

**BDR protests killing by BSF**

BSS, Rajshahi

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) yesterday protested the indiscriminate firing by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) on December 24 that left one Bangladeshi national dead. Another was abducted.

The protest was made formally at battalion commander level meeting held near Border Pillar No 61/1, adjacent to Char Major Diarh village under Paba upazila of the district. The meeting lasted for about six hours.

During the meeting, BDR demanded immediate exemplary punishment of the killers responsible and compensation for the bereaved family members.

BDR also demanded the return of Bangladeshi national Abdus Sattar who was abducted along with his boat during the incident. Different bilateral issues related to the border also came up for discussion during the meeting.

Lt. Col. Sahamsher, Commanding Officer, 35 Battalion of BDR, led the Bangladesh side while the Indian team was led by P S Tomar, Commandant of 26 BSF Battalion.

**Businessman hurt in attack by extortionists dies at CMH**

UNB, Feni

A businessman, fatally injured when trying to protect a colleague from extortionists, died in Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka on Friday night after fighting death for 52 days.

Traders of Manurhat Bazar in Chagalnaiya observed a half-day hartal yesterday as a mark of respect to the memory of the victim, Ali Newaz.

A group of extortionists had demanded Tk one lakh from Aminur Rahman, a businessman of Manurhat. They tried to abduct Rahman from Bakterhat on Nov 7 as he refused to pay. When other businessmen including Ali Newaz came forward to save him the terrorists exploded bombs and fired gunshots. The injured Ali Newaz was rushed to local hospital and later shifted to CMH.

A case was filed with Chagalnaiya police accusing Mia, Momin, Alam, Dulal, Khwaza, Mokhles, Deeder, Shingha Maharaz and Kurshid, all BNP activists, for the attempt to kidnap and carrying out the bomb blasts.

**10 injured in N'ganj clash**

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

At least 10 people were injured, two of them bullet-hit in a clash centring flying kites in Bandar thana area on Friday.

According to source, Yusuf was flying kites with his friends at Sreerampur in the afternoon. He had an altercation with some local youths, which turned into a clash. At one stage, they exchanged shots.

Yusuf and Ali Nur were taken to DMCH with bullet injury. No case has been filed.

**Goods train derails at Chhagalnaiya**

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Feni

Rail communication on the Dhaka-Chittagong route was disrupted for several hours yesterday after a goods train derailed at the Chhagalnaiya upazila in the district in the morning.

Six compartments of the Chittagong bound goods train derailed at around 11:20 am near Muhuriganj bridge between Fazlipur and Muhuriganj. The train was coming from Laksham.

Two relief trains from Chittagong and Laksham reached the spot at around 1:00 pm and was continuing the rescue operation till late last evening.

When contacted the Feni Station master, could not say what led to the derailment of the train.

The incident led to the 704 Inter-city Provti, 303 Up Inter-city Godhuli and Up Karnaphuli Express trains being stranded at the Feni station leading to the sufferings of many passengers.

**FM urges India to look into trade barriers**

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Morshed Khan yesterday urged India to carefully look into issues like access of 25 categories of Bangladeshi products, anti-dumping duties on products and other trade barriers on their part.

The minister said this when Indian High Commissioner Mani Lal Tripathy called on him at his office and discussed various issues of bilateral interest, including trade, transshipment and border tensions.

The hour-long meeting covered all bilateral matters, trade-related issues, particularly duty-free access of Bangladeshi products to the Indian market as well as regional issues, including SAARC.

Morshed Khan pointed out that efforts should be made to balance

the value of trade between Bangladesh and India on the basis of equity.

Regarding the issue of attacks on minority community, the Indian envoy informed the Bangladesh Foreign Minister that New Delhi followed "the policy of not making any statement that may embarrass the government of Bangladesh".

"India appreciates statements made by Bangladeshi leaders that all citizens have equal rights and no discrimination was being made with segment of the people on the basis of faith," he was quoted as saying.

The Foreign Minister also emphasised on the need to maintain peace on Bangladesh-India borders. Both BSF and BDR should have regular flag meetings to defuse tensions.

