



Preparations are underway for holding the Bishwa Ijtema at Tongi in the city suburb. — Star photo.

## Preparations for Ijtema nearing completion

From M A Matin

GAZIPUR, Jan 10: Preparations are almost complete to hold the three-day Biswa Ijtema on the eastern bank of the river Turag in Tongi.

The Ijtema, the second largest Muslim congregation of the world, will begin on January 15.

The organiser of the Ijtema, the Tablig Jamaat, has already covered an area of about five square miles with canopy and installed electric, gas and water supply facilities.

At least two million devotees from Bangladesh and some 60 countries are expected to attend the Biswa Ijtema.

The participants, rich or poor, will sleep under the same canopy for three days imbued with the teachings of Islam.

Some 10,000 volunteers from home and abroad have also built two podiums from where the Islamic scholars will address the devotees.

The organisers have collected tins, canopies, bamboo, loud speakers and jute mattresses from different organisations. These would be returned after the congregation. The congregation, organised every year in cooperation with the Tablig Jamaat in Delhi, is usually held in January.

## JS body faces problems

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Public Undertaking Committee.

Schedule 4 also says, the corporations or institutions set up after formulation of the Rules of Procedure would also be considered as public undertakings.

According to the Convenor of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Banking, Dr Mizanul Huq, MP, the Rules of Procedure was passed in 1974, three years after liberation and the rules covered only those institutions, which were set up before '71 and after '74. So, what would happen about the institutions which were set up during the three-year-period (1971-74) or started operating with new names after liberation (which the NCBS did), Dr Mizan questioned.

In fact, this is a loophole of the law and a proposal for amending the law with a view to bringing those under the jurisdiction of the PUC is under the consideration of the Amendment Committee of Parliament, he pointed out.

Referring to the statement of the State Minister for Finance, Dr Mizan said there are separate committees for looking after the matters of individual ministries and the Finance Committee is one of those committees which has been looking after the matters of the Finance Ministry and the financial and banking sector. But above all those, there are two committees, the Public Accounts Committee and the Public Undertaking Committee, to look after all the public undertakings and submit report to parliament, he mentioned.

Moreover, the Public Under-

## PM's directives for holding Ijtema smoothly

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday directed all ministries and organisations concerned to extend all-out support and cooperation for smooth holding of the Biswa Ijtema at Tongi, reports UNB.

The Prime Minister also asked all concerned to make the stay of the pilgrims comfortable.

The directives came during a high level meeting regarding smooth holding of the Ijtema. Chaired by Begum Zia, the meeting at the Prime Minister's office yesterday afternoon.

The meeting was organised to review the arrangements made so far for the congregation, including easing of traffic, steps for maintaining law and order, running of special trains for pilgrims, supply of drinking water and water purifying tablets, setting up of mobile hospitals and medical teams, and building of four Bailey bridges over the river Turag.

## BSP seeks more funds for ads

The Bangladesh Sangbadpatra Parishad (BSP) yesterday demanded increase of fund for advertisement, equal distribution of advertisements by the DFP and allocation of fund for payment of advertisement bill, reports UNB.

The first Ijtema took place in the Chittagong Hajj Camp in 1948. In 1958, another congregation was held in Siddhirganj under Narayanganj district. These two congregations were relatively small. In 1966, the venue of the congregation was shifted to Pagan of Tongi which was later given the name of 'Biswa Ijtema'. From then onwards, the number of foreign participants at the Biswa Ijtema started increasing.

The venue was finally shifted to the river bank of the Turag in 1967.

In addition to the usual health facilities to be provided by the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, a team of the Army Engineering Corps will set up Bailey bridges on the river Turag for easy and smooth movement of the devotees.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas and other top political personalities are likely to attend the Akhre Munajat, the final prayer of the Ijtema, on January 17.

## No new inclusions in voters' list until Jan 31

The Election Commission will not accept any application from the people for inclusion of their names in the voters' lists and any other amendments from today to January 31 of the current year in connection with the four city corporation elections scheduled to be held on January 30, reports BSS.

The Election Commission in a press release yesterday said many have submitted applications for inclusion of their names in the voters' lists for the city corporation elections.

People have been advised not to come to the Election Commission for this purpose during the specified period.

## Govt depts pushed into Bangladesh

From Page 1 Col 8 and some other functional depts.

