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## Khaleda, Ershad gang up to foil execution of verdict: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has made a scathing attack on Khaleda Zia and H M Ershad, saying they were gang-ing up to foil execution of the court verdict against the killers of Bangabandhu, reports UNB.

"The two vote thieves and autocrats are hobnobbing with each other only to protect the killers... But whatever their designs, the court verdict must be executed in this soil, inshallah," she told a reunion function on the occasion of 51st founding anniversary of Bangladesh Chhatra League at Paltan Maidan yesterday afternoon.

Hasina asked what prompted BNP chief to get into neo-entente with the Jatiya Party chairman when she (Khaleda Zia) had joined anti-autocracy movement to pull down the Ershad regime.

The prime minister, however, found a common ground between the two. She said once Ershad had wished to rehabilitate Col Farooq allowing him to run the presidential race while

## Khaleda, Ershad talk over phone

By Shehab Ahmed, Nazmul Ashraf and Rezaul Karim

BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia and Jatiya Party chief General HM Ershad spoke to each other on the phone yesterday evening for the first time in nearly two decades, sources close to the two said.

They talked for nearly 20 minutes after an ice-melting meeting of top leaders of the two parties at her official residence at Minto Road.

But what transpired in Khaleda-Ershad conversation could not be known immediately. One source only said JP's Kazi Zafar Ahmed played a key role in the whole affair.

In the first formal meeting since the two parties were born, BNP and Ershad's Jatiya Party came face to face yesterday to chart a common agenda with three top leaders from each side sitting across the table.

The six including Khaleda Zia sat in an hour-long meeting to agree that the two parties

would be together in the current agitation against the Awami League government. But they agreed to disagree on certain other issues.

Sources said the two sides failed to iron out a major point of difference — whether or not to contest the forthcoming local government elections with the AL at the helm of affairs.

They also agreed to continue their efforts to forge a better understanding on matters relating to their ultimate goal of forcing the two-and-a-half-year AL government to step down by 1999.

Khaleda Zia aside, the BNP team included party secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and standing committee member Moudud Ahmed. The JP was represented by its three presidium members — Kazi Zafar Ahmed, ABM Golam Mostafa and Kazi Firoz Rashid.

The first-ever formal meet-

ing of the two former foes in Bangladesh politics took place after the recent developments in the Jatiya Party whose two factions merged last week.

Frosty relations, hate and distrust had characterised the BNP-JP relations ever since General Ershad toppled the BNP government in a bloodless coup on March 24, 1982, something that had led to Ershad's rejecting offers to join a BNP-led coalition after the June 12, 1996 general elections.

Instead, he had preferred to throw his lot with Awami League, sending his Secretary General Anwar Hossain Manju to be part of its government. The 'deal' ensured an end to his life in prison after six years since he was forced to resign on December 6, 1990.

Khaleda Zia's government brought 19 cases of corruption and misuse of power during his



Doing it better on their own

Friends, they used to work at a garment factory. Helena (right) and Maleka would get Tk 500 a month, and that too was irregular. Unfazed by the uncertainty, they decided to find a way out. Now they are better off, earning roughly Tk 3000 a month each. And all they do is collect waste papers and polythene stuff.

— Star photo by Sheikh Enamul Haque

## Forex reserve satisfactory, cabinet told

By Staff Correspondent

The Cabinet yesterday expressed satisfaction over the government's performance in dealing with the devastating flood that hit the country in August last year and continued for the next couple of months.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina who chaired the meeting, held at her office, asked her Cabinet colleagues to make "all possible efforts" to speed up implementation of post-flood rehabilitation programmes in affected areas, Cabinet sources said.

While reviewing the progress, the PM gave emphasis on

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## 50 hurt as train derails on Teesta Bridge

RANGPUR, Jan 4: At least 50 passengers received minor injuries when the engine of a Parbatipur-bound train from Lalmonirhat derailed on Teesta Bridge in Kaunia thana of the district today, reports UNB.

