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VOL. VIII NO. 325 REGD. NO. DA 781

INTERNET: <http://www.dailystarnews.com>

POUSH 6 1405 BS

DHAKA SUNDAY DECEMBER 20, 1998

SHABAN 30, 1419 HIJRI

16 PAGES : PRICE TAKA 6.00

Ramadan begins tomorrow

The holy month of Ramadan begins tomorrow (Monday) as the moon was not sighted anywhere in the country yesterday, said the Islamic Foundation, reports UNB.

The National Moon Sighting Committee at a meeting yesterday evening evaluated reports from different parts of the country and announced that Ramadan will begin on Monday.

Presided over by State Minister for Religious Affairs Moulana Nurul Islam, the meeting also announced that holy Shab-e Qadr will be observed on the night of January 15.

Diplomatic zone in city under security alert

Security around the US embassy as well as in the capital's diplomatic enclaves has been tightened after the embassy yesterday reportedly received anonymous phone calls threatening bomb attacks, reports APB.

Official sources said the authorities had taken necessary measures to provide security for the citizens of the United States living in the country following the latest US and British air strikes on the Iraqi capital of Baghdad.

Police said different security agencies had been put on alert and huge contingents of personnel both uniformed and in plainclothes deployed in and around the diplomatic enclaves of Baridhara, Gulshan and Banani.

Motor vehicles plying on the roads in the Gulshan and Baridhara areas were being searched on Saturday evening, witnesses said.

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Missiles hit Baath Party office

Fiercest attack, heavy damage

BAGHDAD, Dec 19: The United States blasts military and government buildings in Baghdad today in what appeared to be the fiercest attack on the capital in three days of strikes, reports AP.

Fierce streaks from what appeared to be Tomahawk cruise missiles arched across the sky before dawn. Warheads exploded a few seconds later, lighting the pre-dawn horizon in a red glow that silhouetted palm trees against the dark sky.

Iraqi anti-aircraft gunners on rooftops opened fire, filling the sky with booms and bright red flashes. Orange tracer bullets streaked high above. Iraqi army claimed downing of 77 missiles so far.

When the attack ended, ambulances or fire trucks with sirens blaring were heard speeding away. Officials, who must escort journalists wishing to tour the city, refused to take them to the targeted areas.

Baghdad residents said damage from the Friday and Saturday attacks was heavy and that a number of buildings in the centre of the capital — including palaces, security headquarters and offices of the ruling Baath Party — had been hit.

Western reporters staying at Al-Rashid Hotel in central Baghdad saw explosions in nearby areas known to have palaces, a headquarters of the Special Security Service and the command centre for the Popular Army, which is a paramilitary force.

The walls of the Military Industrialisation Corporation, which oversees state-run factories, were still standing, but the building appeared to have been gutted by missiles.

Today's attack appeared to be the toughest yet against Baghdad since the US and British militaries began air strikes early Thursday to punish Iraq for its obstruction of UN inspectors searching for evidence of weapons of mass destruction.

Before today's attack, the United States fired nearly 300 Tomahawk cruise missiles from ships in the Gulf or from B-52 bomber aircraft. The missiles carry warheads weighing up to 1,350 kilograms.

Sailors rearm their warplanes for more strikes against Iraq today despite the arrival of Ramadan, the Muslim holy month.

"We're preparing for another night. We're expecting to continue," said Adm James Cutler Dawson, commander of the Enterprise Battle Group in the Gulf.

The activity aboard this US aircraft carrier countered speculation that the US and British air assault would be called off for Ramadan, which began today in Iraq. Some nations will begin the month of dawn-to-dusk fasts tomorrow because of later sightings of the moon.

AFP quoting Tehran radio said, thick clouds of black smoke from explosions in Iraq have covered Iranian border regions.

A cloud of smoke has covered Musian, Mehran and Dehloran regions in southwest Iran, it said.

The radio said "strong explosion" on Saturday.

