

What's on today.....

Founding anniversary: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh will observe its 48th founding anniversary. Venue: Auditorium of the society. Time: 3.30 pm.

..... and tomorrow

Seminar: Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) and International Studies Association Bangladesh (ISAB) will jointly hold a seminar on "Bangladesh in the Security Council." Venue: BISS auditorium. Time: 3.00 pm.

Weather

Dry weather likely

Weather is likely to remain dry over the country with partly cloudy sky over Chittagong region during the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Moderate fog may occur over the river basin in the morning during the period, Met Office said. It forecast that night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The country's highest temperature 28.2 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sitakunda and the lowest 6.8 degrees at Srirangal.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5.24 pm and rises on Tuesday at 6.42 am.

Maximum and minimum temperatures and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Table with 4 columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening). Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.

HERE and THERE

KOICA Alumni get-together

The Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) in Bangladesh organised "KOICA Alumni get-together 1999" at a local Korean hotel in Gulshan recently, says a press release.

Jung Sang-ho, the resident representative of KOICA in his speech elaborated on the activities of KOICA around the world specially in Bangladesh and heartily welcomed the guests.

Korean ambassador in Bangladesh Jung Young-Jo spoke as the Chief guest and highlighted the bilateral relations between Korea and Bangladesh and wished that relations between the two friendly countries will strengthen further in the new millennium.

Prof A K Azad Chowdhury, Vice Chancellor of University of Dhaka, Khawja A Rahim, Joint Secretary ERD, W A Premaratne, Counsellor Sri Lankan High Commission, Golan Rasul, Director Chittagong Port Authority and Prof Mansur of Dhaka University spoke as guest speakers.

Taekwondo skills were performed by female instructors, Korean songs were sung by students of Korean Language Centre were presented at the cultural programme that followed the function.



Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) Dhaka office celebrated "KOICA alumni get-together '99" at a local Korean restaurant in Gulshan recently. Picture shows from left to right, Resident Representative KOICA, Counsellor, First Secretary, Ambassador of Korea and the guests at the function.

Nat'l Social Service Day observed

The National Social Service Day was observed for the first time across the country in a befitting manner yesterday, reports BSS.

