

# JCD rivals draw battle line

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 programmes. Its rivals have taken "necessary measures", too, to foil the plans of the new committee at any cost.  
 A number of senior BNP leaders invited to the programmes by the new committee have already declined in fear of fresh violence.  
 Majority of the JCD leaders and activists has rejected the new committee. They have staged a series of demonstrations demanding its cancellation and also laid siege to the party's central office since the announcement was made on December 23.  
 The JCD units of Dhaka University, the city's south and north, Jagannath College, BUET, Dhaka College, Titumir College and other important educational institutions have already declared the new leadership persona non grata on their campuses and offices.  
 After the announcement, residences of top-ranked BNP leaders came under attack and the party's central office was set afire.  
 New leaders have apparently gone into hiding for fear of attack by

their rivals.  
 The BNP chairperson announced a partial central body of JCD and asked leaders concerned to form a full-fledged committee through consultation with aggrieved activists.  
 But the JCD leaders and activists refused to accept Pintu and Laltu as president and general secretary of the student organisation and refused to participate in any discussion until the new committee was dissolved.  
 At the instruction of the chairperson, a junior BNP leader has already made a number of phone calls to Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu to collect the keys of the JCD central office. Pintu hasn't turned as yet. However, while talking to The Daily Star Pintu expressed determination that the new committee would get on with its programmes and face its rivals politically.  
 Leaders and activists opposed to the new committee have already declared that they wouldn't allow Pintu and Laltu to hoist flags at JCD central office in the morning, visit Zia's mazaar or hold the rally at

Muktangan.  
 They have vowed to maintain siege to the central office at any cost and hoist the national and the party flags in the early morning. Besides they have plans to bring out processions on the campuses of Dhaka University and other educational institutions to mark the day.  
 Sources said that leaders opposed to the new committee had decided to deploy activists at different strategic points of the city to stop supporters of Pintu and Laltu from attending the Muktangan rally.  
 Intra-party bickering within the BNP over formation of the controversial JCD central committee has intensified with both the hardliners and moderate factions resorting to mudslinging. The hardliners blame the moderates for instigating wild demonstrations in the capital and elsewhere in the country against the Pintu-Laltu Committee, although, according to sources, those were spontaneous.  
 The agitation may further intensify if the new committee is not immediately cancelled, observed one source.



Preparation for Biswa Ijtema is going on. The three-day event will begin at Tangi on January 6. -Star photo

# Preparations on to hold Biswa Ijtema Jan 6

TONGI, Dec 31: All preparations are afoot to hold the Biswa Ijtema, the second largest Muslim congregation after the holy hajj, on the bank of the river Turag here from January 6, reports BSS.  
 An estimated 25 lakh devotees from 35 Muslim countries, including the host Bangladesh are expected to attend the 35th annual Ijtema, organisers told the agency today.  
 Similar number of musallis took part in the last year's Ijtema, they said.  
 A two-kilometre square pandal has been erected to house the devotees from home and abroad.  
 About 10,000 makeshift toilets and 250 tubewells have been installed for use of the devotees, the Ijtema committee said.  
 Bangladesh Army has installed three bailey bridges over the river Turag to facilitate movements of the musallis.  
 Two helpdads have been set up at TSS play ground in Tongi and Harirampur for ferrying the devotees in case of any emergency.  
 Besides, special trains and BRTC buses will ply to facilitate movement of the devotees during and before the Ijtema.  
 Special arrangements have been made to ensure law and order and medical facilities for the musallis, organisers said.

