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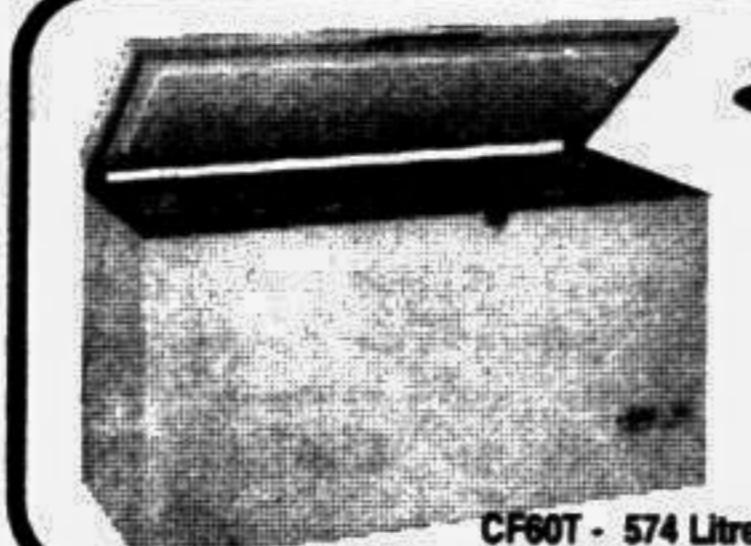
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Malibagh, Dhaka
Tel # 9345261

KAWRANBAZAR

33, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue
Kawranbazar, Dhaka
Tel # 9130647, 9130906

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Chinese aircraft

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However, when the process was going on through the DGDP, a proposal came from the Russian government for supply of MiG-29s at a "cheaper price and on convenient financial terms."

The authorities then decided to procure the MiG-29s and deferred purchase of Chinese M-7 MBs for two years for financial reasons.

Both the ministries of finance and defence are now considering giving a go-ahead to the plan for procurement of the Chinese fighters, the sources said.

The ministries are tight-lipped about the details they are working on. But it was learnt that they would insist on fresh offers, and also on making it a government-to-government deal.

Highly placed defence sources hinted that the Chinese government was interested in making revised offers and could reduce prices "considerably", agreeing on "very easy and convenient terms".

The sources hinted that the Chinese government could offer to supply eight F-7 MBs on deferred payment, considering the "friendly ties" between the two countries.

The Bangladesh Air Force currently has fully trained pilots and a set-up to fly five squadrons, each having 16 fighters. However, its depleted fleet now has only three operational fighter squadrons.

The current fleet comprises Chinese A-III ground attack aircraft, F-7 MB attack and defence fighters and Czech manufactured L-39 jets. It has some useless and obsolete MiG 21s, procured long ago. It also possesses two dozen helicopters-US made Bell and Russian Mi-17s.

Bangladesh is boosting its Air Force fleet by adding half a squadron fighters within March next year with the procurement of eight MiG-29s, first two of which arrived on December 25.

Police-picket

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witnesses said. At least 20 people were injured there, police and witnesses said.

About 30 people were injured in another clash between police and hartal activists at Bahadur crossing at 1:30 pm. The injured included two sub-inspectors of police identified as Abul Kalam and Mohammed Sohel respectively.

A motor cycle and a rickshaw were set on fire in Fakirhat area by pickets this morning, police and witnesses said.

Clashes between police and pickets also took place at Nur Ahmed road, Kazir Dewri, Chawkbazar and Anderkilla, witnesses said.

Normal life was disrupted during the hartal while most of the vehicles stayed off the roads. Shops and markets remained closed. Delivery of goods to and from Chittagong port remained suspended during hartal, port sources said.

UNB reports: The city liaison committee of the opposition alliance met in the afternoon with BNP leader Meer Mohammad Nasruddin in the chair. Mominul Haq Chowdhury and Maulana Abu Taher of Jamaat, Jahangir Alam of Jatiya Party, Dastagir Chowdhury of BNP and Abdur Rahman Chowdhury of IOJ attended the meeting.

The meeting viewed with serious concern the extent of police atrocities on the opposition leaders and activists. It regretted that opposition activists were not allowed to hold rally anywhere in the city today.

"Despite such police action, we shall not allow holding of the election. We shall resist the polls even at the cost of our blood," declared Nasruddin after the meeting.

Meanwhile, Mayor-elect unopposed ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury came out during the hartal under heavy police guard and had a number of rallies campaigning for the election. He urged the people to resist the opposition trying to create chaos and advised them to vote for the competent candidates in January 3 CCL polls.

