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VOL. X NO. 24 REGD. NO. DA 781

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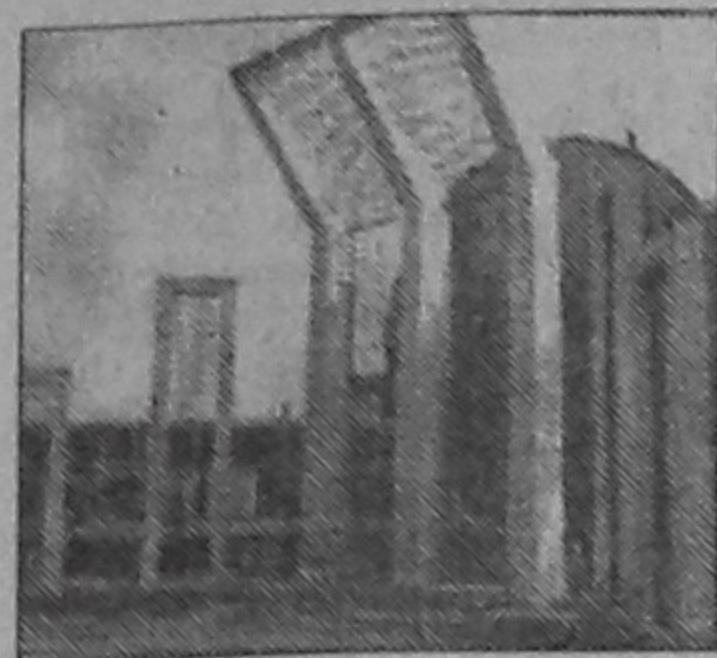
DHAKA SUNDAY FEBRUARY 6, 2000

3rd Millennium

MAGH 24, 1406 BS

SHAWAL 29, 1420 HJRI

16 PAGES PRICE: TAKA 6.00



## Bangla Academy Book Fair opens today

All are set for Bangla Academy book fair beginning on its premises today, reports UNB.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to inaugurate the Boi Mela.

The Amar Ekushey book fair this year has a different significance as it is going to be held with recognition of February 21 as 'International Mother Language Day' across the globe.

Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Betar will telecast live the inauguration of the 24-day book fair from the Bangla Academy.

Meanwhile, State Minister for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs visited the Bangla Academy to see preparations for the Boi Mela. Bangla Academy Director General Dr Syed Anwar Hossain was present.

The minister was told that all preparations have been made for the event.

This year 319 stalls have been set up at the Boi Mela. More than 200 creative publication houses are expected to take part in it.

Besides, discussions, seminars and cultural functions will be held everyday at the main stage of the book fair. The fair will be held from 3 pm to 9 pm everyday.

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## Prayer Timings

February 6		
Fajr	Azan	Jamaat
5:45	6:15	
Zohr	12:45	1:20
Asr	4:15	4:30
Maghrib	5:55	5:58
Esha	7:15	7:45

Source: Islamic Foundation

# India rejects Pak offer for talks

NEW DELHI, Feb 5: India today rejected an offer by Pakistan's military ruler for a dialogue and said peace talks could begin only after Islamabad halted its support for Muslim separatists in disputed Kashmir, reports AFP.

"Our position remains unchanged," Indian Foreign Ministry spokesman R. Jasal said in response to General Pervez Musharraf's offer Friday for talks to diffuse tensions between his country and India and resolve their dispute over Kashmir.

The spokesman in New Delhi said it was Islamabad's responsibility to halt "cross-border terrorism" in the Indian zone of divided Kashmir, where Muslim secessionist violence has left more than 25,000 dead since 1989.

"We are not surprised by these kind of comments. We have always been the initiators of the dialogue," the spokesman told reporters.

"We have maintained the

position that Pakistan has to create the right atmosphere which includes cessation of cross-border terrorism and cessation of hostile propaganda against India," he added.

Musharraf in an interview with state-run Pakistani television said the dispute over Kashmir, the subject of two of the three wars between India and Pakistan since 1947, continued to be the chief cause of regional tensions.

"I don't want tension. I want peace. I am ready for dialogue (with India) but the talks must focus on Kashmir," said the Pakistani ruler, who described other bilateral disputes as only "irritants."

Kashmir is divided between the two countries and is claimed by both.

Pakistan denies India's charges of supporting "cross-border terrorism" in Kashmir, but has vowed diplomatic and political support for what it argues is a just struggle by Kashmiris for self-determination in

the Himalayan territory.

The process of dialogue started during ousted premier Nawaz Sharif's government last year was derailed after a bitter military conflict in the Kargil region of Indian Kashmir last summer.

Tensions further escalated when Musharraf wrested power in an anti-Sharif coup in October in Islamabad.

Meanwhile, another report from Islamabad said, The leader of a major Pakistani militant group fighting to oust India from Kashmir vowed today to step up its holy war, or jihad, in the embattled Himalayan region.

"We shall continue our jihad with greater zeal to end Indian usurpation of Kashmir," Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, the head of Lashker-e-Taiba, told thousands of supporters at a rally in the Pakistani capital.

