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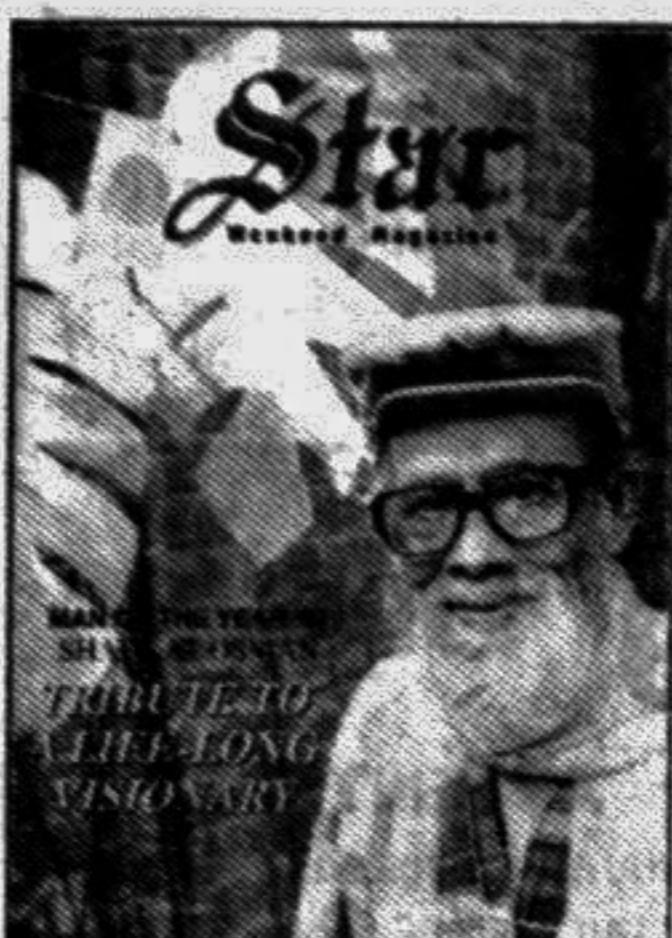
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The Daily Star
Man of the Year '97



Shaukat Osman
The Daily Star Man of the Year for 1997. Read today's Star Weekend Magazine for the full story.

Announcement

Read tomorrow's special issue of The Daily Star for more comments of the participants in the Conference of Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs, held last Sunday, 28 December '97.

Read what young people have to say about how Bangladesh can best prepare for the 21st Century.

Don't miss the Special 4-page issue!!

Biswa Ijtema
begins Feb 14

TONGI, Gazipur, Jan 1: A three-day-long 32nd Biswa Ijtema will begin here on February 14, reports BSS.

The decision was announced after a preparatory meeting of the Ijtema Committee with Maulana Harmuzullah in the chair.

Some 90 representatives from Thailand, Malaysia, Britain, India, Pakistan and the UAE took part in the meeting.

The Ijtema, the second biggest Muslim congregation after the holy Hajj, is being held on the bank of the river Turag since 1966.

Inside Today

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Woman as the Measure of Things

Column: Do I Dare
By A Z M Obaidullah
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Focus

Power unto itself: IMF needs reassessment
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Sehri, Iftar timings

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CHALLENGING CAREER OPPORTUNITY IN The Daily Star

The Daily Star is looking for young men and women between 25 and 35 years of age having graduated with Honours and highly proficient in English, for employment in reporting & sub-editing.

Those interested in pursuing a career in journalism, possessing good English writing skill, willingness to work in a challenging environment, can mail their CV with a recent photo to Box No. 3257, Dhanmondi, Dhaka by 10 January 1998.

The Daily Star

Ever changing colour of a defaulting borrower

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi

Fazlur Rahman sat on the boards of three major state-controlled commercial banks. So he had no problems in getting bank loans. Whether he repaid them is another matter.

Today, he owes tens of crores to Bangladesh's banking system, according to central bank inspectors. It's more than a billion taka, even by most conservative estimates.

General Ershad placed him

on the Sonali Bank board. Then, under Khaleda Zia, he went a step further, finding himself on the Janata and Rupali boards of directors.

A master manipulator, Fazlur Rahman of Narayanganj knows how to do it. Ask any top banker in the past 10-15 years. They will tell you he is a generous gift-giver.

Several bank chief executives have confirmed that his

gifts were indeed tempting. Many of them, and some others in the non-banking community, have said they refused him.

Ask anybody in Narayanganj. They will identify him as *chintu Fazlu*.

He is indeed sweeter than sugar. A well-known university professor was so impressed by him that he agreed to take him to the managing director of a

bank who had been refusing to see him for long.

The professor later discovered to his embarrassment that he had been befooled by a sweet-talking defaulting borrower.

These days, banking and business sources say, he enjoys the blessings of at least one mighty minister and a powerful business close to the ruling party who would be ready to do him a favour.

In fact, he is one of those favoured few, never having problems in finding their way out. He cites his being part of the prime ministerial entourage on her trips abroad as a testimony to his credibility and importance as a businessman.

In October 1996, he was with the prime minister visiting the United States.

Starting as a small-scale importer, he has been able to

put himself at the helm of the several hundred-crore-taka Rahman Group.

Sitting in his plush Sena Kalyan Building office, its walls decorated with his photographs with foreign dignitaries, a polite and soft-spoken Fazlur Rahman exudes confidence, citing so many of his achievements that give him the sense of being important and right.

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Gram Adalats may start functioning from March

Star Report

Affairs yesterday.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday the law minister hoped that with the installation of Gram Adalats, at least 70 per cent of the cases now coming to higher courts, could be disposed of at grassroots level.

