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## Indo-Bangla JWG begins meeting in Delhi today

By M Anwarul Haq

A crucial meeting between Bangladesh and India to resolve outstanding bilateral problems relating to border issues, elimination of cross-border insurgency and repatriation of Chakma refugees and other related problems begins in New Delhi today, according to official sources.

A three-member Bangladesh team left Dhaka last night to attend the three-day meeting from January 28 of the Joint Working Group (JWG).

Although this is the third meeting of the Joint Working Group, this is the first since the revival of the JWG following an understanding reached between the two countries to resolve the outstanding border issues using this bilateral working forum.

The official decision to re-activate the Joint Working Group and strengthen its activities was taken during the formal talks between Prime Minister and Indian Prime Minister in New Delhi last week.

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## JC meeting on Ganges flow ends today

By Staff Correspondent

The Indo-Bangladesh Joint Committee (JC) on the Ganges water monitoring will end their two-day official deliberations in Dhaka today.

The talks are being attended by Khalidur Rahman, Director, Joint Rivers Commission and Towhidul Anwar, Joint Commissioner, JRC from the Bangladesh side and S K Das, Director, Indian Joint Rivers Commission, M S Gupta and Partha Nanda from the Indian side.

The members of the Joint Committee earlier held Technical Inspection Meetings (TIM) for two days on January 24 and 25 at Bhetamara, a few kilometres from the Hardinge Bridge. They also inspected the Hardinge Bridge site where the flow of the Ganges water is being monitored.

The Technical Inspection Meeting (TIM), the first of its kind since the signing of the

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## DSE MARKET

DSE price index	1905.40 (+0.75)
Market capital Tk	13859.37cr
Transactions in volume	234112
Transactions in value Tk	748cr

## CSE MARKET

CSE price index	735.74 (+1.41%)
Market capital Tk	9434.65 cr
Transactions in volume	70812
Transactions in value Tk	137867.52

## Sehri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Jan	Sehri	Iftar
18	28	—	5:46
19	29	5:19	5:47
20	30	5:18	5:47

## Begum Zia tells Jatiya Sangsad Mohiuddin Alamgir's role contrary to Constitution

By Staff Correspondent

Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir's authority to answer questions not related to his ministry in the House.

Bureaucrat-turned state minister Alamgir replied questions relating to Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and Cabinet Division on Sunday and Thursday last.

Yesterday, Ziaur Rahman Khan rose on a point of order to 'Deputy Speaker should revise his ruling'

Deputy opposition leader Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday said the BNP can not be a party to any unconstitutional act in parliament, alleging that the Prime Minister had violated the Constitution by giving additional responsibility to a technocrat state minister.

request the Chair for reviewing the ruling. He said, "I am trying to help the Sangsad". But, the Chair regretted suggesting the BNP lawmaker to submit a petition in writing for reviewing Sunday's ruling.

On Sunday last, the Chair had ruled that Alamgir's answering questions not related to his ministry did not violate the Constitution as he was given the responsibility of answering questions on Cabinet Division, President's Office and PMO in the House.

Before Zia could complete his argument, Deputy Leader of the House Zillur Rahman was given the microphone. Zillur Rahman said that there was no provision of discussing the issue as the Chair had already given its ruling. He also requested the Chair not to allow further debate on the issue.

Amid protests from the Opposition Bench, the Chair again gave the floor to Zia. The BNP

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## Next round of CHT talks Mar 12 We agreed on a number of issues : Shantu Larma

By Special Correspondent

Larma alias Shantu Larma, the leader of the PCJSS nodded in approval saying, "We had accord on many issues. But we shall be meeting again for further discussions on March 12."

But they left without agreeing on the venue of the next round of talks, which, sources said, is likely to be in Dhaka after further communications between the two sides through the Liaison Committee headed by Handsdaj Chakma.

They are likely to report back to their comrades in arms on their mission to Dhaka.

In the past, nine meetings were held between the government and the PCJSS at the Khagrachhari circuit house following a ceasefire agreed in August 1992.

The truce, extended several

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## 40 km Dhaka by-pass road Govt plans to attract private investment

By Sharier Khan and Morshed Ali Khan

The government is contemplating building a 40 km Dhaka by-pass road, with partial private sector participation, connecting Kancharpur on the east with Tongi in the north, according to official sources.