Lashker-e-Taiba is one of more than a dozen militant Pakistani and Kashmiri groups

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# PSA will be strictly enforced: Nasim

Home Minister Mohammad Nasim has categorically said the Public Safety Act will be enforced strictly to protect citizens' life and property, reports UNB.

"The law has been enacted to plug loopholes in certain laws and quickly try the criminals for specific offences like snatching, hijacking, extortion, exploding bombs and arson," he said.

Inaugurating an annual conference of district correspondents of 'United News of Bangladesh' (UNB) at its office, Nasim brushed aside the opposition contention that the law would be used as a political weapon.

"It won't be used to obstruct meeting, rally and other peaceful political activities," he said. He, however, posed a question whether the law should remain silent if a political party can use its office to manufacture bombs."

Nasim said, "We have enacted this law in keeping with reality, out of our feelings and obligation in ensuring security of the people.... 'I, do it in public interest, come what may'."

Seeking cooperation from the media, the Home Minister hoped the press would play its constructive role as a watchdog to ensure peace and stability as well as strengthen the democratic process in the country.

"Without help from the people and the press, terrorism can not be contained," he said.

The Home Minister suggested that newspapers and journalists should not publish any fabricated news that might provoke offenders and create political instability in the country.

Chaired by UNB Chairman Amanullah Khan, the opening session of the daylong conference was also addressed by the agency's chief Editor and Managing Director, Enayeturrahman Khan, Chief News Editor Mustafizur Rahman and City Editor Shamsuddin Ahmed.

Explaining the factors that led to the framing of the Public Safety (Special Prevention) Act, Nasim said existing laws are not enough to bring the criminals to justice due to loopholes, long-drawn investigation and trial process and corruption.

The Home Minister cited

several examples where the accused in sensational murder cases were released by courts, given anticipatory bail or instructions issued that an offender could not be arrested again after being enlarged on bail.

How the accused in the Uddichi Murder Case was given anticipatory bail," the Home Minister questioned.

"I've full respect for the judiciary. But I'm amazed to see how a notorious criminal gets bail from higher court and writ is filed for a terrorists."

Under the provision of the Public Safety Act, investigation and trial would be completed within a certain period of time, he said.

Photographs or videos would be considered as evidence in the tribunal so that criminals can not be freed for want of witnesses.

What is new in this legislation is that any abuser of this law would be punished, Nasim said.

About the bail provision, he said this was just adopted from the women and children repression.

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## PSA 'can't protect gov'

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday said that no tough law would be able to prevent downfall of this government, reports UNB.

"We have seen many tough laws, including Martial Law and Special Powers Act, in the past but those could not save any repressive government. This government will also not be able to save itself by framing laws like Public Safety Act."

Addressing the concluding session of the day-long annual conference of UNB district correspondents, he called upon the journalists to help to overcome the 'actual situation' now prevailing in the country.

Refuting the government claim that the PSA will be used against criminals, Bhuiyan said, "It has been enacted to suppress the out-governments movement."

He said the existing laws are enough to deal with snatchers, hijackers and tempering of tenders.

The BNP leader said, the terrorists backed by the ruling party are engaged in such activities but the government remained silent to take action against these hoodlums.

Blaming the government for using police for political purpose.

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# Alliance readies for tomorrow's jt rally

## Hartal or barricade on Nov 9, 10

By Staff Correspondent

Components of the BNP-led four-party opposition alliance have started massive preparations for their 'grand joint public meeting and procession' in the city tomorrow to protest passage of the 'black and repressive' Public Safety Act.

Sources in the four parties — BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote — said they have already instructed all their units and front organisations to ensure 'maximum attendance' at the public meeting at Paltan Maidan at 3 pm.

Besides, some other political parties, opposition-supported professional bodies and intellectuals will join the programme. This will be a grand show to lead the one-point movement towards its final stage, a top alliance leader said.

The public meeting will be the first joint programme of the alliance since its formation on January 6 last year. The four parties have carried out simultaneous programmes so far.

As per the decision of the alliance, BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia, JP chief HM Ershad, Jamaat Ameer Golam Azam and IOJ chief Azizul Haq will address the meeting from the same dais and lead the joint procession.

Khaleda Zia will announce a fresh agitation programme from the meeting. She is likely to announce a countrywide 36-hour hartal or road and rail barricade programme on February 9 and 10, alliance sources said.

Senior leaders of the alliance said passage of the 'black and repressive' Public Safety Act and 'bomb attack' at BNP offices in Dhaka and Chittagong have forced the four parties to come to a single platform and carry out movement jointly.

All major programmes in future are likely to be carried out from a single platform and we are planning to go for agitation programmes jointly across the country.

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## BCL to resist demonstrations on DU campus today

By DU Correspondent

Tension mounted on the Dhaka University campus yesterday as the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) decided to resist demonstrations during the presence of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on the campus.

Hasina is scheduled to come to the campus this afternoon to inaugurate the month-long Ekushey Book Fair at the Bangla Academy.

BNP-backed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and left-leaning Ganatantrik Chhatra Oikya have earlier announced they would demonstrate when Hasina comes to inaugurate the fair. The student organisations will also wear black clothes protesting Hasina's presence.

