

Biswa Ijtema begins

By Staff Correspondent

The Biswa Ijtema, the second biggest annual congregation of the Muslims next to Hajj, began at Tongi near the city yesterday.

Devotees from all over Bangladesh and more than 70 other countries are attending the Ijtema.

The three-day congregation will end with the Akheri Muna-jat Monday noon.

Renowned Islamic scholars and thinkers from home and abroad were delivering speeches and issuing religious sermons to the huge gathering spread over the two square kilometre area on the northern bank of river Turag.

Buses, minibuses, trucks and trains, including special trains, are carrying the devotees round the clock. Many of them are travelling on roof tops of trains and buses.

This is the 32nd Biswa Ijtema organised by the Tablig Jamaat since 1967.

According to organisers and See Page 12 Col 3

Series of explosions in Tamil Nadu kill 32



Workers and officials carrying election materials in an iron box for distribution among officials in New Delhi yesterday. — AP/UNB photo

MADRAS, Feb 14: Thirteen explosions rocked a town in south India today, killing at least 32 people, shortly before a Hindu nationalist leader was scheduled to address an election rally, AP quoting police said.

Rioting between Hindu and Muslim mobs erupted after the explosions and shops were looted, police said. The state government authorised police to shoot to kill rioters, said police commissioner Nanjil Kumar.

No one immediately claimed responsibility. Police said they suspected a radical Muslim group was behind the serial explosions. If related to the election, it would be the worst violent incident in what has been so far an unusually peaceful campaign in India.

The explosions occurred within 90 minutes at a busy market, two restaurants, a bakery and a private residence in the town of Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu state, 2,400 kilometres south of New Delhi, police said. See Page 12 Col 3

Biman's leased F-28 arrives this week

By Special Correspondent

Bangladesh Biman is expected to add a F-28-4000 aircraft to its domestic service, crippled since the crash landing and damage of a similar aeroplane off Sylhet airport on December 22 last.

Airline sources said the aircraft is arriving from Indonesia sometime this week, on a dry lease from a British company, Fortis Aviation.

Biman signed an 'agreement on principle' with the British company on February 7. Accordingly, the company arranged supply of the aircraft from an Indonesian company. Biman is limping with only one turbo-prop ATP to serve its nine domestic routes.

Biman sources, however, declined to disclose the terms of the dry lease arrangement with Fortis Aviation.

The only surviving F-28-4000 of Biman's Fokker fleet is likely to come back from Amsterdam later this month after D-check to join the domestic fleet.

It floated tenders last week See Page 12 Col 7

Rice price hike came too late for farmers

By Inam Ahmed and Reaz Ahmad, back from the northern districts

The rice price hike came too late for them to reap the benefits.

Faced, ironically, with a serious cash crisis, they are now praying for their Boro crop.

Both marginal and medium scale farmers in the northern districts have paid the price, being forced to sell their Aman produces immediately after harvest when prices were still low.

