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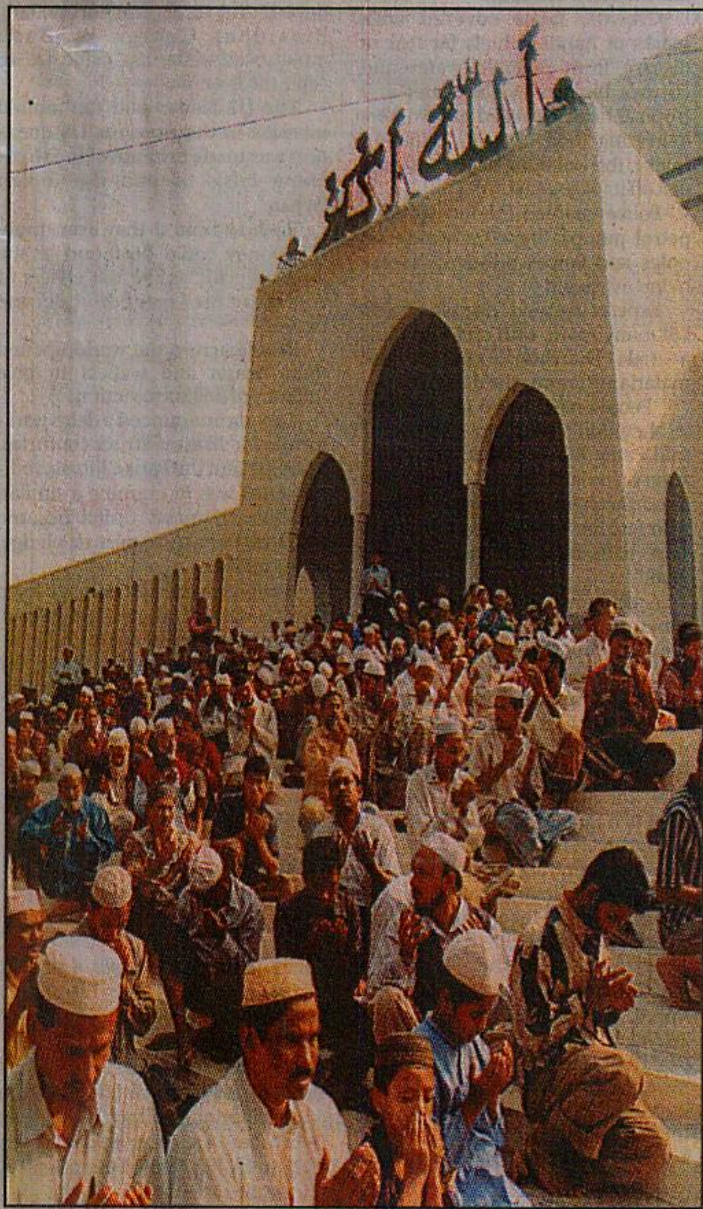


PHOTO: STAR

Devotees at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque yesterday offer *munajat* after Juma prayers for salvation of those killed in the Sunday's earthquake and tsunamis that devastated as many as 12 countries in Asia and Africa.

## Sonali Bank to open new bank in US

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Sonali Bank in collaboration with the government, is opening a full-fledged bank in the United States soon to facilitate channelling remittance from Bangladeshi expatriates there.

The government on Thursday approved a proposal from Sonali Bank in this connection. The bank that already has a similar bank in the United Kingdom will shortly start the process of getting approval for the bank in the US.

Sonali Bank high officials believe that it will be a profitable venture like the Sonali Bank UK Ltd, which was opened two years ago.

The bank will provide full array of banking packages including loans to expatriate Bangladeshis. In addition, it will focus on financing export and import activities.

Sonali Bank initiated this move in November when the US-based Sonali Exchange Company faced a major blow as two American banks asked the company to close their remittance accounts with them due to a tighter US monetary regulation.

Sonali Exchange Company remits to Bangladesh about \$200 million annually.

The JPM Chase Bank and Wachovia Bank --which constitute 80 percent of the Sonali Exchange's operations --have decided to shut down the accounts from March 31 next and within 30 business days respectively, officials said.

Sonali Exchange in a letter to the Sonali Bank head office in Dhaka in early November said, "the overall situation in the US financial sector has been remaining vulnerable all the times after the events of September 11, 2001 and enactment of USA Patriot Act."