Following the accident, both rail and road communications from Rangpur to Kurigram and Lalmonirhat remained suspended for about seven hours causing sufferings to hundreds

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### Prayer Timings

January 5			
	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

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### Shetri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Jan	Shetri	Iftar
16	5	—	5-29
17	6	5-18	5-30
18	7	5-18	5-31

## 'False disclosures, deals in fictitious names'

By Shamsur Rahman

### Shinepukur case starts

The prosecution yesterday accused three directors of Shinepukur Holdings and the company itself of "manipulating" the share market by "giving false public disclosures" during July 1996-December 1996 period.

Chairman ASF Rahman, vice-chairman Salman F Rahman and managing director AB Siddiqui Rahman of Shinepukur Holdings stood in the dock for an hour as lawyers from both sides made arguments.

The hearing on framing charges against the accused began yesterday in the court of First Additional Sessions

Judge, Dhaka, Mia Mohammad Sharif.

At one stage, according to the prosecution, the company came up with false declaration through an advertisement in the November 17 1996 issue of The Independent. And it resulted in an artificial increase in the price of the Shinepukur stocks from Tk 75 on June 30 1996 to Tk 754 on November 30 1996.

The three accused came to the court at 10:50 am and stood in the dock at 12:05 pm when the prosecution began arguing on charge framing. They remained there till the court was adjourned at 1:00 pm.

The hearing will resume at 1:30 pm today.

The prosecution argued that the company sponsors, their associates, employees and staff of sales/share departments in collaboration with some brokers artificially raised share price of Shinepukur Holdings by spreading rumours. By deceptive means, they induced purchase of the company shares.

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## Gunmen kill 16 in Multan mosque

MULTAN, Jan 4: Wounded Shi'ite Muslim worshippers crawled to loudspeakers where they pleaded for help after gunmen sprayed bullets into the mosque in which they were praying killing 16 people, reports AP.

As many as 25 other people were believed to have been wounded in the attack in Quereshi More on Shah Jamal Road, some 300 kilometres (180 miles) south of the provincial capital of Lahore.

Eyewitnesses recounted emotional scenes of neighbours rushing to the mosque, grabbing small children and old men, cradling the dead and comforting the wounded.

Blood was splattered all over the floor of the mosque," said a shaken Ehsan Karim, who runs a small road-side restaurant near the mosque. "The wounded and the dead — all seemed to be piled on each other."

No one took responsibility for the killings but police suspected rival Sunni Muslim militants belonging to a radical group known as the Guardians of the Friends of the Prophet.

Residents scrambled to get transportation loading the wounded onto motorised rickshaws, horse-drawn carts and into cars and buses. Many of the seriously wounded were taken to Multan, some 40 kilometres (24 miles) away.

At the Nishtar Hospital in Multan a state of emergency had been declared. "We all were praying when bullets started hitting us from the back," said a victim, Tareen Bux, at the Nishtar Hospital. "I was hit by bullets and then I fell unconscious... I don't what happened afterward."

Doctors at the hospital said the wounded were suffering bullet wounds. Eyewitnesses said the assailants used Kalashnikov assault rifles in the attack.

Earlier, I heard the sound of firing for around five to seven minutes. Then I saw three or four masked men speeding away in a car," said Karim. At the hospital, hundreds of people both Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims collected to donate blood to the victims.

People wailed and cried and cursed the assassins.



### Deepa Haq dead

By Staff Correspondent

One of the most fecund artists of the seventies and founder member of the Dhaka Painters (now defunct) group, Deepa Haq died at a local clinic at 6:30 in the evening yesterday, her family said. She was 46 and had been fighting a battle against cancer for over two years.

Her body will be brought to the Shilpakala Academy, where her retrospective was held in April last, for janaza at 11 am today. She will be buried at Banani graveyard after Zohr prayers.