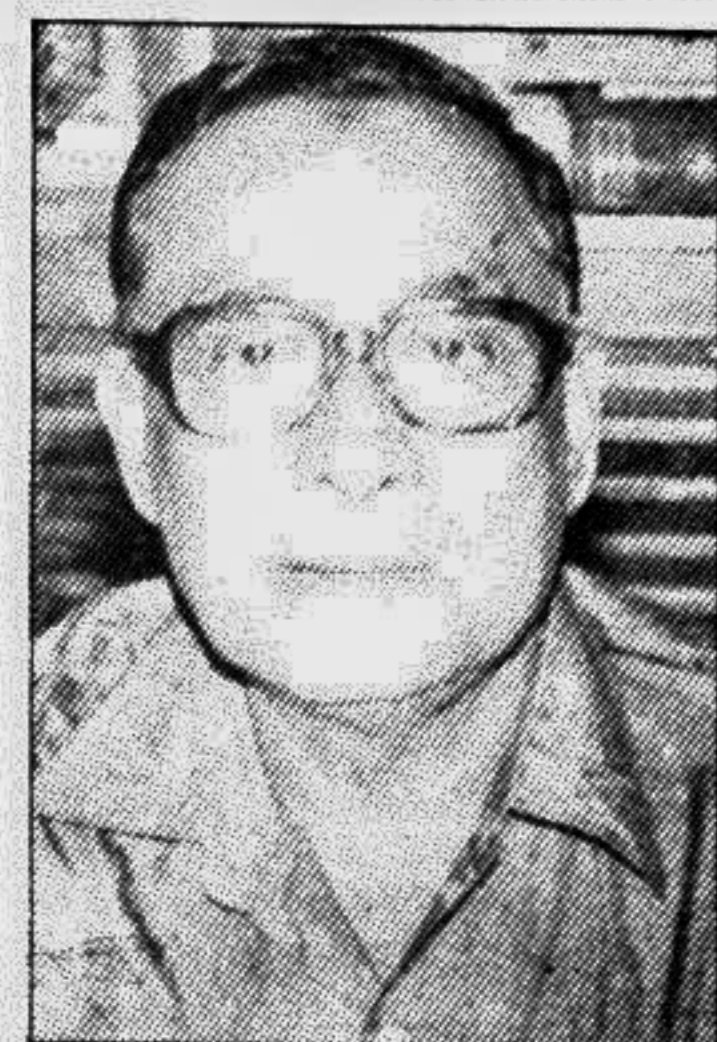
"The high price did not benefit me a single poisha," said Nazir Hossain of Banu Kishmat village of Chilmari thana, Kurigram. "When I sold my paddy it was only Tk 200 per maund. I had no choice because I immediately needed cash to buy fertiliser, seedlings and to pay for family expenses."

Then, who reaped the fruits of the price hike? It was people like Mohiul Islam Mukul, a miller of Ulipur in Kurigram district.

"It was all there in their writing on the wall that prices would jump this year," said Mukul, gleefully. "Harvest was bad and, on top of it, the union parishad elections had resulted in the consumption of huge puffed rice. So, we started buying paddy for as low as Tk 180 a maund. Later, I sold this for as high as Tk 340. In a week's time, price fluctuated from Tk 250 to Tk 310."

The rice bowl of the country, Dinajpur, presents a dismal production picture for this year. Although the USAID in its recent food report has spoken of only a 13.8 per cent production fall, farmers in different parts of the northern district report as much as 50 per cent failure due to adverse weather conditions. In some areas, pest attacks have made things worse.

"Last year, I got about 150 maunds of rice from eight bighas of land," said Shawgat Mia, an aged farmer of Sherpur village of Parbatipur thana, Dinajpur. "This year, I got only See Page 12 Col 8



Badrul Haider Chy dead

Former Chief Justice Badrul Haider Chowdhury died of heart attack yesterday. He was 73, reports UNB.

His family sources said Justice Chowdhury died at about 12 noon at the Gulshan Group Clinic.

Famous for his historic Judgement on the 8th Constitutional amendment, Justice Chowdhury left behind his wife, one son and one daughter, and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

In his judgement, Justice Chowdhury struck down the part of the amendment that split the High Court Division of the Supreme Court into five High Court Benches outside the capital.

See Page 12 Col 8

AL observes 'democracy killing day' today

Ruling Awami League and its front organisations will observe 'Democracy Killing Day' today to mark the February 15 'farce' election under the BNP government, reports UNB.

On this day in 1996, the BNP government held the general elections for the sixth parliament amidst widespread violence and boycott by opposition parties.

The opposition demanded free and fair elections under a neutral caretaker government. The BNP government amended See Page 12 Col 1

Economic Crime Cell

Police need specially trained manpower

By Masud Arif

Police investigation into financial crimes often fails to produce expected result as the authorities concerned do not have efficient manpower for this.

Besides, people involved in financial crimes hold 'privileged positions' in the society.

These were the observations in a proposal submitted to the government by the CID recently to support the formation of an Economic Crime Cell (ECC).

Official sources said the CID proposal emphasised the need for specially trained officials for investigating financial crimes. Those who do the job now do not have required knowledge, special training and experience needed for probing economic crimes, the proposal mentioned.

