

Nirman Tiles

In Broken Marble Tiles Brighter Home At Lesser Price

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NEWS BRIEFS

Chinese FM may visit Dhaka

Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qun Chen is expected to pay an official visit to Bangladesh in the last week of February. Diplomatic sources here yesterday said Chen, who is also a Vice-Premier of China, will come to Bangladesh as part of an extensive tour of the South Asia. Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman is also likely to visit China some time in April, the sources indicated, reports UNB.

Indian cattle skin seized

RAJSHAHI, Jan 15: Members of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) seized Indian cattle skin worth Taka 7 lakh near Binodpur area under the district today. The BDR personnel led by 20 Rifle Battalion Adjutant Captain Md Habibur Rahman seized the contraband which were later deposited with the Rajshahi Customs office, an official handout said, reports BSS.

24 injured in truck crash

SIRAJGANJ, Jan 15: At least 24 people were injured, three critically, when a truck crashed into a shop at Shialkole Bazar in sadar thana today. Police said a Bogra-bound truck with about 20 people aboard rammed into the shop after hitting three rickshaws at the bazar bus stand. Of the injured, three members of a family were rushed to Bogra Hospital and then shifted to Pangu Hospital in Dhaka.

Lakhs of Muslims converge from home and abroad Ijtema begins at Tongi

By Staff Correspondent

Several lakh Muslim devotees from Bangladesh and some sixty countries have assembled on the eastern bank of the Turag river near Tongi, 25 kilometres from the capital, to take part in the three-day Biswa Ijtema which began yesterday.

It is the second largest annual congregation of world Muslims after the Hajj.

Throughout the day, Muslim scholars from home and abroad delivered sermons on the tenets of Islam and the

ideals and teachings of Prophet Muhammad (SM).

People are still pouring in by the thousands from various parts of the country. The Bangladesh Railway is running special trains and most of the inter-city expresses are also stopping at the Tongi station. For the past couple of days there has been a long, unending line of buses and trucks packed with people.

Several tents and canopies have been set up over a vast expanse of 240 acres of land. The devotees have also made

their own arrangements to spend the winter nights at the Ijtema venue.

Thousands of volunteers aided by government, semi-government and voluntary organisations are working round the clock to provide all assistance to the devotees. Adequate arrangements have been made for the supply of drinking water and ensuring sanitary facilities.

Several organisations, including the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society and some

