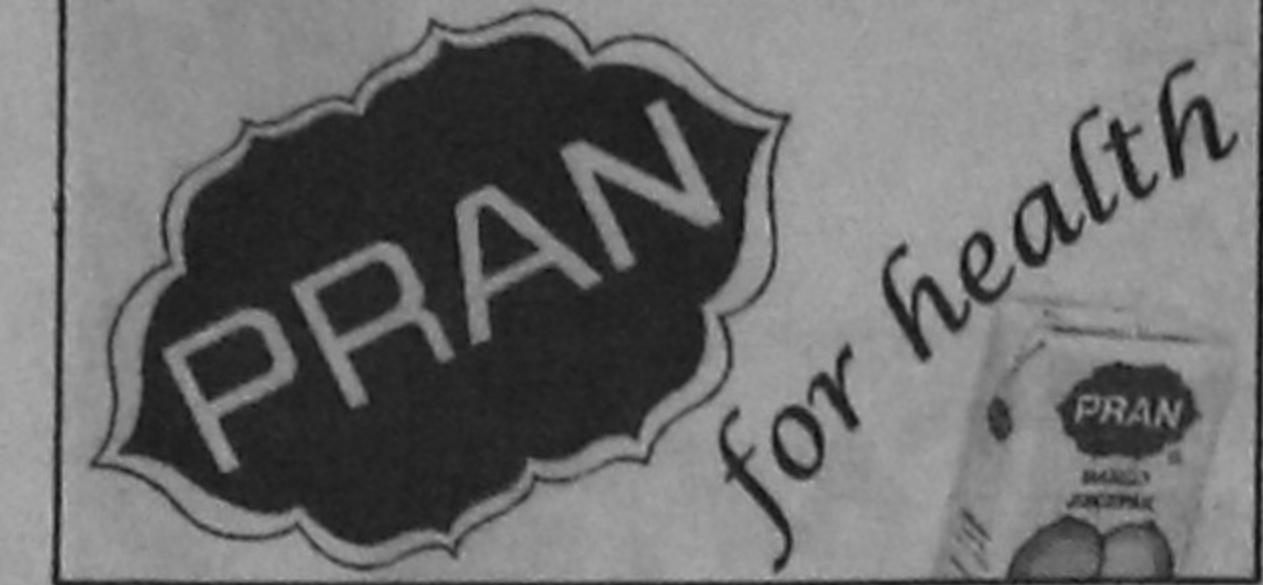


The Daily Star

Wishing the
BEST for the
3rd Millennium

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Eid Greetings



The Daily Star
wishes its readers,
patrons and well-
wishes a happy
Eid-ul-Fitr.

Eid-ul-Fitr tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

The Eid-ul-Fitr, the greatest religious festival of the Muslims, will be celebrated in the country tomorrow on completion of 30 days of fasting in the Ramadan.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the National Moon Sighting Committee held at the Islamic Foundation yesterday evening with State Minister for Religious Affairs Maulana Nurul Islam in the chair.

The Committee announced that the Shawal moon was not sighted yesterday anywhere in the country.

The meeting also decided that the Shawal month of 1420 Hijri would be counted from tomorrow.

In a message, President Shahabuddin Ahmed said Eid-ul-Fitr is a symbol of equality and brotherhood.

Eid brings the sense of equality to all irrespective of rich and poor, as they embrace each other, he said.

The characteristics of Eid strengthen the social fabrics of fraternity, which is helpful for peace and prosperity, he added.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon all to extend their helping hands to the deprived and poor people of the society.

I urge the countrymen to share the happiness of Eid with all irrespective of rich and poor to make it universal, she said in her message.

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Announcement

The Daily Star is pleased to inform that its Senior Reporter Al-Amin will be in Sri Lanka to cover the Under-19 Cricket World Cup which begins on January 11.

He will be sending exclusive reports regarding the tournament with particular emphasis on the progress of the Bangladesh youth team.

The final of the tournament will be held on January 28.

Holiday

The offices of The Daily Star will remain closed for 3 days from January 8 to 10 on the occasion of Holy Eid-ul-Fitr. Therefore, there will be no issue of the newspaper on January 9, 10 & 11.

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Iftar today

Ramadan	Jan	Sehr	Iftar
30	08	—	5.31

Prayer Timings

January 8		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-18	5-25
Zohr	12-45	1-20
Asr	3-42	4-00
Maghrib	5-31	5-35
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Cold wave claims 40 lives, mercury may dip further

By Special Correspondent

The current cold wave may continue in the country for the next few days with a foggy morning on the Eid day.

