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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 Shamsuddoha.

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

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

Sources said that the attorney general is likely to appear

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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 Barrister 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 poll.

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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 Sайдур رحمن 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

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fall short of target  
by 11pc

Euro gives birth to  
price difference in  
Europe

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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

### Sehri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Jan	Sehri	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.

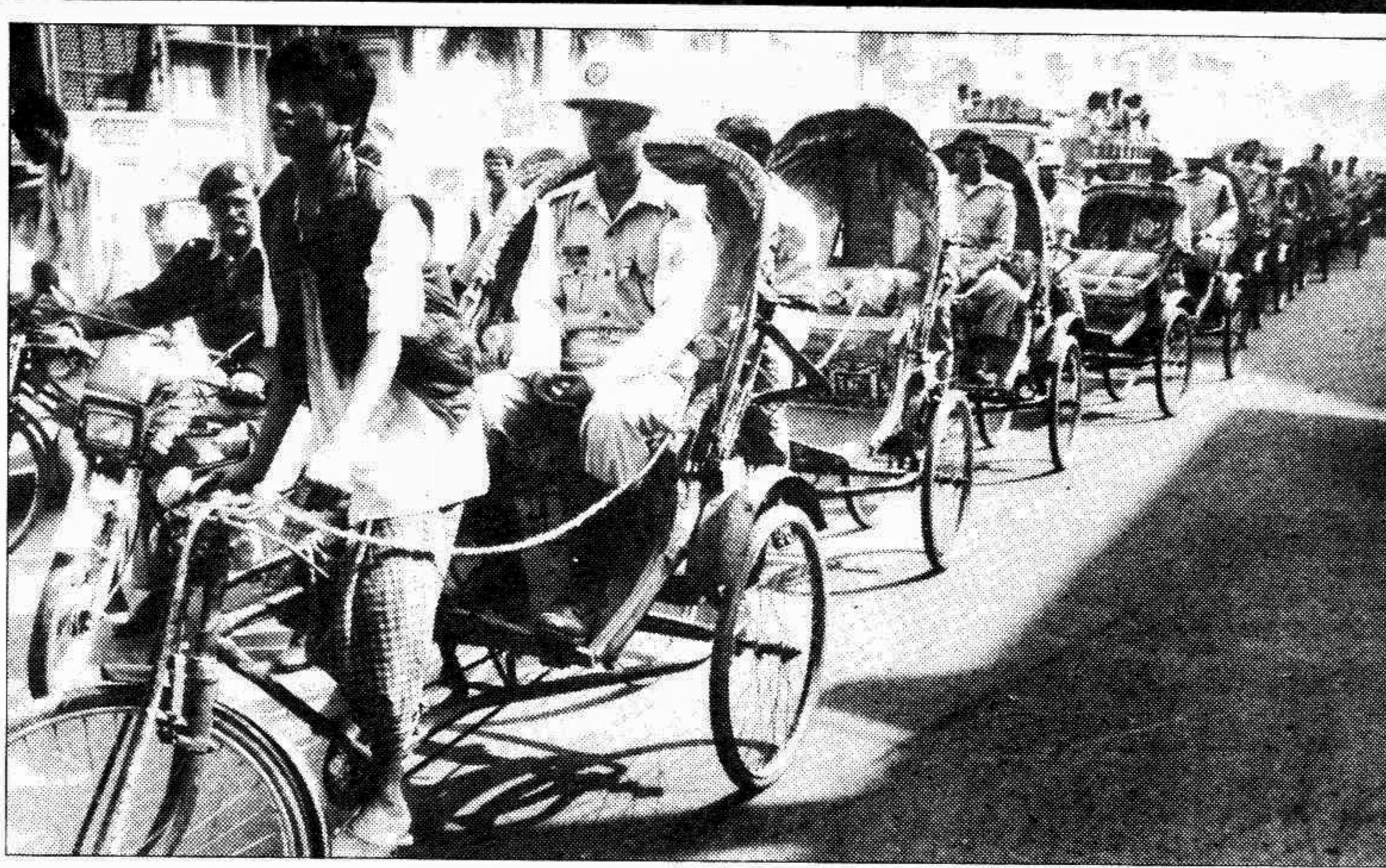
These arms are mostly possessed by political activists, terrorists, illegal toll collectors and miscreants.

The illegal arms include sophisticated AK-47 assault rifle, AK-22 rifle, LMG, rocket launcher, sten gun, SMG, sawed off 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, Nandankanan, City College area, Chittagong Medical College Hostel and Chittagong College Hostel, Chandrapur, Nur Ahmed Road, Nasirabad, Fulatoli area, Raufabad colony.

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

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### 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, so do such other things as rickshaws without licenses. As these poor pullers come under police swoop in city's Mouchay area yesterday, it only reminds us of the annual routine that probably speaks for itself. — Star photo by Amran Hossain

# 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

Some JP leaders had made an abortive attempt to repair the heavy dent 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,"

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# 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 14,21,277 cusecs on Thursday, sources in the Water Development Board said. The flow was 18,286 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.

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

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

By Reaz Ahmad

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 '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 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 Bangabandhu", said a senior AL

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# Banks, lending agencies captive to 87 families

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.

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

Bangladesh Bank Deputy Governor Khondoker 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 (PCB) 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 borrowers.

Replies 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.

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### 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.

Replies 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.

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# 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, Zulfikar Haider and Liaquat 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 sub-continent in 1947 and settled in southern Sindh province, of which Karachi is the capital.

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

# 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 Luximbazar and at Senakalyan Sangstha in the city yesterday, reports BSS.

Fire brigade and police sources said, a fire broke out in the first and second floors of a four