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## '96 share scam Court takes up Doha's case today

By Staff Correspondent

The prosecution will begin framing charges today against three companies accused in the 1996 share scam cases as a Dhaka court takes up trial after almost two years.

The Additional District and Session Judge will hear the charges against the three -- Doha Securities, Beximco Pharmaceuticals and Shinepukur Holdings.

Charges would be framed today against one of the three -- Doha Securities and the accused in this case is AKM Shamsud-doha.

Tomorrow, charges would be framed against Sohail F Rahman, Salman F Rahman and ABM Siddiqui Rahman of Shinepukur Holdings, and Sohail F Rahman, Salman F Rahman and DH Khan of Beximco Pharmaceuticals.

Earlier, on November 30, Salman F Rahman, Sohail F Rahman, AB Siddiqui Rahman and AKM Shamsuddoha were granted bail in connection with the three cases.

Sources said that the attorney general is likely to appear See Page 12 Col 8

## BNP demands introduction of voters' ID card for fair polls

BNP yesterday demanded introduction of voters' Identity Card to ensure fair elections, reports UNB.

The demand came when representatives of FEMA, a non-government election monitoring group, called on Begum Khaleda Zia at her official residence last night.

Emerging from the meeting that lasted nearly one and half hours, BNP vice-chairman Barister Nazmul Huda told the news agency that his party felt introduction of voters' ID card and replacement of Chief Election Commissioner are essential for ensuring a free and fair polls.

See Page 12 Col 4

## Projonmo '71 may split

By Staff Correspondent

Projonmo '71, an organisation of children of martyrs of the Liberation War, is heading towards a formal split over formation of a new central executive committee.

There are two groups in the organisation, one led by its former president Saidur Rahman and the other by former general secretary Tawhid Reza Nur. The two groups have been organising separate programmes on different occasions for some time now.

A central executive committee See Page 12 Col 4

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### Prayer Timings

January 3			
Azan	Jamaat		
Fajr	5-17	5-22	
Zohr	12-45	1-15	
Asr	4-00	4-15	
Maghrib	5-27	5-29	
Esha	7-00	7-15	

Source: Islamic Foundation

### Shetri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Jan	Shetri	Iftar
14	3	—	5-28
15	4	5-17	5-28
16	5	5-18	5-29

## Ctg flowing with illegal arms

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, Jan 2: The port city and its surrounding areas are flowing with illegal arms and ammunition, posing a threat to law and order, sources concerned said.

These arms are mostly possessed by political activists, terrorists, illegal toll collectors and miscreants.

The illegal arms include sophisticated AK-47 assault rifle, AK-22 rifle, LMG, rocket launcher, sten gun, SMG, sawed rifle, SLR, revolver, LG and pipegun etc, the sources added.

Most of the sophisticated arms are in the hands of activists of 'three political parties' who have separate hideouts at different places in the city including Pahartali, Nandankhanon, City College area, Chittagong Medical College Hotel and Chittagong College Hotel, Chandanpura, Nur Ahmed Road, Nasirabad, Fulatoli area, Raufabad colony,

Raizan, Fatikchhari and Chandanais.

Some local leaders of the three political parties allegedly finance purchase of illegal arms by their activists. These were procured from some insurgent groups in Myanmar and some foreign vessels engaged in carrying smuggled goods to the outer anchorage of Chittagong Port, the sources said.

Earlier, sophisticated arms were procured from Shan-tubahini men in exchange of huge payments, they mentioned.

Recently, jungle-covered no-man's-land between Bangladesh and Myanmar borders turned into a clandestine market for sale of illegal arms and drugs.

In the just ended year, metropolitan police recovered a number of arms including three

See Page 12 Col 3



Time to take on them!

It seems only the *Eids* serve the wakeup calls for the law keepers. Smuggled *sarees* become illegal only before the festivals. As these poor pullers come under police swoop in city's Mouchak area yesterday, it only reminds us of the annual routine that probably speaks for itself. — Star photo by Amran Hossain

## Rickshaws with fake licence flood city

About one lakh rickshaws with fake or no licence are plying on the streets of Dhaka city ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr causing serious traffic jam at important points everyday.

