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Wishing the BEST for the 3rd Millennium

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## BSF kills 2 on Sylhet border

SYLHET, Jan 28: Two people were killed in BSF firings at a frontier char in Zokiganj thana here Thursday night, reports UNB.

The Indian Border Security Force with the help of Indian police took away the bodies, local people said.

The identity of the victims could not be known.

Residents of frontier Manikpur village said they heard sounds of heavy firing across the char of Kushlira

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## Inside Today Article

Fallouts of plane hijack drama

Indo-Pak Relations on Fire Again

by A M M Shahabuddin Page 4

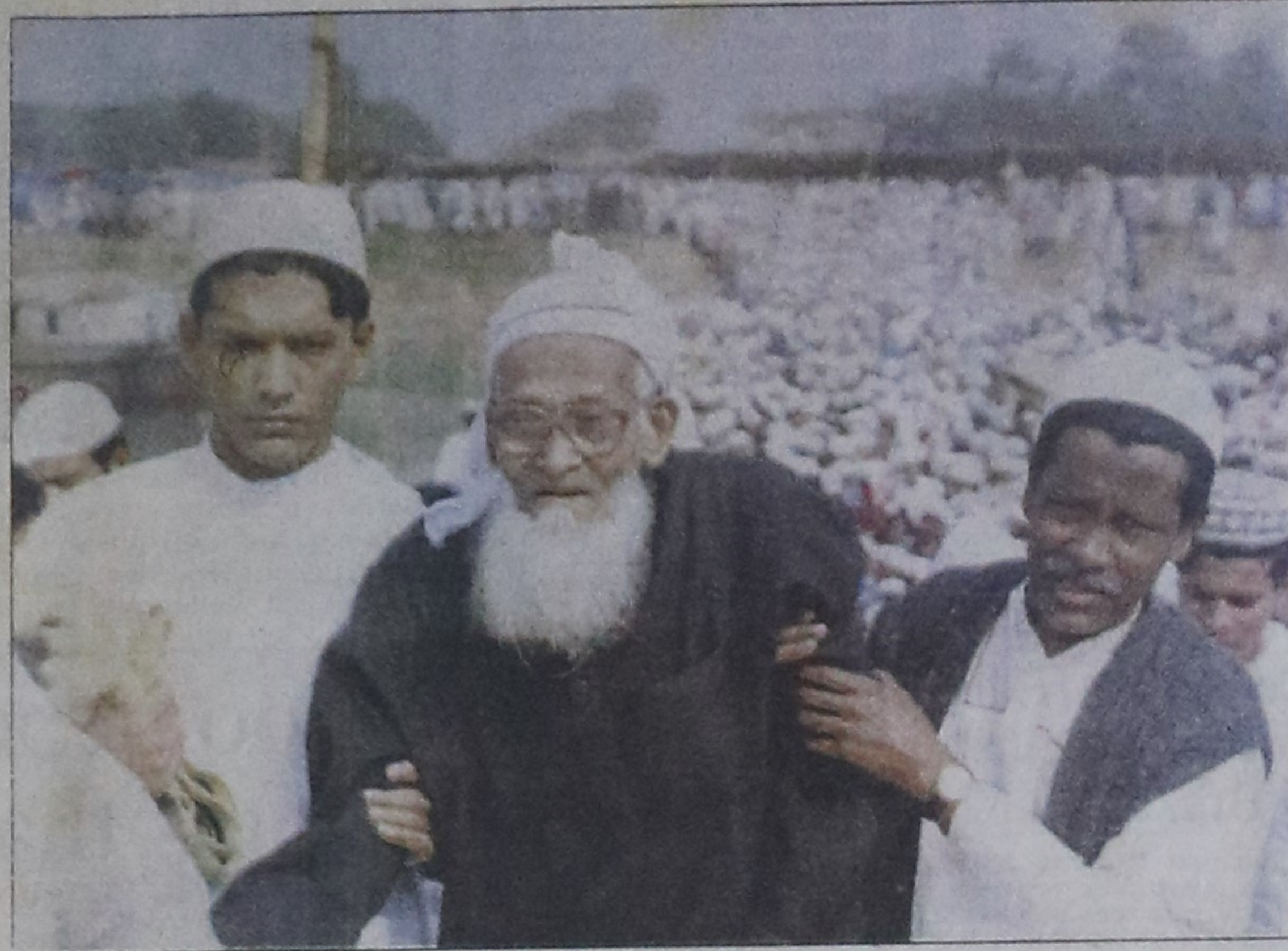
## Supplement

One page supplement on 'Dhaka International Trade Fair 2000' on Page 16

## Prayer Timings

January 29		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-45	6-15
Zohr	12-15	1-20
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-46	5-48
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation



An octogenarian among thousands of devotees at the Ijtema venue at Tongi yesterday. —Star photo

## Ijtema today Thousands converge on the bank of Turag

By Staff Correspondent

Streams of people head towards Tongi to attend the Elewa Ijtema, world's second largest Muslim congregation after Hajj, scheduled to begin today on the bank of the Turag River.

The Ijtema ground on the eastern bank of river Turag in Tongi has already been turned into a place of pilgrimage. Hundreds of thousands of people from home and abroad attended Juma prayers there yesterday.

A big canopy was erected on more than 165 acres of land to accommodate the devotees. But a large number of devotees attended the Juma prayers outside it due to dearth of space. Many devotees also camped outside the canopy.

Hundreds of buses, a good

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## Paris meet: Dhaka to press for specific aid commitment

By Rafiq Hasan

The government will seek specific commitment from the development partners about future aid at the Bangladesh Development Forum meeting in Paris scheduled to be held on April 13-14.

Finance Ministry sources said that the government would take a strong position at the meeting and try to get commitment about a specific amount of aid.

The government has already informed the World Bank about its possible stand at the meeting.

Finance Minister SAMS Kibria will lead the Bangladesh delegation at the meeting. Representatives from around 24 countries and international financial organisations considered as major development partners of the country will attend.

