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Ijtema venue turns into human sea

Juma prayers mark opening day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More than 15 lakh devotees participated in the Juma prayers at this year's Biswa Ijtema yesterday, the first day of the second largest Muslim congregation after the Hajj, on the bank of Turag River in the suburban town of Tongi.

Imam Hafez Jobayer of Kakrail Mosque led the Juma prayers with the rows of worshippers spilling out of the 160-acre Ijtema ground

covered by a gigantic canopy.

State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar, a number of political leaders, the home secretary, and the inspector general and other senior police officials also took part in the Friday prayers.

M A Hannan, chief executive officer (CEO) of Tongi Pouroushabha, said according to their estimates, the number of participants in the Juma prayers would be between 15 and 20 lakh.

Some 3,500 foreign pilgrims from more than 40 countries are also taking part in the event. They are staying in a camp designated for them at the northern side of the ground. More foreign delegates are on the way, sources said.

Thousands of women are also attending the solemn annual function staying at their relatives' houses in Tongi and Uttara.

"In my life I've never seen so

Fatikchhari criminal dies in 'crossfire'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A criminal belonging to infamous Osman Bahini died in 'crossfire' when his accomplices opened fire on the members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in Fatikchhari upazila of Chittagong yesterday.

A team of the anticrime elite force arrested Sajal Kanti Nath, 32, at South Rangamatia in the upazila early yesterday. He was wanted in a number of criminal cases.

As Rab men set out to recover illegal firearms of Osman Bahini from Sajal's possession, taking him with them in the evening, his accomplices opened fire on the members of the anticrime force. The Rab men retaliated.

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ALLEGED CORRUPTION IN POWER PROJECTS

RPCL finally staved off German auditors

SHARIEF KHAN

Amid persistent resistance from the Rural Power Company Ltd (RPCL), Germany postponed at the last moment a decision to send a team of auditors to investigate alleged irregularities and corruption in two Germany-funded power projects.

Sources quoting German donor KfW officials said a team of auditors in Germany has already started looking into files of the RPCL that is allegedly plagued with corruption, and it was scheduled to arrive in Dhaka on November 29 on a 11-day probe mission. But the auditors shelved the visit temporarily at the last moment.

Germany committed two grants worth over Euro 80 million for the RPCL's 450 MW Savar project and the third phase of the Mymensingh 70 MW project. It threatened to cancel the grants unless the projects

are audited.

A source in the RPCL says, "Since Germany started talking about the audit from February, the RPCL has modified a lot of documents. But many documents showing irregularities are already available in offices outside the RPCL."

This unique auditing has started in line with an understanding between the governments of Germany and Bangladesh. But while the Economic Relations Division (ERD) okayed the auditing, the RPCL and its parent organisation the Rural Electrification Board (REB) have been vehemently opposing it and even went on saying that such an auditing is "against the interest of the nation."

The German government last month sought cooperation of Bangladesh government so that the auditors of Deloitte & Touche GmbH of Germany could have access to the

RPCL's documents during their visit that was due to start on November 29.

The RPCL in a last ditch effort announced last month it did not want any German funds. In a letter to the ERD, it further said the German auditors could only see documents relating to German funding for Mymensingh phase-3 power plant. It will not allow review of the Savar project.

Earlier the RPCL unilaterally went ahead with setting up the Savar 280 MW power plant with primary funds of Tk 300 crore raised from different rural power cooperatives, better known as Palli Biddiyut Samity (PBS).

On October 7, the RPCL secretly signed an agreement with Swiss company Alstom that turned up as a lone bidder for the Savar project tender floated late last year. Alstom

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Over 200 held in police, BDR raids in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More than 200 people were arrested in the capital in block and regular raids by law enforcing agencies since Thursday night.