CID has made a list of money-related crimes to be brought under its jurisdiction for investigation. These are forgery of currency notes, share certificates, stamps and documents, manipulation of share market and crimes relating to insurance, export-import invoicing, hundi business, tax evasion and transfer of money abroad.

The CID list also includes various other fraudulent activities related to banking and investment, credit card accounting and computing.

The proposal for ECC was now in the Home Ministry in the process of implementation, sources said, adding the 88 new See Page 12 Col 8

BNP to build up resistance against govt: Khaleda

BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia has said her party along with the people living in the country and abroad will build up resistance against the government which is 'serving the interest of other country and forces,' reports UNB.

Speaking at a reception accorded to her by expatriate Bangladeshis at Jeddah on Thursday, the opposition leader said, "We must remain alert against those who are ruining the national economy, trade and commerce, and industrial and agricultural production."

Begum Zia, who is now in Saudi Arabia for medical check-up, accused the government of working against national interest on the questions of transit, formation of sub-regional bloc and the CHT accord.

The country has been in back gear since the assumption of power by the present gov- See Page 12 Col 8

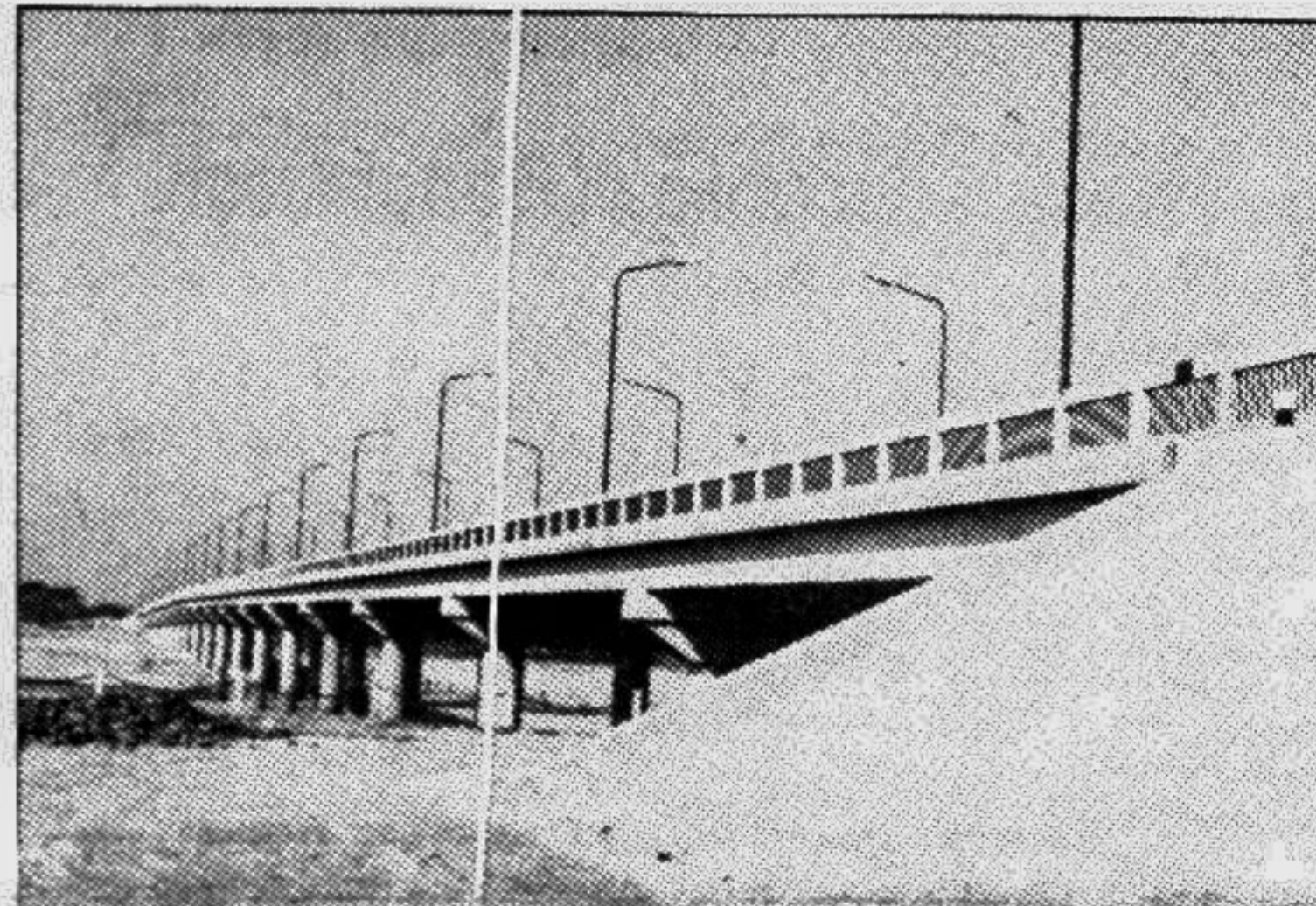
Govt fulfilling its election pledges, says Hasina

