

Opposition to force govt to go for reforms Says Hasina

BDNEWS, Dhaka
Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the opposition will take part in the next election, compelling the BNP-Jamaat coalition government to carry out reforms in the caretaker government system and the Election Commission.
The leader of the opposition was speaking to journalists at her Sudha Sadan residence, where the party leaders and activists came to greet her on the New Year.
Hasina alleged that the BNP-Jamaat alliance is preparing a new voter list in a bid to deprive the pro-Liberation War people, members of the minority communities and Awami League supporters from their right to vote.
She said the ruling alliance has resorted to such tactics also to plunder the national wealth. The AL president said there is no need for a new roll as the purpose could be served by revision of the existing one.
SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

They talk of 'third force' for fear of losing polls

PM tells JCD founding day function

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday said those who are afraid of elections and believe that they will not be able to come to power through elections are talking of the "third force".
On the opposition claim that the BNP is conspiring to bring in a "third force", the PM said, "We [the BNP] are the largest force—we do not stay behind any 'third force'".
She urged the opposition to participate in the next general elections, which she said will be held in time under the existing caretaker government system. "[The Awami League] got 59 seats in the last elections; now, if they choose to stay away from the election, they will be lost from people's mind," she said.



She was addressing a meeting at the Paltan Maidan on the occasion of the 27th founding anniversary of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), the student wing of the BNP.
Khaleda asked JCD leaders and activists to make preparations for the coming elections. "You may have your own liking and disliking,

relatives or friends, but you must work for the candidates nominated by the party," she told them.
Naming the JCD as her favourite organisation, the PM asked its leaders and workers to study well as "they are the ones who will have to lead the country in future".
On the development programmes of her government, especially in the education sector, Khaleda said the BNP government is going to establish six new universities very soon and pledged that if re-elected, education up to the degree level will be made free for female students.
She criticised the Awami League for not doing any development work during its tenure and engaging now in conspiracy against the country and democracy.
Earlier, Khaleda inaugurated
SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Uncertainty still haunts hajj goers

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Uncertainty and anxiety have gripped a few hundred non-ballottee pilgrims at a hajj camp in Ashkona in Uttara as most of them do not know when their plane tickets will be confirmed.
Many of them are even languishing at the camp for the last nine days with no local currencies. The intending pilgrims alleged they are exchanging rial for taka to buy daily meals and breakfast.
"My wife and I arrived at the camp on December 25 as our flight was scheduled for that day," Mahtab Uddin of Netrakona told The Daily Star yesterday.
"Our hajj agency charged us Tk2,000 extras, saying they had to bribe Biman officials to get air tickets," he said, adding, 13 of their group are waiting for
SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



Still uncertain about the hajj, intending non-ballottee pilgrims wait anxiously at their camp near Zia International Airport yesterday as they are yet to get plane tickets.

Democracy is dead: Ershad

BDNEWS, Dhaka
Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad yesterday said his party will form electoral alliance with those who are in agreement with their 12-point demand.
"I had stepped aside from the power 15 years back to protect democracy but now democracy is dead," he said speaking at a rally at Muktangan in the city making the 20th founding anniversary of the JP yesterday.
The nation will have a tough time in the new year, Ershad observed. "The government wants to hold election while the opposition has declared to resist it, which is an ominous sign for the nation."
The former president said: "We
SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



Salesmen busy removing remaining books from a roadside stall near the CPB office at Paltan in the city as agitated people set fire to the stall during clashes between Jatiya Party and CPB activists yesterday.

Secondary students won't get all books before month-end

ASHIQUIR RAHMAN

Secondary school students will not get all their textbooks before last week of January.
"The textbooks for the secondary school students will be distributed in three phases," said Gazi Md Ahsanul Kabir, chairman of National Curriculum and Textbooks Board (NCTB).
"Fourteen compulsory books including Bangla, English, mathematics will hit the stores on January

4, 26 elective textbooks on January 18 and the remaining 20 on January 22," he added.
All of the books will be available in January like the previous years, though many had thought otherwise due to the last moment postponement of uni-track education system, he said.
The NCTB chairman said the primary school textbooks have already reached the schools across the country and will be distributed among students after inauguration
SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

India, Pakistan swap list of nuke facilities

AFP, Islamabad

Nuclear-armed rivals Pakistan and India yesterday exchanged lists of their nuclear facilities in line with an agreement to swap such information annually on New Year's Day, the foreign ministry said.
The two countries swapped the information under an agreement signed in 1988 on the prohibition of attacks on each other's nuclear installations, the ministry said in a statement.
The agreement came into force in 1991 and the first such exchange of information was on January 1,

1992.
Under the agreement both Pakistan and India are to refrain from attacking each other's nuclear facilities in the event of a war.
India conducted nuclear weapons tests in May 1998 and Pakistan in a tit-for-tat response detonated its own devices a few days later.
The rivals have fought three wars, two of them over the Himalayan region of Kashmir, which is divided between them and claimed in full by both.
SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Safta comes into being: Pakistan, Sri Lanka yet to ratify it

AGENCIES, New Delhi/Islamabad

South Asian Free Trade Area (Safta), paving way for free trade of goods among countries of the Saarc countries, came into being yesterday but Pakistan is yet to complete the formality of ratifying it.
"The ratification process is underway. It is just that it was not completed yesterday (the deadline). We hope to do it very soon," Pakistan foreign office spokesperson Tasneem Aslam said in Islamabad.
However, Indian commerce ministry officials said that legally the agreement comes into effect from January 1.
Operationalisation of Safta, considered as a landmark in the history of the Saarc, is being done as per the implementation schedule.

Safta was agreed upon at the Islamabad Summit in 2004. Indian Cabinet ratified the agreement on December 29.
SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Prayer Timing		
January 2		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-27	5-30
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

CHANDPUR POWER PLANT Bid to get 'flawed' bid cleared by cabinet today

SHARIER KHAN

The power ministry today will seek the cabinet's approval for a flawed bid for the 150 MW Chandpur power project in violation of the Public Procurement Regulation (PPR), sources said.
They said the ministry has sent a project summary full of misleading and self-contradictory statements to be tabled at a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Purchase today. The ministry claims the bid of Chinese company Harbin Power complies with all government rules and regulations and, therefore, the committee should approve it immediately as a national priority project.

But, responding to a formal complaint, a government review panel a couple of months ago adjudged the Harbin offer as disqualified and Power Development Board's (PDB's) handling of the tender process as grossly flawed.
The ministry, on the other hand, argues that the review panel's dealing with the complaint was flawed and, so, the cabinet committee should ignore its conclusions 'in public interest'.
It says the Harbin bid is the 'lowest' and the nation can have 100 megawatt power within the next 18 months from the Chandpur project.
SEE PAGE 15 COL 1