



PHOTO: STAR

A 2.7-kilometre flood protection embankment runs through Kamrangirchar encroaching on the Buriganga. Unable to clear madrasahs and mosques off the river, the Water Development Board (WDB) constructed the embankment, deviating from its project concept.

## Eviction drive bumps into mosque

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unable to remove two madrasahs and a mosque, built illegally on the Buriganga in Kamrangirchar, the Water Development Board (WDB) had to deviate from its project concept and build an embankment further encroaching on a channel of the river.

The three structures could not be removed in the successive drives to clear encroachments off the river, as Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain did not give any go-ahead, said sources.

The government asked the WDB to build an embankment along the banks at a cost of Tk 64 crore to prevent encroachment on the river.

At present, the WDB is building a 2.7-kilometre flood

embankment in Kamrangirchar, with about 35 per cent of the work completed already.

The WDB officials said that when they took up the project, they asked the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) to demarcate the offshore for construction of the embankment.

Although the BIWTA demarcated the site, it failed to remove the three major structures, terming the problem 'sensitive', which could not be dealt with unless there was a 'green signal from the top', said a top WDB engineer.

"The go-ahead never came and we were under pressure from above to complete the project as soon as possible," the engineer said requesting anonymity.

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## Another session ends without JS body formation

REAZ AHMAD

The eighth Jatiya Sangsad has just completed its fifth session, with none of the parliamentary standing committees on ministries formed.

Leaders of both the treasury and opposition benches have expressed the view that unnecessary delay in committee formation is frustrating the spirit of transparency and accountability.

Sources told The Daily Star that while the main opposition Awami League has prepared the list of its MPs to represent the opposition in various parliamentary committees, the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) could not finalise its list.

A list of probable treasury bench members for the parliamentary committees submitted to the Leader of the House and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia long ago still awaits her approval.

When asked about the cause of delay in formation of the committees, Chief Whip Khandakar Delwar Hossain said, "I hope the committees would be formed soon. Such delays in committee formation is not a healthy sign for parliamentary democracy."

Delwar, however, repeated the excuse that "the opposition was not providing their list of MPs for the committees." When he was reminded of treasury bench's earlier attempt to form committees keeping the positions of the opposition lawmakers blank, the chief whip refrained from passing any comment.

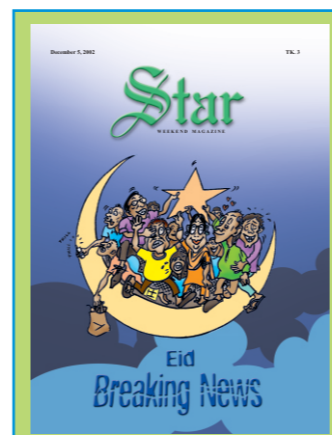
While talking to a delegation of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), UK Branch, on

October 8 in Dhaka, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia had said that various parliamentary committees would be formed soon. "We will keep the slots for opposition representatives open even if they don't give the names," she added.

Claiming its readiness to provide the names of the opposition MPs, the Awami League blamed the government for its total indifference to the issue of committee formation.

Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid told The Daily Star yesterday, "It's not a question of submitting

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### Announcement

The Eid-ul-Fitr is a celebration of mirth and merriment. This week, the SWM cover story reveals the unusual Eid plans of well-known personalities for a holiday read. It will come out tomorrow instead of Friday because of Eid vacations.



PHOTO: STAR

Eid shoppers crowd a stall at the Handloom Clothes Fair organised by the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) at the Karwan Bazaar in the city yesterday.

## Mad hunt for tickets as thousands leave city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With only two or three days left for the Eid-ul-Fitr, thousands of people are leaving the capital every day for their village home to celebrate the Eid with their near and dear ones.

Attendance at the Secretariat and other government and semi-government offices was already thin on Monday. Yesterday was a public holiday and today is the only working day before a three-day Eid holiday begins tomorrow.

The city's inter-district bus terminals, Sadarghat launch terminal and Kamalapur railway station are now crowded with home bound people.

However, during a spot visit yesterday, it was found that many people at Gabtoli, Mohakhali and Sayedabad bus terminals failed to go home. Unlike in the previous years,

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## Festivity in the air

SABRINA KARIM

With barely four days to the Eid-ul-Fitr, the air of festivity can easily be felt in the capital thanks to different events and programmes.

