post-operative period.

The incident has scared other patients. Many of them have left the hospital, said a source.

Mother, daughter murdered in Khulna

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Dec 17: Kohinoor Begum, 35, and her two-year old daughter Shumi were slaughtered by unidentified miscreants early morning yesterday in her house at Ghazipur village under Terokhada thana.

Her son Milon 10 escaped attempt on his life running away from the house. Kohinoor's husband, van driver Zahid Shaikh, was not in the house while the murders were committed, police said today.

Police quoting Milon said that the alleged killers were wearing black masks. They entered the house breaking open the doors and slaughtered my mother and sister who were asleep. Milon told police.

Police believe the murder is a sequel to previous enmity. But some villagers said the armed cadres of an outlawed organisation killed them as Zahid Shaikh is an informer who used to help police nab outlaws.

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HELP ANJUMAN AND INSPIRE OTHERS TO HELP

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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