Bridge over river Karatoa opens

DEVIGANJ (Panchagarh), Feb 14: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today said her government is committed to the welfare of the people and taking steps to fulfil all its election pledges, reports UNB.

"We have constructed the bridge over Karatoa and are taking every step to ensure economic progress," she said, addressing a huge public meeting near the Karatoa bridge here this afternoon.

The Prime Minister earlier inaugurated the 578-metre long fourth China-Bangladesh Friendship bridge over the river Karatoa that reduces the road See Page 12 Col 1



The fourth Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge over the river Karatoa opened yesterday.

Attempt on OC during gunfight between Jubo League factions

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Feb 14: The OC of Kotwali thana, Sohrab Hossain Molla, escaped an attempt on his life when two rival groups of city Jubo League were locked in a gunfight on the premises of Awami League office at about 11 am today.

The feuding groups fired four shots and hurled some hand bombs at the OC who also retaliated with two shots from his revolver in self-defence from behind an electronic goods shop at Shankha market.

Police lobbed two tear gas See Page 12 Col 5

Police raid on tribal students' room at DU

Police yesterday raided Room No 407 of the Jagannath Hall of Dhaka University but did not find anything subversive or illegal, reports UNB.

The occupants of the room are tribal students. The police raid was criticised by the leaders of Pahari Gana Parishad, Pahari Chhatra Parishad and Hill Women Federation who have been opposing the CHT peace accord.

A joint statement issued by Prasad Bikas Khisa, Dipu Chakma and Kabita Chakma said police harassed the tribal See Page 12 Col 5

Loadshedding acute in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Feb 14: Loadshedding has become a regular feature in Chittagong.

Frequent loadshedding is causing suffering to the people and hampering industrial production.

PDB attributed the loadshedding to a shortfall in production of power due to shortage in gas supply.

PDB sources hinted that the power situation might worsen See Page 12 Col 7

Hajj office shifted

The Hajj office in Dhaka has been shifted to Ashkona, east of the Zia International Airport, from its earlier location at Nimali in the city, reports BSS.

The new telephone numbers of the office are 896574 and 896570, said a press release yesterday.

Hasina-Mahathir summit

Dhaka will offer land for relocation of industries

By Reaz Ahmad

Bangladesh will formally offer her land to accommodate industries which the Malaysian government has planned to relocate in neighbouring countries.

The offer is expected to be made during a summit between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Malaysian counterpart Dr Mahathir Mohammed in Kuala Lumpur sometimes in March or April.

Talking to The Daily Star in the city, Bangladesh High Commissioner to Malaysia Wajed Ali Khan Panni said, responding to an invitation from Mahathir, Sheikh Hasina is going to pay a visit to Kuala Lumpur soon. Dhaka is now awaiting confirmed schedule of the visit.

"Dates for the visit were indicated to be in February or March. However, there are alternative dates in April as well," said the diplomat.

Though hit by a recent slump in South East Asian economies, Malaysia plans to go ahead with its venture for setting up more and more high-tech industries for faster growth and relocate its highly labour-intensive industries in neighbouring countries, said Panni. Mainly television, audio-visual equipment, refrigerator, air cooler and other electronic goods manufacturing units and textile mills fall under the category of labour-intensive industries, he explained.