Born in Dhaka in 1953. See Page 12 Col 2

## Fear of vote dacoity is due to fear of defeat: Mohiuddin

From Nurul Alam



Mohiuddin Chowdhury

CHITTAGONG, Jan 4: Mayor of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mohiuddin Chowdhury today said he intends to contest the next mayor election also as an Awami League nominee.

Nomination from the party was yet to be finalised, he mentioned. Talking to The Daily Star today, Mohiuddin said "I am optimistic of winning again. But I will accept the election results if I am defeated."

Mohiuddin, who is also the general secretary of Chittagong city unit of AL, ruled out the possibility of any 'vote-dacoity' or rigging in the mayor polls here.

"Those raising the question of vote-dacoity or rigging are actually afraid of getting defeated in the election," he said.

Claiming success during his tenure as mayor Mohiuddin said, "I deserve credit for expanding the area of the corporation to 120 square miles from 60 square miles. Without my initiative, it would not have been possible. Besides, I did a lot to improve tax collection for increasing the income of this corporation without increasing the rate of tax.

"Moreover, I worked to ensure road development, conservancy services and killing of stray dogs."

Mohiuddin said that during his tenure, 45 schools and colleges were set up in the city, giving priority to education sector. In the health sector, four maternity hospitals and two charitable dispensaries were set up to provide better medicare to the people," he said.

"Apart from city corporation services, I helped many Muslims to go to Makkah for performing Hajj and many Hindus to go on pilgrimage to India's Gaya, Kashi, Mathura, Brindaban and such other places," Mohiuddin further claimed.

However, replying to questions about his failures as mayor, Mohiuddin said "I could not help curb terrorism as I pledged before the mayor election because the local police hardly cooperated with me in this regard."

He went on "Now I am trying to create awareness against terrorism by taking some steps with the help of people from all walks of life. I also wrote to the home ministry seeking deputa-

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## Give up 25pc area of Block 16

By Sharier Khan

### Petrobangla asks Cairn

Petrobangla has asked British oil company Cairn to relinquish 25 per cent area of Block 16 in the Bay Of Bengal for failing to fulfil its commitment to drill at least one exploratory well during 1997-98.

As per the Production Sharing Contract (PSC) for Block 16 signed with Cairn on May 5, 1994, the British company was supposed to complete one exploratory well in the first phase of its operation that ended in May 1997.

Cairn struck gas in Sangu valley in the same block in early 1996.

In the next phase that ended in December last, Cairn was committed to drill another exploratory well up to a depth of 4000 meters.

Accordingly, it undertook a few gas exploration ventures in Sonadia and Semutang. But these ventures ended without success before drilling the wells up to 4000 meters.

So Petrobangla asked Cairn to give up 25 per cent area in Block 16. But Cairn is yet to respond to Petrobangla's order.

As per the government policy, once this area is relinquished, Petrobangla will give it to Bangladeshi exploration wing, BAPEX, for exploration

with local funds. To avoid relinquishing the area, Cairn then tried to get a drilling programme in Gilachhari approved by Petrobangla in mid-'98. But Petrobangla rejected the programme because the available data showed only 10 per cent possibility of finding gas or oil in that area.

"Petrobangla rejected the work programme also because whatever Cairn spends now in Block 16 would be recovered from Sangu gas sales. Petrobangla is already refusing to bear the cost of Cairn's Sonadia operation, and is not willing to let Cairn gamble around at the cost of Sangu's gas," said a source.

After failing to get the Gilachhari work programme approved after repeated attempts, Cairn came with reports saying

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## Bunty Islam arrested

By Staff Correspondent  
Bunty Islam, one of the owners of Club Tramps, was arrested by DB police from a city clinic late Sunday night for his alleged involvement in the killing of film star Soheli Chowdhury.

Soheli was gunned down by a still unidentified gang in front of Club Tramps on Kamal Ataturk Avenue at Banani in the city in the early hours on December 18.

