DITALLA CATTIDDAY TANTIARY 1 2000

Seminar: Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic (BIIS) and International Studies Association Bangladesh (ISAB) will jointly hold a seminar on "Bangladesh in the Security Council." Chief guest: CM Shafi Sami, foreign Secretary. Special guest: Werner Kiene, UN Resident Coordinator. Barrister AKH Morshed will preside. Venue: BIIS auditorium. Time: 3:00 pm.

Weather

Dry weather may continue Prevailing dry weather is likely to continue over the country

during the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB. Fog may occur over Dhaka, Rajshahi and Sylhet division and the river basins elsewhere over the country during the period, Met Office said.

The country's highest temperature 28.2 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday in Chittagong and the lowest 6.8 degrees at

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

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

Temperature

	in Celsius		percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	22.0	13.0	97	76
Chittagong	28.2	14.0	83	66
Rajshahi	21.1	11.0	94	78
Khulna	24.6	11.5	100	76
Barisal	25.2	12.2	97	87
Sylhet	26.7	12.5	62	60
Cox's Bazar	28.0	15.6	76	81
				and the second second

Y2K bug didn't roar after all

Official monitoring over, but experts suggest caution

Although the globally trumpeted millennium bug fizzled out, country's Y2K Emergency Centre has cautioned all from using date-related computerised medical equipment, reports

City/Town

The caution came after USAbased International Y2K Cooperation Centre informed that Gambro AK100/AK200 Dyalyser, used for renal dialysis, machines would give trouble as it can't read year 2000.

"But, there is nothing to be worried about. Problem not only about Gambro, but any other medical equipment that is not Y2K-compliant can be overcome by using a retrospective backdate," said Comman

der Mamtazuddin Ahmed. The officer of Bangladesh Navy, who was Y2K coordinator for country's naval sector and has paid extensive visits to hospitals to check the medical equipment, suggested that all hospitals, clinics and diagnostic centres seek help from their vendors for necessary updating

round-the-clock monitoring by Y2K Emergency Centre ended vesterday but experts of the national body have been continuing their observation over the millennium bug that ultimately didn't roar.

Meanwhile, a hectic six-day

"Our sleepless nights and days are over. But we will have a close observation until February 29 passes," national Y2K coordinator Dr Abdus Sobhan said as his officials were packing up at night to go home after ceaseless watch since December

Dr Sobhan, also executive director of Bangladesh Computer Council, said USA-based International Y2K Cooperation Centre suggested them to keep close observation specially for the date February 29.

However, the BCC has a plan to continue monitoring till June next.

We have a plan to make the centre a backbone of the IT Emergency Taskforce," Dr Sobhan said, adding he had already talked with Science and Technology Ministry on the matter. In another development,

Y2K coordinator for banking sector Jaglul Karim said they didn't have any news of trouble from any bank after transactions resumed on Sunday.

"Our banks had first international transactions today in the New Year. None came up with any complaint that their systems are getting any problem, he said, with a sigh of relief, yesterday.

Assault of woman on DU campus

More organisations condemn incident

By DU Correspondent "Such heinous attack on a

Various socio-political and cultural organisations continued to condemn the sexual assault of a young woman at TSC on the Dhaka University campus during celebration of new millennium on Friday night.

Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA) in a statement yesterday, termed the incident 'barbaric' and expressed strong resentment over the incident that took place on the

Prof R I M Aminur Rashid and M Ferdous Hossain, the president and general secretary of DUTA said that the 'cowardly' incident has damaged the joys of welcoming the new millennium and will remain a black chapter in our national

The DUTA leaders urged the concerned authorities to take necessary steps for immediate identification and exemplary punishment of the culprits responsible for the incident. "Pictures published on the various dailies will be helpful in this regard." they added.

Sammilita Sangskritik Jote has demanded that the government immediately arrest and punish the attackers responsible for the 'heinous' incident.

