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# The Daily Star

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## Detention of Chetia extended

**By Staff Correspondent**  
The detention of Anup Chetia, secretary general of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), has been extended for another three months with effect from February 1, according to official sources.  
Chetia, along with two others identified as Lakhmi Prasad Goswami and Babul Sharma, were arrested from a flat in the city's Mohammadpur area on December 21, 1997.  
Officials of the Home Ministry told The Daily Star that the three prisoners were now enjoying the status of 'ordinary prisoners' but have been kept in isolation at the 'condemned cell block' of the jail to ensure special security for them.  
From time to time, they are also shifted from one cell to another to ensure 'maximum security', they added.  
Arrested under Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure See Page 12 Col 6

## Dhaka's inclusion in IORARC uncertain

**By M Anwarul Haq**  
Bangladesh's inclusion as a member of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IORARC) has become uncertain. It is now unlikely that she would be able to become a member of this emerging bloc of littoral countries of the Indian Ocean before another year, according to diplomatic sources.  
Dhaka's request for being admitted as a full member of the 14-nation IORARC was supposed to be accepted at the foreign minister-level meet held in Mauritius in November last.  
But since no member was taken at the time, Bangladesh expected that a decision to admit it would be taken shortly afterwards. It is now learnt that Bangladesh along with three other countries who have queued up for admission has to wait for an indefinite period.  
A high official said it is not unlikely that this waiting period could even stretch indefinitely — at least till the next ministerial meet due to be held in 1999.  
Bangladesh has, meanwhile, south Australia's support, a founding member of IORARC, during the recent visit of its Foreign Minister Alexander Downer.  
Australia had earlier ardently pursued Bangladesh's case in the Mauritius meeting but it did not materialize due to 'reservations or lack of overt support' of certain countries 'hesitating to enlarge the organisation', the sources said.  
Bangladesh failed to get the membership due to 'non-support' by South Africa, Oman and Kenya. These countries may have been influenced by one 'major member' a well placed source hinted.  
Although the ministerial meeting ended without taking any conclusive decision on admittance of new members, it listed Bangladesh among the most eligible countries besides Thailand, Iran and Seychelles. The position of Pakistan, another applicant, could not be ascertained. However, the meeting decided not to admit Israel, France and Japan who also are learnt to have applied.  
The new Asia-Pacific grouping was initiated with the See Page 12 Col 4

## Delhi confident Dhaka will hand over Chetia

**NEW DELHI, Feb 13:** India is confident Bangladesh will hand over an Indian rebel leader, an official in New Delhi said today as a court in Bangladesh prepared to hear arguments against the extradition, reports AP.  
Pawan Verma, spokesman for India's foreign ministry, said his country had hoped for a quick hand-over of Anup Chetia, arrested in the Bangladeshi capital in December. But he said officials were not concerned by the delay.  
"Both countries are in close diplomatic touch on the matter," he said.  
A Dhaka High Court judge set hearings for Sunday in a bid by the Bangladesh Human Rights Commission to stop the extradition of Chetia, who is wanted in India on murder, treason and other charges.  
Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral asked his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina to speed Chetia's extradition during a visit to Dhaka late last year. But Hasina is facing growing opposition to surrendering Chetia, with some in her country comparing his cause to Bangladesh's own war on independence against Pakistan in 1971.  
The Bangladesh Human See Page 12 Col 6

## Biswa Ijtema begins at Tongi today

**TONGI, Feb 13:** Biswa Ijtema, the world's second largest Muslim congregation, begins on the bank of river Turag here tomorrow, reports UNB.  
The industrial town near the capital Dhaka, has already turned into a human sea as thousands of people have started converging at the site of the congregation, being held since 1967.  
Muslim devotees from all over the world will attend the three-day congregation that will end through Akheri Munaajat on Monday.  
In a message on the occasion, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called for forging unity and solidarity among the Muslim Ummah.  
BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia in a message greeted the devotees attending the Ijtema.  
All preparations have been completed for smooth holding of the annual congregation.  
A two-square kilometre huge pandal has been erected to accommodate the devotees.  
About 10,000 temporary latrines and 200 tubewells have been set up at the Ijtema site.  
Bangladesh Army erected four Bailey bridges over the river Turag to facilitate the people to cross the river.  
State Minister for Religious Affairs Moulana Nurul Islam, Tongi Pourasava Chairman Asmatullah Khan and Gazipur Pourasava chairman Mozammel Hoque visited the spot and expressed satisfaction over the preparation.  
Ten medical teams comprising 26 doctors and 100 staff will work round the clock for rendering medical services to the sick people.  
Some 25 beds were kept reserved for the Ijtema people at Tongi Hospital. Water purification tablets and oral saline have also been kept for free distribution among the devotees.  
Two helipads were set up at Horirumpur, and TSS field near the Ijtema pandal for ferrying See Page 12 Col 1

