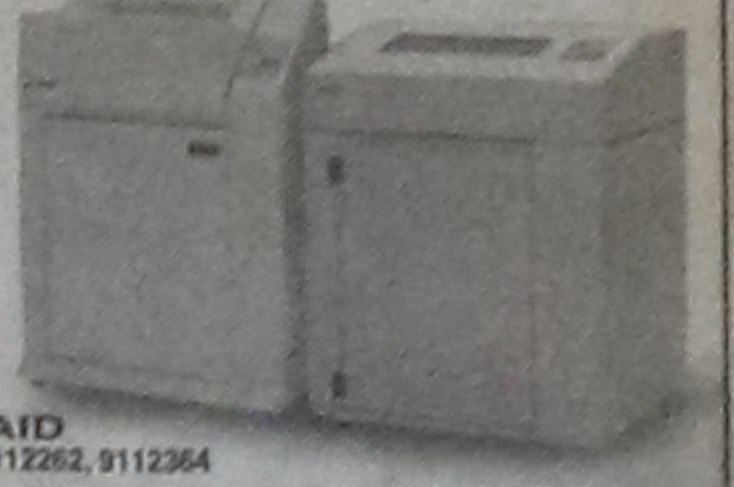


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Ramadan begins tomorrow

The holy month of Ramadan begins tomorrow as report of moon-sighting was not received from anywhere in Bangladesh yesterday evening, according to a press release of the Islamic Foundation last night, reports BSS.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the National Moon-sighting Committee at the Islamic Foundation yesterday with State Minister for Religious Affairs Moulana Nurul Islam in the chair. The press release said the holy Shab-e-Qadr will be observed on December 23 (Saturday).

AFP from Nicosia adds: The month of Ramadan starts today in eight Arab countries and in Iran tomorrow, the religious authorities in those countries said on Saturday.

Saudi Arabia set Monday as the first day of Ramadan, followed by the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait, Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia.

Mummy murder in N'ganj Husband, his mother & sister to die

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Nov 26: The District and Sessions Judge of Narayanganj today awarded death penalty to the husband, mother-in-law and sister-in-law of Mahmuda Sultana Mummy, 19, for strangulating her for dowry.

Judge Abdul Mukit Majumder pronounced the verdict in the sensational murder case under the Prevention of Women and Children Repression Act, 1995 at a packed courtroom. The young housewife was expecting when she was killed.

A large crowd assembled at the court and thronged its premises and roads leading to it to hear the 37-page judgement. It reviewed the FIR, charge sheet and evidence given by 21 witnesses on the murder of Mummy, found strangulated at her father-in-law's house here on October 30, 1999.

Police arrested six people - her husband Abul Kalam Azad Ripon, father-in-law Abdul Aziz

Shikder, mother-in-law Monowara Begum, sister-in-law Rokhsana Akhter Runa, brother-in-law Abu Bakar Siddique and Abu Zafar on charges of murdering her.

They claimed innocence saying that Mummy had hanged herself.

Police submitted charge sheet on November 24, 1999 against three of the six - the husband, mother-in-law and sister-in-law. Monowara Begum and Rokhsana Akhter Runa were granted bail by the High Court in March this year.

The charge was framed against the accused on March 8 this year, accusing them of torturing and killing Mummy for dowry.

Ripon initially gave a confessional statement, admitting that he had killed Mummy. But he wanted to withdraw it during trial on November 6. The judge however rejected it, saying that it was not tenable at all. See page 11 col 3



Bereaved relatives (L) of the victims of Narsingdi garment factory fire wail for their lost ones, bodies of the victims being tagged for identification at a hospital (M), and police (R) dig into the debris on the factory premises yesterday. --Star photos

Inside Today

Article

India's North-East: An Inheriting inheritance!

