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## President urges all to root out fanaticism

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday appealed to the people and political parties to root out extremism and fanaticism from Bangladesh's soil and build a welfare state by institutionalising democracy, as the nation passes through a trying time.

In his address to the House at its first sitting of the new year, the president also urged the lawmakers for constructive, effective and active participation in the process of establishing democracy, rising above jealousy, malice, and petty personal and party interests.

"Divisions among ourselves pave the way for the enemies to cause harm to the nation and

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## JS session starts with opposition staying away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad that went into session yesterday amid boycott by the main opposition will have 15 workdays with the leader of the opposition being at risk of losing her seat unless she joins the House in next 13 days.

Seats of the other Awami League (AL) lawmakers however will not fall vacant even if they continue boycotting parliament until the next session.

The Business Advisory Committee at a meeting has decided that the session will continue till February 16 with 20 hours allocated for discussion on the presidential speech delivered yesterday.

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## 14-PARTY RALLY Thousands demand electoral reform

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thousands of people took to the streets in the capital yesterday demanding immediate resignation of the BNP-Jamaat led ruling coalition, and reforms in the system of caretaker government and the Election Commission (EC).

The demonstrators, under the banner of 14-party opposition coalition, shouted anti-government slogans and carried banners reading 'People don't want the Khaleda-Nizami government any more', 'Step down immediately' and 'People will not accept any election without reforms'.

Before the march got underway,

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## Mufti Hannan finally sent to jail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Mufti Abdul Hannan, operations commander of banned Harkatul Jihad's (HuJI) Bangladesh chapter, was finally sent to the Dhaka Central Jail yesterday 112 days after his arrest.

Meanwhile, Abdul Awal, son-in-law of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) chief Abdul Rahman, was shown arrested in another August 17 serial bomb blast case and taken on fresh remand.

The Detective Branch (DB) of police accompanied by the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) produced

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## Bangladesh among most dangerous areas for journalists

AFP, Sydney

A total of 150 journalists were killed in 2005 -- the worst year on record -- with Iraq and the Philippines topping the list of the world's most dangerous countries, a media watchdog said yesterday.

The journalists died in wars, assassinations, natural disasters and accidents in an increasingly dangerous profession, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) said in its annual report.

Of the total, 89 were killed "in the line of duty" -- many singled

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# 7 killed as cops fire on electricity hungry mob

## Over 100 injured, six police vehicles torched at Kansat as cops disperse mob blocking C'nawabganj-Sonamasjid Road

STAR REPORT

Seven people were killed and more than a hundred injured when police opened fire to disperse a mob in Kansat Bazar in Chapainawabganj yesterday, 19 days into a similar incident that left two people killed in the same area.

The firing took place when locals were demonstrating for the release of three leaders of Palli Bidyut Sangram Committee (PBSC), an organisation of local electricity subscribers, arrested in connection with January 4 violence in the area.

Of the dead, six were identified as Anwar, a rickshawpuller and son of Anij Uddin, Nasir, son of Ayej Uddin, Mannan, a day labourer and son of Mosahak, Garibullah, son of Nizam Uddin of Kansat, Chowdhury of Chatra Krishnachandrapur and Rashid.

Another unidentified juvenile injured in the incident died at Rajshahi Medical College and Hospital.

On January 4, two people were killed in police firing in the same upazila in a similar incident when the locals laid siege to the Kansat Palli Bidyut Samity demanding uninterrupted power supply and reduced meter charge.

On Sunday night, police arrested Golam Rabbani, Zahir Chowdhury and Manirul Islam Manna, leaders of PBSC, which is leading a movement on five-point

demand including reduction of electricity meter charge and minimum charges.

In an immediate reaction, hundreds of agitating people yesterday morning blocked the roads

and highways in the area demanding release of the three.

They laid wooden and concrete poles of Palli Bidyut Samity on Chapainawabganj-Sonamasjid Road blocking a 55-kilometre

stretch from Pukuria to Bholahat.