## PM opens bridge over Karotoa today

The fourth Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge on the Boda-Debiganj-Domar-Jaldhaka road in the country's northern region will be opened for traffic today, reports UNB.  
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the bridge over river Karotoa.  
The 577-metre long and 10-metre wide bridge was constructed at a cost of Tk 53.67 crore.  
The construction of this bridge has reduced the road distance from Rangpur to Panchagarh by 35 kms.  
Frontier Panchagarh and Thakurgaon districts have been connected directly with Dhaka and come under the national road network.  
The Roads Highway Department supervised the construction of the bridge and completed the project in only 10 months against the projected time of one year seven months. This also saved Tk 4.67 crore of the government, said a handout.



Basanta Utsab Ujapan Parishad brought out a colourful procession and arranged cultural programmes in the city to celebrate the advent of the Spring yesterday. — Star photo

## Nasirbahini member killed in gunfight with police

**From Staff Correspondent**  
CHITTAGONG, Feb 13: A member of Shibir-backed Nasirbahini was shot dead during a gunfight with police at Roshangiri village under Fatikchhari thana today.  
Police said the dead was identified as Lokman, 30, and one G-3 rifle was recovered from his possession.  
The alleged terrorists had opened fire on police contingent that raided their hideout at 5 in the morning. Police also fired on them. The shootout continued for one hour. Other members of the bahini fled away at one stage of gunfight, police said.  
Police launched the operation on receipt of information that a businessman was abducted by Nasirbahini from Narayanhat under Hathazari thana on Wednesday morning.  
However, the businessman Ranjit Paul was released last night before police raid. But it could not be known whether his release came after payment of ransom.  
The abductors demanded a ransom of Taka ten lakh for his release, local sources said.

## Feni Jubo Dal leader murdered

**FENI, Feb 13:** A local leader of opposition BNP's youth front, Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal, succumbed to his injuries at Sadar Hospital this morning, reports UNB.  
Police and witnesses said Abul Kashem, 36, son of Abdul Kader, was seriously injured when some unidentified armed miscreants attacked him at a tea stall at his village home at West Charchandia around 9 pm on Thursday.  
They opened fire at him and hit by sharp weapons repeatedly. He was rushed to Feni Modern Sadar Hospital at about 11 pm where he died at 7 this morning.  
Kashem was the vice president of Sonagazi thana unit of Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal.  
District BNP convener Mosharrif Hossain, MP, and joint convener Prof Joyanal Abedin blamed ruling Awami League for the killing.  
The local BNP demanded immediate arrest and exemplary punishment to the killers.  
7-party alliance to demonstrate Feb 18, 19  
BNP-led seven-party alliance will stage demonstration in the capital on February 18 and across the country on February 19 demanding cancellation of the CHT accord and protesting price-hike of essential commodities, reports UNB.  
The liaison committee of the alliance announced the programme at its meeting held at 29 Minto Road in the city. BNP Vice-Chairman Shamsul Islam MP chaired the meeting.  
The meeting termed the ceremony of arms surrender by the Shantibahini insurgents a drama and condemned the government for making fun with the nation.  
The alliance also demanded unconditional release of leaders and workers of opposition See Page 12 Col 7

## Uzbek FM's arrival delayed

**Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister Abdul Aziz Kamilov, who was scheduled to begin his official visit yesterday, will now arrive in the city today, reports UNB.**  
A Foreign Ministry spokesman said due to heavy snowfall in Tashkent, the aircraft carrying Kamilov could not take off in time and he failed to get the connecting flight from New Delhi to Dhaka.  
Kamilov, is leading a four-member delegation, will hold official talks with his counterpart Abdul Samad Azad today to review the bilateral relations and explore new areas of cooperation in trade and commerce.  
A trade agreement between Dhaka and Tashkent will be signed by the two Foreign Ministers in Dhaka.