According to preliminary estimate, the road would cost between Tk 400 and 800 crore. Since the investment is huge, the government and the donors are thinking about attracting private investment on Build, Operate, Transfer (BOT) basis. The private investors will recover their expenditure by collecting toll from road users.

According to a case study by the World Bank, the by-pass would provide three initial interchanges at Joydevpur, Tarabo and Yusuiganj mid-point, with access to the Zia International Airport and the city centre. The by-pass would provide a travel time of 20 minutes to the airport from the southern edge of Dhaka and save 20 hours or more for commercial traffic between the under-construction Jamuna Bridge and Chittagong port.

Some 80 per cent of the possible route under the preliminary plan is now under private ownership but much of it is uninhabited.

Considering the present state of traffic congestion in Dhaka city, this by-pass road should be built within a year," said an official. "There is no better alternative."

The World Bank has now undertaken a feasibility study under a Japanese grant to identify the possible route for the by-pass, acquisition of land, legal aspects and other related issues.

The Asian Development Bank is also conducting a similar study.

The donors are pressing for private sector participation. Besides, it is also not possible for the government to finance such a huge project alone. Therefore, the government has agreed on private sector participation in this scheme," said the official.

The World Bank's case study points out that with a capital investment of 200 million US dollars in private fund over four years, the Dhaka by-pass alone would effectively increase

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The perennial traffic jam in the city is worsening as Eid shopping is picking up. —Star photo

## JS tidbits

By Nazmul Ashraf

Health and Family Welfare Minister Salahuddin Yusuf, who was engrossed with the papers on his lap, apparently felt shaken and hurriedly stood up when Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid drew his attention to the fact that he was given the floor and his microphone was on.

The minister was given the floor to reply to a supplementary question on Awami League member Mohammad Selim's question on his ministry.

Taking the floor, the bewildered minister started replying to the next question, not raised in the House until then, causing laughter by all the lawmakers.

The next question, by Harunur Rashid Khan Monno of BNP, was for the State Minister for Culture Obaidul Kader and the questioner was absent from the House on the day.

However, the minister stood corrected after the Chair pointed out his mistake.

Getting the floor, Jatiya Party lawmaker MK Alam Choudhury told the Deputy Speaker, "I sit dead straight to your nose but I fail to draw your attention every time."

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## JS body finalises report on 3 CHT dist council bills

A meeting of the Special Committee of Parliament was held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday with committee chairman Advocate Rahmat Ali in the chair, reports UNB.

The Committee scrutinised the three bills and finalised its report on those for placing before the Parliament. Earlier, the bills were tabled in Parliament and sent to the special committee.

The bills are: Ranganati Hill District Local Government Council (Amendment) Bill 1997, Khagrachhari Hill District Local Government Council (Amendment) Bill 1997, and Bandarban Hill District Local Government Council (Amendment) Bill 1997.

Committee members Agriculture and Food Minister Begum Matia Chowdhury, Forest and Environment Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Law Minister Abdul Matin Khasru,

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## Moulana Nurul Islam denies anti-liberation role in '71

State Minister for Religious Affairs Moulana Mohammad Nurul Islam yesterday denied that he was involved in anti-liberation activities during the country's freedom struggle in 1971, reports UNB.

"What they alleged is not true at all," said the angry Moulana pointing at the opposition MPs in the House during the question answer session.

A few days back, some BNP lawmakers claimed that two members of the council of ministers of the Awami League government were involved in anti-liberation activities, indicating Moulana Nurul Islam as one of them.

The state minister said the opposition Moulana made a baseless personal attack on him. "Go to my constituency and ask the people about my role in the 1971 War of Liberation. They will tell you the truth."

The opposition MPs were, however, thumping the desks enjoying the state minister's full-throated statement in the House.

"Don't stick any stigma on anybody's character, it is against the spirit of Islam," Moulana Nurul Islam said.

Replying to supplementaries, he said the government is doing everything for Islam.

## Traders on strike N'ganj poultry market looted

From Our Correspondent NARAYANGANJ, Jan 27: The traders of wholesale poultry market here stopped their business for an indefinite period after an armed group looted money from them today.