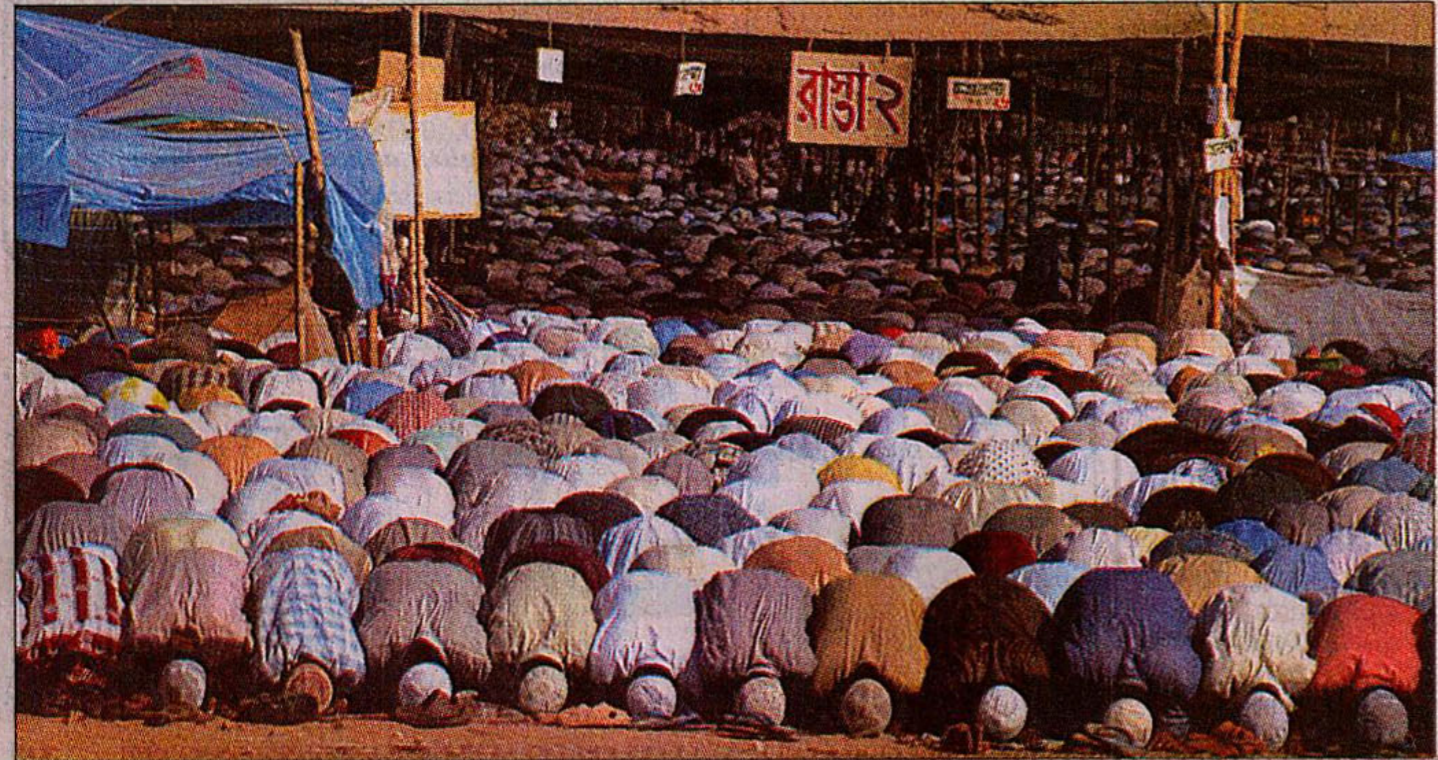
Of them, 145 were arrested under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) and Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Ordinance.

The block raids took place despite a High Court stay on any such action under Section 54.

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and the DMP on Thursday night conducted the block raids in different areas under 16 police stations. The raids aimed to nab listed criminals and seize firearms netted 106 people including 41 convicts and accused, said police sources.

Of them, 65 people were arrested under Section 54 and DMP Ordinance. Apart from the raids, different law enforcing agencies including Cheeta and Cobra arrested another 124 people, 80 of them under Section 54 and the DMP Ordinance.

Detective Branch of police arrested in the city fugitive Nuruzzaman, sentenced to seven years imprisonment in a case filed with Kotwali Police Station of Barisal.



Hundreds of thousands of devotees join Juma prayers at Biswa Ijtema ground in Tongi yesterday, the first day of the three-day congregation of Tabligi Jamaat on the bank of river Turag.

Bandarban border 'open' to arms smugglers

Lone outpost for 129km

MONIRUL ISLAM MONU, Bandarban

Gun-runners are smuggling in and hoarding sophisticated firearms and deadly explosives in the southeast part of Bandarban taking advantage of poor security on a 129-km stretch of its 178-km border with Myanmar, sources said.

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) has only one border out-post (BOP) deep inside the hilly district to keep vigil on the 129-km border. There are nine BOPs on the rest 49-km border.

BDR sources said more BOPs are needed in the rugged terrain to ensure proper security along the long hilly border.

The vast hilly area stretching from Ali Kadam to Thanchi has two reserve forests -- Sangu and Matamuhuri--and the local and foreign arms smugglers are using the deep forests as their safe haven due to lack of proper watch by the BDR personnel, local people said.

In the last two months, BDR personnel seized 15 AK47 assault rifles, 11 submachineguns, two M16 rifles, one automatic air rifle, one .22 bore rifle, two shotguns, one rocket launcher, four mortars, 8,141 bullets, 91 magazines of AK47 and 185 magazines of other firearms from the bordering areas of Naikkhanchhari upazila.

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Where has the money gone?

Tk 2500cr of Desa 'untraced' due to years of graft, theft and mismanagement

REAZ AHMAD and SHAKHAWAT LITON

Thanks to decade-long thefts by its officials and employees, Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority (Desa) is now groaning under the burden of a huge financial mismatch of Tk 2,500 crore forcing the government to borrow money from donors for its immediate bailout.

In an exclusive interview with The Daily Star recently, State Minister for Power Iqbal Hasan Mahmud said Desa owes Tk 4,000 crore to Power Development Board

(PDB), compared to only Tk 1,500 crore that public and private sector power consumers owe to Desa.