Meanwhile, Jamaat leader Shamsul Islam was sent to jail hajat yesterday by a lower court.

After the arrest Shamsul Islam was lodged in Double Mooring thana which came under bomb attack by Jamaat activists at midnight Sunday night. He was soon transferred to Kotwali thana for security reason.

Kamal Hossain, a Jamaat activist, was arrested for the bomb attack on the thana.

Police said Shamsul Islam was involved in armed attacks on police and Awami League meeting since October last. He was arrested on five counts.

Speaker

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Bangabhaban to apprise him of the next coming Parliament session.

In the opening session, every New Year the President addresses the Parliament as per provision of the Constitution.

Tougher policing fails to curb pre-Eid crimes

Serious crimes like mugging, hijacking, extortion and robbery in city are on the rise despite stronger police patrols ahead of the millennium and Eid celebrations.

Twenty platoons of additional police have been deployed on the city streets to cure the incidents, officials said.

But an unofficial record reveals that over a hundred incidents of mugging and hijacking are taking place everyday on average in the capital.

Some of the safe sanctuaries for the muggers so reported the victims to UNB, are Sat Masjid Road, Central Road, Bijoy Sarani, Hatirpool, market areas, Sayedabad to Khilgaon on Biswa Road, Rampura, roads around Ramna Park and Malibagh Bazar area.

Most of the incidents are not reported to the relevant police stations as the victims alleged that police could not do anything about the incidents they have so far come to know.

"Muggers have a chain in capitals, they are not isolated," one of the informed sources told UNB.

Contacting various sources, the news agency came to know about 50 incidents of mugging in Sat Masjid Road areas alone in last 15 days.

When contacted yesterday, Dhamondi thana duty officer said they were not aware of any specific place being used so often for mugging.

Some officers-in-charge of DMP admitted that such jump-and-grab incidents increased, but they were also active to rein in and resist them.

Alongside the street swoops, there are also organised extortions fleecing the businessmen. "Virtually, the businessmen are hostage to extortions," said one at Mouchak Market shopping mall, preferring not to be named.

On Sunday afternoon, three employees of a shoe factory at Kaptanbazar were chopped by the extortions as they refused to pay the gangsters Tk 20,000.

Witnesses said that she had now into muggers thrice during the last few months on Sat Masjid Road near Road Number-15 bus stand at Dhamondi but police told

BCL leaders bickering

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"Mishandling of the issue rather served the cause of Sidiq... It has been counterproductive."

Differing, another said, "After such a treatment, Kader Sidiq will not continue his relationship with the anti-Liberation forces."

The planned attack on Sidiq's party-launching was being widely discussed at the DU campus since it took place three days ago at the premises of Institution of Engineers.

The DU family members in general were averse to the vandalism, involving some of the students of the university. Others tried to understand how could it happen in the broad daylight. Yet a few others seemed enjoying the outcome of the "operation".

The issue remained "talk of the campus" until yesterday. Teachers, students and members of the staff of the university

city were found talking for and against the incident.

