

### JCD office set afire

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The activists then set fire to the central office of JCD at Naya Paltan at about 8:45 a.m. yesterday. During the incident, JCD activists chanted slogans against some BNP leaders, including Dr Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain, Mirza Abbas, Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury and Gasuddin Manum, for their involvement in the formation of the committee.

Furniture and electric appliances at the JCD office on the third floor of BNP central office at Naya Paltan were burnt to ashes.

JCD activists stormed the residence of Dr Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain at about 2:30 p.m. Witnesses said the aggrieved activists, some of them carrying firearms, entered Priya Prangan apartment of Dr Mosharrar at Paribagh and damaged a dozen of vehicles in the parking lot.

Dr Mosharrar was not in his residence at the time of the incident. Protesters also set fire to his car. Security personnel at the apartment put off the fire immediately, however.

Protesters claimed that Dr Mosharrar is one of the masterminds behind the formation of the committee.

Sources said aggrieved JCD activists took position at BNP central office, Dhaka University campus and other educational institutions in the city and also at the mazar of late President Ziaur Rahman in a bid to prevent the new committee leaders from entering those places.

### 7 muggers

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snatching money from a pedestrian.

One Bakul, 24, was caught and beaten up by the local people in Fakirapool area yesterday afternoon while he was snatching money from rickshaw passenger.

Besides, Sumon, 25, and Rashedul Islam, 22, were caught by pedestrians in front of Mottijheel Ideal School at about 10 pm Saturday night while they were snatching money from two rickshaw passengers.

All the muggers were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital under police guard.

### Bid to loot goods from train in Natore, 25 hurt

**From Our Correspondent**  
RAJSHAHI, Dec 24: At least 25 people were injured, five of them seriously, in a clash between Government Railway Police (GRP) and some local people at Azimnagar Railway Station under Lalpur upazila in Natore, this noon.

According to witnesses, the clash ensued when a group of local people numbering about 60 tried to loot goods from the Mohananda Express train at the station.

When GRP police resisted the alleged looters became violent and locked in an armed clash.

Both sides exchanged over 100 shots, leaving 25 people including three policemen injured.

A tense situation was prevailing in the station areas following the incident.

### Police, mob clash

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The drivers then cordoned the four-story house of Taslima. Some of them went to call their other colleagues from nearby areas.

By about 9 am, over 1000 people gathered there and some of them tried to storm into the house, witnesses said.

Meantime, police came and asked the people to leave the spot. But the mob told police to leave.

Police charged batons on the angry people, who retaliated with bricks. Police then fired tear gas shells.

Some of the angry people who climbed on roofs of adjoining houses also threw crackers at police.

Several houses including that

### New thana inaugurated in Faridpur

**FARIDPUR, Dec 24:** Environment and Forest Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury and Home Minister Mohammad Nasim today jointly laid the foundation stone of the newly established Saltha thana under Nagarkanda upazila here, reports BSS.

The new Thana has been constituted with six southwestern unions of Nagarkanda upazila.

The new Thana building will be constructed on a three-acre of land at village Saltha. At present the activities of the new Thana will be run from a local union council office.

Speaking on the occasion, Mohammad Nasim said the new Thana has been established not only for ensuring peace and security of the people of the area and maintaining law and order but also it will help develop the area.

About elimination of terrorists in the southwestern part of the country, he said the government has ensured arrest and trial of the notorious terrorists who had been frequently sheltered by the past governments.

Pointing out to the dishonoring of national flag and national anthem by the conspirators, the Home Minister said the national flag, national anthem and

The condition of Munsif Bazul Basit Anju, joint secretary of the new committee who received bullet wounds in several places of his body on Saturday night, is stated to be critical. He is under treatment at the Combined Military Hospital.

Anju received bullet wounds when a group of youths shot him in front of his residence in the city's Mirpur area soon after the announcement of the committee at about 8:30 p.m. on Saturday night. He was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital and later to the CMH.

JCD's Dhaka City South and North units, units at DU, Jagannath College, BUET, Dhaka Medical College and other educational institutions in the city and other parts of the country have instantly rejected the new committee and demanded its immediate dissolution.

Besides, JCD leaders and activists in different parts of the country, including Chittagong University, Mymensingh, Jamalpur and Narsingdi have also held demonstrations protesting the new committee.