Bunty Islam, however, remained at the clinic — Cardi-Hope Heart Centre — under DB

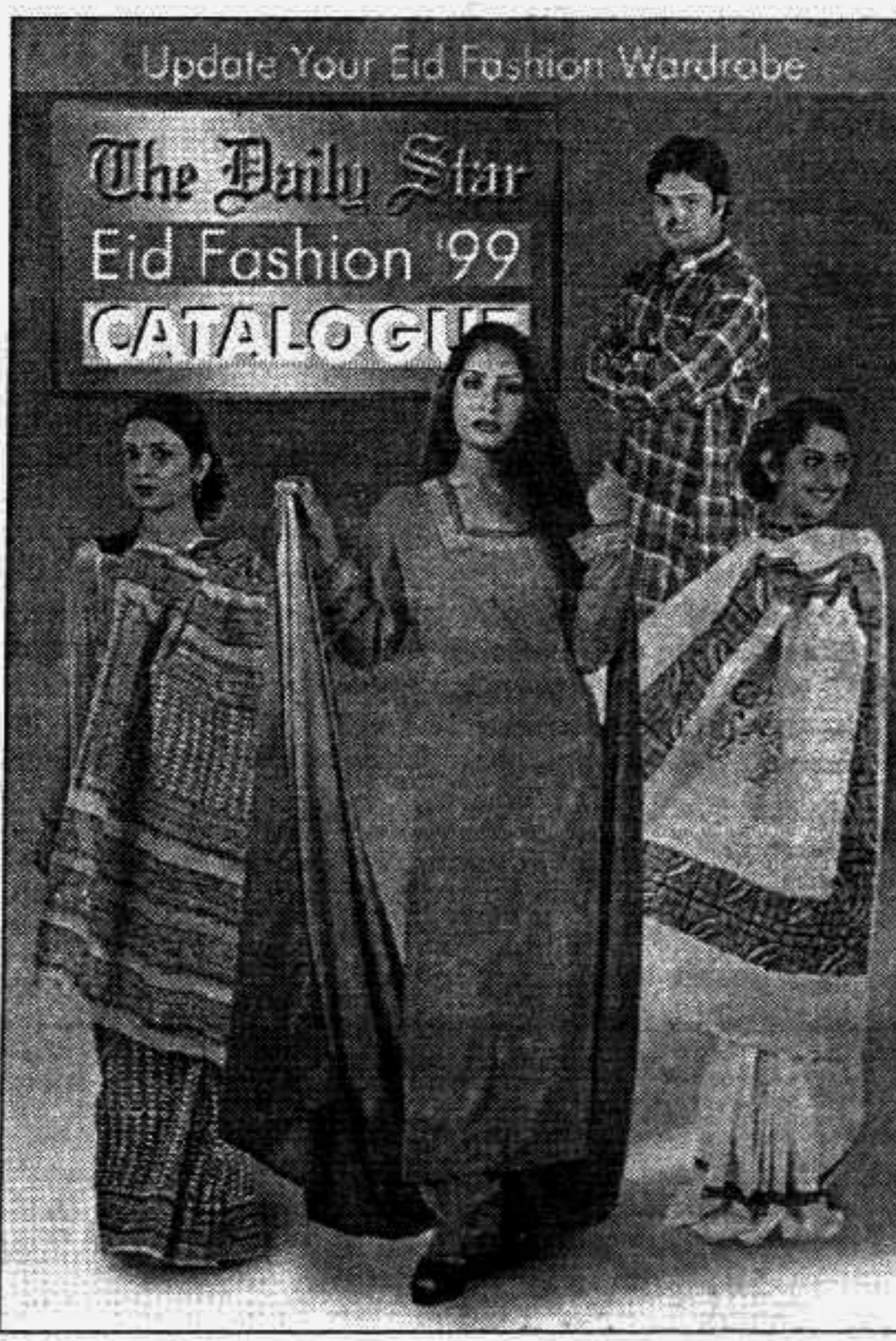
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