Deputy Commissioner of Traffic Police Mostaque Hossain told UNB that rickshaws from the suburbs are entering the city worsening the situation.

According to an official of the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) more than four lakh non-motorized vehicles, mainly rickshaws, are now plying on the city roads.

Normally about 3 lakh rickshaws, rickshaw-vans, pushcarts, bullock carts, bicycle and horse-drawn carriages ply in the city's 2,000 kilometre roads and lanes.

Of the 4 lakh rickshaws plying on the city roads, only 80,000 are licensed, according to the registration record of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

The DC Traffic said a city needs at least 25 per cent road space, but Dhaka has only 8 per cent road space.

Another major cause of the traffic jam is hawkers' taking over of the pavements and part of the roads. Parking of cars on both sides of the roads adds to worsen the situation, he added.

## Ershad gets unnerved as Manju moves quietly

By Special Correspondent

Jatiya Party chief General Ershad is busy keeping vigil on party MPs in a bid to keep them off the orbit of communication minister Anwar Hossain Manju, fired from the party last week.

Both sides are trying to secure support of as many party MPs as possible. Ershad is making all-out efforts to deny his former lieutenant any chance of forming a separate parliamentary group of JP.

Manju is quietly courting the MPs since he was stripped off his primary membership of the party on Wednesday explaining his own position and seeking their support in his battle with Ershad.

Ershad's remarks at the JP founding anniversary programme on Friday virtually sealed off chances of a reconciliation. The former general came down heavily on Manju, blasting him for turning JP

into a "B-team" of the ruling Awami League.

Manju also gave similar indications. The minister told The Daily Star last night that there was no possibility of a rapprochement with Ershad now.

Some JP leaders had made an abortive attempt to repair the heavy dents in relations between the two. Sources said party stalwarts like Sheikh Shahidul Islam, Munirul Huq Choudhury and Sardar Amjad Hossain had taken the initiative.

Meanwhile, Ershad, who was flanked by only four JP MPs at the founding day *iftar* party, fired a warning salvo at those MPs watching the feud from the sidelines. He also warned those who had already rubbed their shoulders with Manju.

"They will not be pardoned," See Page 12 Col 2

## Water flow of Padma falling

PABNA, Jan 2: Water flow of the Padma river is falling at a rate of four to five thousand cusecs daily at the Hardinge Bridge point, reports UNB.

The flow was recorded at 1,41,277 cusecs on Thursday, sources in the Water Development Board said. The flow was 1,82,286 cusecs on January 1 last year.

Joint monitoring of the water flow by the officials of Bangladesh and India is scheduled to begin tomorrow. The Indian team is likely to arrive at the Hardinge Bridge point today.

The sources said that a four-member Bangladesh team reached the Farakka point a few days back to monitor the water flow there as per the 30-year Ganges water-sharing treaty with India.

## As JP bids bye, AL may look for new allies

By Reaz Ahmad

The Ruling Awami League is set to face an all-opposition movement against the backdrop of rapid developments in the political arena following a change of stance by Jatiya Party which was a partner in its 'consensus government'.

As the major opposition BNP tries to forge a greater unity taking JP and Jamaat-Islami into its fold, Awami League can no longer afford to remain oblivious of an eventual post-Eid united movement by the opposition, AL sources said.

AL has taken it seriously that Ershad sacked Communications Minister Anwar Hossain Manju from his party. AL leaders are now keenly observing the new polarization in national politics. Manju's joining Sheikh Hasina's Cabinet was the only visible expression of

JP's support to her so-called 'consensus government'.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, some senior leaders of AL said the party will face the opposition movement 'politically'.

All district units of AL have already been asked to resolve intra-party feuds, if any, at local levels and get prepared for "a political hot weather" after Eid-ul-Fitr, one source said.

The source, a presidium member of the party, gave an indication that the party would revive exchange of views with some left-leaning parties, a practice almost forgotten by the party for about one year now.

AL Chief Sheikh Hasina already had some discussions on the current political developments with some of her senior party colleagues. Some leaders hinted that

meetings of the AL Presidium and the Central Working Committee may be held soon to take stock of the situation.