Several hundred JCD leaders and activists brought out a militant procession on the Dhaka University campus yesterday morning and later held a rally in front of the DUCSU Building.

The angry JCD men chanted slogans against the new committee and demanded that the committee be immediately dissolved.

At the rally, the JCD leaders strongly condemned the BNP leadership for announcing the committee ignoring the sentiment of general students. They declared Pintu, Laltu and their associates persona-non-grata on the campus. The Jagannath College unit also declared the two persona-non-grata.

Earlier, the angry JCD men came out of residential halls of Dhaka University at about 10 p.m. on Saturday and brought out a procession on the campus. At least 10 gunshots were fired during the violent protest, campus sources said.

Additional police forces were deployed on the DU campus to avert untoward incident.

According to the party sources, BNP joint secretary general Mirza Abbas rushed to Khaleda Zia's Banani office on Saturday evening with a list of the new committee. She then called BNP's Student Affairs Secretary Amanullah Aman MP for his consent, but he refused to endorse it.

Sources said Khaleda called BNP Joint Secretary General Mirza Chowdhury, who is attached to the Banani office, and instructed him to put his signature on the committee list for final approval.

Although BNP Secretary-General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan was available, Khaleda didn't consult him about the formation of the committee, the sources added.

They said the BNP chairperson instructed Mirza Chowdhury to sign the papers on behalf of the secretary-general, apprehending that Mannan Bhuiyan may refuse to approve the new committee.

Party insiders apprehended more attacks in the residences of BNP leaders, especially those who have been backing Pintu and Laltu. BNP and JCD leaders also feared that fresh violence may erupt over the new committee.

### Blast at Bata Shoe shop: 2 killed, 30 hurt

**By Staff Correspondent**  
Two people were killed and 30 others injured in an explosion at a Bata Shoe shop at Mirpur in the city on Saturday night.

The deceased were identified as Yusuf, 22, son of Shaheb Ali of 7/1 BCIC Zoo Road, Mirpur and Sumi 10, a student of class four of Al Amin High School, Mirpur.

More than 50 customers were inside the shop during the incident. The injured were sent to different hospitals in the city.

Yusuf went to the shop along with his brother Ujjal to purchase a shoe. He received severe burn injuries and was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he died at about 1:15 am, sources said.

Sumi went to the shop with her parents. She was sent to the Crescent Hospital in Mirpur and later shifted to the DMCH as her condition deteriorated. She succumbed to burn injuries yesterday morning, sources added.

The bodies were sent to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

The duty officer of Mirpur thana police said the incident took place due to an explosion and they are investigating the matter.

Mirpur police filed a case in this regard.

### Christmas

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On this day, Christians imbued with the spirit of Christ take fresh vows to uphold the spirit of love and compassion for others and further consolidate religious harmony in a strife-torn world.

### 8 killed

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The identity of two others could not be known immediately.

The injured were admitted to Sirajganj General Hospital where the condition of 14 was stated to be critical.

Additional police superintendent, Sirajganj, visited the spot soon after the accident.

Police seized both vehicles. A case was lodged with Ullapara police station.

### Dhaka-Agartala

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point on the route, said the service would open up a new window of opportunity in bilateral trade, commerce and cooperation.

Today's trial run is intended to examine 16-kilometre road on the Bangladesh side and suggest the type and size of buses which will run on the route.

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and former West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu visited Dhaka in June last year to inaugurate the Dhaka-Calcutta bus service.

Out of the 140-kilometre Dhaka-Agartala route, a stretch of 16-kilometre from Darkha to Akhaura is in bad shape. This portion of the road has to be improved to run the bus service," Chowdhury said.

Besides, BRTC, officials of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) and Roads and Highways Department will be among the persons attending the trial run.

### Biman

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tenders on November 14, inviting Request for Proposal (RFP) to off-load its shares. The last date for submitting RFP is January 7.

So far, two airlines - Gulf Air and Qatar Airways - have submitted RFPs directly to Biman. A number of other airlines have also shown interest, the sources said. Airlines from South Asian countries have been barred from submitting RFP.

As per the World Bank aided restructuring programme, 51 per cent share of Biman will be retained by the government and nine per cent will be given to its employees, numbering some 5500.

