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## Hasina, Ershad invited to BNP's iftar party

BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia will host an iftar party for the political leaders at her 29 Minto Road official residence today, reports UNB.

All the Members of Parliament have been invited. Special invitation was sent to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, a party source said.

Jatiya Party Chairman H M Ershad has also been invited. A high-ranking leader of BNP said that Ershad was included in the list of invitees for the first time.

## 100 JU teachers for 10-yr ban on student politics

By JU Correspondent

Some 100 teachers of Jahangirnagar University (JU) have expressed solidarity with the President's recent call for a 10-year moratorium on student politics, says a press release.

The teachers in a statement yesterday said, "student politics in recent times has detracted from its glorious past. Student activists as supporters of political parties are not following a healthy course," the statement said. "We do not differ with campus or institution oriented student politics," they said.

The teachers also urged all to take effective measures for implementation of the President's suggestions regarding student politics, the release said.

Among others Prof Selim Al Deen, Prof Azizul Haq Bhuiyan, Prof Hasina Matin, Prof Abu Saeed Khan, Afsar Ahmed and Dr Zugal Krishna Das signed the statement.

## Suu Kyi will resist move to deport her

YANGON, Dec 26: Nobel Peace Prize-winner Aung San Suu Kyi has told members of her party that she won't allow Myanmar's military regime to deport her, reports AP.

The opposition National League for Democracy said in a statement obtained today that Suu Kyi told members last week not to worry about rumours that she would be deported after the New Year.

"Party members should not be worried of my deportation," Suu Kyi said. "I am not a citizen of other countries and I have no intention of leaving this country."

Suu Kyi is married to a British academic, Michael Aris. The government often refers to her as spy and puppet of foreign nations, particularly former colonial ruler Britain and the United States.

"I am not a British citizen and my conscience is clear," said Suu Kyi. "How can a government deport its citizen if there is no country to accept him or her?"

## Mild tremor in Chittagong

CHITTAGONG, Dec 26: A mild tremor, the second in six days, was felt here in the early hours of today, reports UNB.

Met office said the tremor occurred at 4:59 AM and lasted six seconds. The epicentre of the tremor was some 34 km off the port.

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### Shri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Dec	Shri	Iftar
7	27	—	5-23
8	28	5-15	5-24
9	29	5-15	5-24

## Hartal threat worries FBCCI

# 'Open land routes with bordering Indian states'

The country's business people yesterday voiced the need for opening land routes with bordering Indian states at several points to boost bilateral trade, reports UNB.

Besides the proposed Dhaka-Calcutta bus route, such links can also be established with Agartala (Tripura), Guwahati (Assam), Darjeeling (West Bengal) and Shillong (Meghalaya), they suggested while exchanging views at the FBCCI conference hall.

Some of them also spoke about establishing Dhaka-Agartala and Dhaka-Guahati airlinks to facilitate smooth and frequent travel of businessmen to explore trade opportunities.

The representatives of different chambers and trade associations from across the country were summoned by the apex trade body — Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) — to speak on the economic situation and the role of FBCCI.

Ventilating their concern over the opposition's threat of hartal after the Ramadan, they said further hartals would

again hit the country's "weakening economy."

The Opposition should seek other ways to settle their differences with the government or share the business losses caused by hartals, some of them advised.

FBCCI president Abdul Awal Mintoos presided over the function, also attended by Metropolitan Chamber president Laila Rahman Kabir and Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) president AKM Shamsuddin.

Painting a grim picture of the country's post-flood economy, some chamber and trade body representatives said the country's economy was showing a downturn, and both trade and industry have a sluggish performance.

They also criticised the government and the banks for not extending adequate support to the small industries, worst hit by the recent flood, to overcome the damage.

They felt that the FBCCI, as the "main parliament" of the business community, could play a more effective role to

save the economy and put it on the right track.

"All the macro and micro economic indicators are negative... economy is moribund," said MA Rouf Chowdhury, an industrialist who contested for the post of FBCCI president this year.