Meanwhile the BNP Standing Committee is scheduled to meet today (Sunday) to fix a 'minimum common ground' for the three opposition parties to start with.

If finalised, BNP will communicate the decisions to JP and Jamaat for their consideration for launching movement after Eid with a common programme.

Sources in AL told The Daily Star that those who rallied round a common opposition platform were beneficiaries of the post-75 era and they all believed in 'Bangladeshi Nationalism'. "They are out to save the convicted killers of Bangladesh," said a senior AL See Page 12 Col 1

## Conspiracy on to create unrest: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the anti-liberation forces are hatching conspiracy to create unrest in the society and called upon all to remain united for establishing the spirit of Liberation War, reports UNB.

"It's not difficult to understand the motives of those trying to create unrest in the society and issuing threats to oust the government for protecting the killers," she said while addressing a prize distribution ceremony, organised by the Mukti Juddha Sangsad Central Command Council.

Prizes were distributed among the winners of speech and quiz competition, organised by the Sangsad Central Command Council on October 30, 1998.

Several thousand school students from Dhaka and adjoining districts took part in the competition on subjects relating to the Liberation War and See Page 12 Col 8

## 80 RU teachers lend support to agitating DU students

RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY, Jan 2: Eighty teachers of the Rajshahi University (RU) have expressed solidarity with the DU students agitating against alleged sexual harassment of some female students, reports APB.

In a statement today, they also expressed concern over what they described as 'sex scandal' in the DU and condemned the attack on the agitating students who demanded exemplary punishment to the See Page 12 Col 7

## BNP leaders to attend JP's Iftar party Jan 7

BNP leaders will attend an *iftar* party being hosted by Jatiya Party Chairman H M Ershad at Hotel Sheraton on January 7, reports UNB.

The invitation of Ershad to BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia and other leaders were handed over to her by JP presidium member Kazi Firoz Rashid at her official residence yesterday evening.

After accepting the invitation Begum Zia regretted that she would not be able to attend the *iftar* party as she will leave for Saudi Arabia on that day. "But other leaders of BNP will attend," she told reporters.

Kazi Firoz, a junior minister during the Ershad regime, had an hour-long meeting with Begum Zia. Later he said he discussed with her the political situation prevailing in the country, issues for united movement after the Eid and prospect of election alliance in the upcoming mayoral polls.

Replying to a query, he told reporters that Begum Zia is not opposed to the idea of an alliance but left the matter for future discussion.

## Books worth Tk 1cr gutted in old city

A huge property, including computers, air-conditioners and books were gutted in two separate incidents of fire in a book godown at Luxmibazar and at Senakalyan Sangstha in the city yesterday, reports BSS.

Fire brigade and police sources said, a fire broke out in a book godown located on the first and second floors of a four-storied building at Luxmibazar at about 2 am. Five fire brigade vans, two each from headquarters and Sadarghat fire station and one from Postagola, rushed to the spot.

The fire originated from an electric short circuit, the fire brigade sources said.

Fire fighters estimated the loss to be nearly Taka one crore. In another incident, a fire originated from an electric short circuit at an office of a shipping lines located on the tenth floor of the Senakalyan Bhaban at Motijheel Friday night caused a huge damage. The fire damaged 10 computers, six air-conditioners, ceiling fans, carpet and furniture worth about Tk 200,000.

## 'Banks, lending agencies captive to 87 families'

Banks and lending agencies in the country have become 'hostages' in the hands of only 87 rich families who borrowed heavily from them but never paid back, an economist said yesterday, reports APB.

There are also 22 sitting members of parliament (MPs) who have been on the list of defaulters, said Mohammad Ziaul Hoque of Victoria University of Technology in Melbourne, Australia.

"If the lawmakers do not repay their loans, who will abide by the laws they make," he questioned at a seminar on Industrial Loan Defaults: Remedial Policies and Strategies at BIBM auditorium in the city.