Thousands of passengers suffered as several hundred vehicles were stranded on the road. The mob also set fire to more than a

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PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Mob torch a police vehicle in Kansat Bazar after clash with cops yesterday.

## MEGHNAGHAT-2 PROJECT

# Unholy practices go on at cost of nat'l interest

SHARIER KHAN

The Power Development Board (PDB) is awarding the phase-2 Meghnaghat 450 megawatt power project to Belhassa-Orion-Steag (BON) consortium through gross manipulation of the tender process and approval of the cabinet purchase committee, and undermining national interest, sources said.

Experts say although the Meghnaghat-2 power tariff is being

shown at 2.78 cents per kilowatt hour (or kWh), in reality it will be around 5 to 6 cents per kWh because of very unusual concessions being given to the BON.

These concessions would be worth no less than \$70 to 80 million. Some of these concessions will monetarily deprive the PDB. These along with other concessions alone will double the real tariff for this power project, experts pointed out.

While the phase-1 AES 450 MW Meghnaghat plant charges the PDB around \$30 million annually, the minimum annual bill for the BON plant will be \$36 million to \$40 million, one expert added.

The PDB and the power ministry last month finalised the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA), Land Lease Agreement (LLA) and Implementation Agreement (IA) with the BON. But these were not

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## Mirpur BNP leader shot dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminals gunned down a ward-level BNP leader in Pallabi, while police recovered the slaughtered body of a housewife and the decomposed body of an unidentified man in the city.

Abdul Matin Munshi, 40, president of the ward-91 BNP unit and a real estate broker, was sitting at his office at block Dha in section 12 in Mirpur when four youths stormed in and opened fire on him around 8:00pm. The assailants then fled the scene.

Bullet-hit Matin was rushed to Dhaka Medical College and

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## RU teachers start 3-day work abstention

RU CORRESPONDENT

Rajshahi University teachers yesterday started a three-day work abstention, demanding cancellation of the appointments of 546 'controversial' employees, who went on the rampage on the campus on January 21.

All scheduled examinations were postponed and no classes were held as RU Teachers' Association (Ruta) started observing the programme amid authorities' indifference.

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## CID team visits Bangla Bhai camps

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Criminal Investigation Department (CID) team from Dhaka Sunday visited the abandoned camps of Bangla Bhai in Naogaon and Rajshahi and heard the horror of tortures during his infamous 'anti outlaw operations', backed by the local police administration.

Led by Assistant Superintendent of Police Mosih Uddin, the three-man team inspected the training camps cum torture cells of the outlawed Jagrata Muslim Janata, Bangladesh (JMB), reportedly to cross-check statements by a top JMB (Jama'atul Mujahideen, Bangladesh) operative Enayet Ullah.

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## ARMS SMUGGLING

# Dhaka to ask Delhi to help block routes

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

The government will ask the Indian government to help block the routes used by the militants to smuggle in explosives from India for subversive acts across Bangladesh in the last few months.

Sources also said the government will request its Indian counterpart to conduct an investigation to verify the information obtained from some arrested militants about an Indian arms ring involved in selling explosives to the Bangladeshi militants, and take

measures to trace the syndicate and stop its activities.

Law enforcers and intelligence agencies are preparing a detailed report on their findings about the networks of explosives smugglers both in Bangladesh and India. The report will include among other things the detained militants' statements in this regard.

"The report will be completed in a few days," a top official of an intelligence agency told The Daily Star recently on condition of anonymity.

Once the report is prepared, it

will be sent to the home ministry. "Then the government will send it to Indian government through Indian High Commission in Dhaka," the intelligence official added.

Investigators have gathered that power gel, ammonium nitrate, detonators and some other chemicals used in making the bombs that had been blasted since August 17 last year had come from India.

"The militants brought in a huge quantity of explosives through different points on

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## Govt not sure about arrest of Abdur Rahman in India

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday could not confirm the local media reports that police in the Indian state of West Bengal had arrested Shaekh Abdur Rahman, chief of banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), in 24 Parganas Sunday.