The Prime Minister is looking forward to a suitable date at the earliest possible time to pay the visit, which will also mani-

fest Bangladesh's solidarity with Malaysia in its efforts for recovery from the economic slowdown, the envoy said a day after he called on Sheikh Hasina.

Besides, Bangladesh would strongly pursue its case for re-deployment of its workers in Malaysian service sectors. They became victims of recent job-cut in the wake of economic slowdown.

In recent weeks, the Malaysian government gave repeated indications that re-trenched foreign workforce would be absorbed in plantation sector and export-led manufacturing units, which have scope for a total of some 80,000 jobs.

"Our Prime Minister is expected to take up the issue with her Malaysian counterpart during the forthcoming visit so that Bangladeshi workers get priority in the process of re-deployment," said Panni.

He also confirmed re-trenchment of some 1,000 Bangladeshi workers over the past few weeks and said none would be sent back home till re-deployment efforts are exhausted.

Good news! Not only for Hilsha lovers but also for people with heart ailments! The fat (oil) of Hilsha, the most popular, abundant and perhaps the tastiest fish in Bangladesh, does not have any harm on human body. Rather it reduces blood cholesterol, which has been blamed for causing heart diseases, revealed a recent study, reports UNB.

According to a research carried out in the Institute of Food Science and Technology (IFST) of BCSIR, Hilsha oil contains more than 50 per cent unsaturated fatty acids of which about 2 per cent is omega-3 fatty acid.

Food scientists said lipid, a food component, is composed mainly of fat (triglycerides or TG), saturated and unsaturated fatty acids, and cholesterol. Hyperlipidemia or presence of higher quantity of lipid in blood, normally causes atherosclerosis, a condition of narrowing blood vessels.

In such a situation flow of blood in human body hampers See Page 12 Col 6



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

National Board of Revenue

Segunbagicha, Dhaka

Sub: Regarding Assistance Cell for Issue of VAT Registration Certificate of the National Board of Revenue.

It is notified for information of the esteemed individuals & firms interested to obtain VAT registration that VAT Registration Certificate is issued from the respective VAT Department Office. To help make issue of the certificate easier and quicker, a "Registration Cell" has been opened at Room No 327 of the National Board of Revenue. In case you face any inconvenience or harassment in obtaining VAT Registration Certificate from field level VAT offices, you are requested to contact the above-mentioned Registration Cell of the National Board of Revenue with written specific complaint. In view of expediting the registration, all kinds of cooperation are extended to the esteemed taxpayers from this Cell.

The undermentioned officer may be contacted for any explanation or information in this regard. Please collect the required form from any VAT Department Office. If necessary, the form will be available also from the undermentioned Cell. All concerned have been instructed to help in filling the form.

Contact address :
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Registration Cell, Room No 327
National Board of Revenue
Segunbagicha, Dhaka
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PROSPECTUS PUBLISHED ON 29TH JANUARY, 1998 IN THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS AND ON 4TH FEBRUARY, 1998 IN THE JANAKANTHA

UNDERWRITTEN BY

Dhaka Bank Ltd, Vanik (Bangladesh) Ltd., Delta Life Insurance Co. Ltd., Green Delta Insurance Co. Ltd., Peoples Insurance Co. Ltd., Fidelity Assets & Securities Co. Ltd., AAA Consultants & Financial Advisers, Bangladesh Mutual Securities Ltd., EC Securities, Capital Market Services Ltd., Swadesh Investment Management Ltd., 42 Dhaka Stock Exchange Members.

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REGISTERED OFFICE: Fu-Wang Building, House#55, Road#17, Banani C/A, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Tel: 885573, 885361, Fax: 880-2-883985. **FACTORY:** Hotapara Monipur, Gazipur, Bangladesh.

Manager to the Issue:

Swadesh Investment Management Limited. 3/1Bijoy Nagar VIP Road Dhaka-1000.

Tel: 9345853-4, Fax: 880-2-836820