

## JS session resumes today

UNB, Dhaka

After a brief recess for weekend and Ekushey February holiday, parliament sits today at 11:00am.

The House will meet for two sittings—morning and afternoon—to facilitate a general discussion by the lawmakers, mainly from the opposition, on the president's address.

The question-answer will be tabled for the remaining days of the session scheduled to be prorogued on February 28.

## Manhunt starts in Southwest for 42 extremists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Police, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and intelligence agencies have launched special combing operations in the south-western region to arrest 42 fugitive top outlaws who have started fresh bomb attacks and murders taking the advantage of operations against Islamist militants.

These outlaws belonging to different underground parties are reported to have started their criminal activities again with a view to declaring their existence through creating panic in the region.

The list of 42 extremists comprises the names of 15 BPCP (Janajuddho) leaders including its founder Dada Tapan, 10 operatives of New Biplobi Communist Party, 11 of BPCP (M-L) and six of other outlawed parties, an intelligence source said, adding that the home ministry has asked the law enforcers to arrest them.



PHOTO: STAR

Wreaths and bouquets cover the Central Shaheed Minar and its yard in the capital as the nation observes Amar Ekushey and International Mother Language Day yesterday.

## Ekushey observed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Reaffirming commitment to the spirit of Amar Ekushey, the nation yesterday observed International Mother Language Day and paid a glowing tribute to the language martyrs for their heroics in establishing the right to speak in mother tongue.

People in their thousands thronged the Central Shaheed Minar barefoot and placed floral wreaths, paying homage to the martyrs.

The International Mother Language Day was proclaimed by UNESCO's general conference in November 1999 to venerate the supreme sacrifices of language

martyrs Salam, Barkat, Rafiq, Jabbar, Shafiq and many others in 1952.

Wearing black badges, people from all walks of life walked to the Central Shaheed Minar as the songs glorifying the historic event that eventually led the nation to independence floated in the air.

Unprecedented security measures were taken in and around the Shaheed Minar premises. Different entrances to Dhaka University (DU) campus were swarming with mourners well before the zero hour.

Laying of wreaths began at a minute past midnight and continued until 2:00pm yesterday.

The day was observed elsewhere in the country and different places across the globe including Japan, the UK, Canada, and US in manners matching the solemnity of the occasion.

President Professor Iajuddin Ahmed was the first one to lay wreath at the Shaheed Minar and was soon joined by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. Both the president and prime minister stood for some time in solemn silence as a mark of respect for the martyrs.

The next were Speaker Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar and Deputy Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui followed by Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps Shahta Zarab,

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## Lok Sabha marks Feb 21 speaking in mother tongues

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Indian parliament yesterday observed International Mother Language Day in a unique manner, paying homage to those who had laid down their lives in Dhaka for the recognition of Bangla language and culture.

Members of Lok Sabha spoke in over 15 languages, their mother tongues, with pride.

In a symbolic gesture, Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee addressed the MPs in Bangla for the first time, and recalled how the Bangalees fell to Pakistani bullets in the erstwhile East Pakistan in 1952 and became martyrs to safeguard their mother tongue.

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## Joseph Crowley says minority rights must be protected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US Congressman Joseph Crowley yesterday said the Bangladesh government must protect the rights of the minorities to uphold democracy in the country.

"In the homework of democracy, the duty of the majority is to protect the minorities' rights," he told journalists after a meeting with Ahmadiyya leaders at Bakhshbazar in the city.

Joseph F Crowley, co-chair of congressional Bangladeshi Caucus who arrived in Dhaka yesterday on

a three-day visit, also held a meeting with the Bangladesh Hindu Bouddha Christian Oikya Parishad (BHCOP) leaders and Mahanagar Sarbojaneen Puja Committee at the Dhakeswari National Temple.

Earlier, Crowley placed wreath at the Central Shaheed Minar on the occasion of International Mother Language Day.

He appreciated the religious harmony and practice of democracy in Bangladesh, but said the government should take appropriate measures on the allegations of

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## Duty-free access of RMG to US a 'tough job'

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

Visiting US Congressman Joseph F Crowley yesterday said it is a "tough job" to get the Trade Act Bill 2005 passed in the US Senate that would pave the way for duty-free access of Bangladesh's readymade garment.

Crowley, co-chair of congressional Bangladeshi Caucus who arrived in Dhaka yesterday on a three-day visit, said both democratic and republican politicians are facing strong pressure from different groups, especially the textile lobby in the US, not to support the bill.

"I am not pessimistic or

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## Bangladesh-Sri Lanka 2nd ODI today

BISHWAJIT ROY from Bogra

Bangladesh will desperately look for their non-performing top-order to click when they play their second one-day international of the three-match series against Sri Lanka at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium today.

The match will start at 9am with StarSports and state-run Bangladesh Television (BTV) beaming live coverage from the newly approved stadium in the heart of the northern region.