Sonali Exchange, licensed in the USA and shown as a subsidiary of Sonali Bank, remits expatriates' money through remittance accounts held in six American banks which also include Habib American Bank, Wilshire Bank, Bank of

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## ACC fails to start work as tussle with govt on

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

Claiming credit for the formation of an 'independent' Anti Corruption Commission (ACC), an election pledge of the ruling coalition, the government is busy tightening its grip on the commission.

Even six weeks into its formation, the long-awaited commission failed to start its task. Instead it is locked in a tussle with the government to prevent the latter's attempt to control it.

It is now uncertain when the ACC will start its work as a stalemate prevails in it now.

The methods the government is now prescribing to settle the tussle will further strengthen its grip on the commission, fear many ACC staff.

To hide the situation inside the

ACC and the discord between the government and the commission, government policymakers and some commission officials are trying to give the impression that the ACC, a reformed body of the bureau of anti-corruption, would take time to work in full strength.

The government formed the anticrime body on November 21 under the ACC Act that empowered the commission to appoint its staff and formulate rules and regulations.

But the ACC has so far drafted only five rules.

ACC officials said about three weeks ago they had sent the draft rules to the Cabinet Division for approval of the president but they do not know the latest development.

Talking to The Daily Star on Wednesday at his office, acting ACC

Secretary MA Matin said, "Our work has not stopped. We're doing our best to finalise the rules. We'll be able to start our operation in full strength after getting the rules approved."

No organogram for the commission has been made as yet.

Sources said ACC Commissioner Prof Maniruzzaman Mian has been entrusted with the job.

Some high officials of the ACC are however learnt to be preparing an organogram on their own and are likely to place that before the commission soon.

Meanwhile, more than 1,100 officials and employees of the now defunct bureau of anti-corruption (Bac) are yet to know whether they would be allowed to work in the ACC

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

## '238 killed in hands of law enforcers last year'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 238 people were killed at the hands of law enforcers last year and of them, 147 alone were killed in 'crossfire' involving various law enforcing agencies including Rab, said the annual report of Odhikar.

Odhikar, a human rights watch, in its report also said 522 people were killed in political violence last year while in the previous year (2003) the number was 436.

The Odhikar report, prepared on the basis of reports published in leading national dailies, observed that the higher number of political killings as well as killings in 'crossfire' last year accounted for the 'much-worsened human rights conditions in the country'.

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## Two top Rajshahi outlaws killed in 'crossfire'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Two top operatives of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (ML) were killed in 'crossfire' between Rapid Action Battalion and their associates in Puthia upazila early yesterday.

Earlier on Thursday night a Rab-5 team arrested the two, Abdul Aziz, 45, the regional founder president of PBCP-ML and Asgor Ali, 38, from their houses at Konabaria and Dhukhalpara villages of Baghmara upazila, a Rab press release said.

Following information extracted during interrogation, a Rab team at around 4:30am took the two to Borobaria village under Puthia

upazila to retrieve firearms and ammunition.

As the Rab team reached near Borobaria, accomplices of the captured opened fire on them. Rab men returned fire that resulted in a 12-minute shootout.

The two got caught in crossfire while they tried to flee the scene. They were rushed to Puthia Health Complex but doctors there declared them dead on arrival.

Rab recovered a shutter gun, a foreign-made double barrel rifle and a bullet from the scene.

Aziz was accused in two murder cases and Asgor in three. Besides, there were several criminal charges

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## Bangladeshi shot dead by BSF

UNB, Thakurgaon

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) shot dead a Bangladeshi citizen and injured another in frontier Baliaadangi upazila of the district on Thursday night.

BDR (Bangladesh Rifles) sources said a patrol team of the Indian border guards opened fire on Ismail Hossain, 25, and Mostafa, 24, of village Jogthar in the upazila when they were looking for their missing cows near Mondumala border. Ismail died on the spot.

The BSF men took away Ismail's body. Mostafa, injured with bullets, managed to flee.

Commander of 20-Rifles Battalion said they strongly protested the incident.

## Andaman, Nicobar aborigines safe

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Contrary to apprehensions, the aboriginal tribes in India's Andaman and Nicobar islands have survived last Sunday's Tsunami disaster.

Lt Governor of Andaman and Nicobar Ram Kapse said the Mongoloid tribes on Nicobar island Nicobarese, Shompens and Holschu had not suffered any casualties.

The 100-odd Onges tribe and 250-odd Jarawas also did not suffer casualty, he added.