The crammed shopping complexes aside, a number of fairs are underway marking the Eid day ahead.

Most of the open spaces in the city are adorned with riot of colours as the makeshift stalls of the Eid fairs are already in place. Eid fairs are being held at Dhanmondi, Uttara, Manik Mia Avenue, New DOHS, Panthapath Crossing near Hotel Sonargaon, Karwan Bazar, Public Library premises and many other places in the city.

A wide range of goodies is available in most of these fairs. Women can feast their eyes on saris, readymade garments and dress materials while men can enjoy a nice shopping session at the stalls selling punjabi. "The zari border of the sari tempted me to purchase it," noted Ratna Sultana who bought a handloom cotton sari from the fair at Manik Mia Avenue. The fair is organised by Bangladesh Weavers and Manufacturers Business Association.

Attires are not the only attractions of these fairs. Handicrafts, shoes, leather products, plastic items, cosmetics or artificial jewellery, gift items and mostly Eid greeting cards comprise the wide range of goods in the stalls. Even the food products are not left out.

However, the number of visitors so far has been far less than expected in most of the fairs. The stall owners are obviously very much frustrated at the limited sale. "Ever since the organisers introduced entrance ticket, the num

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PHOTO: STAR

Workers set a large canopy at the National Eidgah in the city yesterday for the Eid-ul-Fitr congregation in which thousands of devotees will take part.

## Return of 'the dead'

### 2 brick kiln workers in Rajshahi found alive, arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

It is now a talk of the town after the two brick kiln workers alleged to have been burned to death in the kiln near the city were found alive and arrested from Manipur village on Monday.

Sources said the whole incident might have been "arranged" and could be the outcome of rivalry between local BNP leaders Anwar Hossain Anar, owner of Auto Bricks and Brick Kiln and Abdul Gaffar.

They also said the incident could also be cooked up by some vested quarters or Anar himself to 'kill two birds in one shot'. The "damaged" brick is burdened with Tk 64 lakh bank loans, but it is insured, they said.

Ramesh Sarkar Vedlu and Siddique Hossain were arrested from the house of one Emdadul Haque, also a worker of the brick

kiln, after their gayebana janaza (memorial rites) and recovery of "remains of two living beings" from the brick kiln by police.

Police now ponder, of what "living beings" the recovered remains are!

Angry local people had staged demonstrations after the two workers were "missing" and suspected to have been burned to death in the kiln after they disappeared on November 26.

Debendranath Sarker, father of Ramesh Sarker and Nur Mohammad, father of Siddique, who earlier filed cases against Anar, have also been arrested.

The four arrested persons are being interrogated, Boalia thana police said yesterday.

But they are yet to send the "remains" for forensic test. On Monday they had said the "remains" would

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## Putin-Vajpayee talks to focus on terrorism

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in New Delhi yesterday evening for talks with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on a wide range of issues that would include terrorism emanating from Pakistan and the threat it poses to international security.

The two leaders are also expected to talk bilateral trade relations, energy and defence

cooperation and also the Iraq crisis.

The Russian president, who is leading a high-level delegation, did not make any statement at the airport and was taken straight to the Maurya Sheraton Hotel where he is to stay during his 40-hour visit.

Today is the main working day of the trip, during which Putin will hold talks with a host of Indian leaders apart from Vajpayee. These include President APJ Abdul Kalam, Vice-president Krishan Kant, Deputy Prime Minister Lal Krishna Advani

and other senior cabinet ministers.

Delegates from the two sides will also hold talks, at the end of which to sign several agreements including a Delhi Declaration that would outline the common viewpoints of both nations on vital bilateral, regional and global issues, officials said.

In addition, an agreement to set up a working group on terrorism will also be signed as well as a separate

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## 384 staff of 2 govt projects unpaid for two months

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Three hundred and eighty-four officials and employees of two government projects have been deprived of salaries and allowances for months together.

The nonpayment left 314 officials and employees of the Integrated Agriculture Development Project and 70 others of the Socioeconomic Development

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## Human chain to protest arrest, harassment of journalists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of journalists yesterday formed a human chain in the city to protest the arrest of Saleem Samad and harassment to some other local journalists in connection with the sedition charges brought against two foreign journalists.

The pro-opposition factions of the Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) and the Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) organ

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