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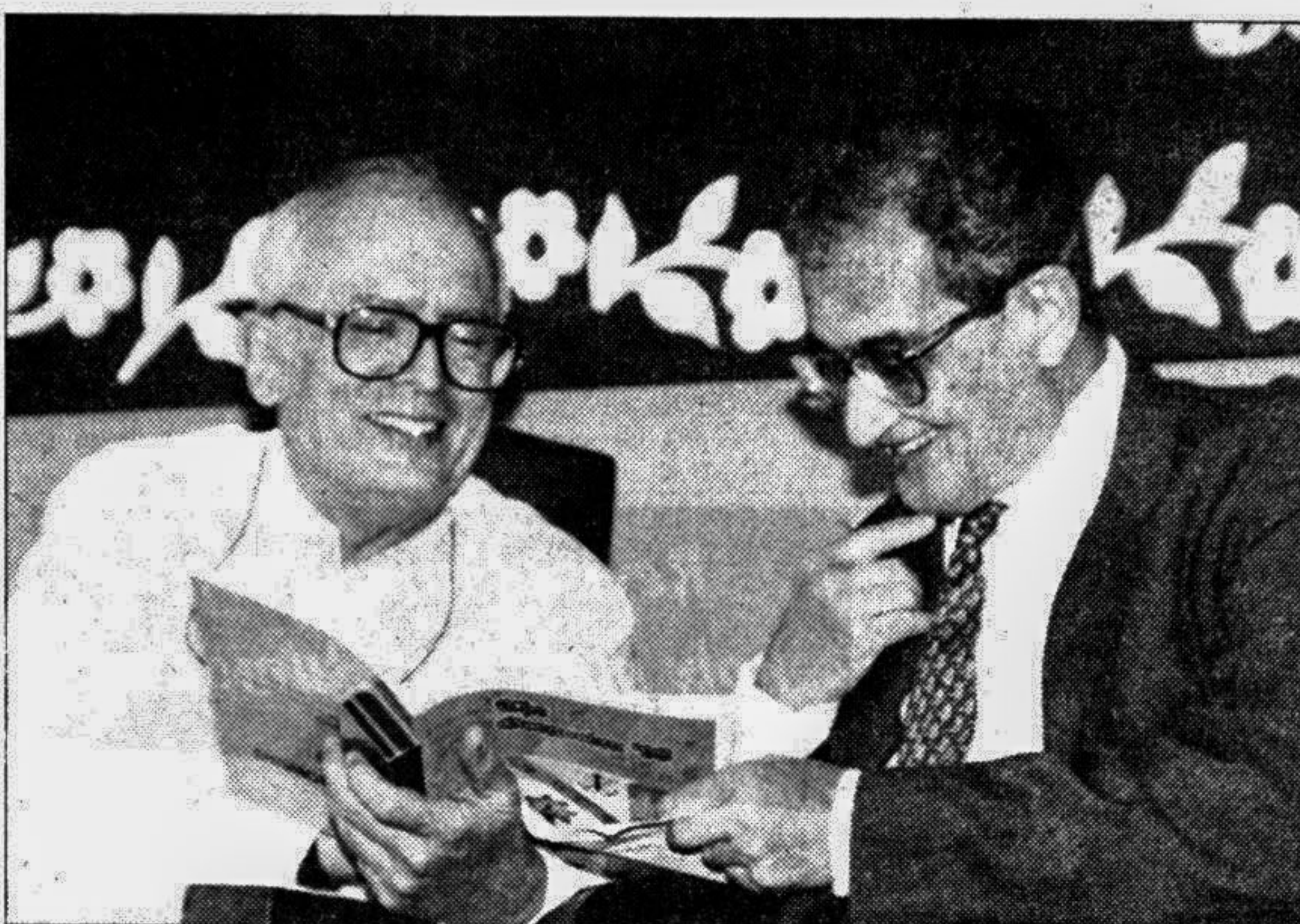
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It's all go for the great Gregorian



St Gregory's was the first choice

He says he was nothing great as a little scholar. But today the world learns from him. As the humble Nobel laureate went to his alma mater yesterday, he recalled his days at the high school more than half a century ago. The school and its students — past and present — did all they could to honour this great *Dhakia chhele*. For Amartya Sen it was a pleasant surprise when Father Peixotto, the headmaster, showed him his 1943 registration card reproduced in a school magazine during a reception.