Biman will continue to retain its ground handling, cargo and catering services.

With a fleet of 14 including 6 DC-10 30 and three Airbus A 310 aircraft, Biman now flies to 25 international destinations. Its market share of passengers going abroad from Dhaka increased by two per cent to 48 per cent in the last one and a half years, the sources said.

## Visa counsellor's misbehaviour at US embassy

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"No official of the US embassy contacted me or conveyed any sympathy to me or my family in last one week," she lamented. Whereas, she told newsmen, all their documents, including passports, remained at the embassy.

On December 14, the aggrieved lady said, she along with family members went to the US embassy for visa and were called to counter number 5 for submitting documents.

The official of Korean or Chinese stock at the counter asked her husband Sagar to bring some additional documents on December 18. At that time, she said, the official also kept her passport attached with a five-year US visa.

As per embassy instructions, on December 18, Shamim Ara, her husband and daughter appeared before counter 3 where an American agent examining documents gave visa token keep-



Jordan's King Abdullah II (R) and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat pray at the monarch's residence in Amman yesterday where the two leaders discussed Arab and international steps that could be taken to secure Palestinian rights. The visit coincides with last-ditch efforts by US President Bill Clinton to salvage the peace process before the end of his term January 20. -AFP photo

## \$15b can be earned

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Terming the convention a milestone, he said linking the resident and non-resident Bangladeshis is a crucial factor for the country's technological development.

NRBs must come forward to invest more in prospective areas and set up joint venture projects, Kibria said.

He however mentioned that the Tk 100 crore funds allocated in the budget to encourage investment in the IT sector was not being utilised due to bureaucratic tangles although the government was willing to allocate more funds for this purpose.

Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury said development of human resources should be given priority.

Apart from IT, other sectors should be given proper attention,

he said and stressed the need for building institutional framework to give support to these sectors.

NRBs should take initiatives for setting up more joint venture projects, Chowdhury suggested.

Dr M Abdullah said at least a process should be started right now to begin cooperation between resident and non-resident Bangladeshis.

The government is the biggest stakeholder in bringing about any technological development, IT in particular. "That's why government support is very essential."

"Let the government, business community, residents and NRBs work together. We are already very late," Dr Abdullah said.

Dr Sheikh Mizan said from now on, TechBang will organise two conventions every year one in Bangladesh and the other in Europe or America.

## All five are married

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since one of his ears was severed by the activists of Pintu group two years ago.

Monjur Elahi, the number one vice-president, reportedly got married about 12 years ago, and was divorced and then married again. He has a child from his first marriage. He is now a businessman.

Organising secretary ABM Mosharrar Hossain is now a father of a newborn daughter. His wife works in the Dhaka University Central Library. He was a commissioner of a Dhaka City Corporation ward in 1994.

Munsif Bazul Basit Anju, number one joint secretary, is also married and has a child. He has allegedly been involved in a number of terrorist activities in the city.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia approved and announced the five-member central committee of JCD on Saturday night with Pintu and Laltu as president and general secretary, respectively.

Most of the "dedicated" activists of the JCD have expressed strong resentment over the formation of the new body. What has surprised us is that non-students and identified terrorists have been accommodated in the JCD committee, said a number of JCD activists on the Dhaka University yesterday.



A boy holds a candle during service for children on Christmas Eve in a Roman-Catholic church in Minsk yesterday. -AFP photo

## Clinton greets Muslims

**US President Bill Clinton** has wished all Muslims across the world a blessed celebration of the Eid-ul-Fitr and peace, health and prosperity in the years ahead, reports UNB.

In his annual Eid-ul-Fitr message, the US president said whether native-born or immigrants from Africa, the Middle East, Asia, or Europe, Muslims represent an increasingly important element in the tapestry of American society.

According to a USIS special release, Clinton also said that because of the growth of Islam in the USA, its people of all faiths are coming to appreciate the significance of Ramadan as Muslims fast, pray and dedicate themselves to the teaching of the Quran.

"United in faith, American Muslims are also united in their commitment to building a society rich in diversity and grounded in mutual respect. I believe America is made stronger by the core values of Islam: commitment to family, compassion for the disadvantaged and respect for difference," he said.