Habibul Bashar's men scored a listless 118 in the first game on Monday that they lost by five wickets.

The home team made two changes for the second match with

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## Jamuna Fertiliser trips again amid urea dearth

Angry farmers block Satkhira-Asasuni road in demand for fertilisers

STAR REPORT

With farmers continuing fierce protests at fertiliser scarcity in the current peak boro season, one of the six urea fertiliser factories of Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) went out of operation Monday night, further aggravating the situation.

Monday's sudden production shutdown of Jamuna Fertiliser Factory due to mechanical troubles for the third time in the last six months however would not last for

more than 10 days, the BCIC assured.

A day after the government-formed fertiliser monitoring committee had sent directives to dealers and transport owners to rush stockpiled urea from Amin Bazar, Dhaka to the outreaches, several hundred fertiliser-hungry farmers yesterday put up a barricade on the Satkhira-Asasuni road at Dhulihar Bazar in Satkhira Sadar upazila.

Furious at the scarcity and high price of urea in Dhulihar Bazar, the farmers felled trees on the road,

causing traffic snarl-up from 8:00am to 11:00am, the police said.

Addressing a spontaneous rally mostly of the farmers who had come to the bazaar to buy fertiliser, Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal central leader and Dhulihar UP Chairman Modasserul Haque Huda demanded supply of fertilisers at reasonable prices to save the irri and boro crops.

The farmers removed the barricade after Sadar UNO SM Ashrafuzzaman and a police team

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## Body formed to survey St Martin's Island

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has formed a high-powered committee to conduct an in-depth survey on the state of bio-diversity of Saint Martin's Island.

The committee headed by the director general of the Department of Environment (DoE) begins its work soon amidst growing concern that gas and oil exploration might affect bio-diversity and ecological balance in the coral island and its neighbouring areas.

The environment ministry has already halted Irish gas and oil company Tullow's seismic survey in the area.

Asked about this, Environment and Forest Minister Tariqul Islam said the government attaches top priority to safeguarding bio-diversity and ecological balance of the only coral island in the Bay of Bengal. "We will decide our next course of action after we get the committee report."

An inter-ministerial meeting on

Sunday chaired by Environment Secretary Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury formed the committee.

Tullow was allowed to explore gas and oil in St Martin's island, Teknaf, Cox's Bazar and surrounding areas by the Awami League government in 1997. A production sharing contract (PSC) was also signed the same year.

The company however did not start work for long, and only recently began seismic survey. It also did not submit any work plan to the DoE as rules required.

On February 9, the DoE ordered suspension of the seismic survey.

Environment ministry sources said gas and oil exploration might have a devastating effect on the coral island's environmental balance. Besides, it might harm habitats of crocodiles and other marine lives in the Bay of Bengal, they feared.

The Energy Division however appears to have a different view on the matter. Seismic survey is essential for exploration, and it does not

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## WIDENING RICH-POOR GAP

# Wage divides widen fast

INAM AHMED

In his own words, Faraz Ali, 20, of Kakmari village of Pabna works from his birth. Last year, he got Tk 80 a day as a casual labourer. This year, he works for Tk 60 and three meals a day. Ali agreed to a lower wage because he has been contracted for the whole year to run his employer's power tiller.

"It will bring me more money at the end of the month than before as a regular job means I will not have to go without work 2-3 days a week," says Ali. "But as price has shot up, I can buy less rice now with a day's wage than before. My 80 taka bought me 5kg rice before, now I can get only 4kg."

Sakhina, 28, whacks hard on the earth with a spade, digging a pond in Kalkipur village of Natore. Her thin body strains like elastic as she holds the spade high above her head, then she quickly bends over,

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PHOTO: STAR

Self-employed Saifur, right, sells eggs as a way out of the low-wage trap for day labourers like Sakhina, centre in the left picture.

## EKUSHEY OBSERVANCE

# 70 hurt in BNP-AL clashes in dists

STAR REPORT

The February 21 programmes witnessed clashes in different parts of the country that left more than 70 people injured, mostly workers of the main opposition Awami League and its student front, while the ruling coalition partner Jamaat-e-Islami's student front Islami Chhatra Shibir occupied the traditional Ekushey venue in Chittagong.

At least 50 people were injured, 10 of them critically, during clashes between the workers of Awami League (AL) and BNP at Meghai Bazar in Kazipur upazila of the district yesterday morning, reports our Sirajganj correspondent.

Four houses were damaged and one was set afire as a sequel to the clashes.

The clashes erupted when the AL intercepted a BNP procession to observe the 21st February.

The critically injured were admitted to the Sirajganj General Hospital and upazila health complex.

To bring the situation under

control, police charged baton and lodged teargas shells on the agitated activists and arrested four AL and three BNP men from the spot.

Police later arrested six other AL workers.