Night temperature may fall slightly, the Meteorological Department here said yesterday.

The biting cold that began four days back so far claimed the lives of at least 40 people, according to reports reaching from districts.

Most of the deaths were reported from the northern and northwestern districts where temperatures continued to re-

main below 10 degree Celsius. There was no disruption in airline flights yesterday as the sky remained clear over Dhaka.

But dense fog disrupted ferry services and movement of motor launches, night coaches and trucks.

Yesterday, the country's minimum temperature was recorded at 5.6 degrees Celsius at Satkhira and the maximum at 25 C at Cox's Bazar. The minimum temperatures in Dhaka and Chittagong were 10.2 C and

13.5 C respectively, the Met office said.

But the northern and the northwestern regions continued to reel under biting cold with temperatures ranging between 8 and 5.6 C. Jessore had 6.4 C. Rajshahi 7 C, Khulna 8.2 C. Rangpur 8.5 C, Dinajpur 8 C. Faridpur 8.8 C, Mymensingh 9.1 C. Barisal 9.8 C and Comilla 10 C.

A Met office forecast till 6 p.m. today said the weather will remain dry in the country with a partly cloudy sky over Chit-

tagong region. There may be thick fog over Rajshahi division and river basins and moderate fog elsewhere till noon today.

The current moderate to severe cold wave over Khulna division, mild to moderate cold wave over Rajshahi and Dhaka divisions and in Srimangal and Barisal regions will continue.

Little change in the weather is expected during the subsequent five days, the Met office said in its extended forecast.

Promotions, changes in Army, Air Force

By Special Correspondent

Some promotions have been given and changes made in the Army and the Air Force recently, sources said.

Maj Geri Jalaluddin Ahmad has been appointed Military Secretary to the President. He would take up his new assignment on January 11. Ahmad who is serving as Quarter Master General (QMG) of the would replace Maj Gen A M Siraj, who is going on retirement on Jan-

White papers in bundles of notes!

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Jan 7: White papers in bundles of soiled Ten Taka notes were detected at the Khulna branch of Bangladesh Bank on Thursday.

A highly placed source in the bank said the bundles were sent from the Barisal branches of Sonali Bank in November last year for burning in the bank's incinerator.

The white papers were detected when a team of BB officials started burning the soiled notes. The burning was stopped

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6 killed in Assam violence Tripura rebels set ablaze 65 huts in 3 villages

GUWAHATI, Jan 7: Six people, including three securitymen and three ultras, were killed and another injured in separate incidents in Assam yesterday, reports PGI.

A lance naik of Assam police task force was shot dead by extremists in Balangar Bazar area in lower Assam.

Two other policemen, who later went to investigate the killing were ambushed on a bridge in the area ultras blasted a bomb killing them on the spot.

Two hardcore NSCN militants were shot dead in an encounter with the police at Bhuban hill in South Assam's Cachar district.

In another encounter between suspected Bodo rebels and police at Batabol in lower Assam's Bongaigaon district one ultra was killed.

A report from Agartala adds: 65 huts of 38 tribal families were set ablaze by the insurgents of banned National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) in three villages of south Tripura district forcing about 50 people to take shelter elsewhere, police said today.

The ultras armed with so-

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phisticated weapons raided Kashi Chandra Para, Rambatpara and Bhaktamohan Malumpurha and set ablaze 65 houses yesterday, police said adding the ultras also opened fire to scare the villages and threatened of dire consequences if they tried to resist.

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Railway Minister Mamata Banerjee yesterday also told newsmen the goods train would pass through Petrapole-Benapole border.

The work for laying of broad gauge tracks for this purpose has been completed on the Indian side, she said.

To begin with, the movement of trains across the border will be confined to goods traffic and could be extended to passengers if the two countries are willing, she said.

India is also in touch with Bangladesh to help connect Assam and Tripura with West Bengal through Bangladesh territory, according to Indian railway officials here.

Official and industry sources here are optimistic that introduction of goods train movement would give a big boost to trade between India and Bangladesh and help ease the current goods traffic congestion by road between the two countries owing mainly to inadequate storage and godown facilities on both sides of the border at Petrapole-Benapole.

Some 60 guerrillas attacked the post in Rarali village where the police, including the officer in charge, sub-inspector Giri Raj Sen, surrendered after a short gunbattle on Monday. Deputy Inspector General of Police Rajendra Bahadur Singh said.