"No trace of the rest of the money [Tk 2,500 crore]," acknowledged the state minister bitterly regretting that many of the Desa engineers own four to five houses each in the city.

Asked whether any government action would come to recover the huge sum lost to corruption and crimes, Iqbal said, "We've reached such a situation thanks to years of irregularities and mismanagement. What we're now trying to do is to borrow money for immediate bail-

out of Desa as well as the PDB." Desa, an electricity distribution body formed in the early 90s as the firstborn of a power sector reform prescribed by donors, supplies power bought from the PDB to consumers in its command area and collects bills. But over the last one decade it has defaulted in paying power purchase bills worth Tk 4,000 crore to the PDB putting the latter in a bad state.

Iqbal told to The Daily Star that the government would borrow money from Asian Development

ACTIVIST STABBED JCD calls strike at Sust today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) called a half-day strike today at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (Sust) as outsiders stabbed a JCD activist and his friend on the campus Thursday.

Activists of the JCD, student wing of ruling BNP, also put up blockades on Sylhet-Sunamganj road and vandalised 13 vehicles and nine shops outside the Sust Thursday night.

Campus sources said JCD activist Sohag and his friend Ishrat Jahan Lovely, both students of sociology department, came under attack at

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MBA for Executives' (IIUC Dhaka Campus)

Download admission form - www.iiucdc.net



A few MBA graduates of IIUC Dhaka Campus

International Islamic University Chittagong (IIUC) Dhaka Campus offers 2-year duration (63 Credit Hour) MBA program for Executives' (Evening shift) for the coming semester. Graduates with two years of working experiences or holding Master's degree are eligible for applying into the program. Total cost for the program is Tk. 90,000/- only.

BBA graduates can complete the MBA program within 1 year (39 Credit Hour) and for them the cost is Tk. 60,000/- only. Last date for applying is 29 December and viva-voce will be held on 31 December 2004 at 4:00 pm. Admission form may be collected up to 8:00 pm everyday.

IIUC Dhaka Campus maintains international standard of education. Textbooks are provided to all students. Separate and secured arrangements are also available for female students.

To improve the efficiency of the MBA students "English for Professionals" course has been introduced.

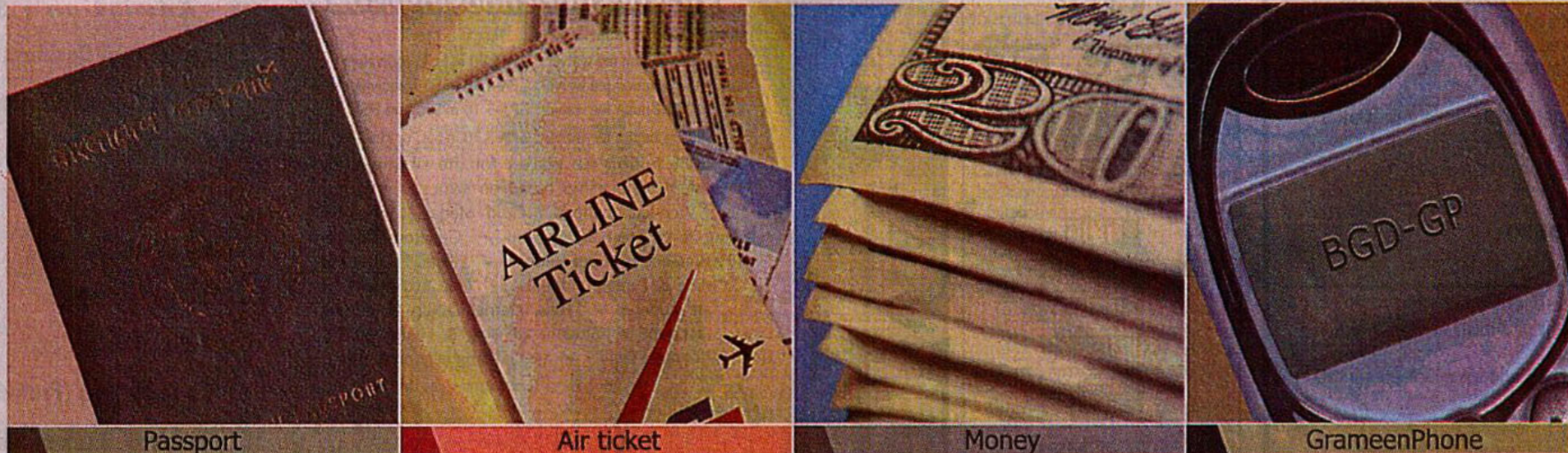
IIUC has arrangements (MOU) for credit transfer to some foreign universities.

Admission forms are available for BBA and CSE programs as well. Admission form can be downloaded from the website: (www.iiucdc.net).

For details, anyone may contact the Dhaka Campus of IIUC, House-23, Road-3, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205 or call 9670220, 9670193, 8629947 Ext. 211, 228 or interested to admit in Chittagong City Campus may contact 031-610085, 610308, 638657.

UGC has recognized IIUC as one of the Top Performing Private Universities of Bangladesh.

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