Indo-Pak troops

trade gunfire in Kashmir

November 27.

Cloudy sky forecast

Light rain or drizzle is likely to occur at one or two places over Rajshahi divisions and the regions of Mymensingh and Tangail till 6pm today, reports UNB.

Weather is likely to remain dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country. Light change in night temperature is expected over the country, Met Office said.

The country's highest temperature recorded yesterday was 30.5 degree Celsius at Cox's Bazar and the lowest 10.0 degree at

The sun sets in the capital today at 5.25 pm and rises tomorrow at 6.43 am.

Maximum and minimum temperature and humidity recorded in

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	\mathbf{Max}	\mathbf{Min}	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	25.6	17.8	72	68
Chittagong	30.0	17.0	80	76
Rajshahi	24.5	15.4	87	70
Khulna	26.4	16.8	76	-
Barisal	28.0	15.4	79	80

Nepal FM's trip

From Page 1 use of the route for five days a week, it is virtually 'nonfunctional' due to inadequate infrastructural facilities at needs a regular customs post, and warehousing and telecom-munications facilities to develop into a useful transit point.

Once the infrastructure is in place and cargo starts moving in volume, Kathmandu will be in a position to ask New Delhi to allow unhindered transit access seven days a week through Banglabandh, said an official familiar with transit negotia-

The other transiting point for Nepalese goods through Ban-gladesh, which was established first, is the Birol-Radhikapur rail route. Rail wagons carrying cargo, particularly fertiliser, use this link up to Birol located at Parbatipur. This route is 'lengthy and time consuming.' Nepal is likely to request Ban-

gladesh to allow opening of Rohanpur rail point at Chapainawabganj district as a new rail transit route. If Bangladesh accedes to the request, the Rohanpur rail point will link up with India's Singhabad which will allow fast movement of cargo to Nepal's borders. Trade officials believe that the

most important aspect of giving access to Rohanpur rail transit point is the prospect of opening up the Mongla port for bulk usage of Nepalese cargo, woo-ing away both revenue and traffic from Calcutta.

Besides, both governments will have to remove tariff barriers to allow more commodities to enter each other's market, should they want enhancement of bilateral trade, observers feel.

Diplomatic circles in Dhaka and Kathmandu are eagerly looking forward to adoption of fresh measures towards strengthupcoming visit of the Nepalese foreign minister.

from a sweetmeat shop "unbe-

Nazrul Islam Khan said, the

internationally renowned

Juba Dal general secretary

Gayeshwar Chandra Roy said a

case under the Public Safety Act

would be filed against Sheikh

Hasina and Mohammad Nasim

on charges of damaging of

vehicles and killing a taxi

driver on December 14 in the

city as soon as the caretaker

Aman MP, Nazimuddin Alam

MP, Abdus Salam, Kazi Abul

Bashar, Chowdhury Alam, Abu

Sayed Khan Khokon, Shahidul

islam Dulal and Shirin Sultana.

and activists brought out a

against the government and

filing of the case against

Sudan extends

state of emergency

KHARTOUM, Jan 3: Sudan's Islam'st military leader Omar al-Beshir today extended a year-long state of emer-gency for another 12 months, reports AFP.

Beshir, re-elected president in last

month's elections that were boycotted by all the main opposition parties, extended the state of emergency until December 31, 2001, the official SUNA

news agency reported. The presidential order, which was

issued Wednesday, gave no reason for the latest extension. Beshir first declared a three-month

state of emergency on December 12, 1999, following a power struggle with his former-ally-turned rival

Hassan al-Turabi. He extended it in March to the end of

Plan to re-excavate

From Page 1

meeting is likely to decide on the procedure to be followed in re-

excavating the rivers and canals.

The meeting reviewed implementation of the projects underway and asked the authorities

concerned to keep strong vigi-

Water Resources Minister Abdur

Razzak, M A Bari, Oli Ahmed and Dr Habibur Rahman attended

Shantu Larma

From Page 1

ment had to postpone its plan to place the amendment before the

Jatiya Sangsad in its last ses-

Larma, on his part, is expected to raise issues such as rehabili-

tation of internal refugees, functioning of the Land Com-mission, relocation of non-tribal settlers out of CHT and withdrawal of the Army. He had

recently said that the government had reneged on its commitments made during the signing of the treaty on December 2, 1997 and he did not

expect the government to fulfil those.

