



Ijtema ends with Akheri Munajat today

A CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Lakhs of devotees will join Akheri Munajat (concluding prayer) today, the final day of the three-day Muslim congregation after Hajj.

The concluding prayer and sermon of the 42nd annual Biswa Ijtema will start at 12:20pm.

President Iajuddin Ahmed, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, advisory council members, two former prime ministers and other dignitaries are expected to join the prayer.

Muslims will raise hands standing on rooftops, open fields and roads stretched for several kilometres.

The authorities concerned set up loudspeakers from Uttara to Cherag Ali Market and Ashulia

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

## Laws approved to corporatise NCBs

### Boards to be autonomous

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

This is the second policy decision of the caretaker government that is constitutionally mandated to carry out only routine government functions while assisting the Election Commission to hold the national polls. Last week, the interim administration signed a contract with an Indian company to set up a 240-megawatt power plant at Siddhiganj.

Earlier this year, a finance ministry proposal for converting the state-owned commercial banks into public limited companies (PLCs) was rejected in the face of strong opposition from the other

NEW CEC  
Govt shelves  
plan to pick  
Anisuzzaman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government (CG) is considering another former bureaucrat instead of M Anisuzzaman Khan for the office of the chief election commissioner (CEC), which fell vacant on January 21 following resignation of former CEC Justice MAAziz.

"We are looking for a man with reputation and morality for the post to form a strong Election Commission," an adviser to the CG told The Daily Star yesterday on condition of anonymity.

He however did not disclose the name of the former bureaucrat who is going to be appointed as the new CEC.

President Iajuddin Ahmed is likely to appoint the new CEC and

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

cabinet members.

Freing the nationalised banks from government control through corporatisation is one of the major conditions that the World Bank (WB) set for the country to receive the \$200-million fourth instalment of Development Support Credit.

According to the draft approved yesterday, the government or the finance ministry would not be able to interfere in the banks' decisions on disbursement of loans, recruitment, and promotions including those to the vital posts like general managers, managing director, and

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

## Flights go haywire for thick fog

STAR REPORT

Dense fog caused disruptions of international flights as well as transportation across the country on road and river for more than 12 hours yesterday.

Air traffic officials at Zia International Airport said at least 20 international flights of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, Gulf Airlines, Emirates Airlines, and British Airways could not land at the airport at scheduled times.

No national or international flights landed at the airport during 11:51pm on Friday and 10:41am on Saturday, they said.

Heavy fog lowered down normal

eyesight at only 200 metres, forcing

drivers either to halt their journey

halfway or to speed down. This

1,531 more held, arms seized

Mamun being grilled

STAR REPORT

Police arrested 1,531 people on various charges and seized seven firearms across the country yesterday while the army-led joint forces detained a union parishad (UP) chairman and seized a firearm from him at Netrakona.

Sources at Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) said about 50 launches, which operate on 28 routes from Dhaka to the country's southern region, were stranded at different places between Chandpur and Hizla on the Meghna and its branches.

Quoting BIWTC officials at Paturia, our Manikganj correspondent said about 20,000 stranded

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Make public everything you know about me

Star editor invites Huda

Mr Nazmul Huda's threat (published yesterday in full), triggered by our story that the ACC has decided to investigate his alleged corruption, can best be described as pathetic and desperate. Fearful of his dirty linen being washed in public, he is trying to threaten and intimidate so that this paper desists from doing its public duty. No threat will silence us.

One can only pity a man who, in order to hit out against someone, drags in his or her parents, which in my case is my late father who passed away 28 years ago and who was a minister half a century

