

## Separate ministry for FFs if BNP returns to power: Khaleda

Confident of returning to power, BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday assured the freedom fighters of setting up a separate ministry to list genuine Muktiyoddhas and look after their welfare, reports UNB. "Inshallah, we will soon go to power. A separate ministry for Muktiyoddhas will be formed so that they can live with dignity. They will be given responsibility to build the country," she told a gathering of freedom fighters. Khaleda was addressing a discussion meeting on the occasion of the biennial council 2001 of Jatiyatabadi Muktiyoddha Dal (JMD) Dhaka city unit at the Institution of Engineers yesterday afternoon. A 101-member new committee with M A Majid, a DCC ward commissioner and BNP leader, as president and Kabir Ahmed as general secretary was announced in the meeting.

Chaired by M A Majid, the meeting was addressed, among others, by chief founder advisor of JMD Col (ret'd) Oli Ahmed, former Speaker Shaikh Abdur Razzak, JMD president Redwan Ahmed, Maj (Rtd) Hafizuddin Ahmed, city BNP president and freedom fighter Sadek Hossain Khoka, Mohammad Shajahan and Mezbauddin Ahmed Shahu. She asked the freedom fighters to come forward to protect the country's sovereignty and independence. "People have tremendous confidence in you for your glorious role during the war of independence and your readiness to make supreme sacrifice," she

told the freedom fighters. Recalling the dark days of post-liberation Awami League rule she said the party did not want the sovereignty of Bangladesh. They were ready to hand it over to their alien masters. The opposition leader said Awami League had signed the 25-year treaty of 'slavery' with India sacrificing the national interest and without informing the freedom fighters and the people as a whole. To cover up its misdeeds they are now making rhetoric of spirit of the independence war. The opposition leader observed that the entire nation is now united behind the nationalist force. But Awami League wants to cling to power by using black laws against its opponents and by resorting to unfair means.

## Gunmen attack UCBL chairman's garments factory

CHITTAGONG, Jan 14: Unidentified gunmen attacked a garment factory owned by UCBL chairman Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury in the city's Chandra Nagar area tonight, reports UNB. Witnesses said the gunmen attacked the RR Fabrics and exploded a number of crackers. They searched for Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury and his wife ward commissioner Hasina Zafar and left the scene firing shots. Zafar Ahmed and his wife were not there during the attack. A case was filed with Khulshi thana.

## One strangled

From page 12 family sources said. Shefali went to the house of Hasanuzzaman at Tongi with her daughters on Saturday. She locked into an altercation with her husband over the marriage of her husband, sources added. At one stage Shefali left her husband's Tongi residence leaving her daughters there. Hasanuzzaman came to his Uttara residence at 1 am and started quarrel with his wife. At one stage of altercation Hasanuzzaman started beating her. Shefali fell on the ground following torture, police said. Hasanuzzaman, his elder brother Khairuzzaman and one Siraj took her to a local clinic where she died. They took the body to the house, police quoting the witnesses said. When the guard of the house wanted to know about the incident they could not give satisfactory answer, police said. Moniruzzaman, the guard then locked the door of Shefali from outside. He immediately informed it to his landlord who called Uttara police. Victim's cousin Shahnaz Begum, filed a case with Uttara police accusing Shefal's husband, his elder brother Khairuzzaman and Siraj, friend of Hasanuzzaman. Khairuzzaman was arrested in this connection but Hasanuzzaman managed to escape.

## Split verdict

From page 12 that his confessional statement was also not taken properly. Charges against the four other could not be proved, he noted. Justice Khairul Huq in his 445-page upheld the death sentence of all the 15. Ruhul Amin has now been elevated to the Supreme Court. Copies of the split judgement were not available yesterday.

## Prokrichi

From Page 12 country's public administration is heavily centralised in the secretariat and urged to take an immediate decentralisation process with a view to devolution of power and duty. They also demanded full financial autonomy and administrative empowerment in organisations in grass roots level. Those present at the press conference included Dr MAK Azad, Prof Jahannara Begum, Khan Monjoor Morshed, Nurul Huda, M Nazrul Islam and Mesbahur Rahman Tutul.