About the duty-free access of 25

categories of Bangladeshi products, the Indian High Commissioner said that studies were to be made by the Joint Group of Experts (JGE) set-up in 1999. The JGE was mandated to take up studies on border trade, transit and transshipment, and access of 25 categories of items from Bangladesh.

India hopes that the JGE will take up these studies soon and the proposals regarding access of the 25 categories of items will also be examined by India.

Talking to UNB over phone M L Tripathy said if the Joint Group of Experts could meet soon either in Dhaka or New Delhi, further progress could be made about all these three points -- border trade, transshipment and duty-free access of Bangladeshi goods.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

**Top terrorists go into hiding on police tip-off**

ABUL KALAM AZAD

All top terrorists in the city, against whom the government vowed 'a determined war', have gone into hiding, being tipped off by some police officials and detectives.

Immediately after the start of the process earlier in the month, the most wanted criminals were informed about the list the government prepared to arrest them, sources said.

Accused of multiple criminal offences in the capital and its adjoining areas, the terrorists have holed up in hideouts to avoid police arrest, the sources added.

"It would be very difficult for us to nab the listed criminals as most of them have gone into their hide-aways about which we have no idea at all," said a top police official. "The secret links with some police officials and detectives are the main bar to bringing these culprits to book," said the official on condition of anonymity.

Sources said that some of the listed criminals have already crossed the border and taken shelter in Kolkata. The terrorists widened their network far enough to carry out their criminal activities from the hideouts, they added.

A section of police officials alert terrorists to the plan before its implementation to nab them. "So everything about the arrest of top terrorists now depends on the efficiency and honesty of the police officials," said another police official.

On Wednesday, the BNP government disclosed a list of 23 most wanted criminals of the capital. The government has also announced a Tk 1 lakh reward for the person helping arrest the eight most wanted criminals each and Tk 50,000 for the person helping arrest each of the rest 15.

Listing criminals and offering awards for their arrest are nothing new. The announcement of its kind was made several times earlier as well. The then Awami League government announced a Tk 25,000 award on May 1, 1997 for the arrest of Prokash Kumar Biswas. He is now involved in cross-border smuggling through the Bangaon exit in Benapole.

Many listed criminals had earlier been arrested and released on bail later. Liakat Hossain, the criminal lynchpin of the underworld group, Five Star, was arrested four times during the rule of the AL government but released on bail all the times.

Last year, Subrata Bayen, another notorious criminal, was also arrested but released on a High Court bail. Bayen is now staying in Kolkata, the sources said.

The criminals divided into two groups -- Five Star and Seven Star -- are now battling for control of some city markets, illegal foreign exchange business and smuggling through the Zia International Airport.

Many gangsters have close links with the high-ups of both ruling BNP and Awami League and are unofficially immune from prosecution for crimes.

**Pakistan won't request meeting with Vajpayee in Kathmandu**

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan said yesterday it would not request a meeting between its President Pervez Musharraf and Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee but was willing to hold talks to calm border tensions.

Pakistan Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar said there was a high possibility that some small action could set in motion a chain of events that would result in conflict.

Musharraf would be happy to meet Vajpayee to de-escalate the tensions, he told a news conference as the two nuclear rivals carried out the biggest border build-up of troops in 15 years.

"We have made no specific request. If there is a desire on the part of the Indian prime minister, then surely a meeting will be arranged," he said.

But he said Pakistan would not request a meeting after India scrapped talks scheduled for a regional summit in Kathmandu next week.

Earlier India ruled out Friday any bilateral meeting between Vajpayee and Musharraf at the summit.

AFP says, Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh and his Pakistani counterpart Abdul Sattar may meet on the sidelines of the summit.

"There will be sideline bilateral though not at the top barring some major catastrophe -- which is not hard to imagine given our relationship and history," a senior unnamed official was quoted as saying by The Times of India.

"Jaswant and Sattar will most probably meet in Kathmandu," he said. There was no official confirmation of the planned meeting.

