

Biswa Ijtema from Jan 29

GAZIPUR, Dec 24: A number of decisions have been taken for smooth holding of the three-day Biswa Ijtema, scheduled to begin on January 29, reports UNB.

Biswa Ijtema, the annual congregation of Muslims organised by Tablighi Jamaat, will be held on the bank of river Turag. The decisions include, construction of a footbridge at Station Road over Dhaka-Mymensingh highway, three baidy bridges over the Turag, two temporary helipads and installation of loudhailers from Tongi College gate to Azampur in Uttara.

Besides, arrangement will be made for special train services to and from Tongi during the Ijtema to facilitate the movement of Muslim devotees.

The decisions were taken at a meeting held at the Ijtema ground Thursday with Chairman of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Ministry Advocate Rahmat Ali in the chair.

Dhaka Divisional Commissioner Mohammad Nizamuddin, Gazipur DC Shamsul Haq, SP Farrukh Ahmed, Tongi Pourashava Chairman A D V Azmatullah Khan, Ijtema organisers Kazi Mozammel Haq and Abu Taleb, among others, attended the meeting.

Govt urges CEC to defer polls to 3 hill district councils

The government has requested the Election Commission (EC) to defer elections to the three hill district councils for six months to help review and update the existing voters' list in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

"We need at least another six months to review and update the voters' list in the region for holding the elections in line with the 1997 peace agreement," CHT Affairs Minister Kalpanaraj Chakma told BSS.

The tenure of the existing hill district councils, constituted in 1997, would be expired on December 31 this year.

The councils were constituted in Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban districts under a new administrative system in 1989 with a three-year tenure. Since then the councils were working without any elections.

The government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina dissolved the earlier councils in 1997 and formed new ones for a two-year tenure.

Under the landmark CHT peace accord, a new voters' list is needed for holding elections to the council.

CHT Affairs Ministry officials said they sought the election commission permission following the consent of the Prime Minister's Office.

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Sehri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Dec	Sehri	Iftar
16	25	—	5:22
17	26	5:14	5:23
18	27	5:14	5:23

Prayer Timings

December 25		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:14	5:22
Johar	12:45	1:15
Asr	3:42	4:00
Maghrib	5:21	5:28
Tarabi	7:15	7:45

Source: Islamic Foundation



The vandalised venue of the convention arranged for launching the Krishak Sramik Jatiya League by Kader Siddique, BU, on the premises of the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) in the city yesterday. (Right) One of the armed goons advancing towards the podium.

Hijacked Indian plane heads for Dubai

Four of the 200 on board 'killed'

LAHORE, Pakistan, Dec 24: Four passengers were reported shot dead by five suspected Indian militants who today hijacked an Indian Airlines plane from Nepal, reports AFP.

The Airbus 300 was headed for the Gulf emirate of Dubai, Indian officials said late Friday, after refuelling stops in India and Pakistan.

The plane's captain told Indian air officials the heavily armed hijackers killed four of the nearly 200 people on board during an argument as the plane refuelled for barely five minutes in the northern Indian city of Amritsar.

Indian officials said the hijackers were armed with dynamite, AK-47 assault rifles, pistols and hand grenades.

The aircraft then flew the short distance across the Pakistan border to the city of Lahore, where it landed despite an initial refusal of permission and in the absence of runway lights.

Under the landmark CHT peace accord, a new voters' list is needed for holding elections to the council.

CHT Affairs Ministry officials said they sought the election commission permission following the consent of the Prime Minister's Office.

After refuelling, it again took off.

Indian Civil Aviation Secretary Ravindra Gupta said shortly afterwards: "The plane is on its way to Dubai tonight."

At the same time, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported the plane had entered Afghan airspace but the ruling Taliban authorities had not given permission to land.

Kabul, where the airliner

ZIA asked to refuse landing plea

The control tower at Zia International Airport has been asked not to allow any hijacked plane to land in, reports UNB.

Sources said the top level directive was issued today (Friday) receiving a news that an Airbus of Indian Airlines en

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was at one time said to be heading after taking off from Lahore in Pakistan, has no night landing facilities for wide-bodied jets.

AIP said the pilot had contacted the control tower at Kabul airport and requested permission to land. "The authorities have not yet conceded the request," it said, quoting Taliban officials.

More than six hours after the Christmas Eve flight 814 from Kathmandu was commandeered as it entered Indian airspace, there was still no word from the hijackers or details on their demands.

All communications were being made through the captain. Indian air officials reported the hijackers spoke Hindi, an official Indian language generally spoken in the north of the country.

