



Curious crowd (right) tries to get a clear view of the rescue operation from outside the fences of Zia International Airport where a Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) fighter (left) crashed yesterday, killing a squadron leader and injuring his co-pilot. The authorities kept the crash site off limits to photojournalists. -Star photo

Megawati's press conference not held

By Diplomatic Correspondent

Vice President of Indonesia Megawati Soekarnoputri did not appear at a scheduled press conference yesterday morning at the end of her visit.

The reason for the abrupt change in decision could not be known from the Indonesian side which set the programme or from the hosts.

More than three dozen reporters and photo journalists of national and foreign dailies and news agencies who turned up at the heavily guarded Senggara Hotel for the press conference came to know from officials of the Indonesian Embassy that it would not take place.

The officials insisted that the programme for the press conference was 'tentative' and was not included in the official programme.

However, the scheduled press conference was incorporated in the official itinerary prepared by the Foreign Ministry. Officials of the ministry said it was done in consultation with the Indonesian side and the programme was cancelled by them.

The Indonesian Embassy claimed that it had informed the Foreign Ministry's protocol wing about this last night but ministry officials denied it.

Sonargaon Hotel staff said a

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200 sr asst secys to be promoted

By Special Correspondent

The Superior Selection Board (SSB) at a meeting yesterday decided to promote at least 200 senior assistant secretaries to the vacant posts of deputy secretary.

The decision followed the Supreme Court's vacation of an injunction on the promotions and the High Court's rejection of another prayer by a special batch of 1982 for another injunction.

Those who will be promoted are from the 1982 batch of the Administrative Cadre.

The SSB which ended its meeting yesterday evening also considered promotion of deputy secretaries to 74 vacant posts of joint secretaries, sources said.

Details were not available till last night.

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Prayer Timings

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Jan 8		5.28 pm
Jan 9	6-43am	

Source: Islamic Foundation

Chinese-built FT-7 catches fire BAF jet crash kills Squadron Leader

By Special Correspondent

A Bangladesh Air Force FT-7 training aircraft crashed after take-off from Zia International Airport (ZIA) yesterday, killing one of the pilots and injuring the other.

One of the pilots, Squadron Leader Mohammad Mohsin, 32, failed to eject and died when the jet exploded into flames in the air, sources in the Air Force said.

Flight Lt. Mohammad Reza Emdad Khan could eject and parachuted on to the ground. He suffered burn injuries. He was taken to CMH for treatment.

The debris of the burning jet fell in a bush near the south-western end of the runway. The jet was Chinese built.

Witnesses said smoke was seen coming out of the aircraft after take-off and it crashed into flames with a big bang in the air at about 1.30 pm.

A Bangladesh Biman flight

from Abu Dhabi was diverted to Chittagong due to closure of the airport.

An Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) press release said that the twin-engine jet was on a training mission. It issued a 119-word press release that gave scanty details.

It said the FT-7 met with an accident immediately after take-off. "Both the pilots had ejected but Sqn. Leader Mohammad Mohsin died while Sqn. Leader Mohammad Reza Emdad Khan sustained minor injury".

A board of inquiry has been formed to probe the incident, the ISPR said but gave no details.

It said Sqn. Leader Mohsin had left behind his wife and a daughter.

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Cracker blasts, clashes with police mark Ctg harta: 29 held 48-hour harta from January 10

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 7: Sporadic cracker blasts, chase and counter chase between police and opposition activists marked the day-long harta in Chittagong today.

BNP-led All-Party Action Committee called the harta in the port city demanding withdrawal of case filed against BNP central leader M Morshed Khan, MP.

Morshed Khan and his son Faisal Morshed Khan were sued under Public Safety Act (PSA) for 'ransacking' of a restaurant at GEC crossing in the port city on December 26.

Police arrested 29 pickets from different parts of the city during harta hours.

All-Party Action Committee (APAC) alleged that police intercepted processions of harta supporters at different places of the city and clubbed opposition activists.

It claimed that at least 70 opposition activists were arrested during the harta.

Protesting the arrest of its activists, APAC announced a 48-hour harta in the port city beginning at 6 am on January 10.