The development partners including International Monetary Fund (IMF) would review the progress of development projects in Bangladesh.

An estimate of aid following the Forum meeting last year is yet to be completed and that of aid requirements for the coming fiscal year would be finalised very soon, the sources said.

The development partners have been showing reluctance to make specific commitment regarding disbursement of aid to Bangladesh for the last couple of years, the sources pointed out. Instead of mentioning specific figures, they preferred to disburse aid on the basis of development projects. This created difficulties to the government in taking up development plans.

"So this time the government would emphasise commitment for specific amount of aid by the donors", a senior official of the Finance Ministry said.

The World Bank has taken note of this and has appointed a consultant to analyse and assess the requirements of aid in

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## DU teacher held on charge of assaulting wife sent to jail

By DU Correspondent

The Dhaka University teacher who was arrested Thursday night on charge of assaulting his wife was sent to the Dhaka Central Jail yesterday.

Mohammad Ferdous Hossain was produced before the CMM's Court yesterday noon. He has been charged under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act of 1995 which does not allow the court to grant the accused bail within 60 days.

Ferdous, also the house tutor of Sir AF Rahman Hall of the university, was re-elected general secretary of Dhaka University Teachers' Association with ticket from opposition BNP-backed "White Panel".

The magistrate rejected the bail prayer He was earlier arrested from his campus residence Thursday night.

His brother-in-law Khaled Mahmud filed the case against Ferdous. Ferdous was accused of assaulting his wife, Shelly, for her refusal to pay Tk 5 lakh as dowry.

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## Trade & aid to top agenda EU envoy terms PM's visit as 'very significant'

Trade and economic cooperation in a new milieu would figure high when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina meets European Union leaders in Brussels next week.

Hasina leaves for Brussels at midnight Monday night on a four-day official trip when she would also hold bilateral talks with Belgium's leaders.

"Her visit is seen very significant," Ambassador Antonio de Souza Menezes, Head of the EC Delegation in Dhaka, said during an interview with UNB.

He said Hasina is Bangladesh's first elected Prime Minister to visit European Union institutions on the eve of signing of a Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Bangladesh.

