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PHOTO: STAR

Residents of Dhanmondi gather at the lakeside at Dhanmondi Road No. 8 in the city yesterday with a call for clearing illegal business establishments off the residential area.

Call to restore residential character of Dhanmondi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhanmondi Paribesh Unnayan Jote (DPUJ), a citizens' forum, at a rally yesterday urged the government to restore the peaceful residential atmosphere in Dhanmondi.

The forum's slogan was "We want to get back our residential area."

They appealed to the government to take immediate steps to prevent further commercialisation of Dhanmondi residential area, and to gradually remove the business installations from the locality in the collective interest of the residents.

At the rally, speakers said that once quiet and peaceful Dhanmondi was fast becoming a noisy commercial centre. The black fumes from vehicles, foul smell of garbage, urine, and excreta in the roads and outside the boundary walls are some of the health hazards that the residents are exposed to.

DPUJ conducted a survey to find out how many houses were being used for non-residential purposes

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14 more listed criminals rounded up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The joint forces netted 112 people including 14 "listed criminals" from different areas of the country in the last 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday.

The "listed criminals" include two arrested from Kamalapur area in the city. Rob and Salam, wanted in criminal cases including that of murder, were arrested when they attempted to board a bus, sources said.

The joint forces also recovered 11 firearms including a pistol, two revolvers, three shotguns and three pipe guns along with 14 bullets during the period.

With the 112, the number of arrested people since launch of the anti-crime Operation Clean Heart on October 17 rose to 10,279 including 2,261 "listed criminals". The joint forces so far recovered 1,869 illegal firearms and 29,044 bullets.

Our Faridpur correspondent reported that the joint forces arrested a fake army officer and four listed criminals from Bhanga in the district yesterday.

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| | Sun Rises | Sun Sets |
|--------|-----------|----------|
| Dec 28 | | 5-20 pm |
| Dec 29 | 6-39 am | |

| Prayer Timings | | |
|----------------|-------|--------|
| Dec 28 | | |
| | Azan | Jamaat |
| Fajr | 5-30 | 6-00 |
| Zohr | 12-45 | 1-15 |
| Asr | 3-45 | 4-00 |
| Maghrib | 5-24 | 5-30 |
| Esha | 7-30 | 7-45 |

Source: Islamic Foundation

Fate of private TV channels hangs in the balance

STAR REPORT

At least five companies which were given licences for private satellite television channels more than a year ago failed to launch the service due to Lack of "technological support" from the authorities, sources said.

When they were given licences, they were asked to launch the service within a year but the government did not spell out whether their licences would be cancelled or not in case of their failure to do so.

"Non-allocation of frequencies" by the authorities is a major barrier to launching of satellite television channels in the country, the sources said.

At least four companies took preparatory steps including procure-

ment of equipment and hiring of manpower to launch satellite service while another tried also to launch terrestrial television channel by the first quarter of this year. But they could not do so due to non-availability of frequencies and bureaucratic tangles.

Frequency is a pre-requisite for launching of both satellite and terrestrial channels.

Asked about this, information minister Tariqul Islam said he is not aware of non-allocation of frequencies by the authorities.

About rumours of cancellation of licences for satellite television channels as the companies concerned could not launch the service in a year, the minister said, "No decision has yet been taken to

cancel the licenses already given to the companies."

When contacted, Chairman of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) Syed Marghub Morshed said the commission has assigned Infrastructure Investment Facilitation Centre (IIFC) to conduct a study on spectrum management or frequency management.

"When we get the study report, we would be able to allocate frequencies to launch television channels," he said.

The IIFC is scheduled to complete the study by September next year. So there seems no chance of any new channel being launched till then.

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Turning a deaf ear to tannery menace

MORSHED ALI KHAN and PINAKI ROY

Over the last 50 years, the Hazaribagh tannery menace has remained unchanged.

Every day, nearly 22,000 cubic metres of untreated toxic wastes from the tanneries in Hazaribagh flow into canals and the Buriganga River.

The residents of Rayerbazar, Zigatala, Keraniganj and the southern part of Savar have been exposed to serious health hazard. Besides, the lands in the areas have lost fertility.

The groundwater is also contaminated. Water in the canals looks like discarded engine oil.

The Buriganga in which most of the tannery waste ends up before flowing downstream has lost most aquatic life forms over a vast area.

The Hazaribagh area smells foul with tannery waste. Corrugated tin-roofs, gold ornaments and other metal objects fast discolour due to gas from sulphuric acid, one of the 60 toxic chemicals used in tanning.

The chemicals include chromium, lead, sulphur and ammonia, said an expert.

Hazaribagh is home to about 700 small and large tanneries. Among 100 export-oriented tanneries, only the Dhaka Tannery Industry has installed a chromium recovery plant a few years ago.

According to the Department of Environment (DoE), the tanneries generate 21,600 cubic metres of liquid waste a day.

An expert said that about 60 toxic chemicals, including chromium,

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PHOTO: STAR

Two metal pipes letting out untreated toxic liquid effluent round the clock into a canal leading to the Buriganga testifies to severe pollution by about 700 small and large tanneries, most of them without waste treatment plant, in Hazaribagh.