But government denied that

there had ever been any com-mitment other than the ones in

It also accused Larma of staying off the meetings of the treaty implementation committee and the refugee taskforce.

the accord.

lance.

Morshed Khan.

After the rally, BNP leaders

government took over.

Sramik Dal general secretary

lievable and ridiculous.

'PSA will prove AL's bane'

proved that the law is being employed against the BNP leaders and activists, not against the miscreants, terrorists, killers, hijackers because they have connections with the

ruling party, Bhuiyan said.
"AL activists led by several ministers damaged more than 500 vehicles in the city on December 14 after the High Court had given its ruling on the Bangabandhu murder case, but no case was filed against them," he said.

The AL government has destroyed political atmosphere in the country, jeopardised democracy, made parliament ineffective, ruined economy in a motive to stay in power permanently with the help of their masters, the BNP leader

He demanded immediate withdrawal of the false case filed against Morshed Khan, his procession and chanted slogans son and others.

Bhuiyan announced that BNP would hold a public meeting at Paltan Maidan on January 11 to press for cancellation of PSA, resignation of the government and withdrawal of false cases filed under PSA against BNP leaders and activists. Khaleda Zia will address the meeting, he added.

In his speech. Khoka termed the case against Morshed Khan. his son Faisal Khan and others on charge of looting Tk 45.000

Death anniversary



death anniversary of Mohiuddin Ahmed, Advisory Editor of now defunct Dainik Desh and a former

leader, will be observed today, says a press release. A milad mahfil and doa will be held at his residence in the afternoon today to mark the



The second social worker Begum Shahida Diwan will be today, says a A doa mahfil

will be held a f t e r M a g h r i b prayers at the official residence (BGTTC Campus) of her second son Dewan Hamidul Hassan, Senior Instructor, Bangladesh German Technical Training Centre (BGTTC), Mirpur today to mark the occasion.

Begum Shahida Diwan was the wife of distinguished educa-tionist and professor of Dhaka University Md Rustam Ali

The fourth death anniversary of Akhtaruzzaman Illias, a noted novelist and a former vicepresident of Bangladesh Lekhok Shibir will be observed today, says a press release.

The central committee of Lekhok Shibir will place wreath at his graveyard at Bogra today and hold a discussion meeting on his works.

Pak bid for 'Shanghai Five' membership

DUSHANBE, Jan 3 : Pakistan has sought membership of the Shanghai Five, an organisation grouping Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan and Tajikistan which aims to settle border disputes and promote security in Central Asia, a Pakistani embassy spokesman said here today, reports AFP.

The reasons for Pakistan's demand were not immediately given by the ambassador here, and the Tajik foreign ministry declined to comment on the bid The Five first met in Shanghai in April 1996 to discuss border issues but the focus of the summits has since shifted to questions of regional security and economic cooperation.

The members vowed in July to create an anti-terrorist unit in the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek to quell drug and arms trafficking, as well as Islamic fundamentalist incursions in the region, notably from Afghanistan.

Pakistan has been accused of supporting the Islamic militia in Afghanistan, who faced sanctions jointly tabled by Moscow and Washington for its alleged support to international terror-

BNP: Speaker

reserved seats in parliament expires on March 31, 2001. It requires two-thirds majority to restore the provision by amending the Constitution.

Reached by phone, opposition Chief Whip Khondoker Delwar Hossain said, "I cannot say anything about joining parliament without the decision of the party. The matter can be discussed in the Standing Committee meeting and I may give my opinion in that meeting." He said the matter could also be discussed in the BNP parliamentary party.

Salt factories

From Page 12

On the other hand, owners of iodised salt factories are being deprived of DOs (delivery orders) from TCB office to meet the growing domestic need. Because, TCB is failing to supcase was "politically motivated ply any more imported salt as and aimed at harassing the the stock has exhausted.

TCB officials said that it has already distributed 30,000 tonnes. The rest 20,000 tonnes have been kept reserved for creating buffer stock. As a result, salt factories in Khulna zone are suffering from acute crisis of non-refined salt.