Samajtantrik Mohila Forum also condemned the incident of the molestation of the young woman at TSC and demanded exemplary punishment of those responsible.

woman again proves that the female of our country will not be secure in the male dominated society in the 21st century," the statement added. The woman leaders also

condemned the 'inactive' role of police during the incident and demanded that the government ensure security of both men and women. In their statement, Samaj-

tantrik Chhatra Front (SCF) said that the sexual assault of a woman on the Dhaka University campus has totally tarnished the image of the univer-

The SCF leaders condemned the 'inactive' role of police deployed at TSC and demanded punitive action against the persons responsible for the inci-

Meanwhile, the three-member probe body of Dhaka University which was formed to investigate the harassment incident held its first meeting yesterday with the committee chairman pro-vice-chancellor Prof M Shahadat Ali in the

The meeting also again condemned the incident and asked the law-enforcing agencies to take lawful action against the

responsible persons. It also urged all to inform the committee if they have any information regarding the in-

cident, said a press release.

AL programmes on Bangabandhu's Homecoming Day

Ruling Awami League chalked out elaborate programmes to mark the homecoming day of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on January 10. reports UNB.

Day's programmes include hoisting national and party flags at central AL office, Bangabandhu Bhaban and unit offices across the country at 6 am and laying of floral wreaths on the portrait of Mujib at

Bangabandhu Museum. It will also arrange a public meeting in the capital after the holy Eid-ul-Fitr, said a party

announcement yesterday. On the day in 1972, the country's founding father returned home from captivity in Pakistan after he was arrested by the occupation forces immediately after he had proclaimed independence following a

crackdown on March 25 night. AL General Secretary and Local Government Minister Zillur Rahman asked party's all units to observe the day in a befitting manner.

Assault on woman JCD to protest on campus today

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) will stage demonstrations on the Dhaka University campus today in protest against the incident of assaulting of a woman on the campus on the night of 31st December, reports

As part of their programmes, JCD, the student wing of the main opposition BNP, will bring out a procession on the campus and hold a rally at the foot of 'Aparajeyo Bangla'

in the morning. A group of unruly 'drunk' youths stripped a woman on the campus on December 31st night when she came on the campus to celebrate the new

Meanwhile, Mostafijul Islam Mamun, general secretary of JCD DU unit, Firoj and Salful met with opposition leader Khaleda Zia at her Mintoo Road residence yesterday after getting release from jail a few days back.

Bar Council team calls on new CJ

An 11-member delegation of Bangladesh Bar Council yesterday called on Chief Justice Latifur Rahman at his Minto Road residence last night, reports

The delegation, led by Vice President of the Bar Council Barrister Amirul Islam, discussed issues relating to quick disposal of cases and vigilance of the courts.

Justice Rahman assured the Bar Council delegation of having regular meetings with the lawyers in this regard.

The bar council leaders also appreciated the remarks of the Chief Justice that the judges of the Supreme Court are not only accountable to their conscience but also to the constitution and people as a whole. The Chief Justice made the remark at a reception accorded to him at the Supreme Court premises on Sunday.

The members of the delegation presented a bouquet to the

Chief Justice. Chairman of the Executive Committee of Bangladesh Bar Council S S Halder, Chairman of the Enrollment Committee A Baset Majumder, Chairman of the Legal Aid and Human Rights Committee Advocate Abdus Salam Talukder, Chairman of the Finance Committee Syed Rezaur Rahman and President of Supreme Court Bar Association Barrister Shafiq Ahmed were, among others, present on the occasion.

Bangladeshi boy at White House Millennium celebration

It was a moment of glory for Bangladesh's wonder boy Mohammad Shakawat Ali Uday when he delivered his message for the new Millennium in presence of President Clinton, Hillary Clinton and US Secretary of State Madelein Albright at the White House Millennium Celebration held at the Ronald Reagan Building on Sunday afternoon, reports BSS from Washington.

The 11-year-old Uday was selected for the event as one of the six children from around the world to speak their minds on the momentous occasion of welcoming the new millennium. Uday received the President's Award-99 for educational excellence in recognition of his outstanding academic achievements. Five other children chosen for the occasion were from Indonesia, Jordan, Nigeria. Mexico and Slovakia.

In his millennium message, Uday said, "I hope the coming millennium will bring peace and prosperity and it will be a millennium of development of humanity-free from fear and a hunger irrespective of race and colour, religious belief and geographical boundary."

He said "Coming from a young nation, Bangladesh, I see a future full of challenges and opportunities. Let us all work together to build a safer World to realise our dreams.

Uday is the Son of Bangladesh Embassy's Political Counsellor Yakub Ali and Mehera Yakub Bula. He is a sixth grader at the Herbert Hoover Middle School in Potomac Maryland.