Devotees arriving at the Ijtema venue at Tongi yesterday. — Star photo

## Biman crew's death in custody CID plans to file case against two policemen, informer

**By Masud Arif**  
A fresh murder case accusing two policemen and a police informer is likely to be filed next week in connection with the death of a Biman crew, Nuruz-zaman Sharif, following torture in custody at the city's Tejgaon thana in June last year.  
The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has also planned to recommend departmental proceedings against three other policemen of the Metropolitan Police, a doctor and a magistrate in connection with the death. They will be charged with negligence in discharging duties, police sources said.  
The CID investigators, after about six-month's investigation, is now waiting for an official order from higher authorities to file the case.  
Nuruz-zaman 37, a cabin crew of Biman died on June 16 after he was taken to court custody in the city at the end of two days' police remand. He was arrested on June 13 on charge of illegal trespass into the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) at Tejgaon.  
CID sources said the three persons to face murder charge will include an Assistant Sub-Inspector, a constable and a youngman who worked as an informer of Tejgaon police. The Officer-in-Charge and a Sub-Inspector of Tejgaon thana and another SI of Sutrapur thana are likely to face departmental proceedings.  
The investigators found that a constable of Tejgaon thana had assaulted Nuruz-zaman using his belt and kicked him indiscriminately while in custody. He was tortured while Tejgaon police took him on remand for two days to find out the reason behind the alleged trespass into the PMO.  
During the CID investigation, the police informer gave a confessional statement which supported the evidence that Nuruz-zaman was tortured in custody. See Page 12 Col 3

## Govt making fun over OMS rice: Mannan Bhuiyan

**BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday blamed the government for price hike of rice and making fun with the open market sale (OMS), reports UNB.**  
He said the government is responsible for the increase in the prices of rice, alleging that it could not ensure production cost of agricultural products, as well as power, seeds and loan to farmers during the last one and half years.  
Addressing a public meeting at Atasha High School ground in Shibpur, the BNP secretary general said that the government's failure in the agricultural sector has been reflected through current scarcity of rice across the country.  
Bhuiyan who was the Food Minister in the past BNP government said a 'silent famine' is See Page 12 Col 8

## Meghnaghat power project PDB-AES discord delays deal

**By Sharier Khan**  
The signing of an agreement between the government and a US company, AES, for setting up the Meghnaghat Power Project under private sector participation is being delayed by several months due to difference of opinion over some technical issues, sources said.  
The project, planned for generation of 300 MW to 450 MW power has already been delayed by about seven months due to the disagreement between the Power Development Board (PDB) and the US company.  
AES was found to be the lowest bidder for the project as it had offered a 22 year levelised power tariff of 2.79 cents per unit. This tariff is half the rate of PDB, the sources said.  
However, after the bid opening, PDB raised a number of issues including the tariff structure which begins from zero tariff in the beginning and higher rate in the later period and the length of the Initial Operating Period (IOP).  
At one stage of the disagreement, the Energy Ministry intervened in November last year and the PDB forwarded AESis' project profile for clearance by the Ministry and the Cabinet.  
See Page 12 Col 1