A group of about 200 traders of the market marched to the Sadar Police Station and gheraoed it while lodging their complaint against the attackers.

Abdullah, a trader at the Digu Babu Bazar market alleged that a gang of at least 25 persons, equipped with deadly weapons, demanded Tk 5,000 from him at around 12:30 pm.

After his refusal, the group broke his cash box and took away Tk 5000. Besides, they took some chickens.

Ziauddin, another trader, complained that the group snatched Tk 5,700 from him besides taking away his gold chain weighing at least one and a half tolas.

Police said, they have arrested two persons — Ataul and Nuruzzaman — in this connection.

## Cabinet asks top bureaucrats Identify reasons for slow pace of development

By Nurul Kabir

The country's bureaucrats have failed to show dynamism in implementing the policies of the new government, despite repeated prodding by the latter to accelerate the process of development.

This was observed by the council of ministers at the weekly cabinet meeting yesterday which reviewed the pace of development under the seven-month-old government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The cabinet asked the top level bureaucrats, including Cabinet Secretary, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister and the Establishment Secretary to immediately identify the reasons behind the failure of the bureaucracy to cut through its traditional red-tapism in implementing various government decisions, the sources added.

The cabinet has also asked the secretaries concerned to submit a report, along with suggestions, to remove the bureaucratic bottlenecks, to the cabinet within shortest possible time, the sources said.

Earlier, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina herself expressed concern over the dilly-dallying in the implementation of various development projects and asked the officials concerned to find out a mechanism to avoid some traditional steps in clearing files.

According to the sources, Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim first expressed dissatisfaction over the performance of the top-ranking government officials at the meeting. He said it was unfortunate that despite the desire of the new government to speed up the bureaucratic machinery specially in terms of file works, the bureaucracy was behaving the same way as it had done during the period of the last

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## Govt-Opposition understanding Beginning of change in political culture: Raphael

US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Affairs Robin Raphael called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Ganobhaban yesterday.

—PID photo

US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Affairs Robin Raphael yesterday expressed US government's appreciation at the political development in Bangladesh and praised the role of the Prime Minister in bringing back the Opposition to Parliament, reports BSS.

"Understanding and friendliness showed in this regard is very significant for the sustenance of democracy," Ms Raphael said when she called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her official residence at Ganobhaban yesterday morning.

Ms Raphael said the end of the stalemate has initiated the change of political culture in Bangladesh. Lauding the role of the Prime Minister in keeping parliamentary democracy high, Ms Raphael hoped that the Prime Minister's effort would continue to strengthen democracy in the country.

The US Assistant Secretary hailed the water sharing treaty with India and said it would not only contribute to strengthen the bilateral relations between the two neighbours, but also promote stability and peace in the region.

She said the signing of the treaty proved that problems be-

## PM assures help for families of Lalbagh shootout victims

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her government firmly believes in voting right of the people and would strive to protect their franchise, reports UNB.

"Past government did not believe in people's voting rights and killed voters for voting against them," she said referring to the Lalbagh killings that occurred a day before the Mayoral polls on January 30, 1994.

Sheikh Hasina said after the heinous Lalbagh carnage, they held a voterless election on February 15 last year. "But people's movement ousted them," she said in an oblique reference to the past BNP government.

She was talking to the family members of those killed and injured in the Lalbagh shootout when they met with the Prime Minister at her Parliament Chamber in the afternoon. They narrated their sufferings and sought help from the PM.

Seven people were killed and 12 injured in the shoot-out on the fateful day, January 31, 1994. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina assured the victims' families of assistance before Eid-ul-Fitr.

Azhar Ali Malik, father of Shaheed Maitur who was killed in 1969 mass upsurge, also met

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## 'Gas supply from Sanghu possible in 16 months'

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 27: Leader of the visiting British trade delegation Sir Martin Laing said here today that gas could be supplied from the newly explored Sanghu valley field in the Bay of Bengal within the next 15 to 16 months.

He also informed that an amount equivalent to 150 million US dollars had been invested in the gas field by a British firm, Cairn Plc, and Holland Seasearch of the Netherlands.

