

## SSA loses legal battle over private port

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**  
 The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday declared illegal the approval of and follow-up works for construction of two private terminals at Patenga and Narayanganj by the Stevedoring Services of America (SSA).  
 The government approved the projects in favour of the SSA on April 25, 1998 amid debates, protests and support. The ports were leased out for 99 years, renewable for another 99 years.  
 The Appellate Division of the SC upheld a High Court verdict, which declared the SSA contract illegal.

The Appellate Division yesterday dismissed the petitions of the government and the SSA for leave to appeal against the High Court verdict.  
 As the Appellate Division upholds the High Court verdict, all activities related to the implementation of the projects have now become illegal, said Barrister Tanjib-ul Alam, one of the lawyers for the writ petitioners.  
 On September 12, 2000, the litigants including a former chairman of the Chittagong Port filed a writ petition with the High Court against the government approval of the projects. On the same day,

the court issued a rule and on November 26 last year, the High Court gave its verdict.  
 A High Court bench comprising Justice Shah Abu Naim Mominur Rahman and Justice Md Arayes Uddin declared the rule on the SSA private terminals as absolute and declared the approval illegal.  
 The government and the SSA then filed the leave to appeal petition with the Appellate Division.  
 Yesterday, the seven-member Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Mainur Reza Chowdhury dismissed the leave to appeal petition.

The High Court verdict held that the process of obtaining approval for setting up private terminals by the SSA Bangladesh Ltd. was not transparent. The court ruled it arbitrary and illegal.  
 The court also found that the incorporation process of the SSA Bangladesh Ltd. was also obtained through presentation of false information as one of the two joint venture partners -- SSA Netherlands BV -- was found non-existent.  
 "It is unusual that an approval to a proposal is given first and then the



Sultana Panni

## Former deputy speaker Panni's wife murdered

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**  
 Wife of former deputy speaker Humayun Khan Panni was strangled at her Dhanmondi residence in the early hours of yesterday by unknown killers.  
 Sultana Panni, 70, was found lying on her face in the balcony of her bedroom. Her hands and legs were tied and mouth taped.  
 The killers also tied up the former deputy speaker in the bedroom of House No. 31 of Road No. 15 at Dhanmondi. A mobile

phone, which she bought on the day of the occurrence, was missing and someone made a call from the phone at 3:30am.  
 "It was not an incident of robbery," Khan Sayed Hasan, deputy commissioner of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), south zone, told The Daily Star. The killers ransacked rooms on the first floor just to make it look like a robbery, he said. The family kept valuables in banks, sources said.  
 "The killers were professional and very much familiar with the family," he said, adding that the

victim might have been killed in an attempt to grab her huge property.  
 Cook of the house, Alauddin, asked domestic help Ruby to call Sultana at about 8:45am. Ruby went to the first floor and knocked at the bedroom door several times. But nobody responded. She then asked the next door neighbour to make a phone call to the victim's bedroom. The neighbour did not do it.  
 Mizan, a tailor who has a small tin-shed shop inside the boundary

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## Faster reforms will cut corruption



Miekko Nishimizu

**INAM AHMED**  
 World Bank Vice-president for South Asia Miekko Nishimizu has said formation of an independent anti-corruption body is only one step towards fighting corruption and other necessary steps like faster reforms are now needed in critical areas like education, health and banking.  
 "Bangladesh can grow even faster, but the reason for stagnation is weak governance and corruption," she said in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star a day after the end of the two-day Bangladesh Development Forum meeting in Dhaka.  
 "Text books don't reach students in time. In some cases, they reached even six months after classes started. And somebody

made money somewhere in the distribution by delaying the process. But this year, students got books in time," Nishimizu said.  
 "Teachers are often absentees, or I should call them ghost teachers. Again, somebody is making money by getting them on payroll through political patronage."  
 Nishimizu noted that the government has confronted the burning issues in every sector. "This government is highly pro-reform and has started implementing some of the very difficult tasks. It will take time to get the result while some results like clean air in Dhaka city are already there."  
 But she says the tall task remains fighting corruption.  
 "Formation of an independent anti-corruption commission is

## SC verdict hailed in Chittagong

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg**

Various quarters here hailed yesterday the Supreme Court verdict on construction of a private container terminal at the estuary of the Karnaphuli river by the Stevedoring Services of America (SSA).  
 This historic judgement once again put interests of the country above everything, they remarked.  
 Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury described the verdict as 'victory of the patriotic people'.  
 Mohiuddin, who is also general secretary of the city Awami League (AL), all along opposed the SSA-proposed private port and launched agitations on several occasions. "We feel relieved now. The judgement upholds the rule of law," he said.  
 The mayor said, "We would also resist in future any such move by vested quarters to harm the interest of the country."  
 Former president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry and President of Port

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The body, left, of slain wife of former deputy speaker Humayun Khan Panni is being taken to the Combined Military Hospital for an autopsy. Panni, on sofa, was tied when his wife was strangled by unknown killers at their Dhanmondi residence yesterday.