Some of the re-organisation measures were being considered in the related departments in order to respond to the GATT rules, a source said.

The committee is also learnt to have reviewed the recommendations related to abolition of the office of the Chief Controller of Exports and Imports.

The committee would sit for more meetings before finalising its report on Administrative Reorganisation, the source indicated.

The Administrative Reforms Committee, which comprises six groups, was scheduled to submit its report by December 31 last. But due to delay in receiving the findings and recommendations, a Cabinet decision extended the time by another three months.

## Unused aid

From Page 1 Col 5 April 1994 when a four-month grace period for submission of claims against the credit will end.

According to informed sources, the reason behind the WB's reluctance to allow more time for Bangladesh to use the 24 million dollar savings for expansion of rural electrification is the long-standing dispute between the BPDB and the REB over service area.

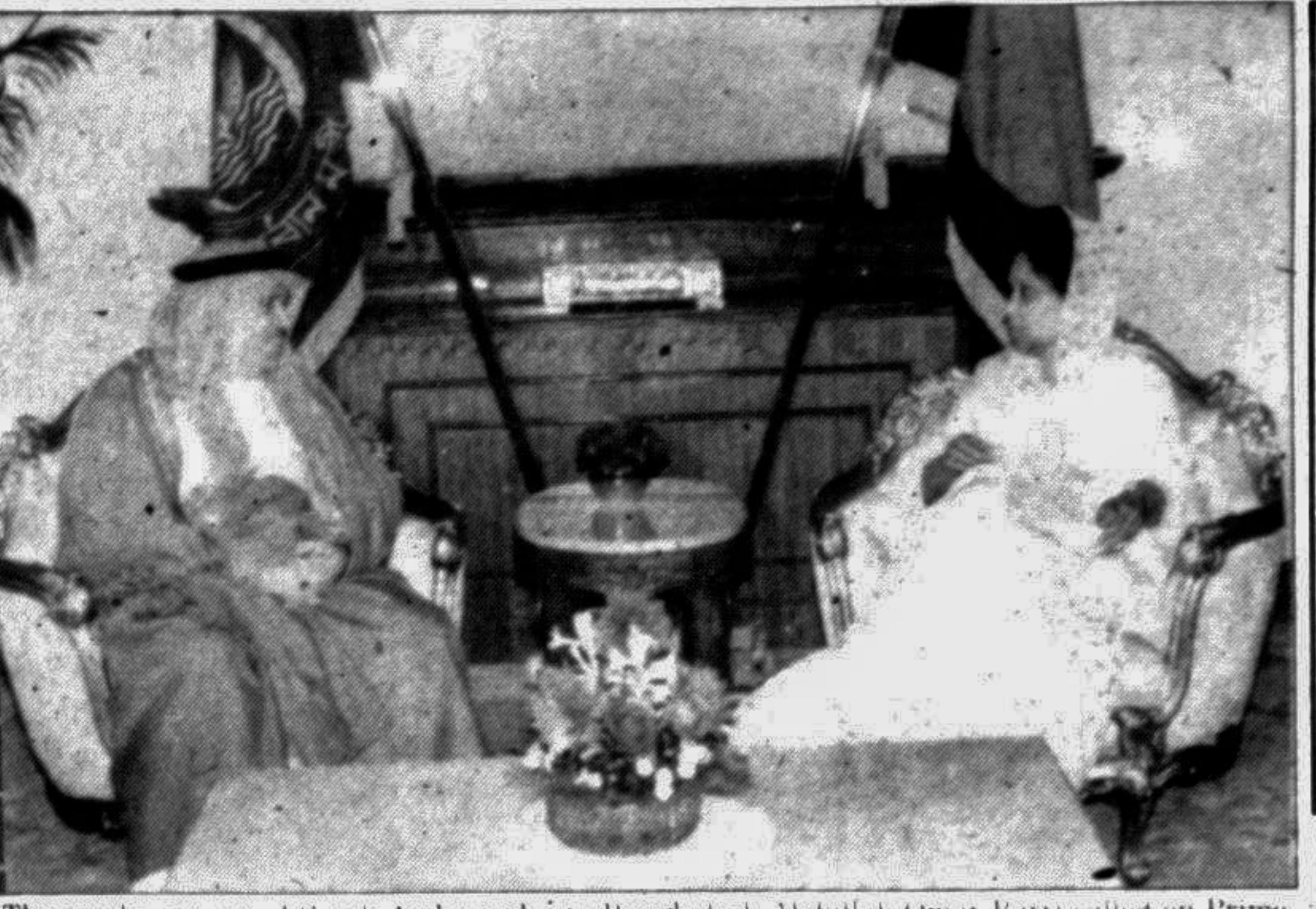
The current demarcation of service area provides that the REB will operate in all areas except the divisional and district towns and other municipal areas, industrial areas, cantonments and universities. But, the BPDB has been extremely slow in transferring its distribution facilities to the REB. Until October 1993 only 4.5 km of lines were transferred to the REB out of a target of transferring 230 km of distribution lines during January-March 1993.