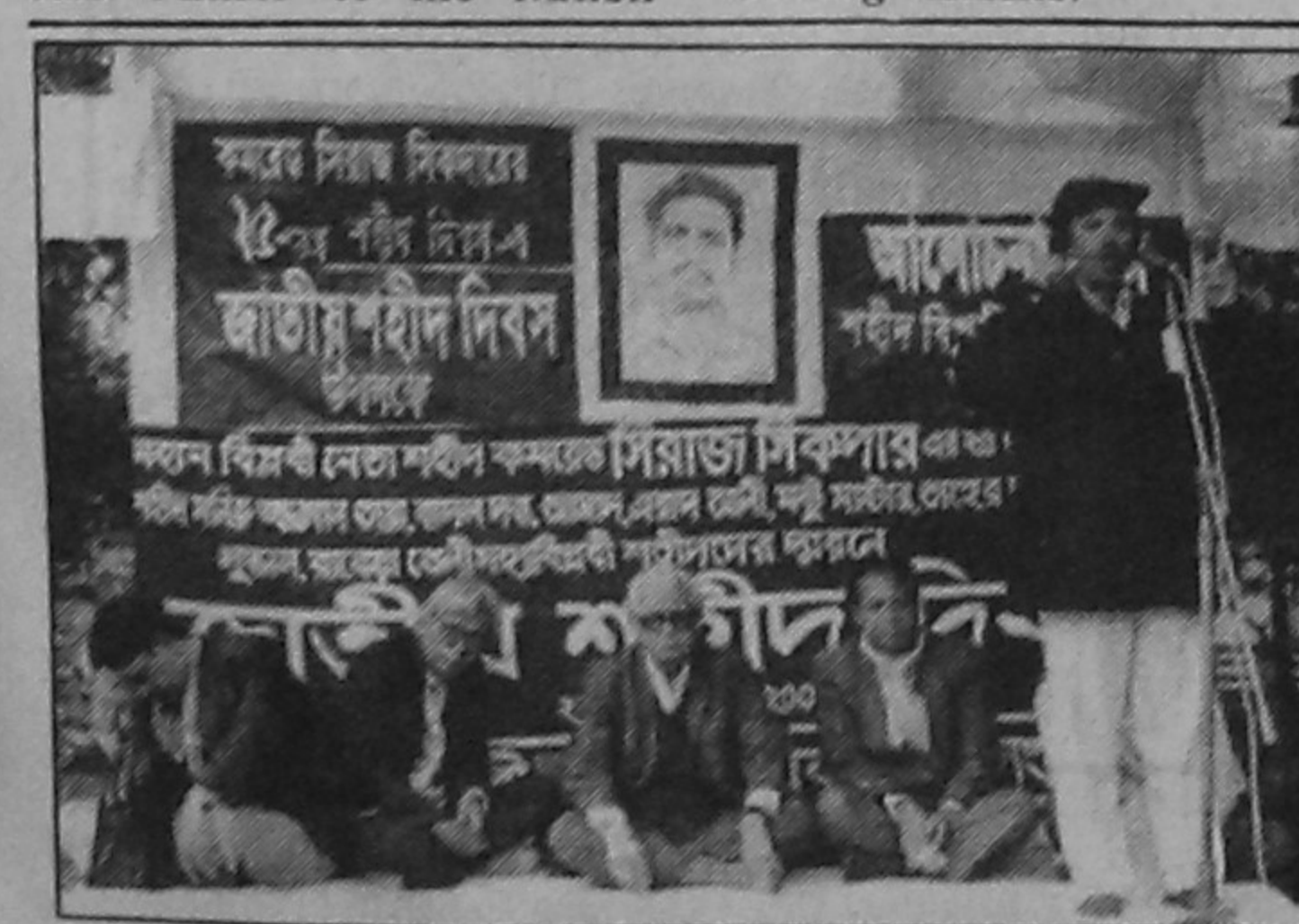
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina last year announced that henceforth January 2 every year would be observed as National Social Service Day to carry forward the social welfare activities. The theme of this year is "service to all and development."

Inaugurating the day's programme at the newly constructed Social Service Directorate building at Agargaon in the city, Political Advisor to the Prime Minister Dr S A Malek said Father of the Nation

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had tried to develop society through undertaking various social service oriented activities.

Listing various social service programmes taken by the government, Dr Malek said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been working relentlessly to finish the unfinished tasks of the Bangabandhu for the greater benefit of the poor.

Dr Malek said 'Ashrayan' project, old age allowance and 'Shanti Nibashi' are some social service oriented programmes of the government that would help assuage the sufferings of the teeming millions.



Shaheed Biplobi Doshpremk Smriti Sangsad held a discussion at the Mukhtangan in the city yesterday in observance of the 25th death anniversary of communist leader Siraj Sikder. — Star photo

Intellectuals killing

RU teachers hail govt decision to form spl tribunal

RAJSHAHI, Jan 2: One hundred thirty-five teachers of Rajshahi University yesterday welcomed the government decision to form a special tribunal to try the killers of intellectuals at the flag end of the Liberation War, reports BSS.

In a joint statement, the teachers said that killers of intellectuals were also involved in rape, torture and arson during the Liberation War in 1971.

They hoped that trial of the killers of intellectuals will help fulfill the hope and aspiration of people, as they have been demanding the same for a long time.

Signatories to the statement included Prof Shahidul Islam, Prof Hasan Azizul Huq, Prof M Nurullah, Choudhury Zulfikar Matin, Prof Shah Nawaz Ali, Prof Abdur Rahman and Jalaluddin.

Shahjalal University

81 pc of teachers, students support renaming of halls

SYLHET, Jan 2: As many as 81.72 per cent of the teachers and students of Sylhet Shahjalal Science and Technology University have described the recent renaming of the university halls and buildings by its authorities as appropriate, reports UNB.