The draft was prepared by an expert group comprising Justice KM Sobhan, Advocate Ahmed Ali and Dr Mizanur Rahman, Professor of Law Faculty of Dhaka University.

A draft bill titled 'Gram Adalat Bill, 1998' has been finalised. A copy of the draft bill was handed over to Abdul Matin Khasru, Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary

unions of the country on people's perception of the village court.

Village courts were established in 1976 through the Village Court Ordinance. But the courts became ineffective for certain inherent flaws.

"In drafting the Gram Adalat Bill, measures have been taken to remove those flaws which turned the village courts into platforms for exerting political influence," the expert said.

The Gram Adalat would be empowered to order an accused to pay compensation to an aggrieved person, not exceeding

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6th phase of repatriation

941 tribal refugees back on first day

From Our Correspondent

KHAGRACHHARI, Jan 1: A total of 941 tribal people returned from Tripura state of India today, marking resumption of the sixth phase of repatriation of refugees to their homes in Chittagong Hill Tracts.

The sixth phase will continue for nine days. So far about 25,000 refugees have returned since 1994.

Samiran Dewan, Chairman of Khagrachhari district council, received the returnees at Ramgarh. Kazi Golamur Rahman, Secretary of Special Affairs Division, was present.

On the other side, Tripura District Magistrate Lokranjan, Tribal Refugee Affairs Officers

'Shahabuddin personality of choice for '97'

By Staff Correspondent

President Shahabuddin Ahmed has been identified by an overwhelming majority of the people of Dhaka city as personality of choice for the year 1997, according to an opinion poll.

The poll results released yesterday reflected the views of 72.7 per cent of the respondents about the President.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia were termed personality of choice for the year 1997 by 50.2 per cent and 31.8 per cent of the respondents respectively.

The opinion poll conducted by the Centre for Sustainable Development, between December 25 and 27, covered 932 households.

Saga of Radio-TV autonomy-III

Fat cash lures BTV's men behind the show

By Rear Ahmad

"It has been alleged by different quarters that officials of Bangladesh Television have engaged themselves in business and profit-making activities without prior approval from the government," reads a BTV circular issued barely two months back.

The circular, coming from the Director General, reminds officials of the state-run television of the Government Employees' Rules of Conduct, 1979, which says, it is mandatory for all government officials and employees to take permission before they get into such activities.

At least two producers, who agreed to talk to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity, confirmed this.

For them, the so-called package programmes are far more lucrative because that's where the money is. They know

the tricks of the trade better than others, and they know how to get away with it, whatever be the quality. So they just go for it.

It's easy to befool their bosses and who knows whether some of their superiors aren't on with them, as some sources alleged. They appear with fictitious names and addresses, and pass safely through their place of work.

At least two producers, who agreed to talk to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity, confirmed this.

For them, the so-called package programmes are far more lucrative because that's where the money is. They know

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Indian Lok Sabha polls begin Feb 16

NEW DELHI, Jan 1: India's general election will be held over four days in February and March and the Election Commission today declared its determination to make the elections free and fair, report agencies.

The autonomous commission, responsible for overseeing the ballot by 600 million people in the world's largest democ-

racy, said polls would be carried out region by region on February 16, 22 and 28 and March 7.

Chief Election Commissioner M S Gill told a news conference all results would be known by March 12 and a new parliament would be installed by March 15.

Voting will be held in most areas on February 16, followed by polls in other regions on the

three remaining days. Vote counting is to begin March 8.

"This is a rather important election," Gill said. "It is coming in the 50th year of our independence, therefore, it must be conducted in such a manner that it does the whole country proud."

Gill said he was determined to ensure balloting, involving 900,000 polling stations and

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Revellers fleeing police who broke street parties at Gulshan in the early hours of the New Year's Day. Eleven people were arrested for creating public nuisance. They were later released, police said. Revellers said police used water cannons and batons to disperse them.

—Star photo

Hunt on, but Nasir has his men in Ctg police

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 1: Chittagong Metropolitan Police has begun a combing operation in the city to round up the activists of Shibir-backed Nasir Bahini who allegedly killed three BCL activists.

Armed assailants gunned down the AL-backed activists at Chandgaon last Friday. Police raided some hideouts of Nasir

Bahini and other terrorists but could not arrest the main accused in the triple-murder case. During the raid they could arrest only four suspects.

Police sources said Nasir, the ring leader, recently returned from Dubai. This has forced the police authorities to launch a fresh hunt for this millionaire 'terrorist'.

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55 injured
Two bldgs collapse in Ctg, Sylhet

By Staff Correspondent

At least 55 people were injured, 15 seriously when roofs of two under-construction buildings collapsed in Chittagong and Sylhet cities yesterday.

Out Staff Correspondent reported from Chittagong that at least twenty-five construction workers were injured when the roof of an under-construction building of Aramit Cement Fac-

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Second incident of robbery at Dhanmondi within 12 hrs

By Staff Correspondent

Dacoits took away Tk 7.43

lakh in cash and gold ornaments from a house at Green Road under Dhanmondi thana in the city Wednesday night, police said yesterday.

This was the second incident of robbery in Dhanmondi area within a span of 12 hours. Earlier, on Wednesday morning, a gang of dacoits took away Tk 500,000 from a house at Green Road under Dhanmondi thana in the city Wednesday night, police said yesterday.

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Fate of F-28

Meetings on, no headway

By Special Correspondent

Bangladesh Biman authorities could not yet decide