Addressing a pro-harta rally at Laldighi Maidan this afternoon, APAC leaders threatened of a greater movement if opposition activists were not released immediately.

Police said at least 20 people were injured in sporadic cracker blasts in the city.

Explosions rocked Circuit House, Agrabad, Jalalabad, Rampura,

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BNP plans to call harta for repeal of PSA

By Staff Correspondent

Main opposition BNP is contemplating calling a countrywide dawn-to-dusk harta in the middle of this month in a bid to force the government to repeal the Public Safety Act (PSA).

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is expected to announce the harta programme at a public meeting at Paltan Maidan on January 11. Sources said BNP has already announced a series of public meetings up to January 30 in and outside Dhaka to drum up people's support prior to launching a 'militant' agitation programme to topple the Awami League government.

They said section of BNP leadership favours calling harta side by side with holding of public meetings and other mass contact programmes, which the party chief has agreed to.

They said at one stage of alteration at Modhumita Cinema Hall in the city's Motijheel area yesterday, hospital sources said.

The dead was identified as Sajal Hossain Mahin, 15, son of Mokbul Hossain, a resident of RK Mission Road while the injured was Rifat Hossain Rana. Both are students of class eight of Mitali School, sources said.

The incident took place when Sajal and Rana went to the Modhumita Cinema Hall to enjoy a film. They contacted a ticket tout for tickets but soon locked in an altercation during bargaining. At one stage the ticket tout started beating them. When they fainted and fell to the ground they were sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where the attending doctors declared Sajal dead, hospital sources said.

The five conditions put by BNP earlier include, an apology by the prime minister for her 'indecent' remarks about the opposition leader and expunging of the same from the parliamentary proceedings, and ensuring a neutral role by the Speaker.

The four-point accord signed between the government and the opposition in January 1997 and

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Ticket touts beat schoolboy to death

By Staff Correspondent

Ticket touts beat a student to death and severely injured another one at one stage of alteration at Modhumita Cinema Hall in the city's Motijheel area yesterday, hospital sources said.

The dead was identified as Sajal Hossain Mahin, 15, son of Mokbul Hossain, a resident of RK Mission Road while the injured was Rifat Hossain Rana. Both are students of class eight of Mitali School, sources said.

The incident took place when they fainted and fell to the ground they were sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where the attending doctors declared Sajal dead, hospital sources said.

Motijheel police quoting FIR said the two were travelling the area in a rickshaw. As they were

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JS body demands reports on defence expenditure

By Nazrul Islam

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Defence at its meeting yesterday discussed the country's defence budget and asked the authorities concerned to submit detailed reports on expenditures at its next meeting.

This was the first ever discussion on the country's defence budget in a parliamentary body meeting.

The meeting also approved a motion of thanks to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina who holds the defence portfolio for opening up such discussion.

Presided over by Committee Chairman K M Saifullah, the meeting selected four areas of expenditure and asked the ministry to submit reports on those. The areas are salary of the armed forces personnel, development of the armed forces, administration and training.

"We like to make the best use of our money for overall development of the armed forces by giving suggestions through the committee meetings," said a member of the committee who attended the meeting.

At the next meeting, the committee will review the reports and make suggestions for overall development of the armed forces.

The committee yesterday discussed the budgetary allocation in

fiscal 1999-2000 for the defence ministry and the expenditures of the ministry, the three forces and their other offices. The allocation for defence was about Tk 3273.42 crore in fiscal '99-00.

"The discussion will continue as we could not complete it," said the committee chairman. In the next meeting, the committee will discuss the defence allocation and expenditure in fiscal 2000-2001, he said.

Opposition members at the meeting raised the question that the expenditure for maintenance was more than that for procurement. In reply, the chairman said it is equally important to maintain old equipment. "We have to save our weapons and equipment procured earlier," Shaiful Islam was quoted as saying.

BNP's expelled lawmaker Maj. (Retd) Akhteruzzaman moved a motion of condemnation against the defence minister's absence from the committee meetings. But, the meeting rejected the motion.