According to a survey conducted by 'Ohna Parishad' a campus-based cultural and literary organisation, only 9.54 per cent of the respondents oppose the naming of the university buildings and dormitories.

The survey was conducted among 775 teachers and students of the university in the wake of the controversy over the naming of some buildings and halls of the university.

Of the respondents, 8.74 per cent refrained from making any comments.

The university Syndicate last year named a number of halls and buildings after the names of Father of the Nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Commander-in-Chief of the Bangladesh Liberation Forces General M A G Osmani, first female politician Begum Zohaida Rahim Chowdhury, Shaheed Intellectual Dr JC Dev, lyricist Hassan Raja, Shaheed Janani Jahannara Imam, Dr Satten Bosh, Dr Qudrat-e-Khuda, Dr Kazi Motahar Hossain and Dr Muhammad Shahidullah.

But fundamentalist groups want the names of the buildings and dormitories changed back to their original ones again, creating anarchy in Sylhet town, including the university campus. One person was killed and over 100 were injured in troubles that ensued in the town over the renaming.

Madrasah Board

Action to be taken against irregularities

Education Minister A S H K Sadique yesterday stressed the need for making madrasah education time befitting in the era of science and technology of the twenty-first century, reports BSS.

Speaking at a gathering of the leaders of Jamiatul Modaresin in the city, Sadique said the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina does not do politics by capitalising religion.

He assured the leaders of Jamiatul Modaresin that actions would be taken against irregularities, corruption and harassment at the Madrasah Board.

Leaders of Jamiatul Modaresin said madrasah teachers want to get rid of anti-liberation forces and added a vested quarter is out to trade on religion.

The function was addressed, among others, by Md Iqbal Abdul Hamid, Moulana Delwar Hossain and former student leader Ismat Kadir Gama.

Book on contribution of police in Liberation War in March

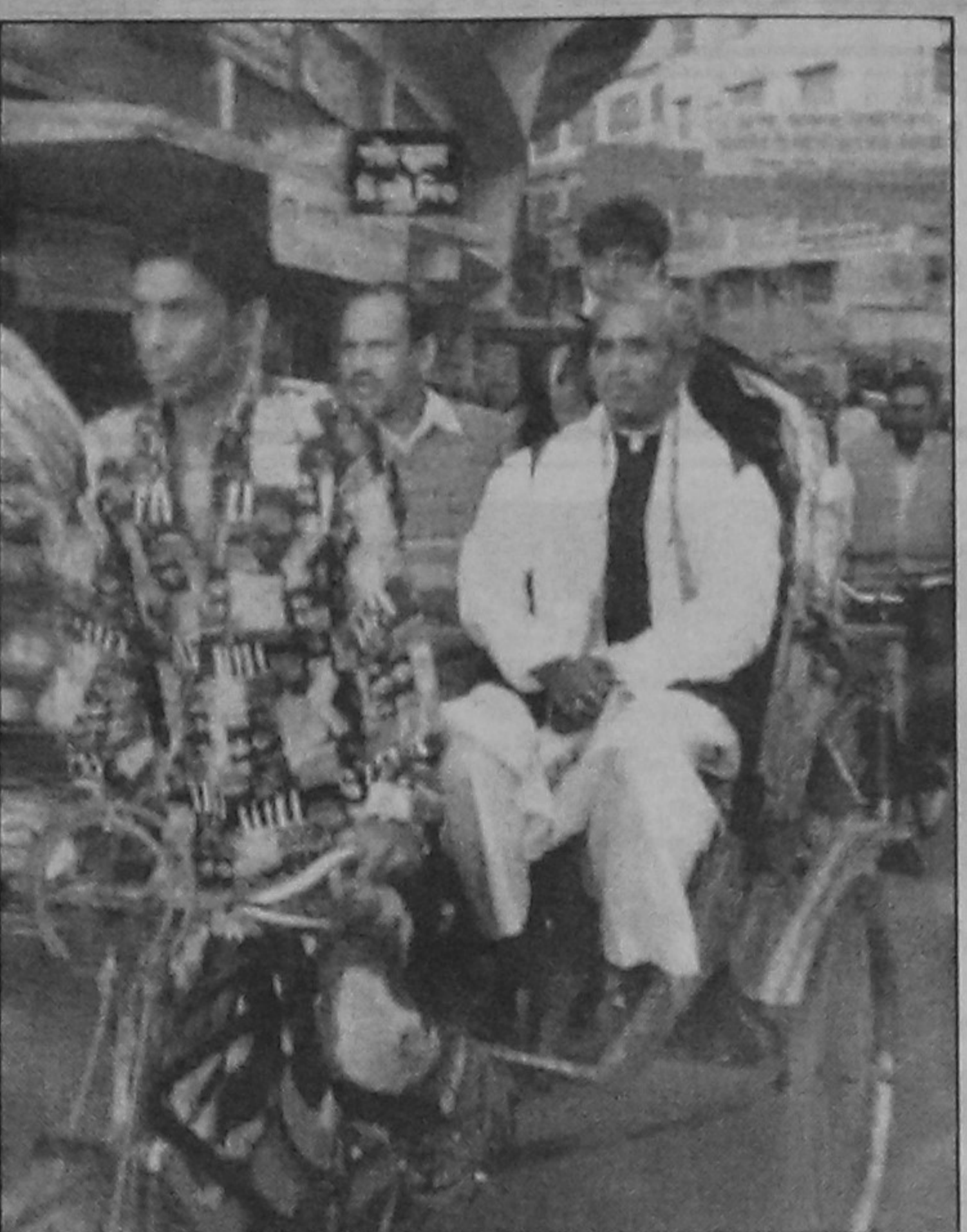
"Bangladesh Police in the War of Liberation," an illustrative and documented history about the role of police in the country's most critical juncture in 1971, will be published on March 26 next, reports BSS.