Column: Perspectives
By Brig (Rtd) M Abdul Hafiz
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Supplement

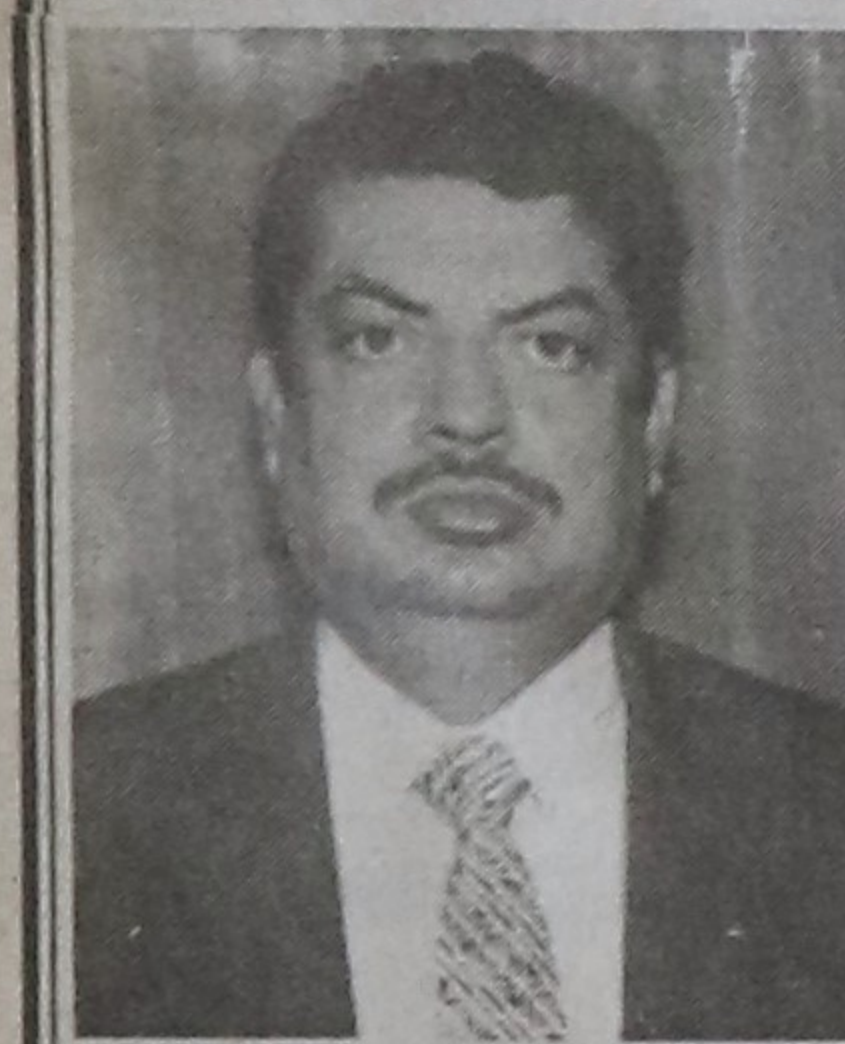
One page supplement on 'Regional Conference of Parliamentarians on Impact of Tuberculosis and Malaria on Poverty' on Page 9

| | Sun Rises | Sun Sets |
|--------|-----------|----------|
| Nov 27 | | 5.11 pm |
| Nov 28 | 6-22 am | |

| Prayer Timings November 27 | | |
|-------------------------------|-------|--------|
| | Azan | Jamaat |
| Fajr | 5-00 | 5-45 |
| Zohr | 12-45 | 1-15 |
| Asr | 3-45 | 4-00 |
| Maghrib | 5-16 | 5-23 |
| Esha | 7-15 | 7-45 |

| Schri, Iftar timings | | | |
|----------------------|-----|-------|-------|
| Ramadan | Nov | Schri | Iftar |
| 0 | 27 | 4-59 | - |
| 1 | 28 | 4-59 | 5-14 |
| 2 | 29 | 4-59 | 5-14 |

OBITUARY



A. K. M. Mainul Islam, Chairman & Managing Director of Quasem Group of Industries & Honorary Consul of Austria in Bangladesh died of heart failure yesterday at 10.40 A.M. in his office Chamber. (Innailiwa wa innailaihe.....). He was 55. He left behind his wife, two sons & two daughters, two brothers & four sisters to mourn his death.

His namaj-e-janaza will be held at Baitul Mokarram Mosque after Asar prayer. He will be buried at Banani graveyard. We all pray to Almighty Allah for eternal peace of the departed soul.

All Officers, Staff & Workers of Quasem Group of Industries



The main accused in the Mummy murder case Abul Kalam Azad alias Ripon (extreme L), his mother (middle) and sister (3rd from L) being brought out of the District and Sessions Judge's Court after the verdict was read out yesterday. --Star photo

Ruling party cashing on Ershad's misery

By Reaz Ahmad

Ruling Awami League is working out strategies to cash in on the latest developments on the opposition front and take a clear public stance towards a convicted Ershad and his faction of Jatiya Party to restore its anti-autocracy image.