Clinton said that there is a special significance this year as Jews celebrate Hanukkah, Christians Christmas and Muslims celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr in the span of the same week.

## Four outlaws arrested

**NATORE, Dec 24:** Four outlawed Sharbahara Party activists were caught red-handed while they were looting cattle from a house at Kalkandara village in Guradaspur upazila Friday night, reports UNB.

The arrested were identified as Kalam, 30, Zakir, 30, Shaquif, 22, and Azizul Haque, 20.

A team of patrol police rushed to the area when the local people raised an alarm and arrested the thieves.

During interrogation, they claimed that they are activists of the outlawed Furba Banglar Sharbahara Party.

Police also recovered two guns and 22 bullets from their possession. A case was filed in this connection.

## Newsmen confined in Banglabazar Patrika office

The management of daily Banglabazar Patrika last night allegedly deployed armed men to oust its journalists and employees from the office as they have been demanding arrears salaries and allowances before the Eid, reports UNB.

Journalists who were agitating in the office alleged that the management hired armed men threatening the newsmen to leave the office. But they decided not to leave office unless their dues are paid.

The journalists and employees were virtually remained confined till filing of this report at 10 pm.

The newsmen could not even use the fax to inform their colleagues in other newspapers and news agencies of the situation, a reporter of the daily told UNB over telephone.

The management deployed the armed men at the main gate of the daily when the newspapermen pressed for their arrears and allowances.

Editor Mohammad Zakaria Khan allegedly misbehaved with the journalists. He even showed his shoes to the journalists.

On December 17, the management sacked two journalists for demanding their out standing salaries.

Journalists and employees were not paid their salaries for the last four months.

## Car bombs rock Jakarta

**JAKARTA, Dec 24:** Car bombs exploded today outside three churches during Christmas Eve celebrations in Indonesia's capital injuring at least seven people, witnesses and police said, reports AP.

One of the blasts occurred near the Roman Catholic Cathedral, located close to the main mosque and presidential palace in Jakarta.

Details of the attacks were sketchy. No group had claimed responsibility, police said.

The bombs exploded within a few minutes of one another and within a radius of about two kilometers.

The injured were taken to nearby hospitals and more than dozen cars were damaged.

# Shab-e-Qadr observed

Shab-e-Qadr, the most divinely blissful night for the Muslims, was observed in the country with utmost religious solemnity, reports BSS.

According to Islam, prayer on the Shab-e-Qadr night is equal to that on 1000 months as the Almighty Allah showers His unlimited Rahmat (blessings) by His own hands upon His beloved devotees on the night following the 26th day of the Holy Ramadan-Mubarrak.

Millions of devout Muslims in Bangladesh and elsewhere of the world spent the whole night in Mosques and at homes and prayed to the Almighty Allah for His mercy of their sins, granting eternal peace of the departed souls of near and dear ones and also sought His blessings for the wellbeing of Muslim Ummah as well as the whole Mankind.

Elderly Muslims with their sons and grandsons in new clothes went to the nearby Mosques and performed their usual Esha and Tarawih prayers. Afterwards, they recited from the Holy Quran and offered Zikr throughout the whole night and they raised their two hands by submitting themselves to the mercy of the Almighty. Elderly Muslim women with their daughters and granddaughters at home prayed to the Almighty Allah, the most benevolent and merciful, for the well-being of Muslims and all others in this World and the World after.

Yesterday was a public holiday.

The specialty of this year's Shab-e-Baraat and Shab-e-Qadr is the absence of horrifying sound from crackers' blasts which has long been the most frightful phenomenon on these particular two nights. Members of the law enforcing agencies were specially alert against the repeat of such awesome incidents in Dhaka and other parts of the country.

The Muslims distributed gifts and specially prepared food items including Ifar among the neighbours, relations and the poor as part of the religious festivity making this Holy occasion. According to the Islamic faith, the Mankind has been asked to seek blessings of the Almighty Allah in an uneven number of the last days of the Holy Ramazan as the Holy Quran was revealed on one of those nights.

## Disturbance at ZIA

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check-in counter. He was asked by a female Emirates official to pay for the additional weight. But the passenger refused to pay. "Do you know who am I?" he shouted.