## Bangladeshis to disrupt polls in India!

**By Staff Correspondent**  
Inspector General of Police (IGP) of West Bengal has said they have taken massive security measures at the Bangladesh-Assam border so that 'no intruder from Bangladesh can disrupt the coming Indian Lok Sabha elections,' BBC reported yesterday.  
"BSF at the Bangladesh-Assam border line have been alerted and the police stations adjoining the border line have been ordered to keep vigil on the border to resist intruders from Bangladesh," IGP Dipak Sanyal told BBC.  
The IGP was speaking on the security measures in West Bengal and Assam following threats by the separatists in North-East India that they would resist the Lok Sabha elections.  
An opinion poll published today in The Times of India newspaper, duplicating earlier surveys, said it was, "clear that the country is headed for another hung parliament."  
The poll forecast that the right-wing BJP and its allies, while making major gains, would fall short of a majority by more than 20 seats, winning around 249 of the 545 lower-house seats.  
That would leave the way open for Sonia Gandhi's Congress and the outgoing multi-party United Front minority coalition, who both see a joint effort to stop Hindu nationalists from coming to power, according to another report.  
The nationalists, accused of being sectarian by their rivals, are tipped to top the staggered polls but fall short of a majority.  
That has sparked speculation that the Congress Party, rejuvenated by a campaign by Sonia Gandhi, widow of assassinated former premier Rajiv Gandhi, could revive its alliance with the outgoing coalition government and thwart the nationalists.

## Folk festival in div HQs from next yr

**SONARGAON, Narayanjanj, Feb 13:** Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today called upon the craftsmen to boost production of handmade goods to regain the country's lost glory of crafts and promote export, reports UNB.  
"We want to bring about a revolution in the production process of folk arts and craft with an allot government patronisation," she said inaugurating the month-long Craft Fair and Folk Festival here this morning.  
"We are determined to regain the country's lost glory of folk arts and crafts by making it popular," Hasina said.  
She announced that the government is taking step to arrange craft fair and folk festival at national level in the divisional headquarters, including Dhaka, from the next year.  
"We are also going to take steps to recognise the best craft and folk artists by giving them awards," she said.  
The Prime Minister said it is not possible to bring progress abandoning the traditional culture as well as ignoring the current trend of world development.  
"We will have to use the multi-dimensional trend of cultural development in our socio-economic life upholding the traditional trend of our folk culture," the Prime Minister said.  
Hasina said this craft fair and folk festival has been arranged for the development and flourishing of rural economy. See Page 12 Col 8

## President of SMC labour union arrested

**A labour leader of the Social Marketing Company (SMC) was arrested in the city early yesterday, reports UNB.**  
Police picked up Mosharrif Hossain, president of SMC labour union, from his house in Gulshan at about 1 am. The management had filed a case accusing him and other leaders of provoking some 140 drivers and packers of the company to force its managing director to sign a bond.  
SMC authorities declared lockout on February 8 following a dispute with its labour union.  
On Thursday, Mosharrif told UNB over phone that authorities had declared the lockout all on a sudden when See Page 12 Col 7

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## Imam Bukhari's call to vote for 'secular' candidates

**NEW DELHI, Feb 13:** Various Muslim religious leaders today appealed to the members of their community to vote for 'Good, honest and secular' candidates in order to give India a stable government, report BSS, AFP.  
Naib-e-Imam of Jama Masjid Maulana Syed Abdullah Bukhari today appealed to Muslims to vote against the Hindu nationalists. He also attacked all the main parties for their treatment of country's 125 million Muslims.  
Bukhari charged the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) with intensifying the communal fervour by announcing building of the temple in Ayodhya, uniform civil code and by slogans of 'hindutva'. He pointed out that BJP was gaining strength owing to the follies of Samajwadi Party, Congress and the Janata Dal.  
As regards to the United Front and its partners, he said, the Indian Muslims were disappointed with their performance. "During elections they beg Muslim votes, but they do nothing to solve their basic problems," he added.  
Imam Bukhari also criticised the Congress on the Babri Masjid issue and said, "We had been demanding apology since its demolition and rebuilding the Mosque, but the Congress, in spite of its promise did not take any step to rebuild it."  
In another appeal, the Shahi Imam of Fatehpuri Masjid, Mufti Mohammad Mukarram Ahmed today called for avoiding the division of Muslim votes and participation of the Muslims in the election wholeheartedly to elect unitedly the honest, clean and secular candidates irrespective of their party affiliations.  
Calls gathered pace today for

## 'Smuggled arms were shipped for Indian separatists'

**By Staff Correspondent**  
The arms smugglers arrested by Indian security personnel from an arms-loaded ship in the Bay of Bengal on Wednesday have confessed that they had planned to carry the arms and ammunition to separatist guerrillas of North-East India through Bangladesh, BBC quoted Indian army intelligence officials as saying.  
Indian naval forces and See Page 12 Col 7