A press release of Bangladesh Railway said, a number of special trains will ply in different routes from January 5 to 9 to facilitate movement of the participants.  
 One special train will operate from Mymensingh, Akhaura and Bhairabazar to Tongi from January 5 to 7.  
 On the day of Akheri Munajat, five special trains will operate from Dhaka to Tongi.  
 On January 9, two special trains will run from Tongi to Mymensingh and another special train from Akhaura and Bhairabazar to Tongi.  
 Talking to BSS, local MP Ahsanullah Master said the government and the Ijtema committee have taken all preparations to hold the coming Biswa Ijtema peacefully.  
 A round-the-clock control room has been set up at the Ijtema site to oversee the holy gathering, he said.  
 The Ijtema committee recently held a preparatory meeting at the Ijtema ground. State Minister for Rural Development and Cooperatives Advocate Rahmat Ali, Ahsanullah Master MP, Chairman of Tongi Pourasava Azmatullah Khan, DC of Gazipur Shamsul Huq and local coordinator of Ijtema committee Dr Azizul Huq attended the meeting.

# Case against 'fatwabaj'

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 away from home on a visit to his sister's house in another village issued an edict that Shahida should go for a *hilla* to resume marital relations with her 'divorced' husband. His sons immediately forced Shahida to marry another man. On return home, Chunnu refused to accept Shahida as wife and sent her to her father's house, the report added.  
 The HC took cognizance of it and issued the rule.  
 On Behalf of the Ain-O-Salish Kendra, Dr Kamal Hossain filed a writ petition as Intervenor. The court called Barrister Tania Amir as Amicus Curie.  
 Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday argued that if there is a clear order terminating such acts illegal, then those giving such *fatwa* would know that they cannot walk away with impunity. He urged the court to distribute copies of its judgement in all places in the country.  
 He maintained that in the name of *fatwa*, helpless women are victimised.  
 Dr Kamal submitted that when

Chunnu pronounced *talak*, Shahida was already conceiving for five months.  
 On behalf of the state, Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Syed Mahmud Hossain said that the DC of Naogaon, Lutfor Rahman, had instructed police on December 2 to take action against the *fatwabaz* and his accomplices. The victim also filed a case with Naogaon thana on December 3 and Maulana Azizul Islam was arrested on December 6. Masuddunabi who solemnised the *hilla* and four others were also arrested.  
 At the initiative local Union Parishad, Shahida has returned to Chunnu and is living with him, the DAG said quoting from an affidavit submitted by the DC. The DC stated that there were no lapses on his part to apply law against the offender.  
 Barrister Tania Amir said that Muslim Family Ordinance does not allow giving such *fatwa* and it is a punishable offence under Section 508 of the Penal Code.

# Army jawan, tempo driver caught while snatching

GAZIPUR, Dec 31: People caught an army jawan and a tempo driver red-handed while they were snatching microbus passengers at Joydevpur crossing here on Dec 25, reports UNB.  
 Police and witnesses said Humayun Kabir, 25, a soldier of Bangladesh Army working at Syedpur Cantonment and tempo driver Baharul Islam, 26, were held along with a revolver when they were allegedly looting valuables from the passengers of a Mymensingh-bound microbus at gunpoint in the afternoon.  
 Agitated people gave them a good thrashing and handed them over to police with critical injuries.  
 They were admitted to Gazipur Sadar Hospital. Two cases were filed against them.  
 An officer of Bangladesh Ordnance Factory at Gazipur Major Asad Tuesday took Humayun from police custody and sent him to Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka.

# Pakistan holds first polls

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 the army seized power from the civilian government of Nawaz Sharif, who was imprisoned and later sent into exile in Saudi Arabia. The military accused Sharif and his colleagues of rampant corruption, economic mismanagement and power abuse.  
 Army chief Gen. Pervez Musharraf promised to hold elections, but said the system required massive reforms to clean up corruption that had become endemic and revise electoral rolls that were antiquated and in some cases bogus.  
 Because of the widespread illiteracy in Pakistan ballots were marked with pictures or symbols rather than words.  
 Each candidate is represented by a symbol such as a lock, a radio, a lamp, an apple. There are thousands of symbols.  
 Voting results are not expected to be released for one week.  
 Munneza Tarar, a women's activist in Sargodha district, questioned the delay in announcing the vote. She