He said many existing industries are facing closure due to lack of credit expansion and working capital support from banks.

Instead of extending help to the small industries to recover from the flood damages, the government rather increased duties which will further shrink the business and industrial ventures, Rouf Chowdhury feared.

A trade association leader, Nazrul Islam, pointed to the higher interest rates on bank loans which, he said, was caused by huge defaulting loans. Small scale genuine borrowers are bearing the cost by paying higher interests, he said.

Nazrul Islam hoped that bilateral trade would increase of road and air links could be established with Guwahati, Shillong.

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Students of Dhaka University wearing masks and covering their faces with black cloth march in a procession on the campus yesterday in their continued protest against alleged sexual abuses by teachers.

## DU tense as rival groups issue threats

By DU Correspondent

Tension gripped the Dhaka University campus yesterday when two rival groups of students brought out separate processions and held rallies.

One group under the banner of "Students Protecting Sexual Harassment" was demanding punishment to teachers allegedly involved in sexual harassment and the other styled "Conscious Students" was staging programmes to "protect the image of teachers".

The "Conscious Students" group announced at their rally that they would capture the Vice-chancellor's office premises today and resist their rival's programme of burning effigies of accused teachers.

Witnesses said that the two groups were about to clash at about noon when activists of the "Conscious Students" group who were holding a rally at the Aparajito Bangla allegedly hurled indecent remarks at a SPSH procession, which was passing through the area.

The SPSH brought out a silent procession from in front of the DUCSU building wearing masks and carrying banners.

The "Conscious Students" group which appeared in the scene on Thursday gathered at the Aparajito Bangla in the morning after parading the campus carrying placards reading "Save your varsity from NGO and Garment Workers".

Speakers at the rally alleged that the students who were staging programmes against teachers were garment workers and NGO agents. They are

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## Commentary

# Another shameful event in our sordid politics

By Mahfuz Anam

Once again we have lowered ourselves in our own eyes. A politician of dubious distinction is the centrepiece in a tug of war between our two leading parties. What is the worth of politicians like M.A. Khaleque? For some one who has been in all parties that formed governments in independent Bangladesh, what better term can there be than "shameless opportunist". Haven't the "Khaleques" in our politics destroyed whatever honesty, ethics and credibility that remained in it in spite of years of military and autocratic rule? Haven't they, through their ready collaboration with whichever party came to power, regardless of the means by which it came to power, given politics and the politicians a bad name and an image that has all but destroyed public confidence in our elected leaders?

For good twenty-one years the Awami League was out of power. Therefore it was free from such practices and clearly not guilty of indulging in this type of sordid politics. But coming to power after two decades, AL appears to be in a hurry to

make up for all the corrupt politics that it failed to indulge in during all these years in wilderness. Recall the "bribing" of two BNP MPs into the ruling party camp with two junior ministries.

We would like to raise three questions in this commentary. First, what is the future of our democracy if this "buying and selling" of politicians becomes the practice rather than the exception, and what will be the level of our politics if the ruling party tries to allure, bribe or coerce other party leaders and MPs into joining its ranks, in such a corrupt manner? Second, how could the Prime Minister allow herself to be associated with a person of such notorious background that exposed herself and her office to such a ridiculous situation? Third, what has been the role of the DGF in all this?

We consider the event surrounding Khaleque's "joining" the AL and then denying it in the evening as one of the most shameful and disgusting episodes in the history of our democratic politics. What possible gain could there be for a party like the Awami League to

bring into its fold a politician whose credibility, respect and value to any party he joins is all but non-existent. He has always been with the ruling party starting from the days of Pakistan, and then shifted from AL to BNP to JP to BNP. We can understand his appeal to military regimes. But to the democratically elected ones is beyond our comprehension. Unless of course the latter are themselves changing their colour which we don't know about.