Sources said in sharp contrast to its earlier affair with Ershad's JP, Awami League is now busy to show its maximum distance with the former military dictator whose political career now hangs

in balance. The AL top brass is now considering strategies to gain maximum political dividend out of Ershad's ill fate. Traditionally, AL has been a strong contender in many of the parliamentary seats where Ershad and his party reigned all through.

If the AL can convince its supporters that the present government played a vital role in pursuing cases against Ershad, it could well draw in its favour voters who have reservations against the fallen autocrat, believe some leaders. Keeping this in mind, Awami League contemplates going for a vigorous programme on December 6, the day Ershad stepped down 10 years ago.

Unlike in the past few years, AL this time plans to mark the anniversary of the fall of autocracy in a grand way hoping that peoples' perception about AL's stance on Ershad would change for the good.

Despite bagging most number of parliamentary seats in the 1996 general elections, AL was still short of a single majority to form government. Therefore, Sheikh Hasina had to seek support from Ershad, who was behind the bar. Eventually, Ershad was set free through legal process amid widespread public criticism about somewhat lacklustre prosecution of cases by the government attorneys at that time.

But the honeymoon between the two parties did not long last, as Ershad's trusted party comrade Anwar Hossain Manju deserted him splitting the party into two factions. Manju, who was inducted into Hasina's cabinet apparently by dint of Ershad's support to AL government, was not in good terms with Ershad for several months prior to the formal rift.

Ershad joining hands with his former foe BNP chief Khaleda Zia on November 30 last year finally brought his sweet-and-sour relationship with AL to an end. Injured on November 10 in front of the Jame-Mosque.

Jamaat reportedly took a strategy for a showdown through holding Tafsir Mahfil by its central leader Delwar Hossain Saidi to stage a comeback in Chittagong politics.

The ban on holding of Tafsir Mahfil for five days from November 13 at Parade Ground and then allowing it at Outer Stadium for three days from November 17, created a set back for Jamaat-Shibir, political sources said.

Police kept a heavy surveillance on the activists of Jamaat-Shibir during Tafsir Mahfil programme. As a result, the Tafsir Mahfil could not draw expected number of Jamaat-Shibir supporters, sources said.

Police sources said after Tafsir Mahfil, fresh raids were made in the city and hunt was on for the killers involved in Bahaddarhat carnage.

We will continue to keep pressure on Jamaat-Shibir until and unless the killers were handed over to us, police sources added.

Talking to this correspondent, Convenor of Chittagong unit of Opposition Alliance Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin said 'we hope that Jamaat-Shibir would stage a comeback in politics shortly.'

Ershad's politics

The beginning of an end!

By Nazmul Ashraf

Jailed on conviction in a corruption case, deposed president H M Ershad stands to lose his membership both in parliament and in the Jatiya Party he heads, according to legal experts.

Should Ershad meet such a destiny, political career of the former military dictator will be reduced to zero, observers believe.

The conviction also bars Ershad from contesting the next general election, putting an end to his ambitious dream of an electoral alliance with BNP and two other opposition parties and forming a coalition government.

According to article 66(2) of the Constitution, a person who has been sentenced to imprisonment for a minimum period of two years on conviction for a criminal offence involving moral turpitude will be disqualified as a member of parliament. Such a person will also be disqualified for being an MP unless five years have elapsed

See page 11 col 7



Shaheed Milon Day today

Shaheed Dr Milon Day will be observed across the country making his 10th death anniversary today, reports UNB.

Dr Shamsul Alam Khan Milon, joint secretary general of Bangladesh Medical Association, was shot dead by unidentified miscreants during the movement against autocrat Ershad on November 27, 1990 on the Dhaka University campus.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday issued separate messages paying rich tributes to Dr Milon.

In a message, President Shahabuddin Ahmed has called

See page 11 col 7

Death toll 48: Most killed in suffocation, stampede

By Staff Correspondent

Narsingdi tragedy

The death toll in the fire at a garment factory in Narsingdi rose to 48 yesterday while more than 100 injured employees were admitted to different hospitals.