also was pessimistic about the real extent of female participation in Pakistan's male-dominated society, where girls are often married off at puberty, withdrawn from school at a young age and forced into servitude. In Sargodha, a district 200 kilometers (160 miles) southeast of Islamabad there are 164 seats not being contested because Tarar says the administration was unable to find a woman willing to run.  
 "They are frightened. People attack their character and ask 'why is she coming out of the house? What kind of a woman is she?'" explained Tarar.  
 The literacy rate among women is barely five per cent, according to unofficial estimates.  
 For weeks prior to the election she pounded the pavement along with other activists trying to encourage women to stand for elections, but many were afraid.  
 She said they were threatened with divorce by their disgruntled husbands. Their was one report of a woman being killed by her husband

after she refused to withdraw her candidacy.  
 Musharraf has promised to hold provincial and federal elections following these polls. He says democratic rule will be back in Pakistan by the end of 2002, this is also in keeping with an order from Pakistan's Supreme Court.  
 Early turnout at the polls in Sargodha was brisk, with one polling station reporting 125 of 900 voters marking their ballot within the first one hour.  
 Allah Rakhi, an elderly woman voting in a small village outside Sargodha, said she was the first to mark her ballot shortly after polls opened at 9 am (0400 GMT) local time.  
 "We have so many problems, we need so much here. We need clean drinking water, electricity is always a problem," she said. "Whoever we elect should help us. Everytime we hope."

# Attendance very thin

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 Although newspaper offices were scheduled to have a three-day Eid vacation, the holiday was extended by one more day due to uncertainty over sighting of the moon.  
 The capital city still looked deserted as most shops and business centres kept their shutters down.  
 The notorious city traffic was less chaotic in the last few days. Number of pedestrians, rickshaws, auto-rickshaws, minibuses and other modes of vehicles were less than normal in the city yesterday. The usually crammed buses had plenty of seats for passengers.  
 Attendance was very thin yesterday

at the Secretariat, the head-quarters of all ministries and offices of the Republic although most top-ranking officials were present.  
 Attendance in other government offices was thin. Sources said only a few staffers turned up and stayed in their offices for some hours. They were busy exchanging Eid greetings and embracing each other. They also talked about their new dresses and how they celebrated the Eid.  
 Secretariat sources said there was virtually no work in the offices. A good number of officers and employees are on additional leave to spend more time with near ones at their village homes "as they find the nine-day holiday not enough."  
 Although all insurance companies, semi-government offices, autonomous bodies, multinational companies and business offices in Motijheel commercial area, business hub of the city, remained open to business yesterday the staff were too inadequate to go about business as usual.  
 With a thinner traffic since Tuesday, the city dwellers continued to have some relief from the hustle and bustle that they are usually subjected to. They seemed to be more than happy with the present look of the capital as they could move without hazards and breath better in the absence of traffic jam and air pollution.  
 Though movement of rickshaws, auto-rickshaws and minibuses increased yesterday, the number of passengers were less than normal. Rickshawpullers and auto-rickshaw drivers charged more than usual in an attempt to compensate for dull business.  
 Most of the shopping malls and markets, barring those of essentials, kept their shutters down.  
 Meanwhile, the holidaymakers have started returning to the capital. Officials and employees, who work in government and private offices, were seen coming back to the city by train, bus and launch at Gabtali, Mohakhali, Syedabad, Kamalapur, Sadarghat and other places in the city.

# Launch disaster

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 turned down the prayer for the sake of investigation. I can not free the vessel till the department concerned is satisfied with the investigation".  
 Meanwhile, BIWTA in a press release yesterday requested the survivors and other witnesses to provide information to the inquiry committee regarding the incident. Information should be given to the office of Senior Deputy Director, Port and Transport Division, Dhaka River Port, BIWTA at 10 am on January 2 (Tuesday) or to the office of Deputy Director, Port and Transport Division, Chandpur River Port, BIWTA at 11 am on January 3 (Wednesday).  
 Information can also be given through mail or over telephone to the following addresses and telephone numbers:  
 Abdul Malek Mian, Deputy Director (BIWTA), Ministry of Shipping, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka. Telephone: 8618260 (Office) 8610097 (Residence).  
 Syed Monwar Hossain, Director, Port and Transport Division, BIWTA, 141-143 Motijheel, Dhaka. Telephone: 9552673 (Office) 7216661 (Residence).