All of 400-strong Shompen tribe in Shompen Island are safe, Vice Admiral A K Singh, director general of coast guard said, adding, the pilot of an Indian Coast

Guard helicopter sighted the Sentanese in an island.

Helicopter and boats carrying relief supplies reached these tribes after the tsunami.

Campbell Island is near the Indonesian island of Sumatra, the epicentre of the massive 9.0 magnitude quake that rolled across much of South and South East Asia but the dense mangrove forest has saved the Shompens from the onslaught of tidal waves, scientists said.

Most of these aborigine groups are highly endangered human races in the world and serve as the surviving links between modern and primitive civilisations, Executive Director of Anthropological Survey of India Ajay Bagchi said.

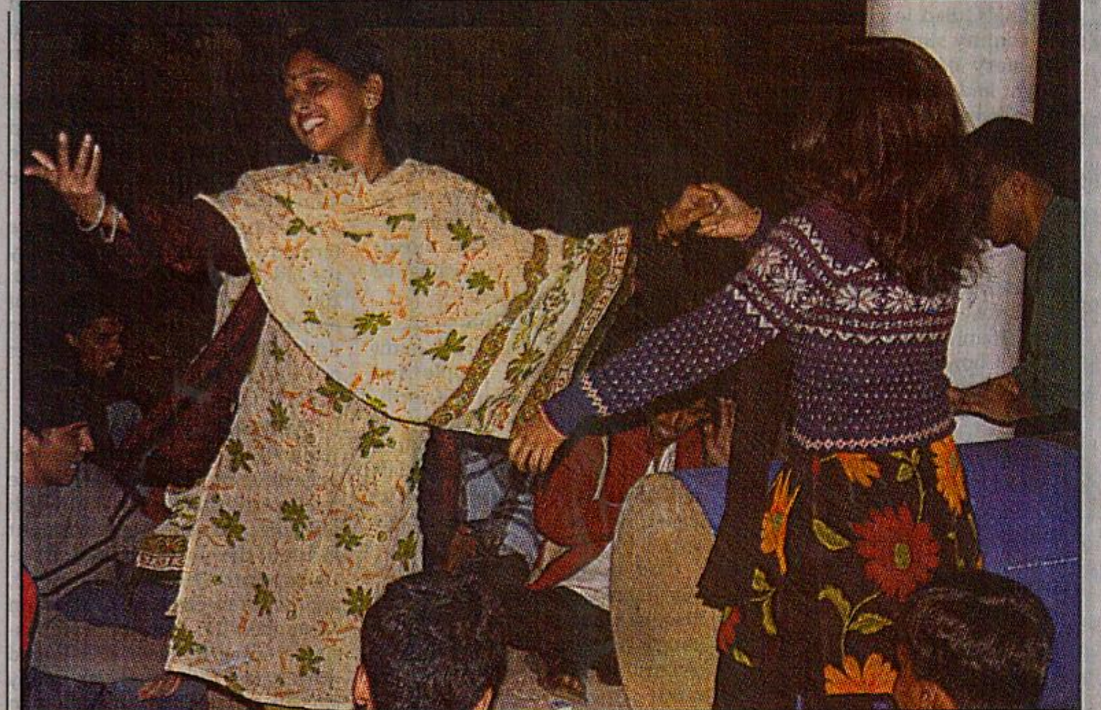


PHOTO: STAR

Students of the Institute of Fine Arts of Dhaka University sing and dance on the institute campus yesterday evening welcoming the New Year.

let happiness grow on us

Bitopi Advertising Ltd.

Prayer Timing		
January 1		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-27	5-30
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

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মেলা চলাকালীন সুদের হারে ১% ছাড়\*



## মাই লোন মেলা এবার চট্টগ্রামে

প্রয়োজন মেটাতে জীবন সাজাতে চল যাই এইচএসবিসি-র মাই লোন মেলাতে

কত কিছুই না চাই আমাদের - কিছু শখের, কিছু প্রয়োজনের। জীবনের সেই সব শখ কিংবা প্রয়োজনকে হাতের নাগালে এনে দিতে এইচএসবিসি আয়োজন করছে মাই লোন মেলা ২০০৫। আপনার পছন্দের পণ্যটি কেনার জন্য মেলাতেই থাকছে লোন নেয়ার সুবিধা।

স্থান : জিমনেসিয়াম  
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তারিখ : ৭-১০ জানুয়ারী, ২০০৫

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\* শুধুমাত্র চট্টগ্রাম ফেয়ারে আবেদনকারী দর্শকদের জন্য  
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