After the closure of its Second Rural Electrification Credit the World Bank will continue to provide assistance for rural electrification through its Third Rural Electrification Credit of 105 million dollars. Continuation of this credit line has recently been linked with transfer of BPDB lines and facilities to the REB according to an agreed plan.

Amid cheers and clapping, Hanif said, "I'll keep all my words, even at the cost of my life, if I win the polls."

The spacious Bangabandhu Avenue, from the Stadium gate upto Nawabpur Road was crammed with people. Many also listened to the speakers from atop the buildings on both sides and the gallery of the Outer Stadium.

Earlier, processions from dif-



The newly appointed Saudi Ambassador to Bangladesh Abdullah Omar Barri called on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday. — PID photo

## PM to tour SAARC states

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recognise Bangladesh. The Irish Defence and Marine Minister David Andrews is presently in Dhaka on a four-day visit and had talks with the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister on the expansion of bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

Osmany evaded direct replies to a number of questions asked by newsmen on Indo-Bangladesh relations including the water-sharing issue and the expected visit of Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao.

Asked if the date of the Indian Premier's visit had been fixed, the Foreign Secretary replied, "There is no information that we can share now."

Asked again if the visit was cancelled, he said, "I am not saying that either."

About a question on the water issue with India, Osmany said the main problem is "the question of sharing not a question of demanding."

When a correspondent wanted to know about the follow-up action of the water issue after it was raised by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at the UN General Assembly, he said there seemed to be no progress at the bilateral or multilateral level.

Referring to the recent Indo-Bangladesh JEC meeting in Dhaka, Osmany said the two sides had elaborate talks on economic issues. "The approach of both sides was posi-

tive as they identified ways of increasing bilateral cooperation."

Regarding the huge trade gap between the two countries, the Foreign Secretary said, "Efforts were being made to remove the trade imbalance."

Asked if India had linked the issue of transit with water sharing, he replied, "In political discussions many issues crop up."

Regarding repatriation of the stranded Pakistanis, Osmany said: "No significant progress has been made," and added, "we are trying to make some progress."

Responding to another question, he said there has been no slowing down of the repatriation of Rohingya refugees. "People are going."

About a report published in the Banglar Bani on the Pakistan High Commissioner's reported meeting with a foreigner at the outer anchorage of the Chittagong port earlier this month, he said the envoy had gone for deep-sea fishing with the knowledge of the Foreign Ministry. He said all Ambassadors and High Commissioners are very respected persons and he did not think they were involved in any prejudicial activities.

Pressed further on the subject, he said, "If the newspaper which published the report comes up with hard evidence, we will definitely look into it."



Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina, along with central leaders of her party, placing wreaths in front of the portrait of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the Bangabandhu Bhaban in the city yesterday. — Star photo

## Foil plan to rig polls

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of terrorism and other criminal activities.

The AL candidate also reiterated that taxes and fees won't be increased and expenses in unproductive sectors would be cut off to meet expenditures for improving civic amenities.

"I'll form anti-terrorism committees at every ward and constitute a body to coordinate the jobs of different authorities looking after the civic amenities with a view to avoiding repeated digging of the roads," he announced.

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## The Midnight File

### Kabul radio resumes broadcast

ISLAMABAD, Jan 10: Forces loyal to Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani have shot down two rebel aircraft, state-run Kabul Radio said today, resuming its broadcast after several days of silence. The radio had remained off the air since its antenna was reportedly knocked out after fighting began on New Year's day. The broadcast, monitored here, claimed that the two jets were downed in the northern region, where Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum is based in the city of Mazar-i-Sharif, reports AFP.