# Welcome 2001

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 youths blasted crackers to herald the year 2001 when the clock struck zero hours.  
 The Dhaka University campus and the posh Gulshan area turned out to be the revellers' paradise for the New Year celebrations like on previous occasions.  
 UNB adds: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has called upon all to take fresh vow for building a poverty- and exploitation-free world order in the new millennium.  
 "We went to work together with the world community for building a peaceful world free from hunger, pollution and poverty," she said in a message on the eve of New Year 2001.  
 She welcomed the New Year in the new millennium, which brings messages of prosperity, excellence, fellow feelings and harmony for the world people, and greeted the countrymen as well as all members of the world community.  
 The PM said Bangladesh wants to be involved in the global endeavour for implementing all fundamental rights of the world people, including education, health and housing for all.  
 "May the next world be safe abode for all children. The neglected

women community be enlightened and unemployed youth involved in the process of production and prosperity through employment."  
 Reiterating her commitment to build a prosperous and modern Bangladesh in the new millennium perspectives, the prime minister said the people kept up their journey towards democracy, justice and voting right started off in the bygone years.  
**23 'boat people' die from thirst and hunger**  
 ADEN, Dec 31: Twenty-three Somalian boat people died from thirst and hunger Wednesday in a boat stranded off the coast of Yemen where they had sought refuge, a UN refugee official said today, reports AFP. The Somalians had spent 12 days at sea when their boat broke down in the Gulf of Aden, said Nabil Mussa, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) representative in Aden. He added that the Yemen coast guard was able to save 30 Somalians and 27 Ethiopians who were aboard the ship. The boat had come from Bosaso port in northeastern Somalia. In the last three years, several hundred Somalians, fleeing their country's decade-long civil war, have perished trying to cross the Gulf of Aden to Yemen. Many refugees hope to travel from Yemen to one of the wealthy Gulf states where they can find work. Yemen hosts an estimated 65,000 Somalian refugees. A large number stay at two refugee camps in southern Yemen.

# Passport office

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 Even police at the main entrance also make money by allowing people passage beyond the counters for Tk 20 each. Entry into the office building requires a pass which is quite difficult to get.  
 Higher officials at the passport office have lodged complaints with the police and requested for action.  
 "I have written to police for action several times but there is no end to the problem," Deputy Director of the office Rafiqul Islam said. "We feel disturbed working this way."  
 "The Home Ministry had asked me to fetch names of individuals who own the shops and whereabouts of the brokers here. Unfortunately this is not possible on my part alone," he added.  
 Islam admitted to incidents of bribery and access of outsiders into the office building but defended the employees nevertheless.  
 "Yes, I do admit that some of the officials are involved in it but they have the work done, don't they?" he said.  
 There are 11 more passport offices in the country. Last month the office at Agargaon submitted Tk 5.2 crore to the public exchequer in revenue collected from new passports, renewals and others.

# Opposition to construction in Lalon's premises continues

Country's leading intellectuals have continued to oppose any construction in the premises of Lalon Akhra and urged the conscious people to resist any move to hurt the sanctity of the shrine, reports UNB.  
 Although the government suspended the construction of a complex at the main premises of Akhra at Chheuria in Kushtia, certain quarters are still active to pressurise the Committee to Protect Lalon Akhra to accept the plan for a two-story building there, the committee alleged at a meeting in Dhaka on Dec 25.  
 Poet Shamsur Rahman and Prof Sirajul Islam Chowdhury, who attended the meeting, urged the conscious section of the society to form committees in each district to join the campaign for upholding the sacredness of the Lalon's graveyard.  
 They invited the tradition-loving people to attend the citizens rally to be held at Press Club at 3 pm on January 8.  
 Prof Syed Manzurul Islam, Prof Abul Maksud, writer Nasreen Jahan, sculptor Rasa also attended the meeting at TSC of Dhaka University.