Pirates loot Tk 1.8 lakh from rice trader

NARSINGDI, Jan 3: Pirates looted Tk 1.8 lakh from a rice dealer on the river Meghna at Shahar Khola area under Raipura thana yesterday, reports BSS.

Police said the pirates numbering 15 swooped on the dealer Abdul Barik of Raipura thana when he was going to Ashuganj rice market with the money to purchase rice.

The pirates boarded Barik's boat and beat him mercilessly. They threw one Nurul Islam in the river, a companion of the rice trader and decamped with the money.

A case was filed with Raipura thana in this connec-

346 held, 17 arms recovered

A total of 346 persons involved in different cases were arrested. 17 illegal firearms and three explosives recovered in a joint operation of forces during last two days, a police press release yesterday said, re-

The joint operation conducted by police, BDR and Ansar continued all over the country including four metropolitan areas on January 2 till yesterday morning.

Besides this, the police arrested 304 wanted accused persons, the press release said.

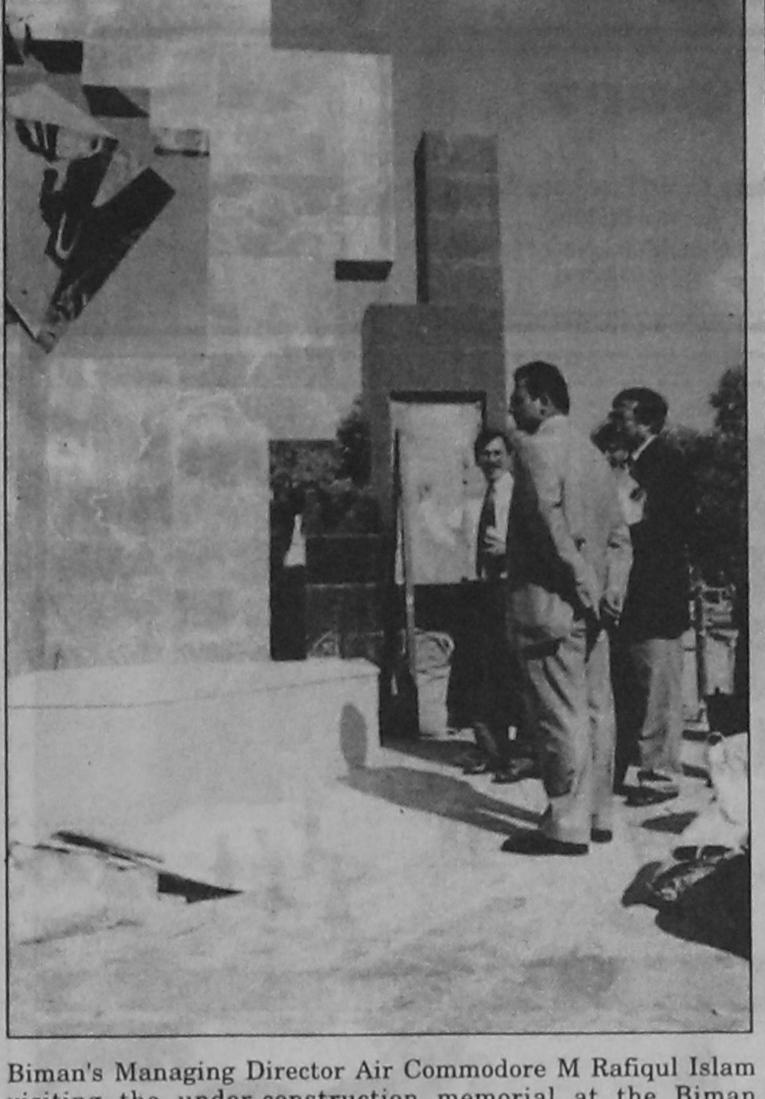
Obituary

Engineer Azizul Huq Chowdhury, general manager of Petro Bangla Gas Transmission and Distribution Co Ltd (GTCL) and chief executive of Paschimanchal Gas Project, died of cardiac arrest at the Suhrawardy Hospital in the city at 3 pm yesterday. He was

53, says a press release. Eldest son of a noted social worker of Sitakundu in Chittagong Dr Mujibul Huq Chowdhury, he is survived by his wife and a daughter. Late Engineer Chowdhury

was the son-in-law of the former editor of The Bangladesh Observer and eminent journalist Abdus Salam. The namaj-e-janaza of En-

gineer Azizul Huq Chowdhury will be held at Banani Housing Complex. Amtali, Mohakhali leaders and elite of the city were in the city at 11 am today.



visiting the under-construction memorial at the Biman head office 'Balaka' premises on Sunday. The memorial is being built at a cost of about Tk 70 lakh in memory of the 28 Biman officers/employees who sacrificed their lives during Liberation War.