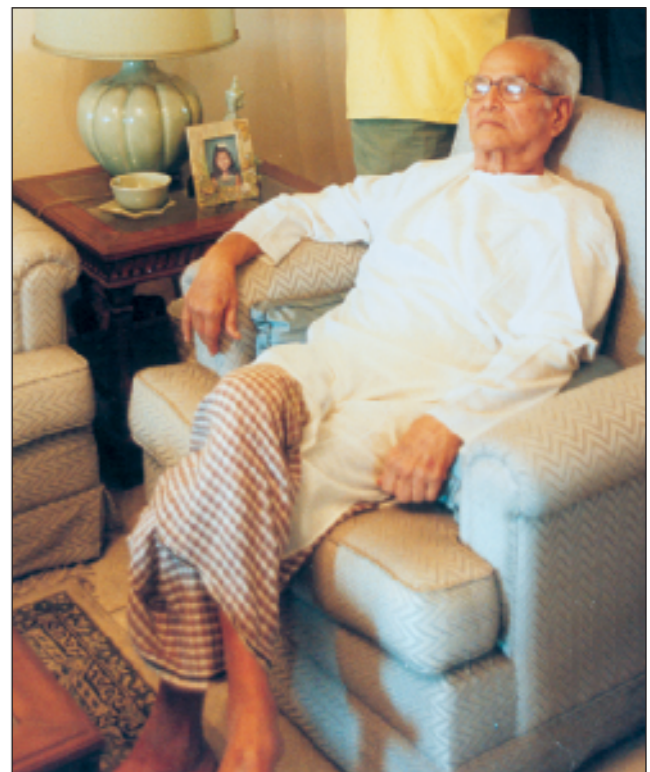


PHOTO: STAR

## Piling pillar tragedy repeats, girl killed

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

A teenage girl died when a huge iron bar used for piling fell on her at Pallabi yesterday.  
 Rina Begum of Chalantika Basti was taking bath in her slum bathroom adjacent to an under-construction building of a garment factory, Jita Garments, at 2:00pm.  
 The bar suddenly fell on the bathroom, smashing it and injuring Rina badly.  
 She was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the on-duty doctors declared her dead.  
 A garment worker, the 19-year-old victim was to go to her factory after bath.  
 Rina's mother, Sajeda Begum, filed a murder case with the Mirpur Police Station against the owner of Jita Garments.  
 Police arrested Manik, supervisor of the construction site, in the afternoon.

The incident followed a similar accident at the Elephant Road on Wednesday in which Parveen Akhter Putul, 22, an attendant of Mastermind School of Dhanmondi died. A piling pillar fell on her, killing her instantly. No case was filed and police arrested none.  
**Jail rejoinder**  
 The jail directorate has issued a rejoinder against a report headlined "Corruption in jails climbs an extra notch" published in The Daily Star on May 17.  
 The directorate has claimed that the information on 'toll collection' was baseless and transfers of officials were all done in the interest of administration on the basis of merit and seniority. It has also claimed that the issue of financial kickbacks, as raised in the report,

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## South-western region 48-hour transport strike threatened from May 22

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna**

Transport owners and workers have threatened a 48-hour strike in South-western zone from May 22 to realise their nine-point demand.  
 Abdur Gaffar Biswas, senior Vice-President of Khulna city BNP and Convenor of South-Western Zone Unit of Road Transport Owners' and Workers Association, gave the threat at a press conference here yesterday morning.  
 The demands include withdrawal of cases filed against transport owners and workers, reduction of prices of petroleum products, formation of Workers' Welfare Fund, construction of bus and truck terminals in all districts across the country, stoppage of

tolls by police and political hoodlums and compensation for families of drivers and workers killed in highway robberies.  
 Buses, mini buses, trucks, tank lorries, auto rickshaws, auto tempos and engine boats will come under the purview of the proposed 48-hour transport strike in the South-western zone and greater Faridpur district, said BNP leader Abdur Gaffar Biswas who was arrested by joint forces during 'Operation Clean Heart' for his alleged involvement in drug trade and other criminal activities.  
 He has also demanded of the government to stop import of reconditioned trucks, buses and mini buses.

## Jubo Dal leader gunned down

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Unidentified criminals shot dead a Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal leader and injured another at Mirpur Majar Road last night.  
 Mohammad Ali, 38, general secretary of ward No. 10, and his friend Mohammad Hasan were in a conversation on a playing ground at Majar Road at the time of the incident at about 7:45pm.  
 A gang of four riding two motorcycles went there and pumped bullets on them. Severely injured, the two were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where Ali was declared dead.  
 The reason behind the killing could not be known immediately.  
 The duty officer of the Mirpur Police Station said they were informed of the incident but failed to give any details. No case has been filed as yet.