The Emirates official regretted that the charges cannot be exempted. The young self-proclaimed VIP then started shouting at the top of his voice and started abusing the female official. All this was happening in front of hundreds of passengers and other airlines officials at the departure lounge, witnesses said.

A security officer of the airlines came to the spot and asked the VIP to refrain from abusing the woman. The passenger became furious and threatened the officer. He made a call from his cell phone to his relative whom he claimed publicly to be the Home Minister.

Within half an hour, a big contingent of DB police reached the departure lounge and questioned every personnel of the airline. They arrested Tanver Ahmed, the security officer of the airlines.

The Detective Branch men are not allowed to enter the departure lounge of ZIA without the prior permission of the authorities. Under normal circumstances, an ordinary citizen can not have access to the DB for such incidents, observers said.

"This happened at the instruction from the top. This blatant abuse of power has shaken up the airline community," commented a source.

The DB officials yesterday, however, tried to justify the arrest, saying that the security officer misbehaved with the passenger after an altercation. The passenger was unable to fly due to the scuffle. The DB claimed that they went to the airport following a complaint by a passenger. When asked who made the complaint, they declined to give the name.

There are several offices of law enforcement at the Zia International Airport where the police could have taken Tanver for questioning. The DB police could not say clearly as to why they had taken him to their office at Minto Road without any written complaint.

## BCL, JCD collecting toll

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maintaining a student organisation such as BCL," said a BCL leader.

Replying to a question, another BCL leader said they have no way but to raise certain amount of money from different sources as they have to spend a big amount for political sustenance. He also said he spends over Tk 5,000 per day for political purposes.

On the other hand, the JCD leaders are having problems in collecting tolls, as their position on the campus and in the city is not good. Ousted from the campus by BCL men, the JCD leaders are staying in various places in the city and trying to raise fund from their respective localities, insiders said.

A JCD leader, however, said they are out of the race as the BCL had already grabbed all opportunities.

## No accord in ME talks

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based on what we heard from them" at the Camp David summit last July and since then.

The top Israeli and Palestinian negotiators met again for about an hour at a nearby hotel after their White House meeting, but both sides said afterward that no breakthroughs were made.

Arafat, speaking in Jordan, made at least one sticking point clear. He said his negotiators would not make concessions on the return of Palestinian refugees to Israel.

Taking the view Palestinians were forcibly expelled from their homes when Israel was established 52 years ago, Arafat is demanding recognition of a "right to return" for millions of Palestinians, including descendants.

Israel has rejected the demand as potentially altering the Jewish character of the state.

In the negotiations at Bolling Air Force Base in southeast Washington, Israel apparently offered concessions on East Jerusalem, which Arafat seeks as the capital of a Palestinian state that Barak has already conceded.

Ben-Ami told American Jewish leaders in a telephone report Friday that the Temple Mount, revered by observant Jews as the site of the ancient Temple, was on the negotiating table.

"For all practical purposes, the Arabs are in control of the Haram," Morton Klein, president of the Zionist Organisation of America, quoted Ben-Ami as saying. Haram al-Sharif, the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the site, is holy to Muslims.

Ben-Ami said Israel was determined to hold on to "Jewish Jerusalem," an indication the dovish Barak was prepared to relinquish the predominantly Palestinian area of the city.

Emerging from the White House talks, Erekat said gaps remained on Jerusalem, security, refugees and borders.

"We're exerting maximum effort," he said.

Yasser Abed Rabbo, a member of the Palestinian delegation, said Friday that Israel had backtracked on Jerusalem. "On some of the ideas they had proposed concerning Jerusalem, the Israelis stepped back, concerning Haram."

"We are facing a crisis. We are not close on any of the issues," he said.

Erekat, on Saturday, said "we would like to see an agreement during President Clinton's presidency." However, he said if the Arab-Israeli conflict was still unresolved when Clinton left office January 20 the next US president George W Bush would deal with it, as well.

Speaking separately in the White House driveway, Ben-Ami said "inevitably differences remain."

In a later interview, the Israeli minister dismissed any idea of a crisis as "not serious."

"What we are trying to do is to fine-tune and see where we can settle differences," he said. "We need to persist, and we have a timetable and we need to see whether we are able, within such a timetable, of settling our differences."