The committee was informed that members of the armed forces engaged in the United Nations peace keeping missions earned nearly Tk 2,200 crore in the last 10 years, of which Tk 1,100 went to the public exchequer. Bangladeshi forces are now engaged in Sierra Leon, Kuwait and East Timor.

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PSA being abused to detain opposition leaders, rig polls

Khaleda tells editors of national dailies

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia said yesterday the government had unleashed a greater degree of repression on the opposition and started blatant abuse of the Public Safety Act (PSA) since it has absolutely no chance to return to power in the upcoming general elections.

The Awami League government is abusing the 'black' law to detain opposition activists so that it can rig the polls, she observed while exchanging views with the Editors of national dailies and news agencies at Hotel Sheraton in the capital.

She said BNP plans to launch a movement to force the government to repeal the PSA without further delay to put an end to repression on the opposition so that a congenial atmosphere prevails before the national election. She sought the media's support to the movement to have the act repealed.

She recalled AL government's assurance that the new law would be used to curb terrorism and would never be misused to repress the opposition. But the PSA failed to curb terrorism, for it was not applied impartially.

The PSA was not applied against the ruling party activists

who killed an auto-rickshaw driver, damaged hundreds of vehicles and set some others to fire on December 14 even in the presence of ministers. Also, there was no case under the PSA after police recovered arms and ammunition from the possession of Bangladesh Chhatra League activists at Mohsin Hall of the Dhaka University.

If voted to power, the BNP chief pledged, she would repeal all black laws, including the PSA, and the Special Powers Act, which she claimed have never been abused during her rule.

During the one-and-a-half-hour meeting, most of the editors favoured BNP's joining the parliament session to press the government to repeal the PSA and raise other issues on the floor of the House.

Khaleda pointed out that her party was yet to resign from par

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Akheri Munajat today

By Staff Correspondent

The Biswa Ijtema at Tongi near the city ends today with the offering of Akheri Munajat (concluding prayers) this noon, seeking divine blessings for peace, progress and prosperity of the Muslim Ummah.

Lakhs of devotees from home and from at least 65 countries are attending the three-day Akheri Ijtema, the second largest Muslim congregation next to Hajj.

The congregation venue on the bank of the river Turag turned into a sea of humanity yesterday evening and thousands were still streaming to the venue, ignoring biting cold.

Organisers said yesterday that the Tablig Jamaat Supreme Consultation Committee would decide tonight (Sunday night) who would lead the Akheri Munajat. The committee comprises Sirajul Islam, Azizul Maqsood, Mahmudul Haq Mozammel Huq and Maulana Saeed.

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Six die at Ijtema: 42 hospitalised

By Staff Correspondent

Four persons died at the Biswa Ijtema at Tongi yesterday and two died on Saturday, organisers said.

They died of heart failure or old age ailments.

The dead are Asadur Ali, 60, of village Bekamore kazir Bazar in Mirpur upazila, Moulavi Bazar; Sheikh Fazlul Huq, 59, of Maddhya Badda Al Amin Bazar in the city; Nazimuddin, 55, of village Dev Raji in Shakhipur upazila, Tangail; Kaemuddin, 65, of village Monoharpur in Tarash upazila of Sirajganj; Sabar Ali, 50, of village Islampur Samanta Bazar in Moleshpur upazila, Jhenidah and Abdul Ahad, 40, of village Jellar Par in Sader upazila, Sylhet.

Two of the six were buried at Tongi municipal graveyard at Markoon and the bodies of four were sent to their respective village homes, said Adam Ali who looks after the ailing persons at

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Construction of 51 shops on a designated parking lot near the Karwan Bazar kitchen market continues in full swing after a group of dishonest traders obtained a High Court rule on the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) notice to move out or face eviction. The shops, occupying the parking lot and a portion of the road, threaten to engulf the park seen behind.

-Star photo

The way they're grabbing the parking lot

By Staff Correspondent

A group of dishonest traders have built 51 shops on a designated parking lot in the Karwan Bazar area during the Eid holidays after obtaining a High Court rule.

On October 1