# Two hurt over Eid celebrations in Chandpur

CHANDPUR, Dec 31: At least six people were injured in a clash between two groups over celebrating Eid-ul-Fitr in village Sadra of Hajiganj upazila on Tuesday, reports UNB.  
 Witnesses said the clash took place among the followers of renowned peer late Maulana Ishaq as they were divided on holding Eid congregation.  
 Some of them had Eid congregation Tuesday as they started fasting from November 26 but others who started fasting from November 27 observed Eid prayer on Wednesday.  
 Since 1931, Maulana Ishaq and his followers have been celebrating Eid and other religious programmes in 25 villages of the district according to the schedule of Saudi Arabia.  
 The clash erupted when the villagers came to know that Eid was not held Tuesday in Saudi Arabia. But those who held Eid congregation Tuesday said they followed the schedule of Libya.  
 However, people in other parts of the district observed the Eid on Thursday as per the schedule of the national moon sighting committee.

# Papri murder

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 re are several criminal cases against Munnna with Dhanmondi thana.  
 Munnna was arrested by Dhanmondi police. When released on bail, he joined the Seven Star group. He was close to Subrata Bayen, another notorious criminal and member of the Seven Star group, the sources claimed.  
 Munnna had rented a house at Uttara and stayed there for his security. Papri and her mother used to stay at the house, the sources claimed.  
 On December 25, two youths came to the house at about 2 pm. Munnna and Papri were present at the house at that time. Gunshots were heard soon after the two youths had entered the house, the sources claimed.  
 Meanwhile, Uttara police said they have interrogated the guard of the house, Rezaul Karim, housemaids Shathi and Ayesha and collected some information from them.  
 Police alleged that the family members of Papri were not cooperating with them in the investigation.

# JCD rivals trade gunshots

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 Panic-stricken passers-by ran for safety during the shootout. None was injured.  
 Police rushed to the spot but failed to arrest any of the "attackers", they said.  
 BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia on December 23 announced an incomplete new central committee of JCD with Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu and Shahabuddin Laltu Pintu as its president and general secretary respectively. This sparked off a series of demonstrations by JCD activists in the city and elsewhere in the country against the new committee.  
 Sources said the Pintu-Laltu faction, as per its announced programme, was due to occupy the central JCD office yesterday morning and hoist the party flag and the

National Flag there on the occasion of its founding anniversary.  
 A good number of leaders and activists of JCD units at Dhaka University, Jagannath College and other educational institutions as well as from its Dhaka city North and South units took position at the BNP and JCD offices earlier to thwart the move.  
 When the "attackers" left, JCD activists brought out a procession from in front of BNP central office and chanted various slogans against the new committee allegedly headed by non-students.  
 It is learnt that JCD activists would guard the office all day and all night and resist the Pintu-Laltu faction from entering the central office.