Protesting the arrests, the district AL has announced a dawn-to-dusk hartal in the upazila today.

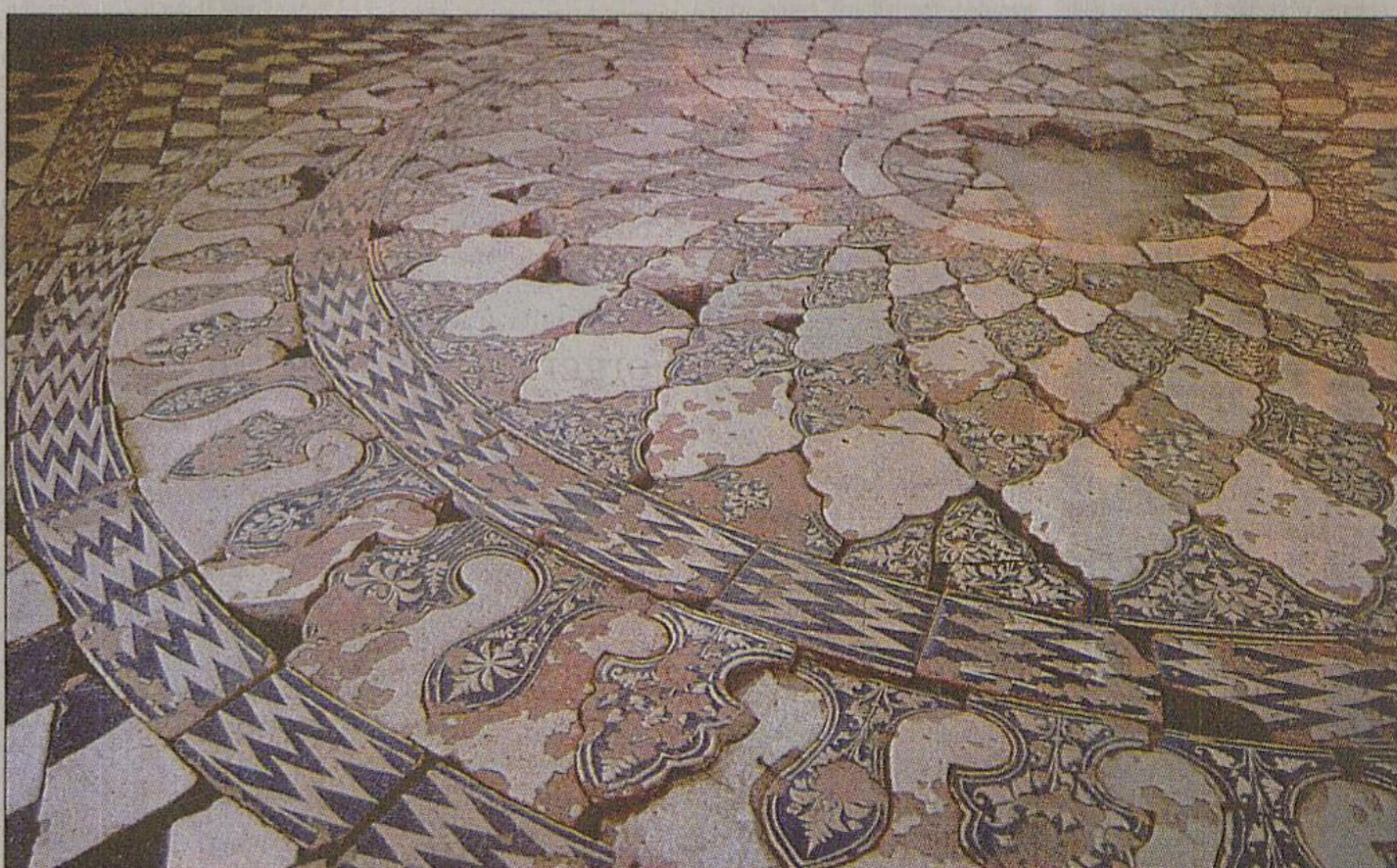
At least three leaders of ruling BNP and its youth front Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal were injured in a clash over placing floral wreaths at the Shaheed Minar in Satkhira town early yesterday, our Satkhira correspondent reports.

Among the injured are district BNP General Secretary Rahmatullah Palash, and district Juba Dal General Secretary Nasim Farooque Khan Mithu.

The clash spread in the New Market area.

Our Jahangirnagar University (JU) correspondent reports: At least 14 Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) activists the university were injured in attacks by ruling BNP's student front

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Archaeologists found this section of a tiled floor by excavating the compound of Chhoto Sona Masjid, a brilliant piece of Muslim architecture in Chapainawabganj while restoring the mosque in December 2004. The eight-foot-square tiled marvel is believed to be the only specimen of open courtyard floor found so far of the Sultanate period (1204-1525AD). It has been kept at a archaeology department rest house in the district since July 2005.

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