Other official sources in Pakistan said the hijackers were believed to be Indian

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Opposition calls hartal in greater Ctg Jan 2-3

CHITTAGONG, Dec 24: The four-party alliance has called a two-day hartal in greater Chittagong from January 2 to resist the 'farical' election of Chittagong City Corporation, reports UNB.

The announcement came from a meeting of the alliance's liaison committee held today at the office of City Jamaat-e-Islami with City Jamaat Party President Muhammad Zahangir Alam in the chair.

Presidents of City BNP Meher Mohammod Nasiruddin, Ameer of City Jamaat Moulana Mohammad Abu Taher, secretary of Islami Oikya Jote Advocate Ahmed Sagor and general secretary of City BNP Dastagir Chowdhury attended the meeting.

The liaison committee decided to hold a mass rally at Pahartoli Alankar Square on December 31. They will bring out black-flag processions from city BNP and its front organisations in Sonagazi and in the town today, reports UNB.

BNP sources alleged that Chhatra League activists and police damaged two mosques and private cars of former BNP minister Dr Moin Khan and BNP MP Mosharrar Hossain during attacks.

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Gunmen foil Siddique's convention

By Staff Correspondent

Gunmen allegedly belonging to ruling Awami League's student wing foiled a convention called by Kader Siddique Bir Utmam to launch his new political party-- Krishak Sramik Janata League -- in the city yesterday.

The convention, called on the premises of the Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB), was vandalised by trigger-happy goons who made the participants flee by firing shots, blasting crackers and finally ransacking the podium in less than two hours of its beginning at 10 am.

At least 50 people including four journalists and four policemen were injured in clashes. One of them was hit with a bullet fired by the goons and seven others were injured with pellets fired by police. Police also fired tear gas shells.

Amid violence by the goons, Siddique was named president of the newly floated party at the second session at about 2:15pm, which was endorsed by the delegates and representatives. Siddique announced the name of Advocate Fazlur Rahman as the secretary of the new party and hurriedly concluded the convention.

Attacks were made in three stages. At 11:20 am, when Siddique was about five minutes into his speech, crackers were blasted inside the convention venue by vandals who sat there in the guise of participants. They also chanted slogans condemning the convention and favouring unity of Awami League.

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Ctg AL trying to elbow out terrorists from polls race

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, Dec 24: Awami League is planning to 'tactically' allow out the 'terrorist' candidates from election race, sources said.

They however did not disclose what was the plan. At least five 'terrorists' candidates belonging to and Jubo League, Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) student and youth wings of the ruling party, submitted nominations for the posts of ward commissioners of CCC and one of them, at Pathantoli of Agrabad withdrew from the race, being forced by Awami League leaders, party insiders said.

But the rest four defied pressure from party in the hierarchy to remain in the race as independent candidates from Sholakbar, Nasirabad, Patharghata and Dewanbazar wards. Police arrested and took into custody, Chirra Akbar, the candidate from Nasirabad, in

connection with a number of criminal cases.

The 'terrorist' leaders are in the list of Home Ministry and Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) for their alleged involvement in different criminal acts including murder and unauthorised toll collection, police sources said.

A top AL leader here, wishing anonymity, said "as the terrorist candidates did not pay heed to our party instruction, we have taken decision to handle them tactically during campaign."

Sources said the party leaders have asked police to keep watch on them.

The 'terrorist' candidates have however, caused concern to the contenders backed by Awami League in 41 wards for the post of commissioner, sources informed.

Mayor Mohiuddin Chowdhury said.

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Even servants of 'Sona' Rafiq won Chandrima plots!

From Our Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 24: Even servants at MP Rafiqul Anwar's house are lucky winners in allotment of Chandrima Housing Project plots.

The ruling party lawmaker from Fatkhkhari, known as 'Sona' Rafiq who headed the allotment committee, allegedly grabbed as many as 14 plots of the Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) project in the names of his family members and relatives.

The other lucky winners allegedly include one of his younger sisters, father-in-law of another younger sister and the husband of his cousin.

The alleged massive irregularities in allotment of plots is now widely discussed in the port city. Even ruling party leaders have demanded cancellation of the allotment and

sought the Prime Minister's intervention in this regard.

Allegations have it that Anwar also grabbed 27 kathas of land adjoining Hotel Saint Martin at Agrabad commercial area in the city centre recently. He took this land in the name of his brother Fakhrul Anwar for only Tk 20 lakh against its market price of over Tk 50 lakh. In doing so, he was greatly favoured and helped by the present Minister for Housing, it is alleged. Previously, he failed to manage this land as the former minister for public works refused.

Anwar also reportedly managed to get four plots in the scandalous allotment in Uttara Housing Project in Dhaka early this year.