The projects was taken up on September 20, 1998 by the Police Department with its own resources. The document will incorporate valiant episodes of sacrifices made by police personnel during the War of Liberation.

The chapters to be incorporated in it are: History of Police, Role of Police in the Non-cooperation Movement, Police in resistance battles, Police Administration in the Republic of Bangladesh, Memoirs and Actions of Police in the battle fronts, Brief life-sketches of Martyred Police and those awarded for their significant roles during the war, and collected documents.

Talking to BSS, Inspector General of Police (IGP) A Y B I Siddiqui said the Pakistani occupation army brutally killed 2,000 out of nearly 14,000 Bangladesh police personnel who left their jobs to join the Liberation War.

Members of Bangladesh Police have launched concerted efforts to bring together scattered stories of their valiant struggle during the war in 1971 against the Pakistani forces," he said adding, researchers have been collecting primary information and data from 10,000 police personnel and their families to prepare the book.



Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak, accompanied by security personnel, takes a rickshaw to Paltan Maidan yesterday to attend the Jatiya Samannaya Committee rally. — Star photo

Nasim warns partymen not to indulge in terrorism

KASBA Brahmanbaria, Jan 2: Home Minister Mohammad Nasim today urged the leaders of the ruling Awami League not to indulge in terrorism for political interests saying the government has a very firm stand against terrorists, reports BSS.

"Don't let any terrorist intrude into the party. We have not even spared party lawbreakers, charged with terrorism," he said while addressing a public rally at Kasba, organised to mourn the killing of a local Bangladesh Chhatra League leader Omranhan Omar, who was killed two months back allegedly by Jatiyabadi Chhatra Dal activists.

Nasim said in five months the government has restored normalcy by crashing a nearly two-decade long reign of terror in the country's south-western region.

"We believe in the rule of law. We don't need armed cadres or terrorists in our politics," added Law Minister Abdul Matin Khasru, who joined the rally as the special guest.

Home Minister added that the trial of terrorists would be completed along with the killers of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by the end of the current year.

The year 2000 is for Sheikh Hasina to fulfil her pledges. Similarly this is a year to complete the trial of the terrorists and execute the verdict of the Bangabandhu's murder case," he said.