Some 65 tribal families were set ablaze by the insurgents of banned National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) in three villages of south Tripura district forcing about 50 people to take shelter elsewhere, police said today.

The ultras armed with so-

See Page 12 Col 3

Maoist rebels kill 9 cops in Nepal

KATHMANDU, Jan 7: Maoist guerrillas in Nepal had killed nine policemen during an attack on a police post in Jumla district, police said yesterday.

Official and industry sources here are optimistic that introduction of goods train movement would give a big boost to trade between India and Bangladesh and help ease the current goods traffic congestion by road between the two countries owing mainly to inadequate storage and godown facilities on both sides of the border at Petrapole-Benapole.

The accused, Russel, reportedly a leader of the ruling party backed Chhatra League unit at Shaidullah Hall of Dhaka University, managed to elude police. The DU authorities temporarily expelled him from the university. Chhatra League however disowned him.

Two youths—Mamun and Mokhtar—arrested by the Detective Branch of DMP earlier in connection with the incident, were taken on five days' remand yesterday for interrogation, police said. The two were book sellers at Nilkhel in the city.

Police however did not seek remand of Taher, another youth detained along with Mamun and Mokhtar. Police said Taher was detained last week when they went to the City Spe-

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Police said the rebels admitted that their targets were bus stations in the Buddhist temple town of Rantepae, where Sri Lanka's majority Sinhalese Buddhist believe a tooth relic of Buddha is kept. Two years ago, days before Sri Lanka's independence celebrations in February, rebels bombed the temple, killing 22 people.

AMPARA, 210 kilometers east of Colombo, has a large number of Tamils.

Meanwhile, authorities lifted the curfew shortly after noon to allow Muslims to offer

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YOUTH CRICKETERS LEAVE FOR COLOMBO TODAY

By Sports Reporter A 14-member Bangladesh team leaves for Colombo today to take part in the World Youth Cricket Championship, starting from January 10.

Hannan Sarker will lead the under-19 Bangladesh team in the mega meet, where the nine Test-playing nations along with seven ICC (International Cricket Council) associate-member countries will participate.

Placed in Group B, Bangladesh will play their first match against India on January 12. New Zealand and Holland are the other teams in the group.

The youth team, being coached by Dipu Roy Chowdhury, will be managed by Azmal Ahmed Tapan. The BCB (Bangladesh Cricket Board) sends Gavin Benzafield, the South African physio of the national team, at its own expense.

Bangladesh, who performed credibly in the previous edition

See Page 12 Col 4

Prices fell drastically later. Petrobangla bought the Sangu and Jalalabad gas at between 1.2 and 1.4 dollars per unit, which was still higher than the local sale price of 1.1 dollars.

As international oil prices increased in recent months, Petrobangla is once again purchasing Sangu gas at a rate nearly double the local price. The Jalalabad gas is however less costlier—around 1.8 dollars per unit. Petrobangla pays gas bills in dollars every month.

As per the PSC, Petrobangla gets its share of gas from both Sangu and Jalalabad fields, which is around 30 per cent of the total gas supplied. With this gas, Petrobangla minimises its losses to a certain level, the sources said.

Petrobangla usually pays the government Tk 400 to 500 crore in DSL annually. It also pays various taxes including corporate tax of IOCs working in blocks 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 under a financial package designed by the government in the early nineties to attract foreign investors.

Petrobangla is currently purchasing between 100 and 120 million cubic feet of gas per day (mmcfd) from Sangu gas field and another 60 mmcfd from Jalalabad gas field. Sangu started supplying gas to the National Grid from June 1998 and Jalalabad from early last year.

The gas pricing formula under the Gas Purchase and Sales Agreement (GPSC) takes into consideration the quarterly average price of High Sulphur Fuel Oil (HSFO) in Singapore market. Under this formula, all IOC

gas prices may fluctuate between a minimum price of 1.2 dollars and a maximum of 3 dollars per unit. The maximum and the minimum prices may vary from PSC to PSC.

As per the GPSC, the government was purchasing Sangu gas at 2.2 dollars per unit during Jun-December 1998. This price was just double to local gas sales price.

When international oil

prices fell drastically later, Petrobangla bought the Sangu and Jalalabad gas at between 1.2 and 1.4 dollars per unit, which was still higher than the local sale price of 1.1 dollars.

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