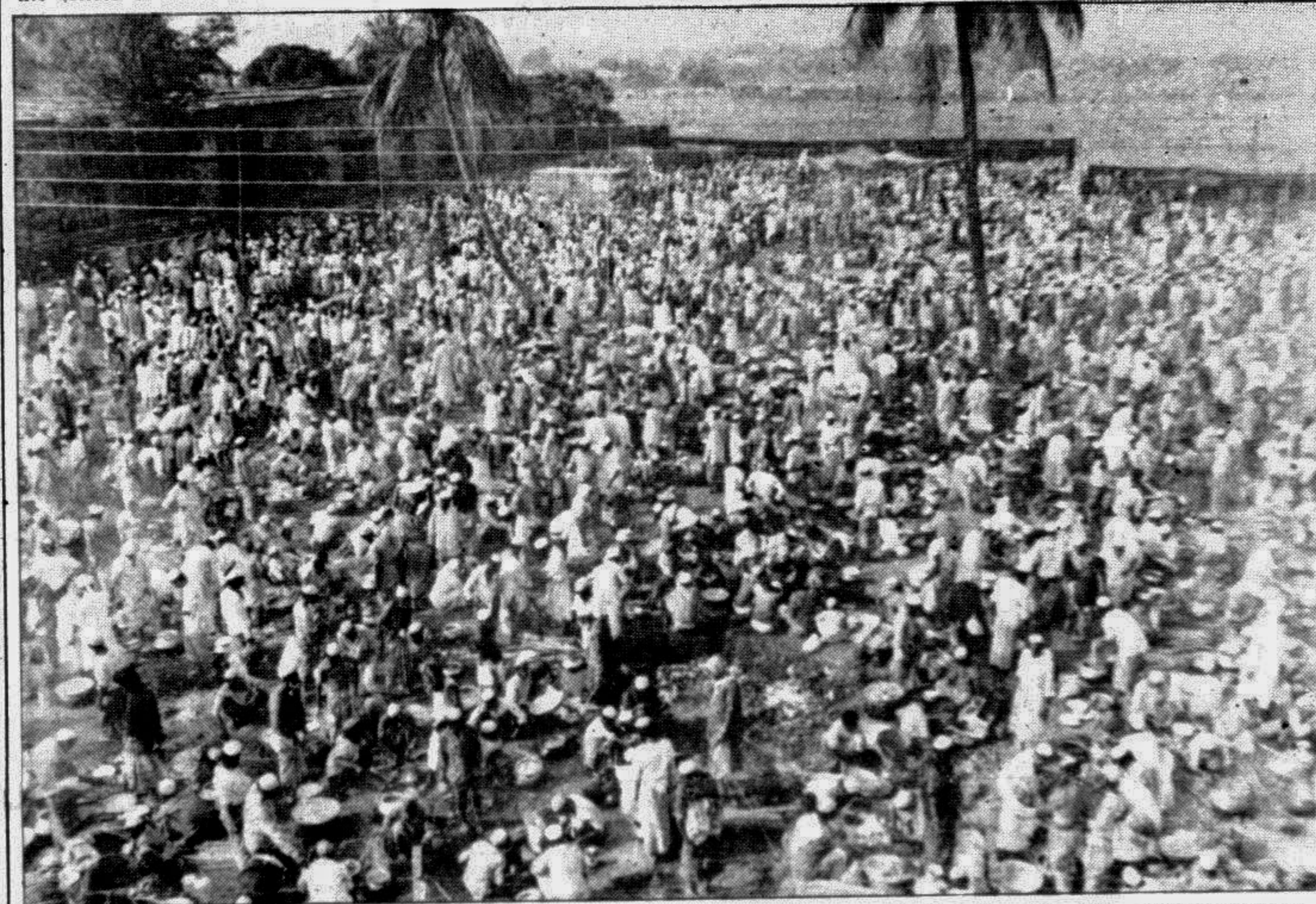
NGOs, have set up medical and first-aid centres.

Traffic jams on the Dhaka-Tongi road often held up vehicles for hours on end.

Our Gazipur correspondent says, 600 devotees from India, 570 from Pakistan and 470 from Malaysia had arrived till yesterday.

The Akheri Munajat (final prayer) will be held on Monday afternoon.

President Abdur Rahim Biswas is expected to attend the final session.



A partial view of the huge congregation on the eastern bank of the river Turag on the first day of the Biswa Ijtema at Tongi yesterday. The participants are seen preparing their won meals. —Star photo

Coal exploration & mining

Ministry okays foreign proposal

By Special Correspondent

The Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources has recommended that BHP Minerals, a US-Australian multinational, be allowed to explore and mine coal in the northern region of the country. A proposal of the ministry seeking permission for signing an agreement with BHP for coal exploration and mining in the north except those places where government agencies have already discovered coal deposits. Deposits have so far been detected at the Jamalganj, Pirganj and Barapukuria areas in greater Rangpur and Dinajpur districts.

Official sources said the Cabinet is expected to take up the issue soon and, if okayed, the government will sign the agreement for which the terms and conditions have already been finalised. BHP Minerals (formerly

Utah International Incorporated) has been showing an interest since 1986 and submitted specific proposals in this regard to Bangladesh that year. But while its offers have been under consideration and scrutiny of the government ever since, more offers from other foreign companies were

invited through advertisements in two internationally reputed magazines. However, there has been little response to those ads, sources said.

Sources added that according to the proposed agreement, BHP will also be allowed to develop the mines if any coal deposit is detected. The company has proposed to extract two million tonnes of coal a year initially, which might go up to six million tonnes.

BHP has agreed to pay the government a royalty of six per cent along with other duties and taxes as per the law of the land.