There are also allegation that Anwar grabbed many

government khas lands at different times. These include 90 kathas of land at Khuram in Fatkhkhari thana in Chittagong, which he reportedly managed in 1998.

Meanwhile, CDA is likely to form a probe committee to investigate the alleged 'irregularities and nepotism' in allotment of Chandrima plots.

The probe body, formed at the initiative of the CDA Chairman, will investigate if the allottees of Chandrima plots have any house or land in the city or in other CDA housing project in their names or in the names of relatives. CDA has also invited written complaint in this regard from any individual.

However, the CDA chairman denied having any role in allotment of Chandrima plots.

City unit of Khulna AL Detention, expulsion of leaders brew up intra-party rivalry

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Dec 23: The detention of Sramik League leader Sharif Abdul Hannan and recent expulsion of city Jubo League leader Hafizur Rahman have again brewed up intra-party rivalry in Awami League's city committee, according to a source.

Tension has been mounting over the lease of Skid ghat after the arrest of notorious Mafia baron Ershad Shikhar.

Both Hannan and Hafiz have been accused of unleashing terrorism and collecting toll. The source said Awami League leader Ayub Ali Khan Bangali filed a case with Khulna thana last month accusing Sharif Hannan of demolishing the city AL office built for collecting toll from the Skid ghat.

Supporters of both Ayub Bangali and Sharif Hannan were on the verge of a fight over supremacy at the Skid ghat.

However, intervention of the state minister averted the fight. But things got worse after the arrest of Sharif Hannan in the middle of this month that angered leaders and activists of Sramik League who directly blamed Ayub Bangali for it.

When asked, a top official of KMP reportedly told the Sramik League leaders that Hannan was arrested with the consent of the top leaders of both the committees of the ruling party.

Sramik League leaders did not believe him and continued to blame Ayub Bangali who reportedly enjoys the blessing of Khaleque Talukdar faction of Awami League.

Recently, Jubo League leader Hafizur Rahman was expelled on charge of murders and other crimes.

But other leaders of Jubo

Nepali PM offers to step down

KATHMANDU, Dec 24: Nepal Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai offered to step down today after lawmakers from his Nepali Congress party rebelled against him and signed a petition seeking his removal, reports AP.

"An understanding has been reached between the prime minister and party president Girija Prasad Koirala that there will be change in the leadership soon," a party spokesman Narhari Acharya told reporters after a meeting of the party's central working committee.

Party members said the change was likely to take place during the winter session of parliament that usually convenes around March.

Koirala is leading the 82 rebel lawmakers of five years -- since Nepal became a constitutional monarchy in 1990.

Bhattarai, 76, has been criticized for failing to take action against a minister in his Cabinet who broke into the house of a married woman, called her names and broke her furniture. No action has been taken against another minister accused of corruption.

India, Pakistan have to become one country, says Abul Kalam

NEW DELHI, Dec 24: India and Pakistan have no other option but to work towards becoming one country, Abul Kalam, the architect of India's missile programme and its May 1998 nuclear tests, said in remarks published today, reports AFP.

Kalam, scientific advisor to the Indian premier, was quoted by the Outlook magazine as saying that if Europe, a continent with a long history of wars, could become one solid entity, then there was hope for India and Pakistan.

"Having a combined cricket team or a combined hockey team is not the first priority towards unity. The two countries have to become a geographical entity," Kalam said. It may take two or three decades, but it will happen for sure. There is no other option."

India's May 1998 nuclear tests triggered a tit-for-tat response from neighbour and arch rival Pakistan and attracted a raft of US-led international sanctions.

Vehicles damaged: 39 held BNP iftar parties in Feni attacked: 45 hurt

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 24: Opposition alliance has termed the Mayor's offer to resign if Opposition parties take part in city BNP and its front organisations in Sonagazi and in the town today, reports UNB.

BNP sources alleged that Chhatra League activists and police damaged two mosques and private cars of former BNP minister Dr Moin Khan and BNP MP Mosharrar Hossain during attacks.

Police arrested 39 people from the spots after the troubles.

Witnesses said 25 people were injured at Ulemabazar, 10 at Bandar Munshi in Sonagazi thana and 10 in Rampur.

They said Chhatra League activists attacked supporters of BNP at Ulemabazar Mesh Khamar Field in Sonagazi

thana minutes before the iftar

injury 25 people. One Kalam received bullet injury during the attack.

The attackers damaged the cars of former planning minister Moin Khan and president of district BNP Mosharrar Hossain MP when they tried to escape the attack.

Police surrounded the entire area after the BCL attack and arrested 17 BNP, Jubo Dal and Chhatra Dal activists from the spot.