## Jalal murder

From Page 1 ing into cognizance a report published in The Daily Star on January 11. The news items contradicted a police report that witnesses in the case were not available at their addresses. The Daily Star correspondents took only three hours to find out the witnesses. Jalal, a source and driver of the Detective Branch of DMP was beaten to death and his body was found in the water tank on the rooftop of the DB office at Minto Road in the city on March 25, 1999. Jalal was reportedly killed over sharing of source money. Four DB personnel including an inspector and canteen manager of the DB office were accused of torturing Jalal to death.

## Speaker

From Page 1 AAPP conference and general assembly as a keynote speaker. He was scheduled to lead a 20-member delegation including officials of the AAPP Secretariat in Dhaka. Meanwhile, these officials led by Qazi Monzur-I-Mowla is likely to leave for Phnom Penh today.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the Armed Forces War Course conducted by the National Defence College at the Mirpur Cantonment yesterday. The Prime Minister is seen, among others, with the course members. -- ISPR photo

# EU ambassadors urge govt, opposition to work together

European ambassadors yesterday said the government and the opposition should work together for a fair election and accept its results to ensure a healthy democratic process in Bangladesh, reports UNB. "This is the election year and democratic process would depend much on freeness and fairness of the election and acceptance of the results by the parties concerned," Swedish Ambassador Anders Johnson told reporters at the embassy. He responded to queries on the EU-Bangladesh political and economic relations as Sweden has assumed the presidency of the 15-member European Union for the first half of the current year. EC Head of Delegation Antonio De Souza Menezes, Danish Ambassador Finn Thilsted and representatives of other EU member-states were present. Ambassador Johnson said EU would send a Needs Assessment Mission to Dhaka from Brussels later this month to study the possibility of sending poll observers to monitor the next general elections. In reply to a question Ambassador Menezes said the EU was monitoring national elections in many parts of the world, including recently held votes in Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe and Cambodia, and earned reputation for

its objective and fair monitoring. In Bangladesh, he said, both the government and opposition parties made the request to monitor the general elections as it did in the last polls. Menezes said although the election time was not yet known, preparations for election monitoring here must begin now. Danish Ambassador Finn Thilsted said the EU wants to see the democratic process, on which Bangladeshis people have got strong commitment, continue through holding impartial elections under a unique system of caretaker government. The EU envoys would not, however, comment on whether the prevailing hostility between the ruling party and the opposition is conducive to free and fair voting. Ambassador Johnson felt the need for constant dialogue between the two parties, strengthening democratic institutions like human rights organisations, appointing Ombudsmen and active role by civil society and the media for effective functioning of democracy. Referring to President Shahabuddin Ahmed's New Year address to Parliament requesting all to sink differences and work together, he said this is the occasion when the ruling party and the opposition can

join their hands for smooth functioning of democracy by ensuring fair voting. About EU-Bangladesh cooperation, the Swedish Ambassador said the first Joint Commission meeting of the European Commission and Bangladesh would be held here in March to identify priority areas of interaction and implement development projects. EU and Bangladesh signed the Cooperation Agreement last year in Brussels for a wider cooperation in aid, trade, investment, environment, science, culture and social sectors. Besides, UN world conference on LDCs would be held on May 3 to deal with an EC proposal to allow free access of products of the least developed countries, including Bangladesh, to the EU market. "We like to see the proposal implemented," Johnson said, adding that during his country's presidency from January to June, Sweden would try hard to enhance the broad partnership between the 15-member European Union and Bangladesh. He said the three Es enlargement of EU members, environment and employment would be the main focus during Sweden's presidency over the European continent.

# PM asks armed forces

From Page 1 not come under external attack and for this, prevalence of democratic system in neighbouring countries is also very much important. Democracy is also important for economic development, she told the function, observing that the people of South Asia are poor and for their economic development, regional peace and democracy are imperative. Bangladesh proved in all respects that it is a peace-loving nation and participation of the members of Bangladesh armed forces in the UN peacekeeping missions is a proof of it, she pointed out. The image of the country has brightened at home and abroad for its peace posture and for restoring democratic process, the

Prime Minister observed. Terming the members of the armed forces as a symbol of national independence and sovereignty, Sheikh Hasina said her government had taken necessary steps for upgrading and modernising the armed forces. "We are doing our best to build up a strong armed forces despite all limitations and resource constraints," she told he function, adding that the government has faced a lot of obstructions while taking development measures for the defence forces. Referring to the restoration of democracy through a long struggle, the Prime Minister said people's confidence in the existing democratic system in the country is growing. With the restoration of democracy, the present government is

taking all necessary steps for rapid development of the country, she said and mentioned her sincere efforts in this regard. She said the government had restored discipline in economic sectors ensuring steady growth in every field. Commandant of the NDC Major General Abu Kaiser Fazlul Kabir received the Prime Minister on the college premises and delivered a speech welcoming her at one of the highest educational institutions of the defence forces. Chief of Army Staff Lt General M Harunur Rashid, Chief of Naval Staff Rear Admiral A Taher and Chief of Air Staff Air Vice Marshal Jamal Uddin Ahmed, Vice Chancellor of different universities and high civil and military officials were present.