8 more bodies

From Page 1 The rally was addressed among others by Amanullah received 165 bodies, mostly decomposed and unidentified. One hundred bodies were buried at Chandpur municipality graveyard till midnight last

> Namaj-e-janaza for the victims was held here today.

Meanwhile, the inquiry Malek, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Shipping, arrived at Chandpur today.

River transport

From Page 1 There are no police in the court, causing security prob-

"We have repeatedly failed to catch offenders as we do not have vehicles to travel to the spots," said one of the inspectors requesting anonymity.

There is only one inspector

for the entire river routes in northern districts, Dhaka and Aricha and one for Barisal Patuakhali, Jhalakhathi. Barguna and Swrupkathi.

He extended it in March to the end of the year 2000.
On December 12, 1999, Beshir declared both a state of emergency and dissolved parliament which was preparing to vote on curbs on presidential powers that were backed by Turabi, the parliamentary speaker. The state of emergency has given Beshir's government increased powered for the state of the state o "In many ways I am handicapped and the laws are too weak. So how can you expect to improve things in the river traffic system," said Magistrate Abdul Mannan Elias of the Marine Court. There are hundreds of war-

Beshir's government increased powers of arrest.
A number of opposition leaders have been arrested in the last few weeks.
The main opposition parties that boycotted Sudan's elections for both president and parliament charged Saturday that the results were rigged after Beshir securely won another five-year term in office. rants but none of the offenders turn up to surrender to the court." he adedd. When contacted, Director

bodies.

General of Shipping Directorate Abdul Malek however said the directorate has formed special inspection teams to ensure safety river transport sector and check illegal activi-

Guest birds

From Page 12 Talking to reporters, Professor Sohrab Uddin Sarker of Zoology Department of Dhaka University, who accompanied a party of environmental journalists to the JU, revealed that as many as 200 to 215 types of guest birds used to come to the country even a decade back. But the number is decreasing each year because of indiscriminate poaching and scarcity of water

Prof. Sohrab said that guest birds like gangreny, gadwan, mallard, pintail, shobeller, etc fly to Bangladesh every winter from mainly Siberia and some European countries. These days, foreign birds can only be seen at Tanguar Haor, Nijhum Dip, Dublar Char, Kutubdia

He also informed that there are a few species of guest birds that live on trees. There are also some birds, which lays eggs there and give birth. The fledglings grow up to be resident birds. The migratory birds, on an average, stay here for nearly six months and then leave off on their flight back home



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina unveiled the plaque of the foundation stone of 'Vijoy Taranga' to be built in memory of the members of Navy who embraced martyrdom in the great War of Liberation at Chittagong Naval Academy yesterday.

PM: Indian Ocean

hard work are essential. She said they should keep in mind that there is no alternative to hard work and honesty. "Strong mental power and utilisation of available facilities will give you the chance to excel."

Not the number but quality will be the determining factor of standard, she said and hoped that the new officials will utilise available resources and oppor-tunities for the welfare of the people.

About the inclusion of female cadets in the naval force last January, the Prime Minister said this is certainly a revolutionary step of the government for establishing equal rights of men and women men and women.

The Prime Minister praised the members of the naval force for their service to the nation, for controlling smuggling and protecting the maritime boundarv and sea resources.

saving the people during natural disasters and constructing homes under Asrayan projects for the homeless.

On arrival at the parade ground, the Prime Minister was received by Chief of Naval Staff Rear Admiral Abu Taher. She was taken to the tastefully decorated "Quarter Deck" (saluting dais) luting dais).

Hasina took salute of the impressive march past of the midshipmen which was commanded by Midshipman Fazle Rabbi. The Prime Minister distributed

BSc degree certificates among the midshipmen conferred upon them by the National University. She also handed over trophies and medals among the outgoing midshipmen

Midshipman Raquib M Habib was adjudged the best all-round midshipman and received the coveted sword of honour. He Gold Medal and Chief of the Naval Staff Gold Medal for outstanding performance in academic and professional

Ministers, MPs, Chittagong City Corporation Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen Harunur Rashid, high civil and military officials and relatives and guardians of the midshipmen attended the ceremony.