Khaleda blasts incidents of assault of woman

BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia has strongly condemned the incidents of assaulting and stripping of a number of women, including the housewife of a diplomat at Gulshan, Jatiya Sangsad Chattar and TSC areas in the city on the night December 31, reports UNB.

In a statement yesterday she said: I was highly shocked and aggrieved to read the detailed reports in the daily newspapers about the rowdiness of a section of youths.

Khaleda said the rowdy and misguided youths in the name of welcoming New Year have stained and ashamed the whole nation by assaulting the women. "Crimes and rowdiness were increased in the society as the

criminals go unpunished," she

said adding that the youths are going astray day by day. "The country would be seized by anarchy and the social system will break down if the government does not take punitive actions against the responsible persons," she added.

The Opposition leader extended sympathy to the victims and demanded punishment of ne criminais.

PM's principal secretary reappointed

Dr Syed Abdus Samad, Principal Secretary at the Prime Minister's office, has been reappointed to the same post for two years on contract in the latest shuffle in the administra-

tion, reports UNB. His contract appointment will take retrospective effect from December 23, 1999, said an official announcement yesterday about it and some other important appointments and post-

Dr Abdus Sattar Mondol, a professor at Agri-Economics department at Bangladesh Agricultural University, has been appointed member of the Planning Commission from his join-

The contractual job of National Museum director-general A K M Shamsuzzaman Khan got a lease for another two years effective from December 28, 1999. He was DG of the Jadughar also on contract ba-

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute Director Dr M Abdur Razzak was elevated to director general on contract from end of last December. He was its acting DG. M A Matin, director (finance)

of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC), also got a lift to the post of its chairman.

Construction of Rupsha Bridge demanded

khulna, Jan 3: The Greater Khulna Development Coordination Committee (KDCC) announced a fresh agitation programme to press home its 18point demand including construction of the Rupsha Bridge and development of the Mongla Port, reports UNB.

KDCC demanded immediate construction of the Rupsha Bridge and solution to problems of the Mongla Port including dredging of the river.

KDCC president Abu Mohammad ferdous announced the programme at a press conference this afternoon. The programmes include

blockade in Khulna City for 3

hours from 11 am on February

16, blockade at Rupsha Ghat for two hours from 11 am on March 8 and human chain at Mongla port at 11 am on April 12. Former Minister Amzad Hossain, KDCC secretary general Daud Ali, local political

present at the press conference.

Scary Spice throws out hubby

LONDON, Jan 3: Spice girl Mel G and husband Jimmy Gulzar have split after a lastditch attempt to save their marriage failed, the Daily Mail reported today, reports BSS.

Mel G is known as Scary Spice in the all-girl group which became Britain's pop music sensations of the 1990s. The Daily Mail said the cou-

ple decided to spend Christmas together with their 10-monthold baby after admitting their tempestuous relationship was at its lowest ebb.

But the festive period was marred by a series of rows, culminating in a furious argument on New Year's Eve, the newspaper said. The singer reportedly ordered her husband to leave their mansion in Little Marlow, a village west of Lon-

The Daily Mail quoted Mel G's grandmother Mary Dixon as saying: "Everyone knows they haven't been getting on. But it's a real shame that they have split up. I feel very sorry for

In December, the Spice Girls squashed persistent rumours of a break-up, saying they would tour and produce a new album in 2000. The Spice Girls have pursued solo careers since releasing two of the decade's bestselling albums.

Inflation up in Turkey by 68.8 pc in 1999

ANKARA, Jan 3: Consumer prices in Turkey rose by 68.8 per cent in 1999 from a year ago, and wholesale prices climbed by 62.9 per cent in the same period, the state statistics institute said on Monday, reports AFP.

Consumer prices rose 5.9 per cent in December from November and wholesale prices were up 6.8 per cent.

In 1998 consumer prices rose by 69.7 per cent and wholesale prices were up by 54.3 per cent, sharply lower than respectively 99.1 per cent and 91.0 per cent in 1997, respectively.

Ankara aimed to reduce inflation to 50 per cent by the end of 1999 in line with a 1997 deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

But the government of Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit has noted that the two massive earthquakes that devastated Turkey's industrialised northwest in August and November would have a negative impact on economic targets.

The government has adopted an ambitious program of economic reforms with a primary objective to reduce the country's chronic inflation under a new agreement with the IMF -- a three-year, four-billion-dollar (-euro) stand-by package approved in December.

Polls open in Croatia

ZAGREB, Jan 3: Polls opened in Croatia Monday in a general election expected to end the rule of the late president Franjo Tudiman's nationalist party in what is seen as a key step for the country's democratic development, reports AFP.

The country's 6,502 polling stations opened at 7:00 a.m. (1200 BST) and will remain open for 12 hours, with the first results expected late Monday. All opinion polls have

man, who ruled the country

crackdown on "dens of iniqshown the alliance of the six uity" ordered by the interior main opposition parties will ministry, saying prostitution is win a majority in parliament. product of Western permissive-The two strongest are the exness and rising immorality in communist Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the Social Lib-Many male Kuwaitis have eral Party (HSLS). "party flats" at either beach The vote comes nearly a chalets, farms or residential month after the death of Tudj-

bars where Arab women are with an authoritarian hand employed as "hostesses" as well since independence from Yuas entertainment shows. goslavia in 1991. Prostitutes also work in He was the main asset of his brothels in industrial areas, nationalist Croatian Demowhere the mostly male and cratic Union (HDZ), which is Asian expatriate work force are expected to lose its nine-year concentrated. leading role to the opposition.

uproot corruption: Clinton the Soviet Union, Which collapsed in 1991. "No one deserves a larger share of the credit for this

WASHINGTON, Jan 3: Presi-

dent Bill Clinton hailed Boris

Yeltsin as "the Father of Rus-

sian Democracy" in a rare per-

sonal tribute on Sunday but said Russia could renounce

democracy if Yeltsin's succes-

sors fail to root out corruption,

Russian president in an un-

usual first person essay pub-

lished by Time Magazine two

days after Yeltsin stunned the

world by announcing his resig-

nation and handing power to his prime minister, Vladimir

"The single idea I heard

Boris Yeltsin utter more than

any other was that his country

must never go back to a dicta-

torship of any kind, especially

to the Communist system he so

clearly detested," Clinton

Clinton, who met the Rus-

10 dead, 500 left

homeless in

Brazil landslides

least 10 people died and 500

were made homeless as torren-

tial rains in Brazil's Rio state

provoked mudslides, the Civil

Defence authority said Monday

Janeiro was one of the places

worst hit by the heavy rains

A couple died in a shanty-

town at Acari after their shack

collapsed as earth engulfed it,

and another two people were

missing nearby after their car

was carried off by a swollen

Another three people died in

landslides in other areas north

of the metropolis and in the

southern areas of Rio state it-

In a mountainous area 80

kilometres outside Rio, three

people died in the towns of

Petropolis and Teresopolis as

their homes were crushed be-

Traffic jams stretching 10

and 20 kilometres back both

sides of the Dutra motorway

caused chaos after Engenheiro

Passos river flooded near Re-

sende, some 150 kilometres

from Rio de Janeiro, forcing the

rising of the Paraiba river

caused structural damage to the

bridge, forcing its closure to

Avalanches also cut off

Kuwait arrests

thirty-seven in

Ramadan orgy

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 3: Police

have arrested 37 people at an

orgy during the holy month of

Ramadan in Kuwait, a newspa-

per reported Monday, reports

were detained at dawn on Jan-

uary 1 at a farm at Fneitis, 20

kilometres south of Kuwait

prostitution, taking and pos-

sessing drugs, organising

'illegal' dance and immoral be-

14 Kuwaitis, three Egyptians,

two Saudis, two Bangladeshis, a

Bahraini and an Iraqi, the

It said the women included a

female pimp and 10 others --

five of them Kuwaitis. The

pimp, a Kuwaiti of Iraqi origin,

earned 100 dinars (330 US dol-

expulsion of 1,000 foreigners

accused of prostitution over the

last year. Expatriates make up

almost two-thirds of Kuwait's

submitted a draft law imposing

prison sentences and huge fines

on people who commit "moral

crimes pertaining to prostitu-

dinar (22,750 dollar) fine and a

seven-year prison sentence for

people knowingly renting ac-

commodation for prostitution.