Accord with Yunnan for cooperation in all fields

UNB, Kunming

Dhaka and Kunming, capital of China's Yunnan province, yesterday agreed to build ties in all sectors, particularly in the fields of trade, economy, technology, infrastructure and culture, under the purview of a greater cooperation between Bangladesh and China.

For a closer cooperation, Yunnan likes Bangladesh to be encompassed in the "Kunming Initiative," a move mooted by Yunnan for sub-regional cooperation with countries close to the Chinese Province.

The views for promotion of relations were expressed when Governor of Yunnan Province Xu Rongkai met Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at Hotel Kai Wah Plaza, where she stayed on the last leg of her five-day official visit to China.

Briefing newsmen after the hour-

long meeting between Khaleda Zia and Governor Xu Rongkai, Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury said Yunnan likes Bangladesh to be encompassed in the "Kunming Initiative" for an enhanced cooperation to the mutual benefit.

The Yunnan governor said his Province would cooperate with Bangladesh in strengthening interaction in economic, trade and cultural fields under the Kunming Initiative joined by Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos and eastern India.

Responding to a proposal from the Bangladesh prime minister, the governor said Chittagong-Myanmar-Kunming air route could be established to build a sub-regional communications network.

Held in a cordial atmosphere, the meeting was attended, among others, by Bangladesh Finance

Minister M Saifur Rahman, Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, Telecommunications Minister Barrister Aminul Haq, State Minister for Communications Salahuddin Ahmed, State Minister for Health and Family Welfare Amanullah Aman, State Minister for Agriculture Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, BNP Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman, Political Secretaries to the Prime Minister Haris Chowdhury and Mosaddek Ali, Principal Secretary Dr Kamal Siddiqui and Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury.

The Yunnan governor was assisted, among others, by Vice-governors Cheng Yingxuan and Shao Qiwei and Mayor of Kunming Zhang Zhenguang.

During the meeting, the prime minister and the governor agreed to exchange cultural delegations

between the two sides under bilateral cooperation between the two countries. Yunnan has some 26 ethnic groups that enrich its culture.

Development of roads and other infrastructure was also discussed in the meeting. "The meeting also looked into the possibilities of opening a direct air link to the benefit of the two peoples," said the foreign secretary.

Later Governor Xu Rongkai hosted a banquet in honour of the Bangladesh prime minister.

Kunming, the provincial capital of Yunnan, which is considered a political, economic and cultural centre and communications hub, was the last stop in PM Khaleda Zia's five-day trip to China.

Before arriving here on Thursday night, she visited Beijing and Hainan provinces holding important official talks with senior

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PM returns home

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia returned home last night after a five-day official visit to China that yielded four agreements on greater economic and defence cooperation.

National flag carrier Biman Bangladesh Airlines carrying the Prime Minister and her 91-member entourage landed at Zia International Airport at 10.35 pm.

Cabinet members including LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandker Mosharraf Hossain, Housing and Works Minister Mirza Abbas, Mayor of Dhaka and Fisheries and Livestock Minister Sadek Hossain Khoka, Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Reaz Rahman received the Prime Minister at the VIP tarmac of the airport.

Dean of the diplomatic corps Shahta Zarab, chiefs of the three services and other senior civil and military officials were present.

Distribution of admission forms of govt schools on

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Distribution of admission forms of the 24 government schools in the city, which began on December 26, will go on till January 5. The non-government schools are also distributing admission forms.

Admission forms of the government schools are available at the schools for Tk 60 each. The non-government schools, however, do not have a fixed price of their admission forms, and in most cases they are charging much more than the government schools.

Preparation of question papers and evaluation of answer scripts for

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First cloned human baby born

AFP, Miami

A human baby was born Thursday through cloning, the first on record, French scientist and member of the Raelian cult Brigitte Boisselier said.

The baby girl was born by caesarean section and the birth "went very well," Boisselier, president of the human cloning society Clonaid, said in a telephone interview with AFP.

Because the effort by the Raelians to achieve the first human birth by cloning was carried out in secrecy, it was not immediately possible to obtain any independent scientific confirmation that the baby was in fact a clone.

Boisselier, a 46-year-old French chemist who is president of the Clonaid human cloning society, declined to give further details of the birth, saying, "I prefer not to say more for now." She added that a full press conference was scheduled in Hollywood at 9:00 am on Friday.

Nor would she say whether the baby would be presented at the press conference.

"We are very happy. It's a triumph," Clonaid spokeswoman Nadine Gary said earlier.

If scientifically confirmed by independent sources, it would be the first human baby produced by the highly controversial technique -- and announced publicly.

It would also mark the beginning of a new era in human reproduction -- the first asexual birth, the first time a child was produced that was not the product of a genetic mix of mother and father, but the identical reproduction of one of its parents.

In this case, Boisselier told AFP on November 27, the baby born Thursday would be an identical twin of its mother, albeit many years apart in age.