After the parade, the Prime Minister laid the foundation of "Bijoy Tarango" at Red Kin Point of the Academy in mem-ory of the members of the Bangladesh Navy martyred during the liberation war of 1971.

Later, she witnessed an attractive steam past of Naval ship at the Karnaphuli river, in which 17 ships of navy including, gun boat, missile ship, patrol craft and torpedo boats

Khaleda urged to join JS

these need special attention. For that, at the fag end of the last session, I called upon you all to play a due role to bring necessary amendment to the Constitution," the Speaker said in his letter. The issue of voting right

of expatriates is an important factor. Resentment has grown among expatriate Bangladeshis as they have been excluded from the voters' list, prepared by the Election Commission, he

"It is the responsibility of all political parties represented in parliament to pacify the resentment. And I would like to request all members of the Jatiya Sangsad to play their due important issues by attending the next session. "I will always be prepared to

discuss or hear any issue if you or any of your representatives wishes to have discussion". The Speaker in his letter also greeted the Opposition on the occasion of the Eid-ul-Fitr and

the New Year. The sources said the letter was delivered at the Opposition Leader's 7. Mainul Road residence at Dhaka Cantonment

Tuesday afternoon. When contacted. Personal Secretary to the Speaker said the letter was confidential and sent by the APS-2 on that day. In his last letter to Khaleda Zia, Humayun Rasheed Opposition at the opening sitting of the Millennium Session on January 1, 2000. But the plan was abandoned due to the Opposition's rigid decision not to attend the parliament sittings.
Political insiders said the

Chowdhury had proposed address by the Leader of the House and the Leader of the

Opposition still stands by its previous decision not to attend the parliament session.

The opposition members attended a sitting only for 45

minutes on June 20 last year to protect their membership. On that day, the Opposition Leader urged the Speaker to "bring back a congenial atmosphere" to pave the way for their return

Bhuiyan's 'peace move'

guidance The JCD leaders in the statement also categorically denied newspaper reports that leaders and activists opposed to the new committee challenged the leadership of Khaleda Zia.

They also denied their involve ment in the attacks on the BNP leaders and damaging vehicles and property. Presidents and general secretaries of DU and Jagannath College units and South and North units of the city committee signed the state-

Bhuiyan told them that he would show the statement first to the party Chairperson on Tuesday and then release copies to the press. But according to party insiders, Khaleda Zia insists that the rebel leaders issue press statement congratulating the new committee But the JCD leaders who signed

the statement outright rejected Khaleda's advice and instead threatened a tougher resistance to Pintu and Laltu. When contacted, the BNP secre-

tary-general said he was hopeful of an early solution as each and every aggrieved leaders and activists have pledged allegiance to the leadership of Khaleda Zia.

A number of JCD leaders told The Daily Star that they were awaiting the developments of the discussion between Bhuivan and Khaleda

They said rebel JCD leaders agreed to a compromise if Khaleda dissolved the existing committee and form a new one putting genuine students at the helm. They vowed not to allow Pintu-Laltu committee to perform organisational activities in any educational institution. They said the current crisis might deepen if anyone is expelled from JCD. "We will continue our politics under the under the leadership of Pintu and Laltu because they are nonstudents and terrorists," said a DU unit leader.

The leaders said that they would not relinquish control on JCD central office and on DU, Jagannath College, BUET and city units until the committee is dissolved.

They alleged that several BNP hardliners, including standing committee member Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Jativatabadi Juba Dal President Mirza Abbas, BNP leader Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury and BNP Chairperson's private secretary Mosaddek Ali Falu are responsible for inciting trouble in JCD by directly patronising the Pintu-Laltu fac-

BNP sources said the volatile situation might further deteriorate if the party fails to accommodate all concerned in the new committee.