# Politics spares not the judiciary

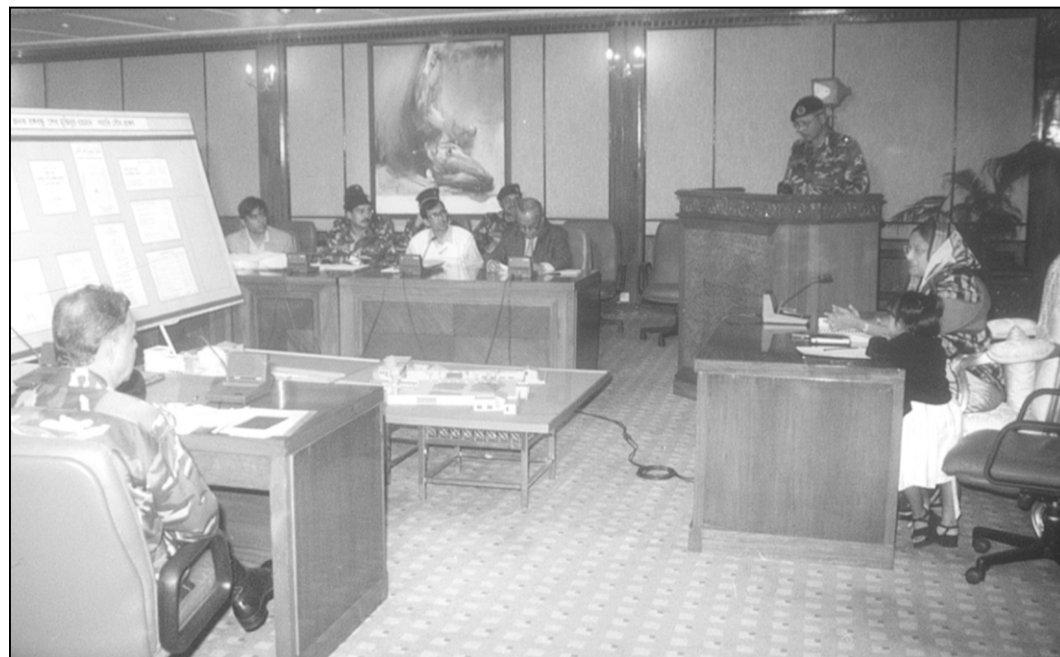
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 Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Home Minister Mohammad Nasim were at the centre of political debate on several occasions for criticising bails granted to some alleged criminals by the higher court and demanding accountability of the judiciary.  
 The unprecedented way in which daily Inqilab Editor A M M Bahauddin and Jatiya Party leader Jahangir Mohammad Adel was granted bail both charged with treason also drew bitter criticism from the top government leaders.  
 The ruling party sharply reacted to the High Court's late-night sitting to grant bail to Bahauddin against whom the government brought sedition charge for publishing a

parody of the national anthem. It also came down heavily on some lawyers belonging to the Bangladesh Nationalist Party for sheltering Bahauddin and Adel at the High Court building so that they could escape arrests.  
 The alleged secret conversation between a High Court judge and Ershad over the latter's conviction in the Janata Tower graft case was yet another issue that heated up the political front and finally led to resignation of the judge.  
 Uniqueness was also there in yet another instance involving the higher judiciary. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was charged with contempt of court for her remarks against the High Court judges who granted anticipatory bails to persons

accused in criminal cases. Hasina was the first head of government to be asked by the High Court to be cautious in her remarks about the judiciary.  
 On the opposition front, the alliance of four parties including BNP pathetically failed to launch any effective movement against the government thanks to their internal bickering mainly due to the absence of a clear understanding on an electoral alliance. Main opposition BNP suffered heavily due to conflicts among its radical and moderate leaders. Infighting in the party's student front Jatiyatadabi Chhatra Dal (JCD) did not help its cause, either.  
 The parliament had dull sessions throughout the year as the opposi-

tion parties continued to boycott the proceedings. But it sprang into life, for a brief period though, when the opposition lawmakers registered brief attendance to protect their membership, a move that earned them lot of condemnation from those in power.  
 BNP's rebel MP Major (Retd) Akhtaruzzaman opened up a new chapter in the country's politics by joining parliament sessions defying a party decision. Akhtar was expelled from the party, but he earned appreciation from many quarters.  
 Passage of the Zila Parishad Bill providing for an indirect election in the local government body came under sharp criticism from the opposition camp.

Awami League's Laxmipur chapter leader and Pourashava chairman Abu Taher occupied the spotlight for his alleged involvement in the killing of BNP leader Advocate Nurul Islam.  
 Changes in leadership in the Jamaat-e-Islami, especially Golam Azam's quitting the top party position, gave way to widespread discussions in the political arena.  
 Nevertheless, the country's politics had an election mood at the fag end of the year with bright prospects for an early general election.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presided over a meeting at her office in the city yesterday to review the progress of construction of a memorial to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman