

## Hasina starts Sylhet tour Sept 29

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition leader and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina will start a three-day organisational tour to the Sylhet division on September 29.

During her visit, Hasina will address a number of public meetings. She will also meet leaders and workers of her party's different tiers, said a press release.

On her way to Sylhet, Hasina will address her first meeting in Ashuganj at 10:00 am on September 29. She will offer fateha to the mazar of Shah Jalal and Shah Paran on the same day, after her arrival at Sylhet.

Hasina will address the conference of Sylhet divisional AL workers on September 30. Leaders and workers from all wards, unions, thanas and districts units will be present at the conference.

From Sylhet she will go to Bhoirab. On her way back to the capital, Hasina will address a public meeting in Kishoreganj on September 1.

Some 15 AL lawmakers and central party leaders will accompany her during the visit.

## Expatriate killed by robbers at Boalkhali

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A man was killed and two others were severely injured in shooting by robbers who were fleeing after looting a house at Boalkhali in the district here in the early hours of yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Syed Hossain, 55, an expatriate who returned home a few days ago. The injured persons -- Muklat Hossain, 45, and Mokbul Hossain, 40, of the same family -- were undergoing treatment at Chittagong Medical College Hospital. Their condition was stated to be critical.

Police and other sources said some 25 armed robbers broke into the house of one Kader Mulluk at Char Khidirpur under Boalkhali upazila at around 2.30am yesterday and looted goods worth about Tk 1.5 lakh at gunpoint.

As the robbers were fleeing the scene, the inmates of the house and local people chased after them. At one point during the chase, the robbers fired indiscriminately on the mob killing Syed Hossain on the spot and seriously injuring the two others.

A case has been filed with the Thana concerned in this connection.

## Graft case Hearing on charge framing against Amu adjourned

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Special Court for Dhaka Division yesterday adjourned the hearing on charge framing against former food minister Amir Hossain Amu in two graft cases.

Judge (in charge) ATM Fazle Kabir passed the order following two separate petitions seeking adjournment of the hearing.

Amu, now on bail, was present in the court.

In the first case, it has been alleged that on July 15 last year, the then food minister Amu gave instructions through 'unofficial notes' for issuance of 52 delivery orders for procurement of one lakh tons of rice against his quota as minister. He then ordered purchase of rice at a price higher than the market price, causing a loss of Tk 20 crore to the government.

The Bureau of Anti-corruption (BAC) filed the case with Ramna thana on January 8 this year.

In the second case, filed with the same thana, it is alleged that as food minister, Amu misappropriated Tk 16.95 crore by procuring foodgrains (rice and wheat) through dealers of his own choice.

The case was filed by the BAC on March 7.

Investigation officers of the cases submitted the charge-sheets on July 1.

# Bloody start to Kashmir polls: 16 militants killed

AFP, Srinagar

Voting got under way yesterday in the first phase of legislative polls in a tense Indian Kashmir following a brutal last-minute surge of overnight violence that left 17 people dead.

Indian and Pakistani troops added to the tension by trading heavy fire across their disputed border as polls opened at 7:00am, although no-one was reported killed in the military exchanges.

Despite a huge security operation involving thousands of police, paramilitary and army troops, suspected militants launched more than half a dozen attacks overnight on polling stations, homes of candidates and police and army positions, police said.

Officials said the attacks, in which one policeman was killed, were aimed at scaring voters from turning out in the five districts where voting was taking place.

Police said Indian security forces killed 16 Islamic militants in two separate incidents, with 11 slain as they tried to cross the Line of Control -- the de facto border that divides Kashmir between India and Pakistan -- in Keran sector of Kupwara.

In the second incident, Indian troops killed five rebels in southern Kashmir's Surankot area in Poonch.

The militants, who suddenly appeared from thickly wooded forests surrounding Surankot, were trying to target polling stations when Indian forces spotted them and killed them, a police spokesman said.

Militants fighting Indian rule in Kashmir have declared the elections a

betrayal of their freedom struggle and have threatened to kill anyone taking part.

The rebels have killed 24 party workers since August, including Kashmir's law minister, Mushtaq Ahmed Lone, who was shot dead Wednesday as he campaigned.

On Sunday the state's Tourism Minister, Sakina Itoo, also narrowly escaped death when militants attacked her convoy. A police guard was killed.

While voting was slow in some towns and villagers yesterday, queues formed in other areas with voters having to wait up to an hour to cast their ballots, AFP correspondents and photographers said.

Presiding officers at most polling stations were wearing bulletproof vests, while police and security force personnel took positions on rooftops and guarded polling booths.

Some 44,000 extra security personnel have been brought in from outside Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state.

Voting is taking place in the northwestern districts of Kupwara, Baramulla, the southern districts of Poonch and Rajouri and Kargil, in the heights of the Himalayan mountains.