Kishtwar following protests in the town Monday after the

Elections are due in the politi-Nadu and Kerala.

egy," BJP president Bangaru Laxman told reporters Wednesday, adding that one focus of the meeting would be the forging of regional alliances. The BJP dominates India's

coalition government, and controls a number of states in partnership with regional

Commenting on Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's recent decision to extend a unilateral ceasefire in the restive state of Kashmir, Laxman said he had the full support of the party

boycott of the polls.

rank and file. "But we would caution him about Pakistan's increased

militant activity ever since the ceasefire was extended, Layman said India and Pakistan have fought

two wars over Kashmir, where a Muslim insurgency against Indian rule has claimed 34,000 lives, since 1989. On the controversial proposal

of building a temple over the ruins of a razed mosque in the northern Indian town of Ayodhya, Laxman said the party stood by Vajpayee's statement that the government would abide by any court ruling on the issue. There is no confusion on this,

Laxman said.

The campaign to build the temple is supported by the BJP but does not figure in the coalition government's manifesto out of consideration for the party's more secular-minded

Thousands of Afghans

KABUL, Jan 3: Thousands of displaced Afghans are living under mounting hardship along the country's border with Tajikistan, which has been requested by the United Nations to allow the refugees into its territory, a UN report said today, says AFP.

Around 10,000 Afghans, uprooted by recent fighting in the northeastern province of Takhar, are living on the banks of Pyandj river on the Tajik border, according to the report. They lack food, proper shelter and drinking water and face "grave security risks" because of sporadic shelling into the area which has injured some

refugees, the UN said. A request from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to the Tajikistan government to allow the displaced people to enter Tajik territory is yet to elicit a response, the report said.

belonging to the anti-Taliban military commander Ahmad Shah Masood. The UNHCR has earmarked

around 250,000 dollars to assist the people and preparations are under way to airlift plastic tarpaulins from Copenhagen to the Tajik capital Dushanbe, it added.

Among the displaced people

were a number of armed men

More than 200,000 people fled their homes in and around Takhar during the Taliban's summer military campaign during which the ruling militia took the provincial capital, Taloqan, on September 6. Around 50,000 of the displaced

people entered Pakistan, forcing Islamabad to close its border with Afghanistan.

The UN report said the number of Afghans officially registered in the new refugee settlements in the Pakistani border area of Peshawar had reached 47,000.

'Sun Fest 2001' concludes

The two-day sun festival titled

'Sun-Fest 2001' was concluded in the country's only coral island Saint Martin on the Bay of Bengal on Sunday amid enthusiasm among the local people and participants from Dhaka to welcome the new millennium.

More than 75 persons comprising scientists, doctors, educationists, journalists, artists, students and children set off for the island from Dhaka on December 30and on the last day of last century to welcome the first sun of the 3rd millennium.

Bangladesh Astronomical Association (BAA) organised the programme, which is first of its kind in the country with a view to popularise the sun observation as well as to start afresh the practice of cosmological science. A good number of local people, and foreign tourists

visiting the island also joined

the festival and on the first day

of "Sun-Fest 2001" the partici-

pants said good bye to the last

sun of the 20th century in a

festive manner.

Besides, the BAA installed a telescope for space observation in the evening and the partici-pants had had a closer look of the moon, Jupiter, Saturn and others stars. Later a discussion meeting was held at the Motel Nijhum

Bv Staff Correspondent

premises. Dr Mofizuddin Ahmed and Dr Rezaur Rahman spoke on 'Structure of Sun' and 'Sun: The Source of Life' respectively. The programme was followed

by the 31st night celebration. The beach wore a festive look as the visitors were busy in merry making.

The main programme of the sun festival was held at the 'Chera Island', a part of the Saint Martin, by welcoming the rising sun on the next day. The participants moved towards the island in the early hours and kept on waiting for the sun to rise. They floated a dummy of the

rising sun on the Bay of Bengal and sprinkled colours on the beach rocks in honour of the first sun of the new millen-

On the second day on Monday a series of programme took

place, which was inaugurated by Dr Rezaur Rahman, The programmes include poster and software exhibition, sun observation through filter telescope for children, semi-nar, space observation and cultural programme. The team left Saint Martin,

which is locally known as Narikel Jinjira, with a total area of 8 square kilometres on Tuesday. The chairman of Saint Martin

Union Parishad Master Shamsul Islam, UP members and the local people appreciated the organisers for holding such a programme in the remote island and also expressed that it would help raise awareness among the local people.