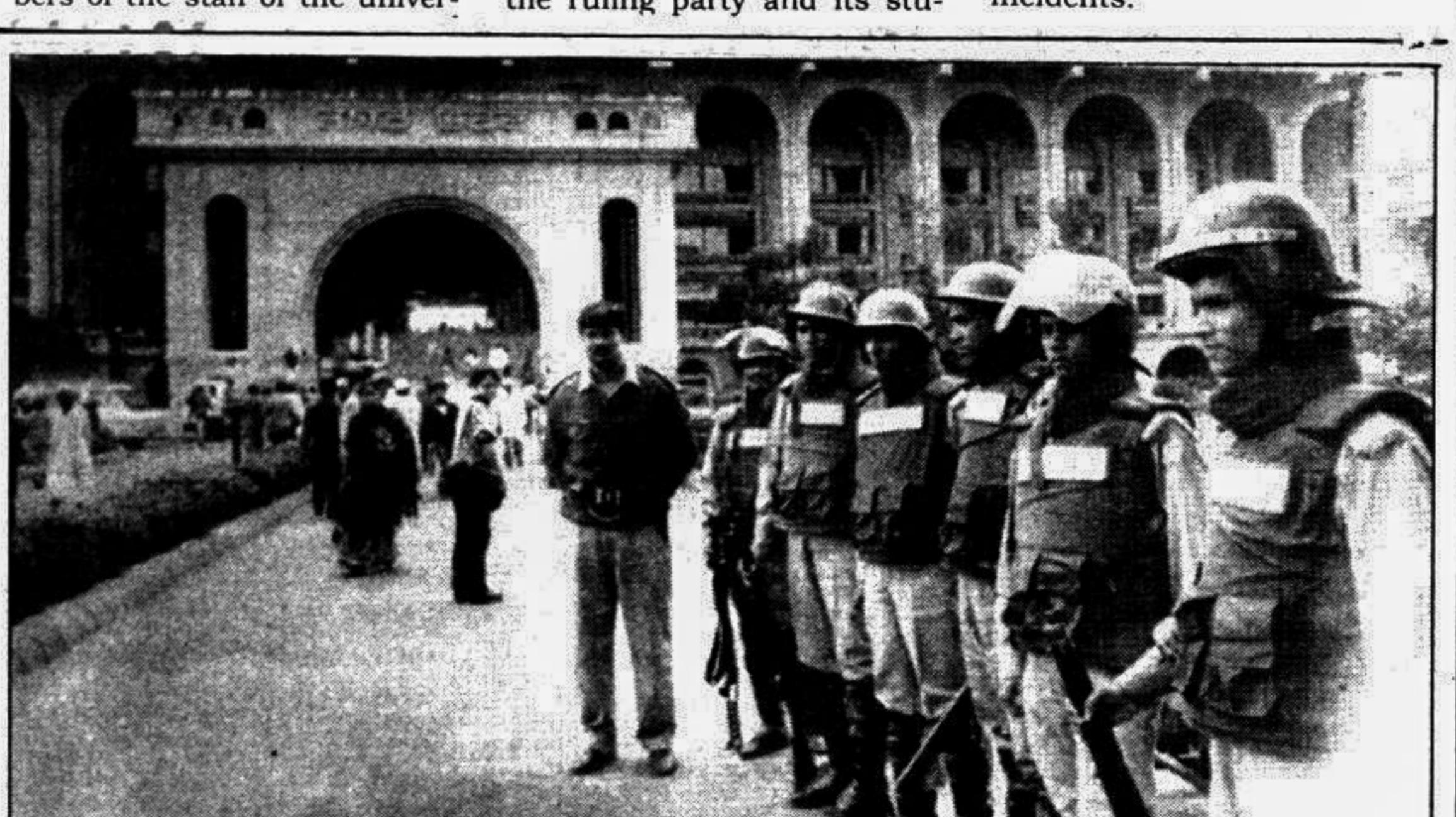
"We definitely condemn any act of terrorism, no matter who does it... Such an attack is not desirable in a democracy," said Prof M Shahadat Ali, the DU pro-vice chancellor.

Prof Ali also called for punishment to those responsible.

Prof Yusuf Haider, the outgoing President of DU teachers' association, said: Nobody can accept such a heinous attack. It is certainly condemnable.

Prof Halder continued, "If the Dhaka University students were involved in the act, it has certainly damaged the image of the country's highest seat of learning."

BNP-backed JCD leader, ABM Mosharraf Hossain called it a heinous act by the BCL activists. "This is not a demonstration of democratic tolerance... Attacks on the opposition parties are nothing new for the ruling party and its incidents."



Tender brigade

Riot police guard the Nagar Bhaban against the threat of violence from rival gangs fighting for control of lucrative city contracts.

— Star photo

DCC receives bids in presence of gun-totting goons, cops

By Staff Correspondent

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) yesterday received tender schedules for a project in zone-5 in the presence of large number of uniformed and plainclothes policemen.

"We asked police to be present during the dropping of schedules, and there was no untoward incident as feared," said an official of the DCC's zone-5.

There have been series of clashes over the project between two factions of Bangladesh Chhatra League since December 12. Armed activists of the feuding factions of ruling Awami League's student front camped at the Nagar Bhaban amidst fears that a big gunfight may erupt anytime.

DCC sources said some of the gang members were present at the DCC office but did not interfere in the bidding process. The gangs usually frighten prospective bidders away from dropping their schedules in a bid to win the contract.

To avoid clash, all the zonal offices of the DCC and the Divisional Commissioner's office accepted bids. DCC sources said 16 schedules were dropped at Nagar Bhaban alone yesterday for a project of Tk 1.84 crore for developing infrastructure on the Dhaka University campus.

Hasina's phone calls

From page 1

tion and details about Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's phone call to Opposition leader Khaleda Zia on Sunday.

"It was a political stunt," Mannan said about the phone call.