# Tofail blasts India

From Page 1 Vajpayee visited Bangladesh last year, he had committed that duty-free access would be given to 25 Bangladeshi items. "But that is yet to be materialised." He added that he didn't understand why India always created different tariff and non-tariff barriers to Bangladeshi goods. "Our businessmen always face problems when they go for export to India," the minister said in presence of a number of representatives from India. Former Indian foreign secretary Muchkund Dubey, who is now president of the Council for Social Development, also addressed at the session and was present during the industry ministry's deliberation. Former SARC secretary-general and former Nepalese foreign secretary Yadav Kant Silwal chaired the session.

Tofail said that big nations should inspire confidence amongst the smaller nation for creation of a free trade area. "Give us some benefits then our people will be sure that free trade was not for bad intention," he said, pointing to the Indian delegates. The industry minister also expressed frustration over non-functioning of the South Asian Preferential Trade Arrangement (SAPTA). "The SAARC summit is also not being held." Tofail regretted the lack of unity among countries in the region. "European nations and other developed countries are united but we the poor nations cannot agree on many issues," he said while recounting his experience at a WTO ministerial conference. Inaugurating the dialogue in the morning, Finance Minister SAMS Kibria reiterated Bangla-

desh's commitment to regional co-operation. South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) was formed at the initiative from Bangladesh, he mentioned. Kibria said that the dialogue would help increase investment co-operation among SAARC countries. He also hoped that the dialogue would strengthen the spirit of SAARC and promote its structure. SACEPS Executive Director Professor Rehman Sobhan said that one of the main objectives of the newly launched organisation would be to evolve mechanism to protect the interest of smaller nations in the region. It would also work to enhance co-operation among SAARC nations, he said.

# Farooq Abdullah escapes grenade attack

SRINAGAR, Jan 14: Separatist militants fired two grenades at a dais where Kashmir's chief minister was delivering a speech after inaugurating abridge in downtown Srinagar today, police said, reports AP. One of the grenades fell 100 feet the spot where off Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah was speaking. He escaped unhurt in the attack that took place at 12:30 pm in Habba Kadal in Srinagar, the state capital. Another grenade exploded on

the roof of a nearby houses. There were no immediate details of casualties, though police said some people were injured in the panic that ensued after the explosions. The Hezb-ul Mujahideen claimed responsibility for the attack on the telephone to The Associated Press' office in Srinagar. At least 700 people gathered at Habba Kadal to witness the opening of the bridge over the Jhelum river when the explosions took

place. They included government officials, civilians and members of Abdullah's National Conference Party. As the grenades exploded, frightened people tried to crawl towards safety. Security forces fired, into the air for several minutes, adding to the panic. Officials said Abdullah resumed his speech after the panic subsided. The attack on Abdullah came barely 24 hours after he report-

## Dilip Chakrabarti dead

By Staff Correspondent Senior journalist of Daily Banglar Bani and noted artist of Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra Dilip Chakrabarti died at his residence yesterday evening. He was 56. Dilip had been suffering from diabetics and heart ailment for long. He is survived by his wife, a daughter and a host of well-wishers. His mortal were cremated at Postagola Shashanghat yesterday night, a press release said. On hearing of his death news, journalists from different newspapers rushed to Dilip's Nabendra Bashak Lane residence to pay their last respects to him. Dilip joined the Daily Sangbad as its Faridpur district correspondent in the 60s. He played a vital role in the Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra as an artist during the War of Liberation in 1971. He joined in weekly Cinema in 1972 and later joined the Banglar Bani as Staff Reporter. Along side journalism, Dilip was involved in different cultural activities. He was an enlisted artist in BTV. During 60s and 70s decades, Dilip acted in a number of films, including "Titas Ekti Nadir Nam," "Lathial." "Janome Janome" is a novel by the late journalist. Dilip was also a member in different capacities of the Press Club, BFUJ and DUJ.