A get-together of the participants of the "Sun-Fest 2001" will be held at Gazipur on January 12 and the festival will formally conclude there. Meanwhile, the BAA will

also hold a space observation programme at the Kalabagan playground in the city on January 9 to watch the full eclipse of the moon.

"India's Border Security Force in Kathua retaliated to the unprovoked firing from across the international border," the source told AFP in New Delhi, ern third of the Himalayan state, over which the two countries have fought two wars and a border conflict. adding that there were no casu-India had extended the unilateral Ramadan ceasefire for There was no immediate official another four weeks, until Janu-

Pakistan responded with a partial troop withdrawal from the border, part of which is

But the shooting came just days

Atal Behari Vajpayee accused Pakistan of backing an alleged

militant threat to attack his

Islamabad discarded the accusation as baseless and said it regretted the comments.

A Muslim separatist campaign in the Indian zone of Kashmir

has claimed 34,000 lives since

1989. Pakistan holds the north-

after Indian Prime

confirmation of the attack, which came a month after Islamabad pledged "maximum restraint" on the border after India's ceasefire offer in Kashmir for the holy Islamic month Rupsha Bridge project

From Page 1

NEW DELHI, Jan 3 : Pakistani

border guards today opened fire on Indian posts in Kashmir,

breaking a month's lull on the border across the disputed Himalayan territory, defence

ministry sources here said, reports AFP.

They said the firing, lasting up to 20 minutes, took place in the Kathua region of the southern

district of Jammu, within the Indian-administered zone of

gets the project work. Quoting a Japanese high official, the sources said that if the Rupsha bridge work is not awarded to a Japanese company, future Japanese project loan including financing of the proposed Paksi Bridge will suffer.

The Japanese consultant sought some last minute clarification from the bidders on one working day before the Eid vacation and closed its evalua-tion process on December 31, the sources claimed.

The Chief Engineer of RHD and the consultant held a meeting Monday last. At the meeting, the consultant said that it found both the Chinese bidders "nonresponsive" as they "did not fulfil the technical criterion". The RHD will now scrutinise the consultant's report and send its opinion to the Communication Ministry which will send the recommendations to the

Upon receiving a green signal from JBIC, the RHD will open the offers of technically qualified bidders. The company which will be selected will have to complete

the project within 40 months of signing of the final agreement.

The proposed three-lane bridge will be 16 meters wide and 1360 meters in length. The main bridge will be 630 meters

Mosque burned down in Kashmir

in length.

JBIC.

Delhi blamed for vandalism

ISLAMABAD, Jan 3 : Pakistan grand mosque of Kishtwar, the today alleged Indian "official complicity" in the burning down of a major mosque in the Jamia Masjid, was completely gutted by a fire. Officials said the fire was New Delhi-ruled zone of the caused by a short circuit, a divided Himalayan state of claim rejected by the protes-Kashmir, reports AFP.

"Pakistan, like the people of Jammu and Kashmir, holds the Indian occupation authorities entirely responsible for this deliberate act of vandalism," a Foreign Office statement said.

"This desecration of a historic mosque, which has been carried out with official complicity, has caused deep outrage to the Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir.

The destruction resulted from

the "failure of the district

authorities to provide adequate protection to the mosque ... and from the deliberate delay in bringing the fire under control," it added.

Indian officials indefinite curfew Tuesday on alliance based in Indian Kash-

India and Pakistan hold parts of Kashmir and have fought two wars over the territory since their independence in 1947.

A senior Foreign Office official separately reacted to New Delhi's decision to hold village level elections in Kashmir, calling it a "regrettable" move. "The decision to hold Panchayat elections is particularly regret-

table at this time when efforts

are underway to launch a peace process on Kashmir," the state-

run Associated Press of Pakistan quoted the unnamed official as saying. The official said the All Party Hurriat (Freedom) Conference, the main Kashmiri sepatarist

mir, had already announced a

BJP to formulate polls strategy today

NEW DELHI, Jan 3 : India's ruling Hindu nationalist BJP party will hold a three-day executive meeting from Thursday to formulate strategy for coming state elections, reports AFP.

cally crucial northern state of Uttar Pradesh, the eastern states West Bengal and Assam and the southern states of Tamil "We will broadly discuss strat-

stranded at Tajik border