According to BHP's estimation, Bangladesh will earn 46 million US dollars from royalty and company taxes excluding other dues if six million tonnes of coal can be extracted annually.

Sources also said BHP may even get the right to export the extracted coal under an agreement with Bangladesh while the government will have the right to buy the whole or any amount of the BHP's production.

Chanpa murder case verdict on Jan 23

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Jan 15: The sensational Fuzia Rahman Chanpa Murder Case of Barisal resumed today at 10:15 am in the court of the District and Sessions Judge Hamidul Haq.

The Judge today cancelled the bails of three male accused — Nasiruddin Jamal, Khan-dakar Zillur Bari and Zahiruddin Kamal — out of the six accused and sent them to jail.

The Judge fixed January 23 as the date for judgement.



Mia Golam Parwar, candidates mainly mastans, got contracts of work.

Parwar said if elected he would give top priority to de-

velopment works and take steps to end corruption and misuse of public money.

Replying to a question, the Jamaat candidate said the involvement of the ministers and the Jatiya Sangsad Speaker in the campaigning for the ruling party candidate might influence the voters, violating the election code of conduct.

According to him, the main problems facing the city dwellers are: ineffective drainage system, non-availability of drinking water, poor sewerage, bad condition of the city roads, terrorism and extortion.

"If elected, I will work to make the city of Khulna beautiful and peaceful; ensuring civic amenities to every citizen," the Jamaat candidate added.

DCC polls diary

Ministry okays foreign proposal

By Staff Correspondent

For Awami League's mayoral candidate Mohammad Hanif, his election symbol — fish — has become a 'smelly affair'.

All other candidates for the mayor's post have no problem in using real bicycles, umbrellas or chairs as campaign tools.

Enthusiastic supporters of BNP's Mirza Abbas were seen riding bicycles during the polls campaign processions.

Activists of the ten Left-leaning parties contestant have put an original cart wheel near the CPB office in the capital.

But for poor Hanif, carrying raw fish in the campaign has become practically impossible — mainly for the price, availability and the odour.

"Initially, we planned to bring in some whales for the campaign," quipped one Awami League supporter. "That would have scared our BNP friends."

Banner and graffiti writers are now very depressed because of the decision to erase all wall writings and to remove banners.

See Page 12 Col 1

Non-payment of valid import bills BB to cancel licences of defaulting banks

Star Report

The dealer licences of local commercial banks failing to make payments against import bills without valid reasons would be cancelled.

This drastic measure by the Bangladesh Bank has been decided upon following the failure by some commercial banks to make payments in respect of a large number of import bills against perfectly valid letters of credit, according to highly-placed sources in the Finance Ministry.

The decision of the central bank is being seen as a very welcome move to revitalise the country's banking sector. Bankers expressing their reaction to The Daily Star, said, the move was essential for enhancing the image of the banking sector.

"LCs from Bangladesh are not being honoured because of failure of some banks to pay the bills in time," a top banker told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity. He said, banks in some countries, including South Korea and Hong Kong, are sometime refusing to accept LCs from Bangladesh, even if they are confirmed by other banks.

Half a dozen private sector banks have been named by official sources for keeping such payments in freeze.

According to sources, most of the outstanding payments are for the garments sector under back-to-back LCs.

Under this system, banks in Bangladesh open import LCs

with a foreign bank for upto 70 per cent of the master LC for the import of raw materials. These LCs have a 140-day provision for payment. The banker on the export side pays the raw material exporter the price of his export after inspecting the bill of lading, commercial documents, the bill of exchange and other necessary papers.

These documents are then sent to the Bangladeshi banks and the importer has to accept the documents unless any faults are found. The Bangladesh Bank then pays the foreign bank the amount it had already paid to the exporter of raw materials.

But currently, importers in Bangladesh, after obtaining a court injunction, sometimes block the payment to the foreign bank.

Sources say, the High Court is reportedly considering setting aside the Munsif court's injunctions blocking the import bills' payments.

Meanwhile, the BB has had talks with the particular banks which are not paying the import bills. "We want to make our banking sector reliable and upto the standard of international banks," a high central bank official said.