Soon after voting started, Pakistani and Indian troops began exchanging artillery and heavy machinegun fire across the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district, an Indian police spokesman said.

No casualties were immediately reported, according to the spokesman.

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PHOTO: ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

The Royal Bengal Tiger that escaped from the Chittagong Zoo through the open gate lounges again in its cage yesterday.

## Regal, after all

ABDULLAH-AL MAHMUD, Ctg

The escape of a tiger from its cage may be a relaxing break for himself but surely a chilling feeling for zoo visitors.

A Royal Bengal Tiger escaped from the Chittagong Zoo under the Khulshi Police Station and stayed out in the open for more than four hours, sending a wave of chill among about 100 visitors yesterday.

However, the tiger was caged back in the zoo after a frantic effort. And, the zoo authorities suspended the caretaker of the zoo, Hanif, and one Faruk for their negligence in duty and

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# Govt to pay off contract seed growers soon

REAZ AHMAD

Amidst fears of a crisis of boro and wheat seeds, the government has decided to pay off immediately Tk 18 crore outstanding dues of some 10,000 'contract growers' of seeds across the country.

These farmers grew seeds at their respective croplands under contracts with the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) and supplied those to it last year. But they had Tk 23 crore dues with the BADC till July this year, of which only Tk five crore was paid.

As the farmers protested non-payment of dues for long despite repeated demands from them and started refusing to supply seeds to the BADC this year, it apprehended a seed crisis in the coming boro and wheat season.

Sources said the government last week ordered immediate release of funds to pay the Tk 18 crore dues to the farmers within this month.

Agriculture Minister Motiur Rahman Nizami and State Minister for Agriculture Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir would personally hand over cheques to the farmers concerned, mostly in the northern districts, shortly, officials said.

Once the payments are made, BADC staff would meet the contract growers and persuade them to produce adequate seeds to avoid any crisis.

Millions of farmers across the country look for BADC-supplied seeds in the hope of better yields. If they do not get those, it might affect the government's ambitious foodgrain production target of 280 lakh tonnes in fiscal 2002-2003, a senior official noted.

The BADC has a total of 60,000 contract growers in 15 zones under two seed circles in the country.

## Airfare for hajj pilgrims fixed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Airfare for ballotee and non-ballotee hajjis has been fixed at 870 and 1050 US dollars each respectively this year.

The fares were fixed at a cabinet meeting yesterday with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in the chair, a government handout said.

Earlier, the government decided to allow 50,000 hajjis this year -- 10,000 of them ballotees and the rest non-ballotees.

This year, the intending ballotee hajjis have been categorised as 'A' and 'B' on the basis of their accommodation in Mecca and Medina. The house rent is 2,000 riyals each for 'A' category and 2,000 riyals for 'B' category.

The government has rented houses in Mecca and Medina for providing accommodation to ballotee pilgrims.

Intending pilgrims who have deposited the first instalment of money as house rent have been requested to deposit another Tk 35,000 each in the second instalment within September 30 as service and accommodation fee.

The third instalment Tk 35,000 and the fourth instalment of Tk 17,123 will have to be deposited within October 15 and October 26 respectively, the handout said.

The expenditure of each ballotee

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PHOTO: STAR

Shahida Begum (middle), mother of slain Moniruzzaman Moni, bursts into tears upon hearing the court verdict on her son's death in the Magura town yesterday.

## Life-term for 3 in Moni murder case

HOSSAIN SERAJ, Magura

The District and Sessions Judge's Court at Magura yesterday sentenced three people to life-term rigorous imprisonment (RI) in the sensational Moni abduction and murder case.

The convicts were identified as Makrul, Abdur Razzak and Abdur Rashid. Also, Makrul was ordered to pay a fine of Tk 7,000 or in default to serve 3 more years of RI while the two others Tk 5,500 or 2.5 more years of RI.

Seven other accused in the case were acquitted by Judge Mohammad Azizul Huq who pronounced the verdict in a packed courtroom at 12:45pm yesterday, about one and a half years after the case was filed.

College student Moniruzzaman Moni, 18, son of Gazi Hamidul Huq, was abducted for ransom from Magura town on March 13, 2001.

Moni's mother Shahida Begum filed a case with Magura Sadar Thana the following day.

Meanwhile, the abductors strangled Moni, mutilated his dead body and then dumped it into the Madhumati River. Police recovered the dead body with the help of divers following confessional statement of Makrul, the mastermind behind the abduction and murder.

The investigation officer (IO) of the case submitted the charge sheet to the court on May 10, 2001, accusing 10 persons. Fifteen persons were shown as prosecution witnesses. After examining all the records and witnesses, the court gave the verdict.

About 1,000 people thronged the court premises and adjacent roads to hear the verdict. Additional police were deployed in the area to maintain law and order. Five of the

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## Warrant for Tofail's arrest stayed till Sept 21

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Special Court for Dhaka Division yesterday stayed till September 21 the order for warrant of arrest against former industries minister Tofail Ahmed and another person accused in a graft case.