## HC rules

From Page 1 Khademul Islam said that the order would be given on production of a reference on stay of a case against weekly Robbar under the Special Powers Act (SPA). Counsels of the petitioners could not produce it before the court yesterday and it led to a difference of opinion between the two judges. After hearing the petitioners' counsels and the state attorney, Justice Saeed Ahmed was about to give an order staying the proceedings of the case for three weeks. But Justice Khademul Islam said he would like to see all the proceedings on the reference before ordering a stay. Earlier on Thursday, the Bench issued a rule on the government to show cause within two weeks why the PSA should not be declared ultra vires the Constitution. The petition by Morshed Khan and his son was filed challenging the validity of the PSA for the first time since it was enacted on February 14 last year. The counsels for the petitioners ---- Barrister Syed Ishtiaque Ahmed, Dr Kamal Hossain, MA Malek, Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed and Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud argued that the PSA is ultra vires the Constitution as it denies fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution. They prayed for stay of the proceedings on the grounds that police would arrest the law-maker and his son before a decision on the rule issued earlier. Additional Attorney General Mahbub-e-Alam opposed granting of stay of proceedings, saying it would lead to stay of proceedings of cases against hundreds of criminals. He said that it was a case showing what the MPs and their sons and spouses were doing. It prompted the court to observe that the MPs' wards are involved in kidnapping, murder and other crimes. Newspaper reports showed that most of them are wards of ruling party MPs. The court further observed that there is a 'smell' of politics in the present case. Morshed Khan, his son and BNP leader Abdullah Al-Noman, among others, were present in the court.

## Rubel murder

From page 12 case till 2:30 pm today. Rafiq in his statement said that he had been at the Ramna thana since 1997. At about 10 pm on July 23, 1998 Rubel's brother Mohammad Iftekaruddin along with 10 others came to thana. They got the death news over telephone, he added. Iftekar told in the thana that he would teach a good lesson to Haitul Islam Thakur as Thakur killed his brother Rubel, Rafiq said. I advised Iftekar to file a case against Thakur but Iftekar left the thana without filing a case at about 12 pm on July 23 last year, he added. He further told the court that a murder case was filed with Ramna thana the following day. SI Haitul Islam Thakur, ASI Abdul Karim, Havildar Nuruzzaman, Constables-Mir Farooq and Ratul Parvez were arrested in the case. Mukuli Begum along with two other women came to thana to evict a shop in front of Rubel's residence, Rafiq added. Of the accused including AC Akram and Mukuli Begum were present in the court yesterday.

# Nepal, India agree on flood control measures

KATHMANDU, Jan 14 : A 10-member joint Indo-Nepal technical team agreed Saturday to a series of measures to control flooding in Nepal, blamed on an Indian-constructed dam, state-run radio said, reports AFP. The Nepalese delegation, from the Department of Irrigation and Water Resources, had left here Wednesday for talks with their Indian counterparts, Radio Nepal reported. Key to the talks was the flooding in Nepal's southwest region, allegedly caused by India's Laxmanpur dam. Nepal maintains that the Indian dam, completed in 1998, caused flooding which affected 15,000 people living in 10 villages in the Banke district, close to the Indian border. As part of the measures, India has agreed to pay for the construction of a seven-kilometre (4.3-mile) embankment on the

Nepalese side of the Rapti River in Banke to minimise the flooding. According to the Department of Irrigation, construction of a two-kilometre section of the embankment would begin immediately, while work would begin on the remaining portion only after a further survey. A 15-kilometre embankment would be built along the Bagmati River where flooding is also a problem. Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, during an official visit to India in August 2000, discussed the flooding issue with his Indian counterpart, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. The communist opposition of Nepal has demanded that India demolish the dam or provide an alternative solution to the flooding of Nepalese villages.

