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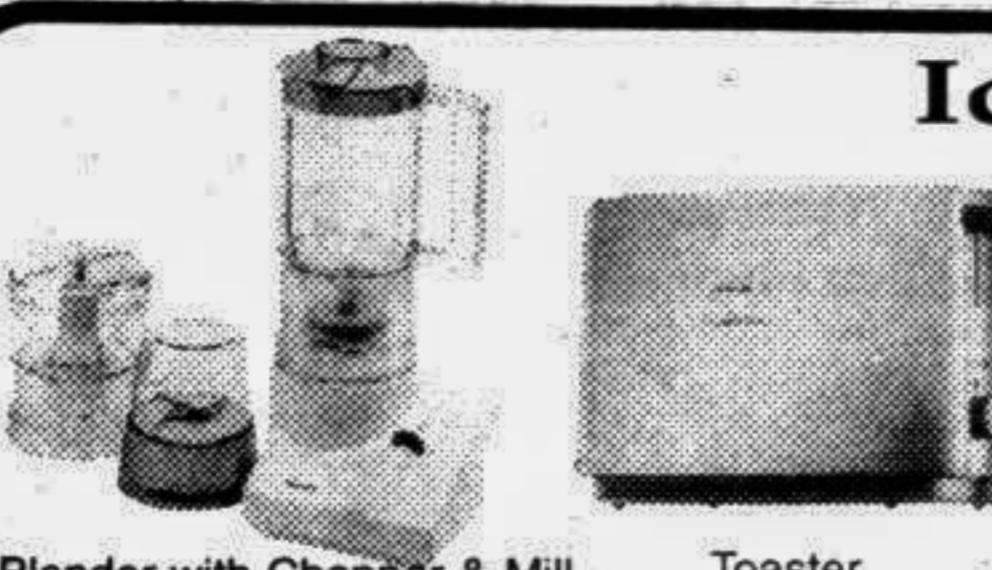
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**PHILIPS**

450 years of Portuguese rule ends

## China regains Macau

MACAU, China, Dec 19: Communist China's flag was raised in Macau tonight, ending almost 450 years of Portuguese rule and marking the start of a new era for this tiny gambling enclave on the southern coast of China, reports Reuters.

At the stroke of midnight, the red flag rose to the strains of the Chinese anthem, replacing Portugal's flag that has flown over this territory for 442 years.

Macau is now a Special Administrative Region of China, with a high degree of self-rule for the next 50 years under a "one country, two systems" formula and principles in Sino-Portuguese treaties.

At 2357 local time (1557 GMT) today, Portugal's flag was lowered for the last time over the trading post set up by Lisbon in 1557.

The flag ceremony, orchestrated in a lantern-like translucent tent, was witnessed by about 2,500 guests from around the world.

Macau's return to China, which follows the handover of Hong Kong in 1997, leaves Taiwan as the only missing link in Beijing's plan to reunite all Chinese territory under its control.

AP adds: Tears streamed

down the face of longtime Macau resident Porfirio Azevedo Gomes as he watched the Portuguese flag being lowered for the last time today at the pink-and-white colonial Government Palace.

"It's very sad when your flag is lowered down," the Portuguese lawyer said after crying on his friends' shoulders.

For the vast majority of Chinese residents, the departure of the Portuguese was long overdue.

"I'd feel more happy to see the Chinese flag flying here," said 32-year-old casino worker Benjamin Chan.

His 8-year-old daughter, Mary, added: "We no longer have to be ruled by the Portuguese."

Locals have long accused Portuguese officials of bad management and indifference that has led to an increase in gang violence in this gambling enclave. There have been at least 37 killings in the past year as gangsters fight for dwindling profits at casinos.

Residents hope the new government — led by the first local Chinese leader, banker Edmund Ho — can restore order. Better security could help revive the economy deeply reliant on gambling and tourism.

Things would be much better if the new government could improve security by just a tiny, tiny bit," said Michael Ko, 30, who has seen revenues at his convenient store near the landmark Hotel Lisboa drop by nearly 30 per cent.

"Business shrinks in the days after every shooting," Ko said. "Fewer tourists come here, and fewer locals hang out when they hear about another shooting."

Macau was a mix of high-security, festivity and nostalgia in its final day under Lisbon's rule.

Many roads were sealed off as dignitaries from around the world descended on the enclave, with Portuguese President Jorge Sampaio and Chinese President Jiang Zemin presiding over the handover ceremony at midnight.

Along main boulevards, Portuguese and the red Chinese communist flags were flying from alternate lamposts. Next to the Government Palace, a banner saying "Welcome the Chinese government to retake Macau's sovereignty" graced a skyscraper. Giant Chinese lanterns floated on the harbor that welcomed the first Portuguese seafarers four centuries ago.

Residents hope the new government — led by the first local Chinese leader, banker Edmund Ho — can restore order. Better security could help revive the economy deeply reliant on gambling and tourism.