What message are we to carry home from the fact that both AL and BNP covet such "politicians"? Today, after successfully "rescuing" Khaleque from AL's hands BNP is keeping him in a safe place — away from home of course — so that AL activists cannot grab him, or he cannot make another summer-sault even if he wishes to. We can bet Khaleque will not be left to himself for quite some time by either parties. It is like collecting your chicken and keeping it in your own cage, lest anyone else should grab it. And of course you need all the

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## 2 AL leaders at odds over Khaleque

By Nazmul Ashraf and Reaz Ahmad

The S. A. Khaleque drama has brought to the fore a deep row between two top-ranking ruling party politicians.

Allegations and counter-allegations by Awami League and BNP have been the main contents of the other episodes of the high drama, but the Dhaka mayor and the Mirpur MP have now stormed on to the stage.

Awami League MP Kamal Ahmed Majumdar has accused his party colleague Mayor Mohammad Hanif of staging the "Khaleque drama" in a bid to teach him (Majumdar) a lesson. But an angry Hanif vehemently denied the allegation expressing his "total ignorance" of the event.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, Kamal Majumdar termed Hanif the architect of the "Khaleque episode".

"For the last several months, I've been a strong critic of Hanif for his failure as mayor. As the mayoral election is nearing, Hanif has been gradually losing confidence in me and finally he tried to find my substitute in Khaleque."

Kamal's charges against the mayor were also backed by some ruling party insiders who termed the decision of taking Khaleque in AL "a political blunder".

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# BB bows to Beximco

By M Shamsur Rahman

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) has finally allowed Beximco's fictitious loans (benami) as used in the central bank letter to be rescheduled, but the terms and conditions would mean huge financial losses for IFIC Bank in accrued interest.

The rescheduling was allowed after Governor Dr Faruquddin gave a personal hearing to Sohel and Salman Rahman, Chairman and Vice-Chairman of IFIC Bank. They hold similar positions in the Beximco Group.

Under the new arrangements, a simple interest rate will be applied on the consolidated loans of Beximco taken under fictitious accounts.

Interestingly, the loans of Baghkhali Fisheries, another associate company of Beximco, were incorporated into the consolidated account and allowed simple interest rate instead of the compound rate.

This means IFIC will have to incur losses on account of interests and the shareholders will also have to swallow the losses.

Earlier, the BB had several times refused to entertain the Beximco plea.

The new arrangements would be effective from January 1 this year. The outstanding rescheduled amount of Tk 12 crore due from January 1, 1998 would have to be paid within January 31, 1999, failing which the entire arrangements would become void.

"Separate accounts will be maintained for the principal amount and interest component," according to the BB letter.

"Balance of fictitious loans outstanding in various names of Beximco Group and Baghkhali Fisheries Ltd at different branches of the bank will have to be consolidated at only one branch of the bank in only one press release added.

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## BCL faction captures DU hall

A faction of the ruling party backed Chhatra League took control of Fazzul Haq Hall of Dhaka University ousting their rivals yesterday, reports APB.

Resident students said a group of outsiders, led by the BCL hall unit secretary, Ilias, drove out 15 activists of their rival group and occupied the dormitory.

The ousted students belonged to the group led by the hall president, Sagar, campus sources said.

Tension was prevailing in the DU hall following the incident.

Paribesh Parishad's call not to take up 'provocative programmes'

By DU Correspondent

The Dhaka University Paribesh Parishad has urged all concerned not to take up any programme which might spoil academic atmosphere at the university before the report of the inquiry committee is published.

The call was made at a meeting of the Parishad yesterday with Vice-Chancellor Prof AK Azad Chowdhury in the chair. The meeting was attended by leaders of various student organisations. Proctor of the university Prof AKM Nur-Un-Nabi

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## AL shrugs off unity bid in opposition camp

By Nurul Kabir

The ruling Awami League believes that the reported opposition unity in the making is nothing to worry about and unlikely to have any impact on the political situation.