## Meeting with foreign diplomats Khaleda's demands shame for nation: Kibria

Finance Minister S A M S Kibria yesterday termed BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia's presentation of certain demands relating to next general elections before foreign diplomats as a matter of shame for the nation, reports UNB. "How could Begum Zia holding a responsible office of the Leader of the Opposition place her demand in an official manner to foreigners? What could the foreigners do in the domestic politics of an independent country?" he questioned. "It is unintelligible." Talking to UNB, Kibria, who is also the chief election coordinator of ruling Awami League, said his party also stood for fair and impartial elections in a free atmosphere for which Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had fought a long battle. It's a good sign that Khaleda who was against the demand for non-party neutral caretaker government has now accepted the concept of Awami League, he observed. Kibria said some of the BNP chairperson's demands like administrative measures for ensuring impartial voting is quite appreciable, but he questioned how the future caretaker government would scrap certain laws as she demanded when Awami League would not be in

power, nor parliament would be there. "It's parliament that enacts or scraps a law when needed. But what the caretaker government or foreigners could do here?" In reply to a question, the Finance Minister said in the past Awami League also had met diplomats and exchanged views informally, but not officially. It is a stigma for a nation that the Leader of the Opposition is making appeals to foreigners about her demands. About election observers, Kibria said Awami League also would welcome foreign observers as it did in the past. Commonwealth, SAARC, NDI, FEMa, all sent poll observers and monitored elections on their own. But the government has nothing to do with it. "We don't perceive what Begum Zia wants to say or seek through her demands," said the Finance Minister about Khaleda's meeting with foreign diplomats on Saturday. Asked whether he feels that BNP is trying to find an excuse for staying out of polls by placing her demands as preconditions, Kibria said it would then be a political disaster for BNP. It is now an established fact that election is the only alternative for going to power.

# Quake kills 138

From Page 12 called upon to help soldiers with rescue efforts. Early Sunday, the first foreign team arrived -- a group of Mexican rescue workers flown in to a military base to the east of San Salvador. Later a group of firefighters sent by Guatemala arrived by road from El Salvador's northern neighbour. El Salvador's Interior Minister Mario Acosta said the Mexicans would join the rescue effort at Las Colinas immediately. National Emergency Committee Director Mauricio Ferrer said a US military task force was expected to assist with the rescue and relief operations. The earthquake was recorded at 11:33 am (2333 BST) on Saturday, and its epicentre was located off the Pacific coast of El Salvador, officials said. It was also felt in Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and in southern Mexico. There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage from those areas. In Guatemala, a two-month-old baby died from injuries after her family home collapsed in the town of Moyuta, near the frontier

with El Salvador, the child's father, Gregorio Quinonez, told AFP. Firefighters said a man died near the Guatemalan capital Guatemala City when a rock shaken loose by the quake crashed onto his car. San Salvador's international airport, 44 kilometres southeast of the city was closed Saturday as officials assessed damage to the runway and installations. Several hospitals were evacuated and stores in the capital shut down as soon as the tremors ended. The government was planning to open a military airport just outside the capital for relief flights. The quake caused panic across the region, where many remember the devastating earthquakes of the past. In El Salvador, 1,400 people died in a 1986 quake that measured 7.5 on the Richter scale. Ten years earlier, an earthquake of the same intensity killed 26,000 people in Guatemala.

## Khasru meets President

From Page 1 judges in the Supreme Court, superseding two judges, that led to agitation by pro-opposition lawyers in the court on Thursday. Today, the team of five senior lawyers led by Barrister Ishtiaque Ahmed, which is trying to defuse the tense situation arising over appointment of the two new judges, is scheduled to meet the Law Minister. Sources said the meeting is crucial since the team is seeking an appointment with the Prime Minister. The team would also seek to know the government's position in view of the Prime Minister's comment on Saturday regarding Thursday's agitation by lawyers. Earlier on Saturday, the President had a meeting with the lawyers' team and told them about his constitutional limitations. The team later said the President indicated that the proposal for appointing two more judges in the Supreme Court should be given due consideration to resolve the matter. Earlier, they also met the Chief Justice with the proposal and later said he had indicated his support to it.

## 100 SC lawyers

From page 12 Signatories to the statement include Golam Mohammad Chowdhury, Golam Kibria, Barrister Mahbubuddin Khokon, Mokleshur Rahman Zahid, Shaikh Rezaul Karim, Ruhul Quddus Kajol, Faysal Mahmud Fayezi, Firoz Shah, Amir Hossain Chowdhury Raihan, Zahed Ahmed Chowdhury, M Zahirul Islam, Mostajuddin Ahmed, Golam Mostafa, Zahid Ahmed Chowdhury, Mir-e-Azam Akmal, M Emdadul Haq, Khadiza Begum Helen, Khaleda Panna, Ferdous Akhter Wahida, Fazilatun Nesa and Delwara Habib.