Nasim also asked police to strengthen their efforts to contain terrorism saying the government would award them for their good work but would not tolerate negligence in discharging duties.

The minister, who later also addressed a rally at nearby Akhaura town, accused the opposition for hindering the gov-

ernment's development initiatives for the past three years and said despite their movement step down before the scheduled time of elections in 2001.

"It is the people who will decide if we have done something worthy to get reelected," he said.

Members of Parliament Advocate Sayedul Haq, Captain (ret'd) Tajul Islam, and Shah Alam, Brahmanbaria District Awami League president Advocate Syed Sirajul Islam, General Secretary Lutful Hye Sachchu, and Municipal Chairman Helaluddin Helal, among others, spoke on the occasion.

Referring to the landmark CHT peace accord, Ganges Water Sharing Treaty and elimination of terrorism from the southwestern regions of the country, Nasim said these three major successes have been accomplished in the past three years.

He said that for more than two decades the tribal insurgents operated from their bases in India, which gave them the protection due to strained relations between the two countries as the subsequent governments were not sincere to solve the problem.

Nasim said similarly the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty was possible as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told her the then Indian counterpart Deve Gowda that his country must give Bangladesh due share if it wanted good neighbourly relations.

Later the Home Minister inaugurated the country's 124th Fire Service and Civil Defence Station at Akhaura which was constructed on 1.5 acres of land at a cost of Tk 89.84 lakh.

Fire Service officials said until 1996, there were 119 fire stations in the country.

Muslim militant shot dead in Kashmir

NEW DELHI, Jan 2: Indian troops shot dead a Muslim guerrilla in Kashmir who had attacked a para-military complex six months ago killing five people, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported today, says AFP.

Zahoor Ahmad Sheikh was killed in a gunbattle in Baramulla district in northern Kashmir overnight Saturday, the news agency said. Arms and ammunition were recovered from him.

Sheikh was among a guerrilla group which stormed a paramilitary Border Security Force (BSF) complex in the Himalayan state in July 1999, killing four BSF personnel and a woman.

The police said Sheikh had been trained in Pakistan and was a member of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen group.

More than 24,000 people have been killed in a Muslim separatist campaign raging in India's Kashmir since 1989, New Delhi accuses Islamabad of arming and training the militants, Pakistan denies the charge.

Bad weather hampers French storm mop-up

PARIS, Jan 2: Bad weather hampered efforts today to restore power to some 53,000 homes left without electricity since last week's storms in France, as Britain shipped in generators used in millennium celebrations, reports AFP.

"We have already sent 50 generators over to (to France) and we are in the process of sending a further 60 which include ones used at the Millennium Dome and throughout London and the southeast over the millenium," a spokesman for the London Electricity said.

One of the generators came from a New Year's party at the home of comedian Rowan Atkinson, best known for his role in the "Mr. Bean" series.

On Saturday, French authorities hurriedly disconnected generators used to power giant Ferris wheels on the Champs-Elysees during New Year's celebrations and dispatched them to areas hard-hit by gale-force winds last Sunday and Monday which left 86 people dead.

'Taipei-Beijing ties quasi-int'l'

TAIPEI, Jan 2: Taiwan's independent presidential hopeful James Soong today called for a peace agreement with rival China to promote the bilateral ties he defined as "quasi-international," reports AFP.

"If I were elected as the president, I would propose to de-escalate the tensions," Soong said in a live interview with the Cable News Network of the United States.

Ties between Taipei and Beijing have swung to their lowest ebb in three years after Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui said in July they had a "special state-to-state relationship," remarks angry Chinese leaders aimed to split the island from the "motherland."

Soong said he would "suggest we sign a non-aggression peace agreement between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan with the participation of international witnesses."

At a later press conference, Soong insisted international witnesses would be imperative given the lopsided military strength in favor of Beijing.

"Some had proposed we forge a non-aggression agreement with the mainland, but Taiwan might be left unguaranteed without international witnesses," Soong said.