She then said that an American couple was expecting the first birth by cloning, a baby girl, near the end of the year.

Cloning provides a genetic duplicate of another creature.

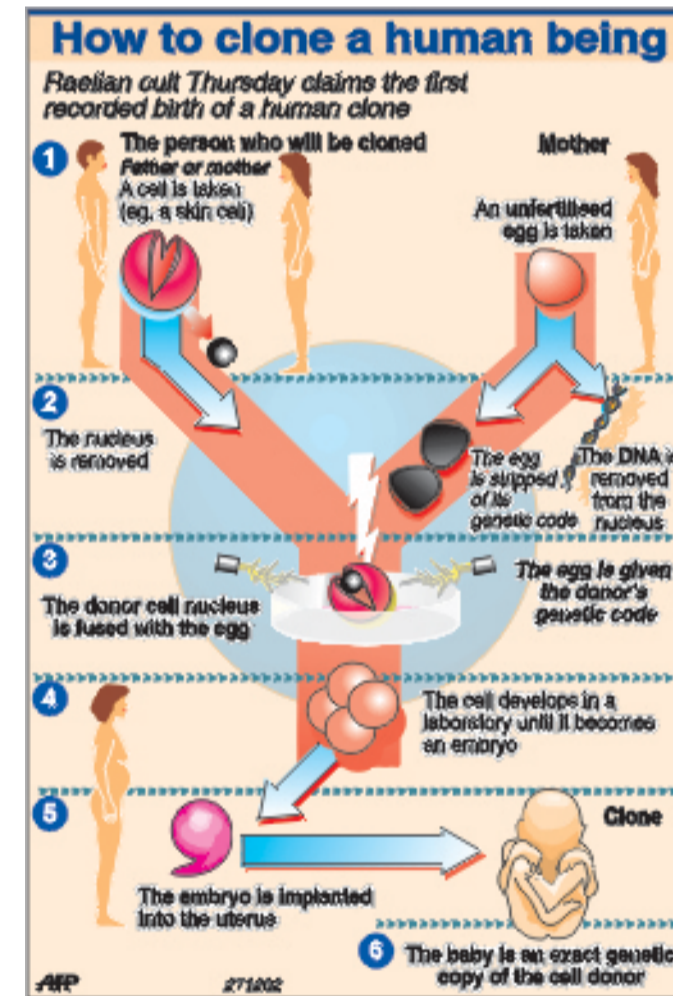
The predominant method around the world entails removing the nucleus, or core, from an egg and replacing it with DNA from a donor. This DNA "reprograms" the egg, transferring into it the entire genetic code of the donor.

Clonaid, which is based in Las

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Brigitte Boisselier



Hasina calls for unity of democratic, pro-liberation forces

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League president Sheikh Hasina yesterday called for a greater unity of all democratic and pro-liberation forces to stand united against what she said the ongoing killing, repression and violation of human rights by the BNP-Jamaat government.

"At this critical juncture of the nation, all progressive and pro-liberation forces should stand united and uphold the democratic process to overcome the situation and meet the people's demands," she said.

The long-serving Awami League chief, who received a fresh mandate in Thursday's triennial council of the party, was talking to reporters in the evening after placing a wreath at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Bangabandhu Bhaban with the newly elected presidium members.

Hasina said the BNP-Jamaat alliance government has tarnished

the country's image as "killing, rape and serious violation of human rights are taking place everyday in every sector." This must be resisted unilaterally, she said.

Asked to comment about the characteristic of the new central working committee, a smiling AL president said both young and elderly leaders were inducted in the committee, which, she hoped, would be able to fulfill the expectations of the party workers at grass roots.

"The young leaders have merit and spirit while the elderly got experience... We want to blend both to reach our desired goal and meet the people's expectations," she said.

Hasina said the new committee is an answer to those who thought of eliminating Awami League by unleashing torture and repression.

"Awami League secured 50 per cent of popular votes in the last

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AL likely to fill central body vacancies today

STAR REPORT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) is likely to fill the vacancies in its central working committee today, said party sources yesterday.

With AL President Sheikh Hasina in the chair, the new AL presidium discussed the issue yesterday at its first meeting, which was adjourned until 4.30pm today.

Hasina consulted with the presidium about prospective office bearers and executive members to be included in the 73-strong Awami League Central Working Committee (ALCWC).

The presidium gave the party chief, Hasina, 'absolute power' to choose the rest of the office bearers and executive members at yesterday's meeting.

On her re-election to the party presidency in the triennial national

conference Thursday, Hasina designated 37 office bearers for the ALCWC.

Meanwhile, exclusion of two frontline leaders and former ministers -- former organising secretary Mohammad Nasim and former research and information secretary Professor Abu Syeed -- from the AL central committee was much discussed among the party workers.

The sources said the fate of Nasim and Syeed hangs in the balance.

Hasina is learnt to have been unhappy with the performance of Nasim and Sayeed while the party was in power. Also, their performance in the last one year and a half came under criticism by the party high command, the sources said.

Despite all, Nasim may be designated as organising secretary (No.

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