### Bosnia agrees in principal to Croatian peace plan

BONN, Jan 10: Bosnia's Muslim President Alija Izetbegovic agreed in principle upon a peace plan proposed by Croatian President Franjo Tudjman at today's peace talks, a Croatian delegation official revealed here today. But the two presidents still have disagreements on some details of the plan, including the allocation of land in central Bosnia between Croats and Muslims. Muslim demands for access to the Adriatic sea at Neum and the management of the divided Mostar city, said the official who declined to be named, reports Xinhua.

### BSRS MD

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bank as decided by the government, nor is it performing its role as a DFI.

The activities of the BSRS as a DFI came to a halt in 1985 after an embargo imposed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) because of the huge size of its non-performing loans and later, the process of privatising the Sangstha was disrupted by an injunction by the Petition Committee of Parliament.

The seat fell vacant following the death of Awami League MP Asaduzzaman.

According to the election schedule, the date for submitting nomination papers to the concerned returning officer has been fixed on February 16, the date of scrutiny on February 17 and the last date of withdrawal of candidature on February 26.

The Deputy Commissioner of

Magura-2 JS

### by-election Mar 20

The by-election to the vacant Jatiya Sangsad seat of 92-Magura-2 will be held on March 20 next, according to an Election Commission press release issued here yesterday.

The seat fell vacant following the death of Awami League MP Asaduzzaman.

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The BSRS was being sold out for Tk 83 crore, but the entrepreneurs of the projects claimed that the value would be much higher.

It is also reported that the BSRS, during the tenure of Mamunur Rashid, took a number of controversial decisions regarding rehabilitation of the sick units which, in some cases, were contrary to the government directive.

The Finance Secretary discussed the matter with the Managing Directors of the DFI and the decision to transfer Mamunur Rashid reportedly followed that meeting.

Mushfiqur Rahman, Secretary, Local Government Division, has been transferred to the Planning Commission as its member. Md Akther Ali, Secretary, Jute Ministry, has been appointed Secretary of the Agriculture Ministry.

Syed Alamgir Faruk Chowdhury, Co-ordinator (Secretary) of the General Education Project, has been made Secretary of the Local Government Division.

### BSF renews firing in Muhurirchar

FENI, Jan 10: Indian Border Security Force renewed firing Sunday night on villages in Muhurirchar ahead of Indo-Bangladesh border talks that began in Delhi today, reports UNB.

BSF returned the fire which continued about an hour, but no casualty was reported from either side, district officials said.

Indians backed by the BSF have been trying to forcibly harvest crops cultivated in Muhurirchar by Bangladeshi farmers since last month. A muddled housewife, Dhanb-e-wa, of village Baupurbari in Parshuram thana was killed in BSF firing on Friday.

### BMA strike

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with the Prime Minister and the Health Minister without any result. We will not withdraw our strike unless the government issues orders accepting our demands," he said.

The 21-point charter of demands includes increased budget allocation for the health sector, building up an infrastructure for primary health care facilities to ensure health for all by the year 2000, setting up hospitals and recruitment of more manpower for the health sector.

The other demands are: autonomy for all medical colleges and institutions, equal pay scale for medical officials at the thana level and filling all the vacant health service posts.

The BMA handed over a copy of the charter of demands to the Health Minister last September and held rallies and brought out processions in support of its demands in November and December.

It also observed a token strike in December, which was followed by a hunger strike and a sit-in on December 28.

## পলিথিন ব্যাগের ব্যবহার দেশে পরিবেশ সমস্যার সৃষ্টি করছে কেননা পলিথিন ব্যাগ পচনশীল নয়

পলিথিন ব্যাগ পচে না এবং মাটির সঙ্গে মিশে না। পলিথিন মাটির পুষ্টি প্রবাহে বাধা সৃষ্টি করে। ফলে মাটির উর্বরতা শক্তি কমে যায়।

পলিথিন ব্যাগ পানি আটকে রাখে। ফলে নালা-নর্দমার পানি আটকে পরিবেশ দূষিত হয়।

পলিথিন ব্যাগ ব্যবহার স্বাস্থ্যের জন্য ক্ষতিকর।

সরকার পরিবেশ সংরক্ষণে