"The decision is a right step in that direction."

To implement the Bangladesh Bank decision, necessary changes would be effected soon in the relevant laws, he added.

Heads of top UN bodies to meet in city Feb 6

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh would have the unique distinction of hosting the first meeting of five heads of UN agencies, beginning February 6.

The executive heads of the UNDP, WFP, UNFPA, IFAD and UNICEF will hold a three-day meet in Dhaka. These five bodies are part of the United Nations Joint Consultative Group (JCGP).

They would deliberate on sustainable development programmes and other related issues. The JCGP meet would also act as a forum for an exchange of ideas and information on the ongoing programmes and future policies of the UN agencies.

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Cabinet considers annual reports of ministries

A special meeting of the cabinet held at Bangabhaban with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair yesterday considered the annual reports of different ministries and divisions for the financial year of 1992-93, reports BSS.

The meeting discussed the progress of implementation of development projects and directed the ministries and divisions to take all steps necessary for speedy implementation of all programmes including development projects.

The cabinet also directed the secretaries and additional secretaries in-charge of different ministries to increase the

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BSF fires on BDR outpost in Muhurirchar

FENI, Jan 15: The Indian Border Security Force again fired today on the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) outpost in Muhurirchar area of the district, reports UNB.

The BDR sources said the BSF men started firing on their repatriation at about 10:25 am the BDR responded with counterfire, and the encounter lasted till 10:45 am.

Nobody was, however, reported hurt in today's firing, the 12th such incident on the landmass of river Muhuri which the Indians are trying to capture.

C&F employees call off strike

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 15: The employees of the clearing and forwarding agents (C&F) here called off their strike today following a joint meeting this afternoon attended by Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al-Noman, leaders of the agitating employees, the C&F agents, Chairman of the

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গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ড
ঢাকা।

ভ্যাট সংক্রান্ত জরুরী বিজ্ঞপ্তি

আপনি জানেন কি?

- ভ্যাটযোগ্য সেবা প্রদানকারী (যেমন - হোটেল-রেস্তোরাঁ, মিস্ট্রি ভান্ডার, কমিউনিটি সেন্টার, স্বর্ণকার, ডেকেস্টেরস, বিডিটি পারলার, বক্সিং স্টো, নির্মাণ, ইত্যাদি) সেবা প্রদানের সময় আপনার নিকট থেকে মূল্যের সাথে ভ্যাটও আদায় করছেন।
- ভ্যাট আদায়ের পমাণস্বরূপ আপনাকে কাশিমোমে/চালানপত্র প্রদান করা আইনতঃ বাধ্যতামূলক।
- আপনি কাশিমোমে/চালানপত্র অনুগ্রহপূর্বক বিক্রেতার নিকট থেকে চেয়ে নিন।
- কাশিমোমে/চালানপত্র না দিলে পদত ভ্যাট সরকারী কোষাগারে জমা হবে না।
- একজন সচেতন নাগরিক হিসাবে এটা কি আপনার কাম্য?।
- মুনে বাধবেন, আপনি কাশিমোমে না নিলেও মূল্যের সাথে ভ্যাট আদায় করা হয়ে গেছে।
- আপনি কি চান আপনার দেয়া সরকারের পাশা রাজস্ব অন্য কেউ সঞ্চিক দিয়ে গৃহণ করুক?
- আপনার সহযোগিতা পুরুতপক্ষে পরবর্তী প্রজন্মের সুন্দর ভবিষ্যৎ বচনায় অবদান রাখবে।
- জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ড আপনার সর্বাধিক সক্রিয় সহযোগিতা কামনা করে।

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জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ড