It also includes a 5,000 dinar

(16,250 dollar) fine and five-

year prison term for the owners

and managers of public places

Islamists have welcomed the

blocks, which often have illegal

used for prostitution.

The draft includes a 7,000

In August, a group of MPs

The press has reported the

The arrested men included

They are facing charges of

City, al-Watan daily said.

haviour during Ramadan.

newspaper said.

lars) per prostitute.

2.2 million population.

The 26 men and 11 women

roads leading to the mountain

At Barra do Pirai, the swift

neath tonnes of earth.

road's closure Sunday.

region of Friburgo.

traffic.

that began late Sunday.

The area north of Rio de

reports AFP.

river Maracana.

RIO DE JANEIRO, Jan 3: At

sian leader 19 times as presi-

on a democratic path.

Clinton praised the former

reports Reuters.

transformation than Yeltsin himself," Clinton said. "For all his difficulties, he has been brave, visionary and forthright and he has earned the right to be called the Father of Russian Democracy."

But the US president sug-

gested that Russia could reject democracy if its government fails to halt the corruption and crime that have flourished since the Soviet Union's demise. "Unless that battle is joined

In a piece entitled "rememand, over time, won, the demobering Yeltsin," Clinton recratic norms and the market called the Russian leader as a economy that have been bluff, bold and pugnacious man Yeltsin's prime focus can be unwho detested the Soviet system done," Clinton wrote. in which he rose to power and "Russian citizens, like those was determined to keep Russia of other democracies, need con-

> government of laws," he added. "Otherwise, they will turn to other leaders and perhaps even to other forms of government." Clinton said that another piece of unfinished business that Yeltsin has left his successors was the brutal campaign against Moslem separatists in

Chechnya that is championed

fidence that theirs really is a

dent, said Yeltsin deserved by Putin, his hand-picked sucmost of the credit for the cessor, and opposed by the West On Saturday, his first full democratic and marketoriented Russia that rose from day as acting president, Putin visited Chechnya and gave the "totalitarian monolith" of

hunting Knives to some of the Russian troops fighting against Chechen separatists in a conflict that has caused thousands of refugees to flee the embattled region.

"We have a profound and open disagreement with the Russian government not on its right to oppose violent Chechen rebels but on the treatment of refugees." Clinton said. "Russia has to find the right balance between the use of effective force and a decent respect for individual rights and international norms. In Chechnya, that balance has not yet been found." Putin, a former spy who headed the successor agency to the KGB, is favoured to win the March 26 elections that will chose Russia's new president:

US National Security Adviser Sandy Berger told ABC Television's "This Week" programme on Sunday that Chechnya could become "an albatross around his neck in March," suggesting that mounting casualties could hurt Putin at the polls.

Clinton said despite their disagreement over Chechnya, the two countries had worked together to reduce their nuclear arsenals, had ceased targeting each other with nuclear weapons and had seen their troops serve side by side in the

Court orders arrest of newspaper chief in Iran

of parliament.

TEHRAN, Jan 3: Iran's conservative-led judiciary today issued an arrest order for the embattled director of a leading pro-reform paper and close ally of President Mohammad Khatami, judicial sources said, reports AFP.

Police will arrest Said Hajarian, a former deputy intelligence minister who heads the Sobh-e-Emruz daily, "if he does not present himself to the courts in the next few days, they said.

Hajarian had been due to appear in court Monday to respond to at least eight complaints filed against Sobh-e-Emruz, most put forward by the Iranian secret services and the military judiciary.

told AFP Hajarian would appear in the press court on Tues-Hajarian was accused by the pro-reform Executives of Construction Party in late December of bugging its offices after publishing remarks by the

Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani that sparked a political row. He was alleged to have planted microphones in the party's headquarters to have picked up "highly confidential" remarks by Rafsanjani's daugh-

ter. Faezeh Hashemi, a member

daughter of former president

His lawyer Ghoalali Riahi set off the worst unrest here since the aftermath of the 1979 Islamic revolution. was given a two-week ban in

rity forces. But Salam reappeared in another form in December and Khatami's brother, who is also deputy health minister.