(More photos on Page 11)

By Staff Correspondent

Amartya Sen says he was not a "good student" in childhood.

"I wouldn't say that I was a remarkable student," Sen told fellow Gregorians at a reception at his alma mater yesterday.

"If anybody wants to differ with me, Father Peixotto (the acting headmaster) can check with the records."

It was a big occasion for the school and its former students as they received the most celebrated Gregorian the school has ever produced.

On a brief tour of the Old City where he lived as a child, Sen stopped at St Gregory's High School, when he recalled his days as a student, his formative years.

"I can clearly recollect those days when I began going to school, my early education life... when I was developing curiosity for various subjects," Sen said as hundreds in a jam-packed school playground listened to the Nobel laureate.

The school and the Gregorians' Association did not miss the chance to honour the second Bengali winner of the Nobel Prize, the first Asian for economics.

Those who gathered included past and present students, guardians, noted citizens, politicians, and teachers of the school and residents of the neighbourhood.

"I feel privileged for being here in Bangladesh and especially at St Gregory's School," Sen said.

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Thrust on pvt sector cooperation BIMSTEC for early setting up of rail, road links

By Staff Correspondent

The second BIMSTEC ministerial meet in the city yesterday "decided on developing rail, road, multi-modal transport, shipping and air linkages" among the member states giving particular emphasis on speedy implementation of the "components" of Trans-Asian Railway and Asian Highway projects.

The 18-month old regional organisation stressed setting up of these linkages for enhancing commercial, industrial, cultural, social interaction and tourism among the five-member countries.

A 22-point joint statement incorporating the decisions of the ministerial meet was released at a press conference yesterday afternoon. It was attended by the participating state ministers and deputy ministers of the five countries.

BIMSTEC is the acronym for Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand for Economic Cooperation. The organisation was formed at a state minister level meeting in Bangkok on June 6 last year and was initially called BISTEC with four founding members. Then after the admission of Myanmar and the Declaration of December 22, 1997, it was renamed BIMSTEC.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury who led the home side at yesterday's conference was the main speaker at the press conference. Indian State Minister for External Affairs Vasundhara Raje, Myanmar's Deputy Foreign Minister U Khin Maung Win, Sri Lankan Deputy Foreign Minister Lakshman Kiriella and Thai Deputy Foreign Minister

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Osmani Airport starts operating wide-bodied aircraft today

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Dec 19: Osmani International Airport here is now all set to operate wide-bodied aircraft with the completion of Runway Extension Project, an official said.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is likely to inaugurate the operation tomorrow, he said.

The inaugural flight BG-801 of Biman is scheduled to land at the Osmani Airport at 2 pm. A 221-seat Airbus with 196 of Economy Class and 25 of Business Class seats will be the first wide-bodied plane to land here. Initially there will be one such flight a week on Friday, a Biman official said.

Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury, foreign minister Abul Kalam Azad, finance minister SAMS Kibria and civil aviation minister Mosharraf Hossain will also attend the function.

The prime minister will also offer *fateha* at the shrine of Hazrat Shahajalal (RA).

The Runway Extension Project was initiated in 1991-92 fiscal with an estimated cost of Tk 100 crore.

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Impeachment House approves one of four articles

WASHINGTON, Dec 19: The US House of Representatives approved the first of four articles of impeachment against President Clinton today, charging he committed perjury before a federal grand jury investigating the Monica Lewinsky affair.

The 228-206 vote marked only the second presidential impeachment in history, reports AP.

Earlier, Clinton stood on the brink of impeachment today in a House torn by partisanship and rocked by the sudden resignation of its next Speaker. For the first time in 130 years, lawmakers were poised to vote on removing a chief executive for "high crimes and misdemeanors."

A somber House engaged in final debate that was brought to an instant hush when incoming Speaker Bob Livingston called on Clinton to resign and then told lawmakers he was resigning from Congress next year because of revelations that he had extramarital affairs.