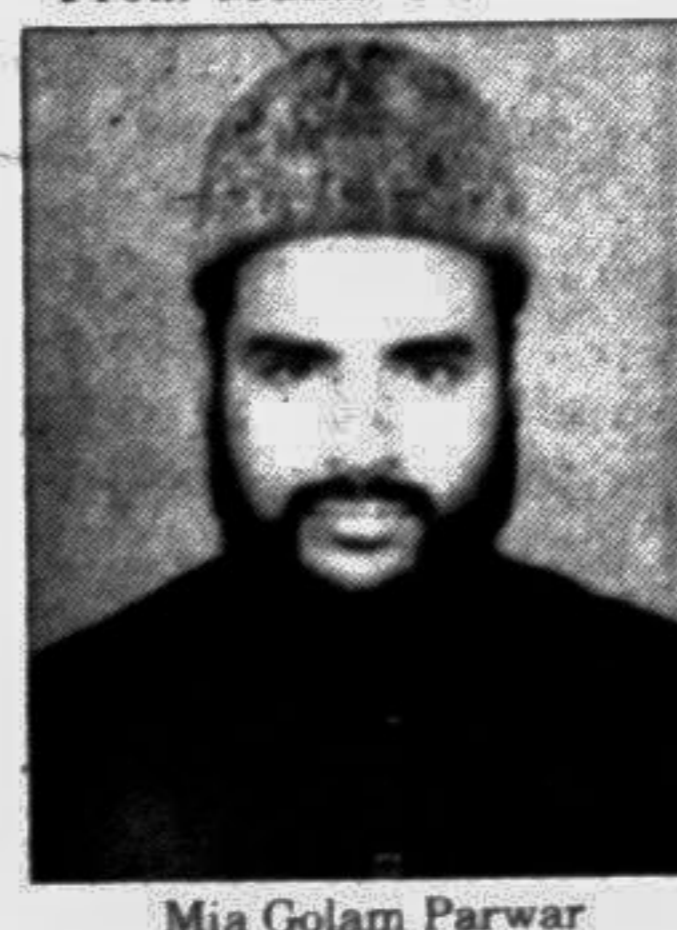
Interview with KCC mayor candidate Parwar promises better service

From Munir U Ahmed

KHULNA, Jan 15: The Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh nominee for the January 30 mayoral election here, Prof Mia Golam Parwar, has urged the city dwellers to elect honest and God-fearing people to make the Khulna City Corporation a service-centre for Ashrafah Makhluat.

In an exclusive interview with The Daily Star at the Jamaat office last Thursday Golam Parwar said the condition of the sixteen lakh citizens of the city could not be improved unless honest and sincere candidates were elected in the coming polls.

Parwar alleged that the Khulna City Corporation office was made a party office during the past and the present regimes and the party work-



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velopment works and take steps to end corruption and misuse of public money.

Replying to a question, the Jamaat candidate said the involvement of the ministers and the Jatiya Sangsad Speaker in the campaigning for the ruling party candidate might influence the voters, violating the election code of conduct.

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"If elected, I will work to make the city of Khulna beautiful and peaceful; ensuring civic amenities to every citizen," the Jamaat candidate added.

100 feared dead as ferries collide in West Bengal

By Staff Correspondent

CALCUTTA, Jan 15: More than 100 people were feared drowned early today when two ferries carrying Hindu pilgrims collided at sea in thick fog off the Indian state of West Bengal, police said here, reports AFP.

One of two motorised launches carrying 150 pilgrims from a pilgrimage site sank in the Bay of Bengal, national radio station said.

The Press Trust of India (PTI) said the second ferry was reported missing after the two collided around 1:00 am (1930 GMT) Saturday in the confluence of the Bay of Bengal and the Matla river.

"Details regarding the number of passengers in it (the second launch) are awaited," PTI quoted a police source as saying from the Sagar Island,

located in the Bay of Bengal off the state's southern coast.

Earlier reports said the missing ferry named Sagar Samrat, was also ferrying Hindu devotees from an annual pilgrimage in Sagar Island to the town of Namkhana.

Only 21 people have been rescued from the site of the collision, 90 kilometres (54 miles) from the state capital of Calcutta, PTI said, adding that eight bodies had been recovered.

Most of those feared drowned were old people, the police said, adding that senior officials have rushed to the site to speed up rescue and salvage operations.

Some 300,000 pilgrims mostly from India's north, arrived in the Sagar Island on Friday to offer prayers to the sacred Hindu river Ganges.