Earlier, in Bandarmunshi gunmen attacked and opened fire on a group of BNP activists on their way to an iftar-party injuring 10 of them, four with bullet.

In Rampur area of the town, police reportedly attacked the people who came to attend an iftar-party of BNP and its front

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Sylhet tense: Hartal, grand rally today

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Dec 24: A tense situation was prevailing in the town today ahead of tomorrow's hartal and a grand rally called by opposing camps.

The All-Party Action Committee (Opposition) has called a day-long hartal across the district tomorrow demanding withdrawal of names of halls and buildings of Shahjalal University while Mukti-joddha-Janata Manch backed by Awami League and Mukti-joddha Sangsad called a grand rally at Registry Maidan the same day.

Additional police and BDR personnel have been deployed at main points of the town to avert any untoward incident tomorrow.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad will attend the grand rally as chief guest while Rashed Khan Menon and Hasanul Haque Inu will address it.

The All-Party Action Committee (Opposition) held a rally at court point this afternoon.

Chaired by Moulana Habibur Rahman, central

the rally was addressed among others by district BNP president M A Haque and general secretary Ariful Haque Chowdhury, JP president Advocate Giassuddin Ahmed, JCV president Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury and city Jamaat Ameer Dr Shafiqur Rahman.

The speakers called upon the people to make tomorrow's hartal a success.

The speakers said Shahjalal Varsity VC Professor Habibur Rahman and Dr Jafar Iqbal will be declared persona non grata in Sylhet. They said, if needed, we may declare the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the Foreign Minister persona non grata in Sylhet.

On the other hand, a meeting was held at the office of district Mukti-joddha Sangsad with its Commander Enam Ahmed Chowdhury in the chair.

It was addressed, among others, by district Awami League president Syed Abu Nosor Advocate and general secretary ANM Shafique, Ex-MP Enamul Haque Chowdhury Bir Pratik.

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Merry Christmas



The Daily Star wishes its readers and patrons belonging to the Christian community a merry Christmas

Christmas today

By Staff Correspondent

The Christian community joins millions of fellow Christians around the globe in celebrating the Merry Christmas (X-mas) today.

The Christians will share the joy with members of their families, friends and neighbours amidst due religious fervour and gaiety.

In a message on the eve of the Christmas, President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed felicitated the members of the Christian community and said that "Jesus' moral of peace and service continued to generate hope among the people ravaged by war and conflicts."

In her message on the occasion Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said: "Jesus Christ was committed to justice, peace and a society free from exploitation."

She pointed out that Bangladesh was a unique example.

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Bombs explode in front of Ctg Radio Station

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 24: Three bombs exploded in front of Chittagong radio station at Agrabad tonight, but no casualty was reported, police said.

The bombs were hurled by unidentified miscreants in front of the radio station at 8:30 pm, police added.

A huge contingent of police was deployed at the gate of the station immediately after the incident. They started search operation in and around the radio station.

However, none was arrested in this connection till filing of this report at 10 pm.

Body of female JU student found in lake

From JU Correspondent

SAVAR, Dec 24: Body of a female student of Jahangirnagar University was found floating in a lake on the campus today.

Police recovered the body, identified as Nargis Sultana Ratna, 20, a second year Honours student of Geography Department.

Campus sources said, some passers-by found the body of Ratna, the youngest daughter of the Principal of Jahangirnagar University School and College, M Monsur Ali, floating in the lake at around 8 am. They informed Savar police of the matter. Savar police rushed the scene and recovered the body.

Family sources said, Ratna left the residence on the campus Wednesday afternoon after an altercation with her mother over a trifling matter. Family members were looking for Ratna since her disappearance.

A UJ case was filed with Savar police in this connection.

Two alleged terrorists held at Ctg

From Our Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 24: Police arrested two alleged terrorists and three miscreants here and recovered 60 bottles of phenisyl syrup.

Terrorist Nurul Alam alias 'Chashma' Alam, 28, was caught by people when he was trying to extort toll from a hotel adjacent to Phulola bridge at KD Aman Ali road under Chandgaon thana at around 11 am this morning.

Alam is an absconding accused in five criminal cases including murder, dacoity and extortion.

Seriously beaten up, Alam was handed over to police. He is now undergoing treatment at Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

Kowari police also arrested terrorist Abul Kalam alias Bakkuliyah, 37, from an area near the thana in connection with five criminal cases including dacoity arms-dealing and terrorism, yesterday evening.

Police in a raid at Reazuddin Bazar recovered 60 bottles of contraband phenisyl syrup from a shop and held three persons last night.

The arrested were Ajit Sen, Sumon Sen and Priya Ranjan Das.