But BCL threatened to resist the opposition student fronts warning that "no demonstration or black flag showing would be allowed on the campus during Hasina's presence."

The BCL also brought out a procession and held a rally on the campus yesterday welcoming Hasina. Addressing the rally, the leaders warned that

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## Dengue fear looms large

By DU Correspondent

'Dengue Hemorrhagic' fever may break out in an epidemic form in four major cities of the country if immediate measures are not taken to eradicate or control mosquitoes that carry dengue.

These vulnerable cities are as Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi.

Experts on vector-borne diseases expressed this fear at a symposium on "Disease Vector in Bangladesh and their Management" in the city yesterday.

Bangladesh Zoological Society organised the symposium at the Auditorium of Zoology Department of Dhaka University on the occasion of the 12th biennial national conference.

Principal Scientific Officer of IEDCR Tushil Uddin Ahmed (Retd) submitted a keynote paper on the topic, while Prof. Mahmud ul Ameen and Prof. M. Ismail Hossain took part at the discussion.

Experts feared that a large number of citizens of these four cities could be attacked by the Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever because the number of Aedes mosquito, responsible for the dangerous fever, has been increasing very fast in these places.

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## APAC Dhaka city unit finalised

The Dhaka City unit of All Party Action Council of the opposition alliance has almost been finalised with Sadek Hossain Khoka MP of BNP as its convener, reports UNB.

The council is likely to be announced in a couple of days. Khoka is also convener of the city unit of BNP.

In forming the action council, the city unit of APAC has omitted some of the conditions set by the central liaison committee and jointly signed by four secretaries-general of BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote on January 18.

The city committee will have 151 members instead of 101 and three joint convenors though there was no option for joint convener in the guidelines, party sources told the news agency yesterday. JP, Jamaat and IOJ were given joint convenors.

Jatiya Party has been given 37 members, Jamaat 20, IOJ 15, other smaller parties 10 while the rest went to BNP in the city APAC.



It was dark, dank and cold yesterday as a thick canopy of clouds blanketed the city, with a total of 34 millimetres of rain until 9 p.m. last night. As usual, the city's poor bore the brunt of the late winter storm. Most rickshaws abandoned the streets, allowing auto-rickshaw drivers and other rickshaw-pullers to rake in the cash. Rain is also expected today all over the country. Temperature may drop by one or two degrees, and heavy fog will cover the river basins.

—Star photo by Sk Enamul Haq

# Let democracy work

Mahmud urges PM, Leader of Opposition

By Staff Reporter

The Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition should let democracy function instead of promoting self-destruction of national politics, says the president of Bangladesh Economic Association.

Dr. Wahiduddin Mahmud, an advisor on the 1996 caretaker government, said failure to do so would prove Bangladesh is not ready for multi-party democracy.

"The political situation is becoming unstable.... Whether the nation will bypass the crisis and progress along the path to democratic and economic prosperity depends on your wisdom and foresight," wrote Mahmud in an open letter to the leaders yesterday.

"It can be assumed any neutral and non-partisan proposal to solve the present political crisis would not please you, because you firmly believe the cause of the current political impasse is the undemocratic attitude of the opposing camp," wrote Mahmud.

"You would agree that either the 1991 or 1996 election was free and fair. You would also agree your opponent enjoys the support of about one third of the people. This balance between the two parties has created the ideal circumstances for stable parliamentary democratic practices."

"However, the two parties must reach an understanding on the practical framework for

democratic practices.... If you fail to do so this would, in a way, indicate Bangladesh's politics is not fit for multi-party democracy."

Mahmud said parliamentary democracy in the country has almost stopped functioning. Terrorists and their mentors are hiding behind politics because the democratic institutions are weak and confrontational.

The rule of law is deteriorating, and the credibility and neutrality of administrative steps taken to curb terrorism have become a contentious political issue. People are losing confidence in democracy and the economic environment is deteriorating.

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## Garments trader shot dead in city

By Staff Correspondent

A trader in garments cut piece was shot dead at Banani Bazaar in the city yesterday.

The dead was identified as Raju Ahmed, a resident of Sheara Bazar under Gulshan thana. The killing was sequel to a previous enmity, sources at Dhaka Medical College Hospital said quoting victim's family members.

Police recovered the body from Banani Bazar and took it to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morgue for autopsy.

Police however said that the killing followed an altercation between Raju and some youngsters when he went for a telephone call at Banani Bazar.

One person identifying himself as Mintoo and a friend of

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## We have Moved

Offices of The Daily Star have moved to its new premises at Karwan Bazar. Please send in your mails and contact us at the following address and telephone numbers:

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## The Daily Star Anniversary Supplement

The Daily Star will bring out a 40-page Special Supplement on February 9, 2000 to mark its entry into the Tenth Year of publication. The Supplement which is designed to focus on the first quarter of the new millennium will carry scholarly writings about the directions we need to take as well as reports of our own correspondents highlighting some positive trends in specific areas of national life.

The price of the 56-page Daily Star anniversary issue, inclusive of the normal 16-page spread-out, remains unchanged at Tk 6.00.