"I must set the example that I hope President Clinton will follow," Livingston said.

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Tough programme after Eid Hartal in Ramadan, if needed: Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

Opposition leader Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday urged the government to immediately accept BNP's demands to avoid hartal in the month of holy Ramadan.

"We will be compelled to call hartal even in the month of Ramadan if the government fails to reduce prices of essentials including rice, onion, pulses and oil soon," she said.

"If necessary we will announce tougher programmes during Ramadan for the interest of the people," the BNP chairperson said while addressing a huge public meeting at Paltan Maidan in the city.

She also announced a programme of countrywide demonstrations by her party on December 31 to press its demands and threatened to launch massive street protests immediately after the Ramadan to topple the government.

"Insha Allah we will be able to remove this anti-people government through a mass movement after the Eid. The government must be given farewell before the year 2000,"

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the Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad said.

The public meeting was organised by BNP to protest "massive rigging" in the Pabna-2 by-polls and to demand its cancellation, mid-term general election and resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC).

The BNP chief said her party so far called only 12 hartals in the last two and a half years while the Awami League had enforced 173 days' hartal. "Don't be unbalanced by only 12 hartals, wait... hartal and other tougher action programmes are awaiting you (govt). We will teach this autocratic government accordingly," she added.

In her speech Begum Zia repeatedly urged the Awami League government to immediately take measures to reduce prices of essentials and demanded rice at Tk 10 per kg during the Ramadan period under the OMS (open market sale) programme.

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9 children drown in Shankha

CHITTAGONG, Dec 19: Nine children have drowned in the confluence of the Shankha river when an engine boat capsized with a bridal party, reports UNB.

Survivors said all others in the boat could swim ashore. The bodies of Nurul Afsar, 5, Kohinor Aktar, 4, Montajuddin, 5, were found floating in the river today. Six others are feared drowned.

The engine boat capsized with the bridal party when it was going from Raichhara to the house of bride in Anwara on Friday.

Rally in front of Press Club defying ban

By Staff Correspondent

BNP held a big rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday evening defying a ban on gathering there.

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia addressed the rally for about seven minutes.

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Qulkhwani



The Qulkhwani of our beloved son Late Sohail Chowdhury (Solo) will be held on December 21, 1998 after Asr prayers in our residence at House No. 27/E, Road No. 10, Banani. We seek the presence of all relatives and well-wishers at the qul

and pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

"Father & Mother"

C-954

'Anti-crime rally' fails to take place at Ctg

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, Dec 19: A scheduled citizens rally, aimed at "ensuring people's participation in curbing crime in the city," was not held at the Lalghati Maidan today due to opposition from ward commissioners and some local political leaders, sources said.

The Chattogram Metropolitan Community Policing Parishad (CMCPPP), backed by Chittagong city police commissioner Kutubur Rahman had planned the rally.

The police commissioner who is also chairman of the CMCPPP was supposed to address the rally as chief guest.

A minister from Chittagong and the IG of police also reportedly asked the police commissioner not to hold the rally today sidetracking the local leaders and ward commissioners, the sources said.

The ward commissioners of

Chittagong City Corporation issued a joint statement protesting the planned rally and expressing resentment over such a move.

They claimed that the police commissioner, being a government official, had no right to hold a public rally.

"Holding of such a rally, aided by some smugglers and hoarders, was contrary to the interests and activities of the government," the statement said.

They alleged that the elected ward commissioners did not get any cooperation from the Chittagong police commissioner to check terrorism in the city.

When contacted, Kutubur Rahman said, "The ward commissioners are opposing the move out of ignorance as they can not follow the concept of community policing which is

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Action against 18 students 8 expelled from CU

CHITTAGONG, Dec 19: The Chittagong University authorities have taken punitive measures against 18 students after probing allegations against them, reports UNB.

The action against the students belonging to two major political parties was taken for creating obstruction in admission, harassing teachers, employees and common students, issuing threats to provosts, attacking students with sharp weapons, damaging portrait of Bangabandhu.