He said the Prime Minister is not sincere to resolve problems through discussion. She talked about dialogue many times but did not send any letter or formal invitation.

The Prime Minister continued making indecent remarks about BNP leaders, intensifying repression, filing false cases and holding polls unilaterally on the one hand while talking about dialogue on the other hand, Bhuiyan alleged.

He said the Prime Minister's statements at the OCAB meeting again proved her insincerity for dialogue. "Moreover, she is not sincere to meet Sheikh Hasina and handed over Khaleda Zia's letter inviting her for dialogue."

He said the Prime Minister's office could contact the private secretary of the Leader of the Opposition if she (PM) was really sincere for talks. But she did not do so and made the call before 9am.

The PA and other staffs of the Opposition leader do not come to office before 10am now because of Ramadan. The PM's phone was received by a house maid, for whom it was not possible to guess that the PM was on the other end.

When his attention was drawn to the fact the PM's call was made through a red phone, Bhuiyan said, "It was seldom used. Barring some exceptional situations in the last three years, there were few calls through the red phone, none of those from the prime minister."

The meeting also directed the authorities concerned to identify the unused food godowns of BADC to increase stock capacity and prepare a report and submit it to the committee immediately.

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There are two red phones at the residence of Khaleda Zia — one of those at her bed room,

and one at the committee chairman Md. Sadiq Hug in the chair, reviewed the overall food situation of the country and expressed satisfaction over adequate stock of foodgrains.

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Banking system

From page 1
made the application of the law ineffective.

The report pointed out that solutions to these problems have to be found out taking the socio-economic reality into consideration and one should not expect that mere appointment of foreign consultants can give a right direction for solving the problem.

The committee, after reviewing the overall situation, said that the nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) seem to have reached a near-crisis point and the weak supervision system of the central bank was mostly responsible for the crisis-ridden banking sector. Addressing this problem required the crucial and important decision for autonomy of the Bangladesh Bank, the BRC observed.

The report said that the unrealised loans comprised the most critical and grave issues for the banking sector. It also observed that the Money Loan Courts have failed to make any noteworthy contribution towards realising the classified loans. The committee recommended amendments to the law to make its applications easier and effective.

Identifying the various reasons for loan default, BRC has come to the conclusion that the major causes are "corruption and lack of ethics among bank officials." Although corruption and forgery were proved against officials, the banks failed to take any exemplary punitive action including filing criminal cases against the offenders. It is not even clear which organisation of the government is vested with the responsibility of taking legal actions against banking sector forgers and deceptions," the report said.

About the dilemma of too much and too little control of the central bank on the scheduled banks, the report said, it has now become necessary to impose or continue various restrictions on the banks for the sake of the depositors.

The committee is aware that too many restrictions may hurt the private banks' independence to take business decisions and bureaucratic red-tapism may be created," the committee said.

DCC

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have to make several trips to dispose of a single load of garbage and return the container to its place. The department has been flooded with complaints from residents who want the containers removed from their neighbourhood.

The official said the system failed because the 136 organisations that collect garbage door-to-door don't use the containers properly. In many cases, the collectors simply dump the garbage on the road, creating an unbearable situation for drivers and residents.

The official said he didn't know whether the concrete bins would solve the problem, but insisted that "some project had to be taken up."

The container system was introduced in the early 1990s. More containers were imported to cover a wider area after Mayor Mohammad Hanif was elected.

Officials said the engineering section could say how much was spent on the project.

According to a rough DCC estimate, the city produces about 3,500 tonnes of garbage daily. The DCC can remove about 70 per cent of that with its 152 container trucks and 190 open trucks. However, roughly 40 per cent of the fleet are grounded due to mechanical problems.

This correspondent observed this during recent visits to the NICRH and some private clinics in the city.

"All arrangements can be made according to needs of the patients and I can also negotiate a discount," one of the staff at the NICRH engaged in the business said while talking to this correspondent standing in front of the main gate of the hospital.

The man in NICRH uniform had at first introduced himself as a hospital employee but when he realised that he was talking to a newsman, he said he was an outsider.

"We get commission for sending patients to clinics or private chambers of doctors," he said but refused to name the clinics.

On investigation, it was learnt that there were at least 10 such brokers who were

Antiques without an audience

A video dealer tries to unload outdated cassettes for Tk 10 to Tk 20 on footpath near Baitul Mukarram. Dealers used to fetch nearly double that for nighty rentals, but satellite television and VCDs have erased the market for their fuzzy films.