

4 selected for Janakantha award

By Staff Correspondent

Four eminent personalities have been selected for the Janakantha Gunijan O Protibha Shammanona Puroshkar 2000 for their contribution to art, literature, culture, journalism and freedom fight.

A press release said yesterday, those selected for the award are renowned journalist Obayedul Haq for his contribution to journalism, Rashid Karim for contribution to literature, music composer Samar Das for contribution to the war of liberation and Amanul Haq for photography.

Obaidul Haq will get Tk one lakh at a time and Tk 5000 per month. The three others will get Tk 25,000 each at a time and Tk 5000 per month. Each of them would also get a gold medal and a crest.

The Janakantha introduced the annual award in 1998 and 11 personalities received it so far.

Indian protesters disrupt screening of movie starring Manisha Koirala

NEW DELHI, Dec 31: Students in India halted the screening of a movie starring a Nepali actress to protest against anti-Indian violence in Nepal last week, officials said today, reports AFP.

Members of the National Students Union of India (NSUI) disrupted the screening of "Champion," starring Nepali-born Manisha Koirala on Saturday in Indore in Madhya Pradesh, magistrate Manish Singh told AFP.

"Hundreds of students tore up posters of the film and resorted to minor stone pelting. It was a backlash against the wave of anti-Indian protests in Nepal last week," said Singh.

"The district administration has geared up to curb further agitation against cinema halls screening "Champion." Stern measures will be taken against demonstrators."

The unrest followed a series of violent protests in Nepal against Indian movie star Hrithik Roshan after it was alleged the actor had said in an interview that he loathed Nepal and its people.

Reports of the interview triggered days of unrest, although See page 11 col 3

DAG Shahabuddin

Ahmad resigns

Shahabuddin Ahmad has tendered his resignation as Deputy Attorney General for personal reasons, says a press release.

The resignation takes effect from today.

Ahmad was the first law officer appointed by the present government after it assumed power in June, 1996, the press release said.



Obaidul Haq

Rashid Karim

Samar Das

Amanul Haq

Case against 'fatwabaj' in Naogaon: Verdict today

By Special Correspondent

The High Court yesterday completed hearing on a *suo moto* rule on the Deputy Commissioner of Naogaon to show cause why action should not be taken against him for failing to take action against a *fatwabaj* (one giving edicts in the name of religion) whose *fatwa* devastated the life of a housewife.

The edict led to her *hilla* (forced marriage) with another man and subsequent refusal by her first husband to accept her.

The HC would deliver its judgement in the case today.

A Division Bench of the HC comprising Justice Golam Rabbani and Justice Najmun Ara Sultana had issued the *suo moto* rule on December 2 follow-

ing a newspaper report. The report narrated the plight of Shahida, wife of Saiful Islam Chunnun of village Atikha in Sadar upazila of Naogaon, due to a *fatwa* given by Maulana Haji Azizul Islam of the locality.

During a family feud about a year and a half ago, the report said, Chunnun allegedly divorced Shahida wife by pronouncing *talak* which was claimed to have been overheard by the Maulana, their neighbour.

However, the couple continued to live together and had a child.

On November 16, the Maulana seeing Chunnun See page 11 col 1

JS body to probe 'destruction' of Chokoria green belt project

By Staff Correspondent

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Land at a meeting yesterday constituted a four-member sub-committee to investigate the alleged destruction of the coastal green belt project in Chokoria thana of Cox's Bazar in the name of shrimp farming.

The meeting took into consideration allegations by the locals that a section of influential people are cultivating shrimps in the south-east coastal belts by destroying the government's green belt project aimed to protect the coastal people from annual natural disasters such as cyclone and tidal surge.

Presided over by Majibur Rahman Talukder, the meeting asked the sub-committee headed by Suranjit Sengupta to submit its report within a month after conducting spot investigation.

Other members of the sub-committee are Enamul Haq, Mohammad Ali and Salahuddin Ahmed.

Committee members State Minister for Land Rashid Mosahrraf and Abdul Latif Siddique were among those who attended the meeting.

Founding anniversary today

JCD rivals draw battle line

By Staff Correspondent

With the new committee of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), headed by Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu and Shahabuddin Laltu, determined to carry out its programmes to observe the party's 23rd founding anniversary despite the rival activists' plan to resist them, bloody violence is feared across the city today.

The new committee has outlined a programme featuring hoisting of national and party flags at the central office at Nayapalton, placing of wreath at the mazaar of late President Ziaur Rahman and holding of a rally at Mukhtangan at 2-30 pm today.

Although the leadership, policymakers and senior members of the BNP are anticipating untoward incidents in the city today, the party hasn't so far taken any step to avert them.

Sources say that supporters of both the groups have taken final preparation to confront each other. It has become a prestige issue for both, they observed.

The Pintu-Laltu faction, according to the insiders, has organised a huge number of non-students and armed cadres for successful completion of the See page 11 col 1



The city has come abuzz with people returning after a nine-day Eid-ul-Fitr vacation (left). Government offices, however, appeared unwilling to come out of the festive mood on the first day of work after the holidays.

Pakistan holds first polls since army takeover

ISLAMABAD, Dec 31: Pakistanis went to the polls today in staggered local elections which the military rulers here say is the first step toward a return to democracy for this poor nation of 140 million people, reports AP.

Elections for municipal and district councils are being held in 18 of 106 districts in Pakistan. The last of the elections will be held in July.

In this round of voting Kanwar Dilshad of the election commission says that 31,605 candidates are vying for 20,076 seats. There are an estimated nine million registered voters in the 18 districts.

For the first time in Pakistan's troubled political history seats have been allocated specifically for women and the poor an attempt the military says to

create a more egalitarian nation. Pakistan has been traditionally ruled by either the military or mostly corrupt politicians, who belong to the wealthiest and most powerful in a country the vast majority earn barely 400 a year and only a few can read or write.

The latest round of military rule began in October 1999 when See page 11 col 4

Offices reopen, attendance very thin

By Staff Correspondent

The government and private offices resumed business in the city yesterday after a long nine-day holiday, including a four-day Eid vacation.

Government offices virtually went on holiday on December 22 when most of the city dwellers started leaving the city to celebrate the Eid-ul-Fitr with their near and dear ones in outlying villages and towns.

See page 11 col 1