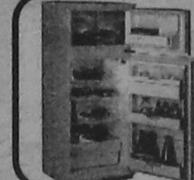


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Fire: Goalpara power units out of order

From Staff Correspondent KHULNA, Jan 3: All six production units of Goalpara power station have gone out of order since Saturday as the 60-megawatt unit of the Khulna Power Station (KPS) caught fire on Saturday night due to mechanical faults. A source at KPS said it will take at least two weeks before to repair the damage. Fire broke out in the unit due to leakage in the insulator which the engineers and technicians could not detect earlier. The repair will cost over Tk 15 lakh, in addition to suspension of power supply. Sources said 110-megawatt unit also went out of order on Wednesday due to major mechanical breakdown. GT and TG-35 are also two units of the KPS which PDB authorities declared 'abandoned' few months ago. But its officials and employees including the executive engineer are still drawing their salaries without working, the sources said. One of the two barge-mounted power plants of the KPS went out of order three years back. It is yet to be put into operation. Efforts are being made to shift this unit elsewhere in the country due to a lot of technical problems including that of docking, the sources said. The shifting will cost over Tk five crore, said an engineer at the KPS who is reportedly trying hard for keep the plant in Khulna. Total load shedding in Khulna zone on Saturday was 50 megawatt. The national grid supplied 100 megawatt on Saturday. Load shedding may increase further if emergency measures are not taken to sort out the problems, said a source at KPS.



(Top) Voters run for cover after rival groups began fighting at UCEP School polling centre and (above) people queue to cast their votes at Doctor Khastagir Girls' School —Courtesy: Prothom Alo

Putin sacks Yeltsin's daughter

MOSCOW, Jan 3: Acting President Vladimir Putin made a symbolic break with the past Monday, sacking the scandal-tainted daughter of former leader Boris Yeltsin as a Kremlin aide at the start of his first full week in office, reports AFP. Putin signed a decree dismissing Tatyana Dyachenko as a senior presidential advisor and re-assigned Yeltsin's chief spokesman Dmitry Yakushkin to other duties. Dyachenko, the ex-president's favourite daughter and chief image-maker, played a key role in Yeltsin's 1996 re-election campaign and had come to epitomise the power of a tight-knit group of Kremlin aides over the country. Reputedly the 'gatekeeper' who controlled access to the man who ruled Russia for the past eight years until his shock resignation Friday, Dyachenko has been credited with helping engineer the dismissals of several premiers. "It was inevitable. A new man, a new entourage, and new close advisors," Yakushkin told Echo Moscow radio. The former Yeltsin aide said he had himself seen Dyachenko "tidy her desk and collect her things" from her Kremlin office. Dyachenko, who turns 40 later this month, embodied what Russian media derisively refers to as "The Family," a close-knit cabal of shadowy figures, unelected and unaccountable to parliament, who pull strings behind the scenes. The group also includes billionaire businessman Boris Berezovsky, oil magnate Boris Abramovich, ex-Kremlin chief of staff Valentin Yumashev and the current holder of that post, Alexander Voloshin.

100-yr-old baby!

COPENHAGEN, Jan 3: Denmark's first millennium baby, a girl, is already 100 years old, according to computer records, a newspaper reported here today, says AFP. Denmark passed the bug hurdle comfortably after spending 30 billion kroner on readying computers to keep them glitch-free but not at Holbaek hospital. In a minor case of the dreaded 'it' striking a computer, the baby's birth as per January 1, 1900, the newspaper BT reported. Jette Christiansen, the proud mother, was quoted as saying: "It was quite bizarre to see my daughter — a girl of 3,900 grams — down as a centenarian. But it doesn't make me any less happy. A hospital spokeswoman at Holbaek explained: The hospital takes credit for Denmark's first millennium baby. But it wasn't aware of the computer problems. "Our equipment wasn't ready for the 2000 bug."

CU: 8 months

From page 1 were killed in a clash between Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) on December 19. Following the incident, the university authority vacated all dormitories of the university and suspended all examinations till January 13. Protesting the killings, Shibir called an indefinite strike on the campus amid the vacation. The scheduled vacations include 31 days for Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr in January, 18 days for Eid-ul-Azha in March and April, 31 days on account of rainy season in July, 15 days for Durga Puja and Autumn in October and again a month-long Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr vacation beginning from December 14, 1999.

6-hr hartal observed

From page 1 Movement of rickshaws was normal. In many areas including Malibagh, Moghbazar, Farmgate, Gulistan and Mohakhali, these created serious jams during the hartal. Many auto-tempos, minibuses and state-run BRTC buses were seen plying on the city streets during the hartal hours. However, long distance buses and trucks did not ply. Trains, launches and steamers operated as usual. Sources at Zia International Airport said some international flights changed schedule yesterday. Trading at Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) remained suspended during the hartal. However, 'electronic trading' in foreign exchange market went on as usual. There were limited transactions in banks. Educational institutions, private offices, business houses and shops remained closed. Attendance in government offices was thin. Presence of pro-hartal activists on the streets was negligible and virtually there was no picketing during the hartal. BNP activists led by party leaders Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Maj Gen (Retd) ZA Khan, Major (Retd) Hafizuddin Ahmed MP, Amanullah Aman MP, Shamsul Alam Praminik MP and Abdus Salam brought out processions twice from the party central office at Naya Palan. The processions passed through Kakrail, Bijoynagar and Fakirerpool areas. A rally was also held in front of the party office. Witnesses said helmeted police and DB police closely followed the processions. Activists of Jatilya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote were not seen on the city streets. Supporters of the ruling Awami League brought out several anti-hartal processions in the city during the shutdown. AL's main procession brought out from Bangabandhu Avenue paraded different streets. Party leader and State Minister Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya led the procession.

30 injured as gang fires on rivals in city

By Staff Correspondent At least 30 people were injured when an armed gang attacked their rivals at Din Mohammed colony at Bhashantek in the city last night. Of the injured, nine were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with bullet injuries. Those admitted to the DMCH were: Zakir Hossain, Sarwar, Ahmed, Iftekar Hossain Rumi, Hakim, Habibur Rahman, Yusuf Ali, Shorab and Baser Ali. Hospital sources quoting witnesses said a gang of armed youths led by Bipu and Gias suddenly attacked Zakir at his residence at Din Mohammed colony in Kafrul area at about 9 pm. The attack was a sequel to a conflict with the gang over playing cricket match few days back. Zakir's cousin Sarwar was also hit with a machet when he came to help Zakir. The gang opened fire, hitting several locals who came to see what was happening. Some were admitted to a clinic, while others wanted to be sent to DMCH, hospital sources said. When contacted Kafrul police said that their boss went to the spot but they can't comment on the incident until they are back.

Ananda Mohan College vice principal's office ransacked

MYMENSINGH, Jan 3: A section of honours students of Ananda Mohan College ransacked the office of the vice-principal of the college today at about 11-30 am to realise their demand for deferring examination date, reports BSS. The agitated students also brought out a procession and paraded main road of the town.

Violence marks polls

From page 1 No voter was seen till noon at a centre at Little Flower Kindergarten. Premises of many other centres gave a deserted look. Zahir Uddin, a government official when asked said, "I did not go to the polling centre to cast my vote out of fear." Many other voters echoed the same sentiment. Chittagong turned into a 'ghost city' amid a panicky situation as the Opposition enforced a 48-hour curfew hartal. Most of the people stayed indoors, vehicles except few rickshaws stayed off the roads and shops and markets remained closed. Another voter, Rina Chowdhury, standing in the same queue echoed the same sentiment. Monjurul Alam, Presiding Officer at a centre at Kadam Mobarak said till 10-30 am, 450 votes were cast out of 2030. "I did not expect such a turnout at such a panicky situation" he said. But during another visit to the centre at 3 pm, a large number of 'cadres' were seen in and around the polling booths. A total of 1299 votes were cast out of 2031 till that time, officials there said. On the other hand, only 30 votes were cast till noon at Kazem Ali School centre, one kilometer from the Kadam Mobarak centre, sources there said. At a government school centre located within a stone's throw from Kazem Ali School, only 32 votes were cast till 12-40 pm. The BNP secretary general announced that the opposition parties have decided not to announce fresh programmes before the Eid festival. But they are planning to build up a mass movement through announcing tougher programme, one after another after the Eid. BNP leaders Sadek Hossain Khoka MP, Anwar Zahid, Amanullah Aman MP and Abdus Salam were present at the press briefing.

Cancel polls

From page 1 He joined the British Diplomatic Service in 1970 and has served in Ghana, the Philippines, Zambia, South Africa and latterly India, together with a number of UK postings with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London. He is married with one son and one daughter, and his areas of interest include travelling, music, reading and walking. Dr Carter has a BA (Hons) from the University of Wales and a PhD from Durham University.



Taiwan's independent lawmaker Lo Fu-chu (C) grabs Chien Hsi-chieh of the opposition Democratic Progressive Party in a brawl at parliament yesterday as Lin Ming-yi of the ruling Kuomintang looks on. Both Lo and Lin chased Chien after they accused him of alleged groundless vitriol. — AFP photo

Declare Pakistan a terrorist state

Vajpayee urges US, others

NEW DELHI, Jan 3: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee urged major nations of the world today to declare neighbouring Pakistan a terrorist state, saying his government would work toward that objective and hoped the United States would spearhead it, reports AP. Vajpayee said the government had information making it clear that the eight-day Indian Airlines hijacking that ended Dec 31, with one passenger stabbed to death, was an "integral part of the Pakistan-backed campaign of terrorism." However, Vajpayee provided no details on the information India says it has of Pakistani involvement. Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh told a press conference on Saturday that the hijackers — masked throughout the event — were Pakistanis and that they had fled to Pakistan after India traded three prisoners suspected of terrorism for the lives of the 155 hostages. Pakistan has denied Indian allegations that it is a terrorist state and backed the hijackers. It has said the hijackers did not come to Pakistan and would be arrested if they did. Chatting with reporters during a visit to a science congress at the University of Pune in southwestern India, Vajpayee said, "Pakistan's active and sustained role in fomenting terrorism in India is now too obvious to be overlooked by the international community. "India, therefore, strongly urges major nations of the world to declare Pakistan a terrorist state," he said. "Our government will work systematically toward this objective. "I hope the United States would take an initiative in this regard," he added. The statements have not been accompanied by any proof that can be independently verified. On Sunday, National Security Adviser Brajesh Mishra appeared on television to say Pakistan had links with the five men who hijacked the Airbus A-300 jetliner. He told independent Star TV that Indian intelligence intercepted several radio conversations between militant groups in Kashmir that confirmed Pakistan's involvement. Mishra claimed that in one of the messages intercepted by New Delhi — a discussion between members of two different separatist organizations — one man asked why the other had condemned the hijacking, saying that the hijackers were acting on the instructions of Pakistan. Meanwhile, Pakistan said today it had no news on the whereabouts of the hijackers and three militants who disappeared after the hijack drama. Interior Minister Moinuddin Haider also described as "very irresponsible" Indian allegations that the hijackers were Pakistani nationals who had crossed back into the country.

Cancel CCC polls: Khaleda

Opposition leader Khaleda Zia asked the government to immediately revoke the 'farical' election to Chittagong City Corporation, showing respect to the opinion of the people, reports UNB. "By successfully observing half-day hartal countrywide, the countrymen expressed their real support to the issue of revoking the CCC polls," she said in a post-hartal statement yesterday. The BNP chairperson alleged the government, in its bid to retain state power by strengthening its foundations, tried to hold the CCC poll missing police, BDR, Army and 400 magistrates, alongside the ruling party leaders, activists and armed cadres at the port city. "But the voters rejected the election as the government held it unilaterally ignoring the Election Commission advice and keeping the opposition parties out of the contest," she said. The former prime minister reminded the ruling quarters that no government in the past could hold on to power holding such farcical elections leaving out the opposition parties as well as the people.

Thick fog, severe cold

From page 1 Khepupara in Barisal division are likely to be affected if severe cold spells sweep the country. Drivers of long distance vehicles and marine vessels have complained that most of the luxury coaches, lorries and motor launches are not equipped with special fog lights to avoid collision in major rivers and highways. "Sub-tropical ridge is prevailing over northern Indian states. The ridge should penetrate into Bangladesh territory while at the same time easterly trough should retreat up to the south of the Bay of Bengal for any significant fall of ground temperature," he said. Hossain denied that jets are dominating the mid-level of troposphere and added that the jets (wind speed 60 miles per hour) are staying at around 30,000 feet above the mean sea level which should descend up to 18,000 feet to change the dynamics of winter. Quoting some records of the lowest mercury temperature, he said mercury dropped to 2.8 degrees Celsius on February 4, 1968 at Sreemongal, 3.6 degrees Celsius on January 27, 1964 at Ishwardi, 3.9 degrees on January 1, 1955 at Dinajpur and 4.1 degrees Celsius on January 18, 1964 at Faridpur. Referring to the first three days of this year, Met Office officials said the situation in Sreemongal deteriorated. The lowest temperature there was 8.2 degrees Celsius on January 1, 2000 and 6.8 degrees Celsius on January 2 and 3. The lowest minimum temperature in the previous year recorded 5.4 degrees Celsius at Chuadanga on January 11, 1998.

Ban on wine shops on some religious occasions

The government has imposed ban on selling and serving of wines at all wine shops of the country on some religious occasions, reports UNB. The restrictions were imposed to maintain the sanctity of the days, an official handout said yesterday. According to the announcement, all wine shops, bars and clubs of the country will remain closed from Wednesday evening to Thursday evening on the occasion of the holy Shab-e-Qadar. The other occasions when the shops, bars and clubs will remain closed this year are: from April 16 evening to April 17 evening (Muharran), from evening of June 15 to evening of June 16 (Eid-e-Miladun Nabi), from November 12 evening to November 13 evening (Shab-e-Bara) and from evening of December 24 to evening of December 25 (Shab-e-Qadar), and the entire month of Ramadan. But the restrictions will not be applicable for those hotels, clubs and bars of international standard, where only the foreigners drink wine.

Accused abducted from court premises in Barisal

BARISAL, Jan 3: A group of armed terrorists today abducted an accused in an arms case and his brother from the premises of District and Sessions Judge's Court at noon today, reports UNB. Witnesses said Swapan Sarkar, 24, and two other accused in the arms case appeared before the second Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court. The armed men snatched away Swapan and his brother from the guard as they came out of the court. Witnesses said the armed men were Parvez and his accomplices, terrorists of the town.

Water talks

From page 1 feeder canal, the navigation lock and the point below Farakka barrage. According to data received in Dhaka yesterday, the present flow of water from Farakka has been "more than adequate." On January 1, 1.03,000 cusec of water were released at Farakka while 1,05,000 cusec were measured at Hardinge Bridge point. On January 2, 1,06,000 cusec were released at Farakka and 1,04,000 cusec was recorded at Hardinge Bridge point. The water accord entered its fourth lean season this year. Except in 1997, the first dry season following the water treaty, there has been 'satisfactory discharge of Ganges water as stipulated in the Indo-Bangladesh water treaty', said a source in the water resources ministry. However, a Joint Scientific Committee of Bangladesh and India engaged in studying the reasons of the water shortfall that year is still to submit its report.

BNP-JP dispute

From page 1 top opposition leaders had recently asked the liaison committee to complete formation of the action committees without further delay, opposition sources said. Meanwhile, BNP itself is also divided on the question as to who would head the action committee in the capital. One group prefers city BNP convenor Sadek Hossain Khoka, MP, while former Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury is the choice of the other group, according to BNP source. In this backdrop, the liaison committee is expected to meet again in a day or two in its bid to resolve the dispute. "We are not likely to go for launching the planned action committees before the Eid, even if the disputes are settled in the next liaison meeting," an influential member of the committee told The Daily Star last night. As per earlier decision, formation of the action committee was to be completed by December last year.