Attack on Ctg Betar, Press Club condemned

State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed yesterday strongly condemned the latest hit-and-run bomb attacks on Chittagong Betar Bahan and Chittagong Press Club saying the terrorist activities, allegedly being conducted by the four-party alliance, reminded the atrocities of razakars and al-badars in 1971, reports BSS.

In a statement Prof Sayeed alleged that the four-party alliance dominated by the anti-liberation Jamaat-Shibir clique, was launching bomb attacks on different installations of the country in a bid to destabilise the country and its democratic atmosphere.

"As part of their evil design they (four-party) have targeted the conscious journalist community, press club and mass media centres for attacks," he said, adding that they want to seize state power illegally by jeopardising democracy and the constitution.

The State Minister called upon all to be united to face the heinous activities of the anti-liberation and reactionary forces.

Indian clothes seized in Magura

MAGURA, Jan 2: The police in a raid recovered a huge quantity of Indian clothes from a bus at Apara bus stand under Shalika thana today, reports UNB.

The Dhaka-bound bus from Benapole was halted and searched at 2 pm when police found the Indian saris, shawls, shirt and sweaters worth about Tk 50,000.

No one claimed the ownership of Indian clothes and no arrest was made. A case was filed with Shalika Police.

Syria ready for tough talks with Israel in US

DAMASCUS, Jan 2: Syria is ready to discuss all the basic problems with Israel in peace talks starting Monday, while keeping a total Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights top of its list, a well-placed Syrian source said today, reports AFP.

"The withdrawal from the Golan is a settled issue for us, the negotiators will discuss the details and test the commitment the Israelis showed during the first round" of talks held December 15-16 in Washington, the source said.

The second round in Shepherdstown in West Virginia will be led as before by Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shara and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, overseen by US President Bill Clinton.

"Security arrangements, water and normal peaceful relations" are the issues which remain to be discussed between the Israeli and Syrian negotiators in Shepherdstown, 120 km from Washington, the source added.

The Syrian delegation headed by Shara left Damascus Saturday evening. It includes Generals Yusef Shakkur, former chief of staff, Ibrahim al-Omar, a senior military engineer, and Hassan Khalil from military intelligence.

The Syrian ambassador to the United States, Walid Muallem, and to the United Nations, Mikhail Wehbheh, will also be present as will legal expert Riad Daudi and international water expert Majed Daud.

The head of Shara's office, Samir Kassir, is also on the trip.

The most important thing is to come to an agreement on these issues, the source said, adding that this could be possible at the end of the second round.

The source said the talks would be intensive, and could last nearly two weeks, with a pause for the Muslim celebration of Eid al-Fitr, which is due at the end of this week.

The official Ath-Thawra paper said Sunday that the talks in the United States would focus on serious issues, including the timetable of a withdrawal from the Golan by Israel.

These talks will be "a test of Barak's intentions regarding the complete Israeli withdrawal from the Golan and the acceptance of parallel and balanced security arrangements on the two sides of the June 4, 1967

border", the paper said. A western diplomat in Damascus said that Syrian negotiators were going to Virginia to secure the commitment of the Israelis to a withdrawal to the borders which existed before the June war in 1967. Then Le'anan would be able to join the talks, he said.

On Sunday, just before leaving for the United States, Barak reminded Israelis of the "very painful but necessary" price for peace with Syria, in reference to the Golan which was conquered by Israel in 1967 and annexed in 1981.

He warned that he would not sign up to peace "that didn't carry that price". "An agreement must deal with all issues that are important for us and implies a full normalisation with Syria and Lebanon, and not just a non-belligerency deal."

8 killed as train hits van in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Jan 2: A train hit a van filled with passengers today killing eight and injuring nine in central Pakistan, a news report said, according to AP.

The accident occurred Sunday morning at a rail crossing in Chinjot, near the central town of Faisalabad, the Associated Press of Pakistan reported, citing police at the scene.

Putin will sail to victory in polls: Kremlin

MOSCOW, Jan 2: Russia's acting President Vladimir Putin will sail to victory in presidential elections at the end of March, the Kremlin asserted confidently today, reports AFP.