**3 buses collide on Jhenidah highway: 2 dead, 35 hurt**

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Two women were killed and 35 others injured yesterday when three buses collided on Jessore-Jhenidah highway, at Agumndi of Kaliganj upazila in Jhenidah.

Police and witnesses said the accident occurred at around 2 pm when two Dhaka bound buses, Diganta Paribahan and Shaukhin Paribahan heading from Jessore, started in a race against each other. One of the buses ran over a pedestrian woman, who died on the spot, as both the speeding buses tried to give way to a Jessore bound bus, Padma Paribahan coming from the opposite direction from Jhenidah. The three buses collided into each other, killing a passenger and injuring 35 others.

The dead woman was identified as Nabusun Begum, 65. The identity of the other victim could not be known.

The injured were admitted to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital, Kaliganj Thana Health Complex and Jessore Sadar Hospital. Of them Kahinore Begum and Majida's conditions were stated to be critical.

Police seized all three buses but the drivers managed to escape.

A case was filed with the Kaliganj police station.

**BNP to form bodies for HR violation convention**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A joint meeting of the BNP's National Executive Committee yesterday decided to form several bodies to make the convention on human rights violation during the tenure of the immediate past Awami League government a complete success.

The BNP and its alliance will bring those people who were victimised by the AL and its activists during the last five years.

The meeting instructed all party leaders and activists to provide documents, pictures and lists of victims to the party central office and sought cooperation from all quarters to make it a success.

The meeting was held at the city BNP office at Naya Paltan with party Secretary General and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan in the chair.

**Solu shown arrested in 2 murder cases**

**Remanded for interrogation**

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Salimullah alias Solu was shown arrested in Sajal and Rafiq murder cases yesterday.

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka also placed Solu on a five-day remand in the two cases for interrogation.

Detective Branch (DB) of police produced Solu before the CMM's Court at 3:00 pm yesterday and sought for showing him arrested in the Sajal Chowdhury murder case and in the Rafiq murder case. Police also prayed for 17 days remand in the two cases.

After hearing both sides, the court placed Solu on a five-day remand -- two-day in the Sajal murder case and three-day in the Rafiq murder case.

DB police arrested Solu from his Madrassah Road residence in the city's Mohammadpur area on Friday morning.

**Yangtze 90 kms shorter than previously thought!**

AFP, Beijing

Scientists have found that China's longest river, the Yangtze, is nearly 90 kilometres shorter than previously thought, state media said yesterday.

A new measurement of the river using satellite technology found that it stretches for 6,211.3 kilometres, shorter than the accepted length of 6,300 kilometres, the official Xinhua news agency said.

But it is still the longest river in China and the third longest river in the world, according to Xinhua.

"It does not mean the river shortened," said Liu Shaochuang, a researcher with the Institute of Remote Sensing Application under the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Results of Banking Diploma Exams on Page 8.



Child artistes of the Kendriyo Khelaghar perform chorus at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday on the concluding day of the 4-day Victory Festival organised by Sammilito Sangskritik Jote.

**ALCWC to decide anti-govt programme today**

REAZ AHMED

Awami League Central Working Committee (ALCWC) at a meeting scheduled for today might decide on some agitation programmes against the ruling alliance, party sources said.

However, the main opposition is unlikely to call any hartal this time protesting rise in fuel prices and imposition of regulatory taxes on some importable goods.

Senior party leaders told The Daily Star yesterday that today's meeting would take stock of the latest political situation in the country and might consider finalising one or two mild agitation programmes, mainly to boost party morale.

No major decision would be taken however nor any hard programmes announced in Sheikh Hasina's absence.

AL President Sheikh Hasina, currently on a private trip to the USA, is scheduled to return home

on January 8.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, an AL presidium member told this correspondent yesterday, "As of today her return schedule remains unchanged. Our leader will be back on January 8 provided the schedule is not altered."

Addressing a news conference in the city on December 26, acting AL chief Abdus Samad Azad urged countrymen to participate in movements to be soon announced by the party. He however did not specify the timeframe although AL had previously said it would launch a movement right after the Eid-ul-Fitr.