Indian police, meantime, confirmed they had detained a man in West Bengal but did not say whether he was the hunted Bangladeshi militant kingpin, reports Reuters.

State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar told reporters yesterday afternoon that he came to know of the matter from local newspapers.

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# EU worried over rights abuse

## Civil society urges it to watch whole polls process

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A high powered EU delegation yesterday expressed concern over human rights abuse while a section of the civil society urged the team to monitor the whole election process in the next general polls instead of the voting day only.

"They [the EU delegates] were concerned over human rights issues in the country and said they feel it creates an environment of human rights abuse. This, in turn, affects both good governance and

the electoral process," said Sharmeen Murshid, chief executive officer of Brotee, who was present at the meeting.

The troika sat with the civil society members to be briefed about the current political climate in the country and to understand what should be their role in Bangladesh as a significant member of the international community.

The Troika arrived in Dhaka yesterday led by Nikolaus Scherk,

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## CONDOLENCE



We are deeply shocked and saddened by the sudden demise of our beloved Director, Khorshedi Alam (Dolly), who breathed her last at the early hours on 21 January 2006 (Inna lillahi.....Rajeun).

In her death we have lost not only a guardian but also a great and devoted social worker and philanthropist. She was the Founder President of Gulshan Ladies Community Club, an Honorary Rotarian and a Founder Member of North South University. She was also the President of Women's Voluntary Association and Women's Club of Business & Professionals.

She is survived by her husband, Mr. Iftekharul Alam and a host of relatives, friends and their families to mourn her death. We offer our heartfelt condolences to Mr. Iftekharul Alam and her family members.

May Allah rest her soul in peace and give the bereaved family the fortitude to bear this irreparable loss.

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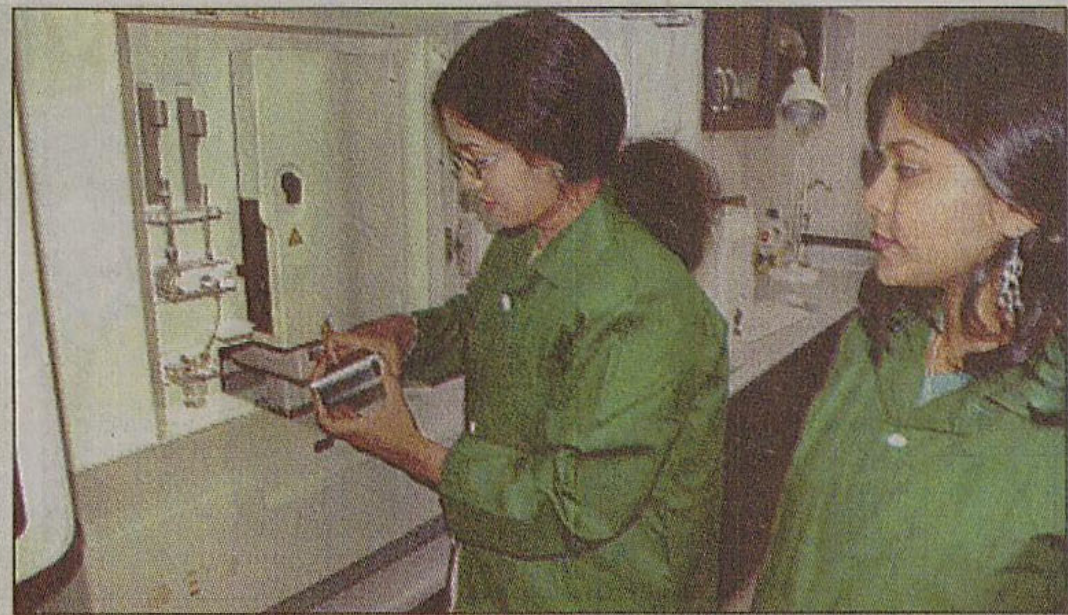


PHOTO: STAR

Technicians of the country's first-ever DNA profiling laboratory check instruments after its inauguration at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital yesterday.