Eight students expelled from the university for one year are: Mia Mohammad Towfiq (3rd year English-BCL), Kabir Hossain (LLM-Shibir), Mahabub-e-Elahi (2nd year Economics-BCL), Rezaul Hasan Nagesh (2nd year English-BCL), Zahurul Ahsan Sumon (2nd year

Political Science-BCL), Ashraf Shahadat Chowdhury (2nd year English-BCL), Asif Ahmed (3rd year Economics-Shibir) and Mohammad Shahidul Islam Bahar (2nd year Political Science).

The admission of Shah Jamal Sikder (M. Com Marketing) was cancelled for taking admission in two departments, while admission of Mohammad Ismail Bhuiyan of 1st year Sociology was cancelled for taking part in admission test on behalf of another student. Both of them are activists of Shibir.

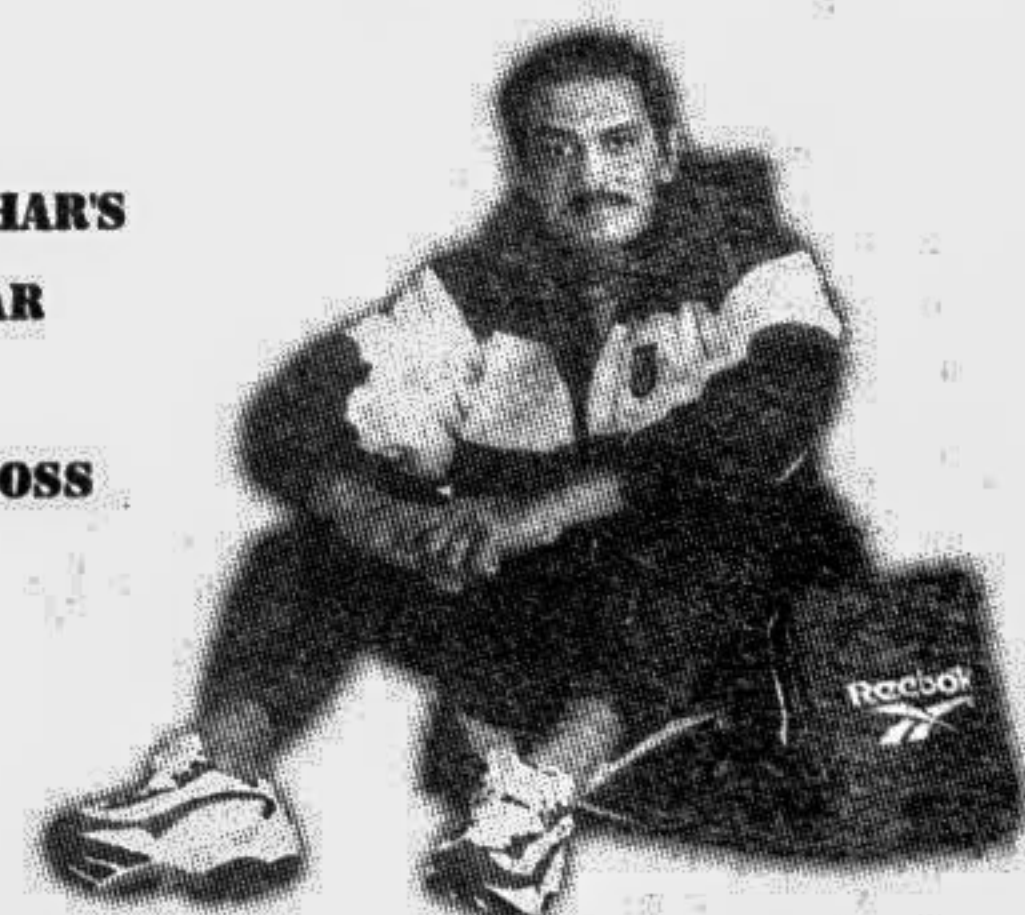
Those fined with Tk 200 each are: Kazi Mohammad Ilyas Kanchan (2nd year Statistics), Akshirul Hossain (2nd year Statistics), Moazzem Hossain Koser (2nd year Management), Mohammad

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