"The presidential administration must look at all possible outcomes, but it doesn't mean we think they're realistic," said deputy chief of the Kremlin administration, Igor Shchabursov, asked about the chances of Putin losing.

"This outcome" -- that the 47-year-old former KGB spy will be defeated by another candidate -- "is not realistic," he added at a press conference.

The Kremlin official said it would be preferable for Putin to win in the first round of elections -- expected to be held on March 26 -- to avoid wasting time on a drawn-out presidential race.

"We have not fixed this as an objective, but it is perfectly possible and it would be preferable. The less time we lose, the sooner we can get to work with full legitimacy," he said.

Russia's youthful leader, whose popularity has soared with his tough handling of the Chechen war, will need to devote his energies to campaigning for votes, according to the Kremlin.

Nepali man claims to be 167 yrs old

KATHMANDU, Jan 2: Nepalese man Ram Avtar Saha Kanu claimed he is 167-years-old and has the certificate of citizenship to prove it. Local press reports said today, reports AFP.

The Kantipur daily said Kanu, from the lowland tropical region, does not look old for his age -- he still has 15 teeth.

He publicly appeared on the first day of the new millennium to inaugurate Mahabir Prasad Brijlal Dental Institute at Birgunj, 220 kilometres (140 miles) south of Kathmandu.

The newspaper said according to his official certificate, Kanu was born in 1832 in Devodia Village in Dhanusha district, 290 km southwest of here.

He was given the official citizenship certificate in 1988 which declared that Kanu was born in 1832.

However the local village council chief Rabindra Shah said: "We are trying to officially establish his age to prove that he is the eldest living person in the world."

At the institute's opening ceremony, Kanu was officially declared Nepal's eldest person, the paper said.

Kanu has outlived his wife and son and is currently looked after by a distant relative at a religious monastery.

Reformists walk out of Iranian parliament

TEHRAN, Jan 2: Reformists walked out of the Iranian parliament today in protest at planned legislation which would eliminate a second round of next February's vital general elections, reports AFP.

The walk-out by some 30 members of the conservative-dominated parliament brought the session to a halt for lack of a quorum.

Majid Ansari, leader of the reformist minority in parliament and close to President Mohammad Khatami, called the proposed changes a "political coup" by the conservatives, who risk losing their majority in the February 18 polls.

The bill being debated would restrict the vote to a single round and bar the use of colour in election posters.

The reformists claim that the single round, with a "first past the post" system, would favour the conservatives. It means that a candidate could be elected with only some tens of thousands of votes in a large city like Tehran, Ansari said.

Advertisement for 'ExecuTrain' featuring a banner that says 'DEVELOPING 1000 IT PROFESSIONALS' and 'BANGLADESH 2000'. Below the banner is a photo of a group of men in suits sitting at a table.

Prof Dr Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, Advisor, National Committee on Software Exports and former Advisor to the Caretaker Govt of Bangladesh speaking at a discussion meeting on "Prospects of developing 1000 professionals on Information Technology (IT) field by the year 2000 for global markets from amongst the mid and junior level serving engineers of the govt and autonomous bodies" organised by Bangladesh 2000 in association with ExecuTrain yesterday in Dhaka. Also seen in the picture are A K M Abu Taher and M N Islam, Advisor and Executive Director of ExecuTrain respectively as well as Engr M Shahjahan Khadem, Chairman, Bangladesh 2000.

Advertisement for English Department Alumni Society. Text includes: 'English Department Alumni Society', 'DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA', 'Annual Get-together 1999', 'Date: January 28, 2000 (Friday)', 'Time: 3.00 p.m. - 6.00 p.m.', 'Venue: Teacher-Student Centre (TSC), Dhaka University, Dhaka', 'Interested alumni are requested to register by January 20, 2000.'

Registration Form with fields for Name, Postal Address, Permanent Address, New Membership Fee (Tk. 100/-), Registration Fee (Tk. 100/-), Signature, and B.A. (Honours) of 19 / M.A. of 19.