Narsingdi police, however, said last night that number of employees killed in the incident of fire has risen to 38 yesterday and that they handed over bodies of 35 victims to the relatives until yesterday evening after autopsy at the Narsingdi Sadar Hospital.

The injured were admitted to Narsingdi Sadar Hospital, Bhairab Hospital, Bajipur Hospital and different thana health complexes of the district. Five critically injured persons were shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday, sources said.

Most of the 48 victims died of suffocation and in stampede while some others died while jumping from the building. Four of the victims were roasted alive, our correspondent reports.

Sources also said that most of the victims are teenage girls

hailing from Kararchar, Gajaria, Patwarpar, Kamargaon and Charnagardi villages of Narsingdi, sources said.

The fire, believed to have originated from an electric short circuit on the third floor at about 7 p.m. on Saturday, engulfed a large number of cartoons containing garments of the four-storey Chowdhury Knitwear Ltd., which is situated near Kararchar along the Dhaka-Sylhet Highway under Shibpur thana.

Nearly 650 employees were working on the second and third floor of the factory at the time of the incident. A thick column of smoke engulfed the inmates inside the building.

As soon as the news of fire spread among the employees, workers mostly from the second and third floor desperately scrambled to get out of the building through the main staircase that leads to emergency exit.

Our correspondent quoting firefighters reported that the collapsible gate to the main staircase on the first floor was locked from inside, preventing the workers from making exit.

A large number of workers died of suffocation while some others lost their lives in stampede at the narrow staircase and trying to jump from the building. Though most of the workers managed to get out of the building, some 250 employees were trapped inside the burning factory when firefighters were frantically fighting to put out the flames.

Finally, firefighters with the help of local people broke open the collapsible gate on the first floor and recovered 41 dead bodies till early yesterday morning.

Later, seven more dead bodies were recovered from inside the building. See page 11 col 2

Falu, Lokman may be removed for instigating conflicts

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is likely to remove two of her close and influential aides for allegedly instigating intra-party conflicts.

Reliable sources said the two aides Mosaddek Ali Falu and Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan - have become 'very powerful' within the party by taking advantage of closeness with the party chief.

The two men's excesses created serious resentment among the rank and file of BNP and its different front organisations. Their recent move to make Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu and Shahabuddin Ahmed Laitu president and general secretary of the party's student wing JCD angered majority of party men.

Although most of the leaders and activists of BNP and its front organisations consider the two as 'most troublesome persons' in the party, the sources said, they continued to make undue interference in all party activities in the absence of any action from Khaleda Zia.

Party sources said the party chairperson is now convinced unless the two aides are removed, their excesses would tarnish her image as well as that of the party.

The two persons have long been instigating untoward incidents within the party, dishonouring party leaders and trying to establish supremacy over the Standing Committee members, MPs and other leaders. They have also amassed huge wealth over the years by using the image of Khaleda Zia.

They were 'so powerful' that none in the party could dare to make any complaint against them to the party chairperson, the sources mentioned.

In many cases, top leaders drew attention of the party chief about undue interference from Falu but

Khaleda did not take any action. As a result, Falu even dared to misbehave with her family members.

Falu have long been influencing the leadership of BNP, Juba Dal, JCD and other front organisation. It became very difficult for the party men to get any post or position without the blessing of Falu, a party leader said seeking anonymity.

Many senior BNP leaders allege that they could not discuss party matters freely and frankly due to interference from Falu. They even suspect that Falu works as an 'agent' of those in power and 'supplies' important party decisions and other information to them.

Falu, who has a very poor academic background, always preferred to bring non-student incompetent people and cadres in the leadership of JCD and similar people in that of other front organisations. Pintu is one of the recruits of Falu.

Sources said Khaleda has now become concerned over the activities of Falu as various national dailies in the last few days carried a series of reports on his financial corruption, involvement in instigating groupings and funding party cadres to create trouble in BNP and its front organisations.

A senior BNP leader told this correspondent yesterday that the party Chairman finally felt that Falu and Lokman should no longer continue as her aides but she wants them to 'resign voluntarily'. Falu is her private secretary while Lokman is chief of her private security force, known as CSF (Chairperson's Security Force).

Some party sources said Khaleda Zia has apparently given a green signal to the party men to create

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The Management express their deep gratitude to the valued investors for their overwhelming support & confidence responded in the Company.

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