Reluctant to take the unity move in the opposition camp seriously, some ruling party stalwarts find it only natural that parties like BNP, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami would eventually team up against the AL.

"The so-called move for solidarity among the BNP, Jatiya Party and Jamaat is not so important a development that could make the AL policy planners sit together to work out a fresh strategy," says Amir Hossain Amu, the party's influential presidium member.

The alliance of these parties miserably failed to defeat us in the recent parliamentary by-elections in Pabna. Their unity at the national level would

produce the same results."

Tofail Ahmed, the commerce and industries minister and another influential presidium member of the party, believes that the reported move for unity among the BNP, JP and Jamaat is "nothing but a solidarity among those rejected by the people in the last general elections."

"We do not have to worry about it. What is more important is to win the next election."

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## Monju differs

Star Report

Unlike his friends in the ruling Awami League, Jatiya Party leader and a member of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Cabinet Anwar Hossain Monju believes that a possible alliance between BNP, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami

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## JP regrouping, ready for simultaneous movement

A meeting of the Jatiya Party Presidium yesterday endorsed the idea of a simultaneous anti-government movement with the main opposition BNP and other parties, reports UNB.

The meeting at the JP Chairman's office at Baridhara with party chief HM Ershad in the chair also finalised an 8-point plan of action.

It was decided in the meeting that the party would join a simultaneous anti-government movement if BNP supports the JP's ideal of compelling the government to hold all the local government elections, including Upazila election, under a caretaker government.

The meeting emphasised on building the party's image as an opposition party among the countrymen.

The presidium members endorsed the reinstatement of Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury as the party's presidium member and also the Vice-Chairman.

The meeting also welcomed

the initiative made by Kazi Zafar Ahmed to return to the mainstream with the break-away faction headed by him and Shah Moazzem Hossain.

The presidium decided that both Kazi Zafar and Shah Moazzem will be reinstated in their earlier position.

Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury did not attend the meeting on ground of illness although he came to the party chairman's office to meet Ershad.

Sources said that after holding closed-door talks with the party chairman, Mizan left the place without joining the meeting.

Meanwhile, former JP secretary general and Communications Minister Anwar Hossain Monju attended the presidium meeting but left long before it was finished.

Our Staff Correspondent adds: The JP Presidium also decided that Ershad would attend the council session of JP (Zafar-Moazzem) faction in the city to-

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# Bus accident kills 10 in Sirajganj

SIRAJGANJ, Dec 26: At least 10 people were killed and 75 others injured in a road accident involving three passenger buses on the Dhaka-Bogra highway in Kamarkhand thana today, reports APB.

Police and witnesses said six people died on the spot while four others succumbed to their injuries at the Sirajganj General Hospital.

Doctors feared the death toll from the accident, one of the

worst in recent months, could rise further as some of the injured were still fighting for their lives.

Of the dead, six were identified as Nazrul Islam, 36, and Abdul Mannan, 30, of Bogra and Abdus Sattar, 46, of Naogaon. Dilip Suker, 42, driver of Raonak Paribahan hailing from Dhaka, D/R Paribahan driver Badshah, 35, from Tangail and Hamidul, 20.

Witnesses said the body of a BDR jawan was taken to Bogra

while three others aged between 35-40 were taken to Rangpur and Bogra by their relatives without postmortem examination.

Witnesses and survivors said the accident occurred when a Dhaka-bound passenger bus collided with a Rangpur-bound bus at a place in between Jhal-wali over-bridge and Konabari at 1 pm. Moments after another Naogaon-bound bus rammed the two vehicles.

About 30 seriously injured passengers of the three buses were admitted to Sirajganj General Hospital. Some of the injured were rushed to Bogra Mohammad Ali Hospital.

Meanwhile, some passengers of the buses alleged that their belongings were looted by a section of people who gathered at the spot after the accident.

The Deputy Commissioner and police super of Sirajganj visited spot.

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