He pointed out that since 1970s, banks and development finance institutions (DFIs) in Bangladesh have been handicapped by persistent loan defaults. "The nation's banking system is on the verge of collapse,"

Apart from concentration of bank credits in only a few hands, Hoque pointed out, re-

peat defaulters' were able to grab large chunk of the nation's scarce resources by using political influence and outside intervention.

He cited a number of factors that were responsible for loan default: flawed credit delivery system, high debt-equity ratio, high term and variable ratios, delayed credit disbursement and inappropriate loan repayment instalment.

Bank (BSB) Bangladesh Shipa DPLs like Boud not only extend short and long-term finance, but also ensure close monitoring of industrial projects they were supporting.

Bangladesh Bank Deputy Governor Khondker Ibrahim Khaled gave examples of political intervention in sanctioning loans during the '80s and pointed out that there was no basic problem in the process of sanctioning the loans.

There are enough expertise in the nationalised banks or in the BSB. The question is how efficiently you utilise the expertise for dealing with a loan

portfolio," he said. Khaled pointed out that the reform measures carried out in the banking sector between 1991 and 1995 had apparently failed to bring about any improvement in the loan repayment scenario.

On December 31, 1990, he recalled, some 29 per cent of the loan portfolio of all NCBs was identified as classified while the percentages for the private commercial banks (PCBs) were only 25.

After five years of reforms, classified loan portfolios for the NCBs went up to 34 per cent and for PCBs 43 per cent on December 31, 1995, the central bank official mentioned.

"It can be said from the example that such measures did not work in Bangladesh," he said, adding that BB was now trying hard to bring about a change in the total situation.

Referring to the concentration of loans in a few hands, Khaled remarked that they might be a handful of borrow-

See Page 12 Col 7

## Basic edn a must to speed up economic development: Sen

NEW DELHI, Jan 2: Nobel economics laureate Amartya Sen said today that India needed to give a boost to basic education of speed up its economic development, reports Reuters.

Describing illiteracy as "an issue of greatest concern," Sen added, "social change is something in which elementary education plays a major part."

India has one of the highest rates of illiteracy in the world with 52 per cent of its population, or 424 million people, unable to read or write.

Sen, awarded the Nobel Economics Prize last year for his contributions to welfare economics, told a meeting of educationists that elementary education was "a central component of any kind of economic development."

The country was facing

growing illiteracy levels and was in danger of becoming one of the most illiterate parts of the world, Sen said.

Economic powers such as Japan had high levels of education before they advanced towards industrial development, he added.

The first step has to be to make elementary education a fundamental right (in India), he said.

Sen said providing elementary education would be mostly a labour intensive effort not involving huge capital expenditure.

It demands those things which even a poor country can provide at a relatively low price," he added.

State spending on education as a share of gross domestic product has risen from 0.7 per-

See Page 12 Col 8

## Military courts to try 7 MQM activists

KARACHI, Jan 2: Seven activists from the ethnic Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM), including three provincial deputies, will be tried by Pakistan military courts on murder charges, officials said today, reports AFP.

They will be the first MQM activists to face trial by military courts since the government introduced the tribunals early last month in a crackdown on terrorism and violence in Karachi.

The three deputies — Kazi Khalid, Zulfiqar Haider and Li-aquat Qureshi — have been in hiding and will be tried in absentia. The rest of the seven accused are in police custody.

MQM represents the Mohajir community made up of Muslims who migrated from India after the partition of the subcontinent in 1947 and settled in southern Sindh province, of which Karachi is the capital.

The party broke a political alliance with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in October when

he accused it of involvement in the murder of a former provincial governor Hakim Mohammad Saeed.

Sharif dismissed the elected government in Sindh following the split with the MQM and clamped direct federal rule on the region. He later set up military courts for speedy trials.

The MQM alleges that the government campaign is aimed at crushing it.

The first death sentence ordered by a military court was carried out on Thursday when a man convicted of killing a police constable was hanged in a Karachi jail.

Opposition parties have condemned the execution, pointing out that petition challenging the formation of military courts were pending in the Supreme Court and the Sindh High Court.

Sharif said here Friday the military courts were performing satisfactorily and criminals were being given the punishment they deserved.

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