**No law and no order**

It's the same old story in our capital city. The Kakrail-Naya Paltan stretch, jammed for three to four hours during rush hour yesterday, is just one example of city's pathetic traffic management. This newspaper keeps publishing the pictures, but the powers that be prefer to look the other way.

Star photo by Sk Enamul Haq

## Trade unions at EPZs

From page 1

ment-run EPZs were in the audience. Counter-arguments came from the investors who pointed to the notorious record of trade unions in public businesses and reminded the government of its promises of a trade-free business climate, while the ministers said a government decision would be made "within a month".

Minister Tofail Ahmed said he foresaw disturbances if trade unions were allowed in the EPZs, lamenting the fact that an LDC like Bangladesh might not be able to withstand the US pressures.

"My country's hope is that Bangladesh will make progress towards ensuring that its workers enjoy internationally recognised rights, including freedom of association," Holzman said.

"For the United States 'making progress' means that Bangladesh should be headed in the right direction in protecting workers' rights, not that it already had established an ideal situation."

The ambassador said the number of workers "denied the freedom of association" would increase with more EPZs in the pipeline. "Promotional material for the EPZs uses the fact that workers are denied freedom of association as a selling point," he said, trying to put it in contrast with garment's success in eliminating child labour from the industry.

Holzman also tried to make his case by highlighting the Dhaka-Washington trade figures, which are heavily tilted against the US. He also sought to refute arguments that the US pressure to "introduce trade unionism" in EPZs was a "protectionist measure".

"My government does not accept that an inevitable con-

tradiction exists between workers' rights and stable economic growth."

The diplomat also warned that Overseas Private Investment Corporation, which advises US investors, would not recommend Bangladesh as an FDI destination.

Holzman spoke of a 1991 assurance from the Bangladesh government that restriction on trade unions in EPZs would be withdrawn. The investors present said it amounted to a breach of trust on part of the Bangladeshi government if it had made such a pledge to the US because they had come convinced that the EPZs would be free from characteristic problems in Bangladesh's industry.

The ambassador, however, suggested that trade unions could take a different shape from the current practices, which are blamed for indiscipline and losses in state-run businesses.

Minister Tofail Ahmed told the meeting that he would expect a government decision regarding trade union activities in the EPZs within a month.

Labour Minister Mannan said that the decision would reflect the interests of both sides.

Khaleda Sung, chairman of the Youngone Corporation, said the investors were ready to respect the right to association but it should not be done at this moment. "It needs some time because the country is not prepared for this."

He also alleged that the government had not disclosed earlier that it had assured the US government of allowing trade union in the EPZs. The Korean investor also appealed to the US ambassador to use his good offices if trade union is allowed there, he said.

"The foreign investors would not come to Bangladesh if that atmosphere does not exist in future." He also said he feared that the 90,000 jobs would be vulnerable if TUs were introduced.

Tofail also refuted the allegation that human rights were being violated in the EPZs.

Bangladesh benefits as much as US\$40 million annually by enjoying preferential access of its goods to the US market, party sources said.

**Nurse found dead at hospital store room in Uttara**

By Staff Correspondent

Dipali Rani Baidya, 25, a nurse of Uttara Women's Medical College Hospital, was found dead in the store room of the hospital at Uttara in the city on Saturday night.

There were scars around her neck and marks of stab injury in her back, said sources at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where her body was sent for autopsy yesterday morning.

Baidya, who was on duty at the Gynae Ward of the hospital, was missing since morning. Her colleagues found her in the store room at about 8:30 pm.

Cantonment police said quoting the unnatural death case filed in this regard.

The victim was a resident of the hostel of Uttara Women's Medical College Hospital at Road No-9 under Sector-1 of Uttara Residential Area, police added.

Officials of the medical college could not be contacted for their comments last night.

**Khaleda**

From page 1

Khaleda told UNB last night at her 29 Minto Road official residence.

The BNP Chairperson had a plan to visit Saudi Arabia on December 28 to perform Umrah Hajj at the invitation of the Saudi King.

She cancelled her proposed programme due to the recent political developments, particularly relating to the Chittagong City Corporation election, party sources said.

**Sylhet getting tense again****Ruling party to hold rally, Opposition calls hartal**

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Dec 19: The Opposition-backed All Party Action Committee today called hartal at 12 today. When the agitators in procession reached the DC office area, police put all the gates of the collectorate under lock and key. Additional police and BDR were also deployed in the area. The agitators then sat on the main road and held a brief rally there with Principal Moulna Habibur Rahman in the chair.

The one-hour sit-in began at 12 today. When the agitators in procession reached the DC office area, police put all the gates of the collectorate under lock and key. Additional police and BDR were also deployed in the area. The agitators then sat on the main road and held a brief rally there with Principal Moulna Habibur Rahman in the chair.

The speakers demanded immediate release of their six activists who were arrested on charges of hurling crackers on the official residence of the VC of Shahjalal University last week.