Criminal probe into Helmut Kohl opens

BONN, Jan 3: German authorities opened a criminal investigation Monday into former chancellor Helmut Kohl for alleged breach of trust with his Christian Democrats (CDU) by hiding party donations, Bonn prosecutor Bernd Koenig told

The Bonn prosecutor's investigation will be running parallel with a parliamentary inquiry into Kohl over the secret party funding.

Kohl, 69, has admitted to running the secret accounts, which he said totalled two million marks (103 million dollars/euros), but he has refused to name the anonymous donors

The party is liable for violations of laws on party financing but the Bonn prosecutor is investigating Kohl for breach of trust with his own party on suspicion of deceiving it about the accounts. The offence is considered a criminal charge and punishable by up to five years in

Kohl, a giant of post-war Germany, was chancellor for 16 years from 1982-1998 and headed the Christian Democratic Union for 25 years from 1973-1998.

The Bonn prosecutor told Wolfgang Thierse, speaker of the lower house of parliament, the Bundestag, on Wednesday that it would be investigating Kohl, who is a deputy and could have parliamentary immunity.

But parliament did not oppose the investigation, and so it will proceed.

Arafat to meet Clinton Jan 20

GAZA CITY, Jan 3: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat will hold talks with US President Bill Clinton at the White House on January 20. Palestinian international cooperation minister Nabil Shaath told AFP on

Monday. "They will discuss the peace process, American support for the peace process and US-Palestinian relations," said Shaath, who will be among the delegation heading to Washing-

The meeting will be held less than a month before a February deadline for Israel and the Palestinians to reach a framework peace accord on some of the most sensitive issues dividing them, including Jerusalem, Jewish settlements and the fate of Palestinian refugees.

Nuri, a leading reformist, of demagogy. The remarks by Hashemi, one of the most moderate figures on the Iranian political scene, have caused a huge row among reformists, who are trying to preserve a united front ahead of crucial elections in

Sobh-e-Emruz quoted

Hashemi as criticising "radi-

cals of the 1980s who were now

passing themselves off as pro-

gressives and reformists" and

reportedly accused jailed for-

mer interior minister Abdollah

Five major pro-Khatami papers have been closed down by the conservative courts this year, including Nuri's popular Khordad and the reformist Salam, whose banning last July

Another reform paper, Arya. late December for allegedly publishing false information after complaints from . mian secu-

launched a new daily on Sunday called Participation.

At least 11 rebels, two hostages dead after army takes Lebanese village

KFARHABU, Lebanon, Jan 3: At least 11 Sunni Muslim rebels and two of their women hostages were killed Monday when the Lebanese army seized the village of Kfarhabu in northern Lebanon, an AFP correspondent saw.

An official of the Lebanese civil defence said the two women had been "eliminated" by the rebels. They were among eight

hostages seized by the rebels when they holed up in the village. The fate of the other six -one of them a man, and the others women and children -- is unknown Lebanese security services

said the rebels killed included one of their leaders. Abdullah Workers of the Lebanese Red Cross and civil defence removed the bodies with the help of troops as night fell, after the

army's final assault on the vil-The death toll could well be heavier among the rebels," the first aid workers said

Plane hijack Released UK man can return to his country

LONDON, Jan 3: A British Islamic militant freed by India after the hijacking of an Indian Airlines passenger plane has the right to return to Britain if he wishes, the British Foreign Office said late Sunday. Some 160 people, held

hostage by five hijackers, were released in Afghanistan a few hours before the New Year on the eighth day of the drama after India agreed to free from prison three Muslim Kashmiri The hijackers and the freed

militants were given 10 hours to leave Afghanistan by Kabul's ruling Taliban militia. Among the three freed was Ahmad Omar Sayyed, 26, a

Delhi since 1994. In New Delhi, he was identifled as Ahmed Umar Syed Sheikh and said to have been involved in kidnappings.

Muslim militant based in Lon-

don who had been held in New

For the moment he has not expressed the wish to return to Britain.

Russia can renounce democracy if Yeltsin's successors fail to