Exchanging views with members of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry at its conference room today, he stressed on optimum utilisation of Bangladesh experts and skilled manpower.

Presently, three lakh Bangladeshi expatriates are staying in Britain, he said.

Turning to the privatisation drive in Bangladesh, Laing said that the process should be expedited.

Addressing the meeting, SAAG member Peter Lee said that Bangladesh should attach importance to three areas — political stability, infrastructural development and expediting implementation of decisions by overcoming bureaucratic tangles.

British High Commissioner in Bangladesh David C. Walker said Britain would extend cooperation and help to Bangladesh as a 'strategic partner'.

Earlier, president of CCC&I Jafrul Islam Chowdhury, MP, welcoming the British delegation, said that the visit by British Prime Minister John Major to Bangladesh and signing of agreement on gas exploration had come as positive steps towards improving bilateral relations.

## Hearing resumes Banu says police tried to identify her as Yasmin

From Our Correspondent

RANGPUR, Jan 27: The hearing of the sensational Yasmin rape and murder case resumed in the special court, Rangpur today.

Twelve more witnesses submitted their depositions. The judge of the special court, Abdul Matin, recorded their depositions till 5 pm with an hour's break for Zohr prayers.

Two of the witnesses — Morjina and Marjan Nesa — disclosed how police tried to divert the Yasmin murder case to suit their interests. They told the court that police showed them some pictures of Yasmin's body and put pressure on them to identify the body as that of Banu, a prostitute. If they did not do so, police threatened them with consequences, the witnesses said in their deposition.

Banu, while submitting her deposition as witness, said that at the time of the incident, she was at her village home. But police taking the advantage of her absence, tried to identify the body of Yasmin as her own. After two days of the murder when

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## Taxi drivers attack Ansars at ZIA: 5 injured

By Staff Correspondent

At least five Ansars were injured when a group of taxi drivers at Zia International Airport (ZIA) attacked them yesterday morning.

Cantonment police arrested four drivers identified as Motiur, Nurul Islam, Manik and Anwar in this connection.

Besides, the airport security men caught more than 15 people including drivers when they went on the rampage and assaulted the Ansars, airport sources said.

The ZIA authorities shut down the taxi booth in the airport and were planning to take stern action against the drivers who, according to an airport official, were responsible for various problems in the airport.

Meanwhile, the injured Ansars Afzal Hani, Mukles and Ashraf were admitted to a clinic at Uttara.

The trouble that began at about 8:30am on the flyover of the airport terminal building lasted around an hour creating panic in the area, airport sources said.

An Ansar intercepted a microbus of an airlines on the fly-

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## LC opening falls by 7.56pc in five months

Opening of letters of credit (LCs) for imports dropped 7.56 per cent during first five months of the current fiscal from previous financial year's corresponding level, reports UNB.

According to statistics released by the Bangladesh Bank yesterday, authorised dealer banks opened LC worth Tk 10,905.61 crore during July-November period of the 1996-97 fiscal.

The decline is mainly due to lower opening of LCs — a 53.38 per cent fall over the level of last year — for import of food-grains and finished consumer goods, the central bank said.

However, LC openings for industrial raw materials and intermediate goods went up 12.32 per cent during the five months compared to previous year's same period.

Import LCs worth Tk 9,233.02 crore remained outstanding as on November 30, 1996.

LCs valued Tk 2,766.22 crore were opened during July-November period for import of textile fabrics and accessories for garments followed by petroleum, oil and lubricant (POL) Tk 765.19 crore and machinery Tk 722.06 crore.

## Youths clash with shopkeepers at Dhanmondi Hawkers' Market

By Staff Correspondent

A group of young men were locked in a clash with some shopkeepers at the Dhanmondi Hawkerc's Market in the city yesterday evening.

The clash began when the young men, who identified themselves as the students of Dhaka College, allegedly tried to forcibly take some clothes, which were just brought to the market in a vehicle at about 7 pm, police said.

Police arrested two of them — Moniruzzaman, 18, and Mannan, 21. They were taken to the Detective Branch for interrogation.

A number of shopkeepers closed their shutters following the incident. However, the shops were opened around 9 pm, police said.

Extra police were deployed in the area.