The situation in Sylhet is again getting tense with the an-

nouncement of fresh programmes for and against the naming of the halls and buildings of the university this week.

Former finance minister and central BNP leader M Saifur Rahman at a meeting of the opposition leaders in Sylhet yesterday afternoon said the on-going movement for withdrawal of the names is logical.

The rally syndicate as well as the government should honour the sentiment of the people, he said adding the authority should withdraw the "disputed" names immediately.

On the other hand, welcoming the names 'Muktijoddha Janata Mancha' will hold a grand rally in Sylhet on December 25.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad will attend the programme. Some other national leaders are also expected to attend the rally.

Meanwhile, the Awami League, JSD, BGD, Ganatantry Party, CPB, Workers Party and some cultural organisations have extended their support to hold the rally. Several meetings were held at the Sylhet District Muktijoddha Sangsad to make the rally a success.

**DUTA polls tomorrow**

By DU Correspondent

Hectic campaigning is going on for election of the executive committee of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA) to be held tomorrow.

The pro-Awami League Blue panel and pro-BNP White panel are contesting for the 15 posts in DUTA. Left-leaning Pink panel is not contesting the election this year and most of its supporters will cast their votes for Blue panel candidates.

Supporters of both the panels are going door to door and seeking votes for their candidates.

The city BNP organised the rally at Muktangan to protest indictment of party's senior leader Tarique Islam in Udichi Murder Case and arrest of JCD leaders and activists on Friday including its president Habibul Nabi Khan Sohel and general secretary Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu.

Chairman by city BNP joint convenor Abdus Salam, the meeting was addressed, among others, by Khandaker Delwar Hossain, Dr Khandaker Mosharrif Hossain, Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, party MP Shamsuzzaman Dudu, Barkatullah Bhulu and Nazimuddin Alam, JCD leader ABD Mosharrif Hossain and Bazlul Bashir.

**10 hurt as BCL, JCD clash in Feni**

From Our Correspondent

FENI, Dec 19: At least 10 people were injured in a clash between the activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal at village Motuha under Chhagalnaiya thana of the district last night.

According to police, the clash was a sequel to Friday's clash between the two rival student organisations in Feni town that left a newly-elected Commissioner of Feni Pourasava and a Sramik Dal leader killed.

The feuding groups used lethal weapons and exploded crackers during the clash.

The injured were admitted to Feni Hospital and Chhagalnaiya Health Complex.

**BNP demands apology**

From page 1

he extended them an invitation to return to parliament.

He said the government should implement the four-point agreements mediated by the Speaker and signed in the parliament.

However, Chowdhury said he doubted the Speaker would extend an invitation to the opposition, since the Prime Minister made the indecent remarks about Khaleda Zia while Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury was presiding over the session.

He said the Speaker didn't stop the Prime Minister, or expunged the indecent remarks while she was on the floor of Jatiya Sangsad. "Now the question is whether we'll respond to his invitation or not," said Chowdhury.

The BNP leader said that the Awami League either reduced the Speaker's authority, or he doesn't have the courage to run an impartial parliament.

Turning to country's overall situation, Prof. Badruddoza Chowdhury said though there is no existence of one-party system in the country, but the activities of the ruling AL are worse than the one-party system of the mid '70s.

He said the government is systematically destroying the country's election system by holding unilateral by-elections and local polls.

The AL government is snatching voter's rights in order to establish the right. Meanwhile, the Chief Election Commissioner and the Election Commission have lost the people's confidence because they are incompetent and completely subservient to the government.

Chowdhury said the opposition parties have boycotted all polls because of the commission's policy.

The Chittagong mayoral election is illegal and all of his work will be considered as such. Chowdhury demanded the immediate cancellation of the CCC polls and declared that all agitation programmes in Chittagong will continue.

Chowdhury strongly condemned police attacks on JCD leaders and activists. He said the government's repression of opposition supporters has crossed all limits, and he demanded the immediate release of all leaders and activists.

Chowdhury also condemned the murder charges filed against BNP vice chairman Tarique Islam. He said the government is taking a very big risk by setting a bad example.

"What will be the situation if future governments follow the Awami League's bad precedence," he observed.

He demanded the immediate resignation of the government, the CEC and the EC.

Abdullah Al Noman, the BNP's acting secretary general, said the opposition will launch an anti-co-operation campaign against the Mayor of Chittagong as soon as he takes the oath.

He said they will urge people not to pay taxes until fresh elections are held.

Khandaker Delwar Hossain, the opposition's chief whip, said that if the BNP is voted to power, it would cancel all polls, including those in municipalities and Chittagong. He said the government has prepared a blue print outlining plans to hold a national election without the participation of opposition parties.

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Considering the prevailing circumstances and in view of repeated requests from our prospective investors to facilitate deposit of their subscription money, the management of our Company is pleased to extend the closing date for subscription of share upto 28<sup>th</sup> December, 1999 instead of 19<sup>th</sup> December, 1999. This has approval of the Securities and Exchange Commission.