The accord would be signed at ministerial level in Brussels next March for furthering cooperation in political, trade and commerce, and in the field of economy, human resources, science and technology, information and culture, prevention of drugs and money laundering.

Menezes said the EU is attaching importance to the Bangladesh leader's visit since Dhaka is the spokesman for the

LDCs and EU community has been very sympathetic for some of the concerns of the least-developed countries. The visit would create an opportunity to hear some of the concerns from her.

Besides, Bangladesh is now a member of the UN Security Council. "It is an opportunity to develop political cooperation between EU and Bangladesh," Menezes said Hasina will have talks with new EC President Romano Prodi who came to Dhaka as Italian Prime Minister and is familiar with her as well as development issues in Bangladesh.

She will also meet President of European Parliament Nicole Fontaine and its members.

Asked about the agenda of her talks with EU leaders, Menezes said: "We don't have any contentious issues with Bangladesh. We would like to hear what her concerns are, namely aid and trade matters."

He said the Prime Minister's tour would inject new dynamism in the relations between the development partners and Bangladesh. It would also give an impetus to trade and aid development.

The European Community together with its member states has become the largest donor of development aid to Bangladesh. EC's annual aid programme for

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## JCE meets today Teesta issue to dominate water talks

By Staff Correspondent

The third secretary-level meeting of Bangladesh-India Joint Committee of Experts (JCE) begins in the city today to take up the issue of sharing of waters of the Teesta and other common rivers.

According to sources in the Water Resources Ministry, the Teesta issue will top the agenda of the meeting and sharing of waters of six other common rivers — Monu, Khowai, Gumti, Muhuri, Dharla and Dudkumar — will also come up at the two-day talks.

The 10-member Bangladesh side of the JCE will be led by Water Resources Secretary Dr A T M Shamsul Huda and his Indian counterpart Zafarul Hasan will lead his country's 10-member delegation at the talks to be held at a city hotel.

The JCE, formed following the signing of Indo-Bangladesh water accord on December 12, 1996, was mandated to look into the problems of water sharing and work out the principles for this.

The outcome of the JCE meeting would be placed before the next meeting of the Joint Rivers Commission (JRC), which is likely to be held in

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## Bill on woman & child repression Report finalised with some amendments

The Standing Committee on Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Ministry at a meeting yesterday made some amendments to the Woman and Child Repression Prevention Bill, 2000 introduced in Parliament Thursday.

"The act could have been more rationalised if the opposition attended the session and made their amendments," said chairman of the committee and Prime Minister's Parliamentary Affairs Advisor Suranjit Sengupta.

BNP MP Khalequzzaman said they didn't raise any objection to the proposed law, as it is an updated version of previous two acts.

"The law is aimed at preventing repression on women and children that increased in recent time following deterioration of law and order due to government failure. However, the act is not political in nature," he said.

In reply to a query, he said they were not concerned about time of passage of the Bill as opposition parties are now abstaining from Parliament.

Representatives of civil society, especially leaders of women bodies, also took part in the meeting to give their opinions on the Bill of the toughest law against repression on women and children.

Suranjit Sengupta, who presided over the meeting, said that the report of the Standing Committee on the Bill was finalised and it will be placed before the Parliament.

Sources close to the meeting said it proposed to exclude the provisions about "embarrassing women and indecent gestures towards them" from tough punishment if the persons involved are not really at the stage of repressing women.

They said the changes were made in definitions of newly

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## An awakening with the Ustad

Star Report

The city's music lovers savoured the transcendental tune flowing from the shehnai of Ustad Bismillah Khan yesterday on the second evening of his three-day shehnai recital programme at Osmani Memorial Hall.

The shehnai legend's recital yesterday evening featured renditions in both raga and dhan formats — selections which with their intricate dazzling pattern weaving brought forth the inexplicable bond between man and river and the divine spirit. The effect of the music on the listeners was to the point of sublimity.

Bismillah Khan, one of the most outstanding music personalities in contemporary Indian classical music, has literally pulled shehnai to the center stage of classical music which lay neglected as a mere instrument used only in temple

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