Judge (in charge) ATM Fazle Kabir passed the order following a petition seeking stay of the order for warrant of arrest against Tofail and former ERD secretary Moshirur Rahman, issued by the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court on September 10.

The special court also fixed September 21 hearing of bail petition of the accused.

More than 100 lawyers appeared in the court and submitted petitions

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## Education Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the historical Education Day.

On this day in 1962, police opened fire on demonstrating students in the city, as they demanded cancellation of the Sharif Education Commission report. The violent attack caused deaths and grievous injuries.

The incident sparked off mass movement that led up to the six-point movement 1966 and uprising in 1969.

Different organisations have chalked out various programs in remembrance.

The Bangladesh Chhatra Union will bring out a procession in the city to mark the day while the Bangladesh Chhatra League will place a wreath at the Shahid Smriti Bedi in front of the Siksha Bhaban.

A discussion will also be held in the afternoon. The Bangladesh Chhatra League will place a wreath at the Shahid Smriti Bedi in front of the Siksha Bhaban. Our CU correspondent adds that the Bangladesh Chhatra Union has also undertaken different programmes in Chittagong to mark the day.

The Chittagong unit of the BCU will also arrange blood donation programme, bring out procession and hold rallies.

## Arrest killers of Dr Aftab, demands Sylhet BMA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) in Sylhet yesterday demanded immediate arrest and trial of the killers of Dr. Aftab Hossain, assistant director of MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital.

The leaders of the association at a press conference threatened that they would launch a greater movement if the authorities fail to arrest the killers within the next 48 hours.

All the physicians of the district yesterday boycotted attending private calls as per a decision of BMA following the killing of Dr Aftab Sunday.

Besides, the BMA Sylhet unit brought out a mourning procession in the town demanding arrest and trial of the killers of Dr Aftab.

The procession, which was participated by the doctors, officials and employees of the medical college, paraded main streets of the town.

Later, the processionists submitted memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner and Police Superintendent of the district demanding immediate arrest of the killers.

Meanwhile, Golapganj police yesterday searched houses of two suspected persons following interrogation of two attendants of the late doctor's private chamber. But, the suspects were not available in their house. However, police declined to give identity of those persons.

Two attendants -- Jainuddin and Rakibuddin were still being interrogated, said a police official.

# Kidnapped son of shrimp trader yet to be rescued

## 3 Sundarbans pirates killed in gunbattle with police, BDR: 6 held, arms recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Three alleged pirates were killed and 15 others injured in a gunfight on Saturday with police and BDR personnel at Atharobeki in the Sundarbans, about 150 kilometres from Satkhira town.

The joint team of police and BDR went to the Sundarbans to rescue a kidnapped boy.

The pirates killed in the gunfight were identified as Rezaul, 30, Raju, 34 and Abdullah, 28. All the three were members of 'Kalu Bahini' in the

Sundarbans.

The injured include BNP leader and chairman of Ramjan Nagar union parishad Alamgir Haider, 46, BDR Jawan Abdus Sattar, 55, and police constable Abdul Huq, 38.

Five alleged pirates and an Indian national were arrested from the Sundarbans during the joint combing operation. Some arms, documents and an engine boat were also recovered.

The arrested have been identified as Rahman Gazi, 42, of West Bengal, Montu Mali, Abdur Rashid, Sridhar Munda, Mujahid Molla and Khurshid Ali.

Satkhira police superintendent Rafiqul Islam said the arrested pirates are also members of notorious 'Kalu Bahini'.

Tapan, only son of shrimp trader Rabintra Mondal of village Kalinchi in Shyamnagar upazila, was abducted on September 10 by a gang of pirates for a ransom of Tk five lakh.

Rabintra Mondal lodged a case with Shyamnagar thana on September 11.

On September 12, OC Ayubur Rahman and UP chairman Alamgir

Haider went to the Sundarbans with 30 armed policemen and BDR jawans. They raided several places of Shyamnagar upazila to rescue the kidnapped boy. On Friday night, the joint team took position at Atharobeki of the Sundarbans.

In the early morning of Saturday, the alleged pirates swooped on police and BDR men at Lataberhi canal. The law enforcers also attacked the pirates. Both sides traded gunshots for about four hours leaving three pirates dead and 15 others injured.

According to OC Ayubur Rahman of Shyamnagar thana, both police and pirates fired at least 200 rounds of shots during the clash.

The pirates fled to the deep forest, leaving their engine boat in the place of occurrence, said Khandaker Golam Faruque, Additional Police Super, Satkhira. He said the joint operation to rescue Tapan will continue.

The kidnapped boy could not be rescued despite combing operations till 5 pm yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Marma artists perform at the dance festival-2002 organised by the Nriyadhara, a cultural group, at the National Museum auditorium in the city yesterday.