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

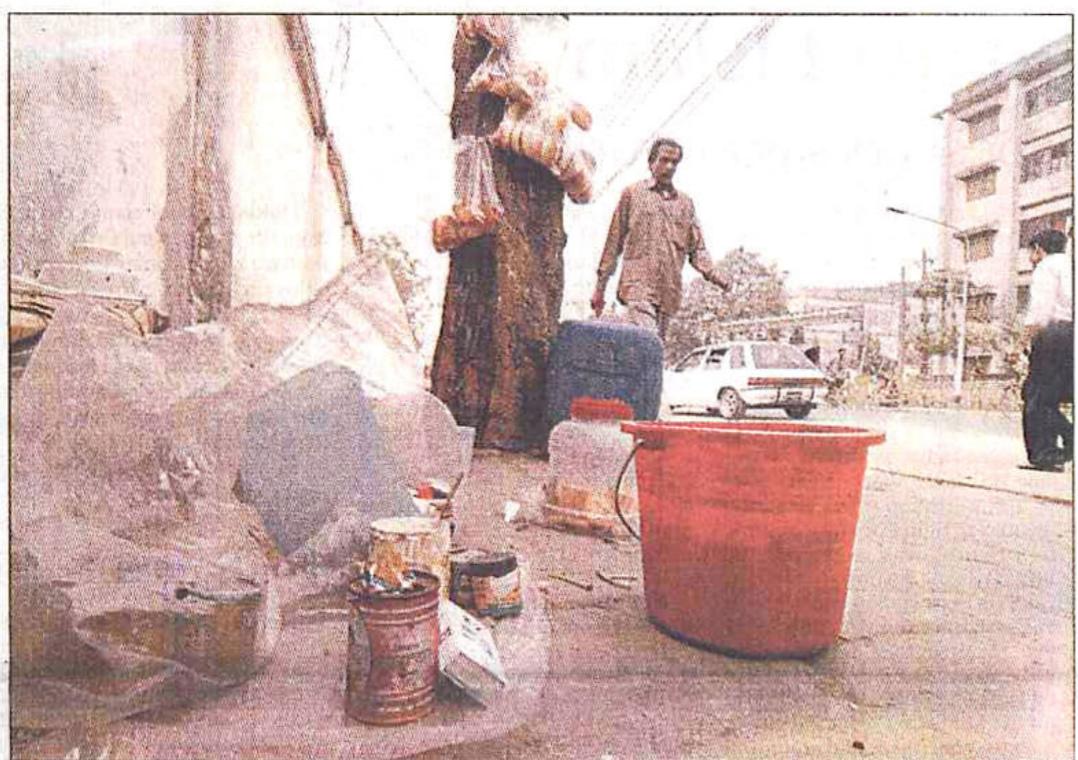


PHOTO: STAR

A tea seller at Mohammadpur in the capital leaves his small shop unattended and stands at a distance fearing eviction from footbath where he runs his shop. He returns to his stall only when there are customers.

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## Big guns stay out of dragnet

Mamun only remarkable arrestee in 41,000 held so far

SHAMIM ASHRAF

Most of the listed top criminals, their patrons and the corruptionists still remain out of the dragnet of joint forces although the forces arrested a staggering number of people across the country since the declaration of state of emergency.

A large number of the absconding criminal suspects, their godfathers and corrupt ward commissioners and union parishad chairmen, some local criminal godfathers, some leaders of business syndicates, and several listed criminals, and busted a number of illegal VoIP business dens and fake fertiliser and insecticide factories, they failed to apprehend most of the top offenders and high-profile criminals.

Although they succeeded in capturing a number of allegedly corrupt ward commissioners and union parishad chairmen, some local criminal godfathers, some leaders of business syndicates, and several listed criminals, and busted a number of illegal VoIP business dens and fake fertiliser and insecticide factories, they failed to apprehend most of the top offenders and high-profile criminals.

They seized 10,400 sacks of urea at Bhairab upazila, reports our Kishoreganj correspondent.

Of those, 10,000 bags were seized from Bhuiyan Enterprise at Bhairab Bazaar, Officer-in-Charge of Bhairab Police Station. Zamir Uddin Ahmed said.

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Khulna sadar thana police yesterday seized 1,000 sacks of urea fertiliser and 545 sacks of spoilt basic commodities including fish feed, reports our staff correspondent in Khulna.

Another 400 sacks of urea were recovered from his younger brother Monjil Bhuiyan's store in the same area.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

## More fertiliser, cement, commodities seized

STAR REPORT

Joint forces in separate operations all over the country yesterday sealed off 16 warehouses, arrested five people, seized around 12,000 sacks of fertiliser, 654 sacks of fake cement and over 2,500 sacks of various types of spoilt basic commodities.

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SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

## 17 OCs of DMP transferred

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Officers-in-charge (OCs) of 17 police stations out of the 32 of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) were transferred yesterday.

Police headquarters in an order shunted the 17 OCs out of the DMP and transferred 13 police inspectors to the DMP to replace them. The four other posts will be filled shortly.

The OCs sent out of DMP are Ziaul Alam to Dhaka range, Rabib Haq to Dhaka range, Jahangir Alam to Dhaka range, Syed Nazrul Islam to Barisal range, Mozammel Haq to Dhaka range, Ainul Haq to Police Training College at Noakhali, Abul Kair Matabbar to Dhaka range, Arzu Miah to Highway Division Kazi Nur-e-Alam to Chittagong range, Syed Mahbubur Rahman to Meghna range.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

SHARIER KHAN

For contractual violation, the Power Development Board (PDB) is most likely to cancel, within February 22, the 490-megawatt Meghnaghata-2 power project deal that was awarded to Obaidul Karim's shell company BON Consortium.

Besides, BON Consortium is unlikely to be able to arrange bank loans to finance this project, as Karim is wanted by the police in connection with different graft and criminal cases filed against him for swindling Tk 594 crore from Oriental Bank. Charges against him

were based on a central bank investigation done at the fag end of the alliance government rule, making the case rock solid.

Karim has disappeared since last week. His disappearance is most likely to affect other projects and businesses awarded to him including the Gulistan-Jatrabari flyover and the operation of Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre.

A Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) source said that work related to the eight-kilometre-long Gulistan-Jatrabari flyover project has slowed down significantly, even though it has not stopped. He

said two Chinese contractors, on behalf of BON Consortium, were present at the site but their works were lagging far behind the schedule. This project demands a cost of over Tk 500 crore.

"We have a foreign consultant and a Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) team overseeing the implementation. We are expecting the monthly report from the consultant by February 7 and then we would be able to understand how uncertain this flyover project has become," he added.

The BON Consortium, which

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



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