"The situation prevailing in the country now calls for waging a movement," Samad Azad had told newsmen.

Responding to a query Azad also asserted that the AL is not suffering from any organisational weaknesses.

Sources told The Daily Star that today's ALCWC meeting is consid-

ered important against the backdrop of recent government decisions of increasing prices of gasoline and public utilities, and cancellation of public holidays on the birth and death anniversaries of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Besides, the meeting would take note of the latest stage of preparations of a planned national convention on 'Crimes against Humanity,' which was deferred for the second time last week as its January 19-20 timetable coincided with Biswa Ijtima, the second largest congregation of world Muslims. A fresh date is yet to be finalised.

Various organisational matters would also figure at the ALCWC meeting to be chaired by acting AL chief Abdus Samad Azad.

**Resist state terrorism, Samad Azad tells BCL function**

UNB, Dhaka

Acting president of Awami League Abdus Samad Azad yesterday called upon people to build up resistance against, what he said "the state terrorism."

At the same time he asked the government to stop repressive activities saying that it is not possible to stifle the voice of Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina by filing 'false' cases against her.

Instead of remaining busy in finding faults of the opposition it would be wise for the government to take effective measures to protect the country from economic collapse.

"Come to the way of protecting the country from economic disaster. If you fail, the people will not forgive

you," said Azad referring to the BNP's coalition government.

Azad was speaking at a function organised by Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the student wing of Awami League, at the National Press Club in observance of the 30th anniversary of the country's Victory Day.

"Days of the government are numbered. It should not be given enough time," he said by way of warning the 3-month old Khaleda Zia's government.

Azad was highly critical of the government and compared it with the Ayub regime saying it has engaged detectives to implicate the former prime minister and her

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

**US study reveals Air pollution linked to birth defects**

REUTERS, Washington

Women exposed to air pollution during pregnancy are more likely to give birth to children with heart defects, researchers reported yesterday.

They said their study, published in the American Journal of Epidemiology, is the first definitively to link air pollution with birth defects.

"There seems to be something in the air that can harm developing foetuses," Beate Ritz, an epidemiologist who headed the study, said in a statement.

The team at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) School of Public Health and the California Birth Defects Monitoring

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

**Stop police excess under Sec 54, during remand**

**Seminar told in city**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion meeting here yesterday said abuse of law by law enforcers must be stopped to save innocent people from harassment and violation of human rights.

The law enforcers should be given orientation training on human rights. The civil society and the media have also a great role in checking such abuse, they said while participating in a discussion on "Abuse of Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure".

Odhikar, an NGO, organised the discussion at its office on the occasion of launching its survey report on alleged abuse of Section 54 of CrPC in Motijheel and Mirpur thana areas in the city and in Munshiganj Sadar and Narayanganj Sadar thanas.

The survey was conducted from July last year to May this year with the support of Grameen Trust under its Programme for Research on Poverty Alleviation (PRPA).

Irene Khan, General Secretary of London-based Amnesty International, now on a visit to Bangladesh, launched the report on behalf of Odhikar at the meeting.

The speakers alleged that police abuse Section 54 and also misuse their power while preparing FIR (first information report of a case) and dealing with

detainees on remand.

Irene Khan said abuse of Section 54 can be checked through "enforceable safeguards".

Poor people who have no connection with power and are not aware of laws become easy victims of human rights violation, she said. Good governance can check such violations to a great extent, he noted.

Barrister Moynul Hossain, Chairman of editorial boards of daily Ittefaq and the New Nation, stressed the need of "a new anti-terrorist law" without repealing provisions of Section 54.

"Section 54 is necessary for police, and without this law, police will become weak."

He said, "Our system is not working well because of too much partisan role of political leadership". Police can implicate any one in a case just by adding ones name in the FIR. Sometimes innocent people are victimised due to personal enmity.

Allegations have it that police realise money from innocent people by implicating them in cases, Moynul said.

He however said, "police must have power to carryout their duties".

Only safeguards and orientation training on human

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2