



# The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



REGD. No. DA 781

VOL XIII No.194

DHAKA SATURDAY AUGUST 2, 2003

People's Right to Know

www.thedailystar.net

SRABAN 18, 1410 BS

ZAMADJUS-SAANT 2, 1424 HJRI

16 PAGES PRICE: Tk 7.00

## Gram Sarkar goes ahead

### HC to hear writ against move today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government begins formation of Gram Sarkar units today that coincides with a High Court hearing of a writ challenging the legality of the act providing for their constitution.

"We have completed all preparations for the formation of the local government bodies as scheduled," said Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan.

He said the High Court did not issue a stay order on the installation of Gram Sarkar, the lowest local government tier, and there was no

legal bar to moving ahead with the schedule.

"The High Court served a showcause notice and the government has given its reply," he explained.

Eminent lawyer Dr Kamal Hossain filed the writ challenging legality of the Gram Sarkar Act, 2003 in favour of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) on July 6.

The High Court asked the government to explain why the act should not be declared illegal and beyond the constitution.

The court bench comprising Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury and Justice AFM Ali Asgar in a brief

hearing of another petition seeking stay on the formation, turned down the plea on Wednesday, but fixed the date for hearing the writ today.

The government is now ready to form 40,392 Gram Sarkar units in as many wards under 4,488 Union Parishads (UP) in the next 45 days from today.

The president assented to the Gram Sarkar Act on February 27 after its passage in the Jatiya Sangsad.

The local government ministry has already trained 7,000 people, all government officials at the upazila level, to familiarise them with different aspects of Gram Sarkar, an auxil-

iary body to the UP. Mannan Bhuiyan told The Daily Star on Thursday.

The training of elected UP chairmen, members and UP secretaries has also been completed, he added.

Bhuiyan said the government decided to reintroduce Gram Sarkar to ensure direct participation of the rural people in development process.

"Gram Sarkar is meant to bridge rural development with mainstream development as an auxiliary body at the grassroots level...it is not an administrative unit," he said.

"We believe that the Gram Sarkar

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## 4 JCD activists expelled, Tusher's room ransacked

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka University (DU) unit of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) yesterday expelled four activists of its Zahurul Haq Hall unit for their involvement in the attack on Hasan Jahid Tusher, the DU correspondent of The Daily Star.

The expelled activists are Shahid Uddin, Zulfikar Ali, Mizanur Rahman Sohaq and Monirul Islam, said a JCD press release.

The DU unit of JCD also served showcause notices on President of Zahurul Haq Hall unit of JCD Tanjilur Rahman and Organising Secretary Shooeb Khandakar Shooeb, asking them to explain within three days why they should not be relieved of their positions for failing to prevent the attack on Tusher.

The two men will face disciplinary actions if the allegation of their involvement in the attack is proved, the press release said.

JCD's DU unit President Amirul Islam Khan Alim and General Secretary Hasan Mamun approved the decisions.

While giving their reaction to the expulsion of the four JCD activists, some members of the Dhaka

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## BCL to enforce strike at DU from today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) will enforce an indefinite strike at Dhaka University (DU) from today protesting attacks on its leaders and activists and demanding arrest and punishment of those responsible.

The Awami League's student front called the strike on Thursday following attacks on the BCL members by the BNP-backed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists that left scores injured, including BCL President Liakat Shikder.

The BCL members came under attack when they brought out processions in support of the strike by students of the DU science faculty to press their demand for acceptance of the four-year honours degree as professional qualification.

However, the general students withdrew their indefinite strike programme after the government accepted their one-point demand.

BCL General Secretary Nazrul Islam Babu said their strike will

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## BNP leader slaughtered in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A local BNP leader was publicly slaughtered by a group of miscreants in Chhatarpur union of Pabna on Thursday evening.

Nurul Biswas, 50, was a former president of BNP Chhatarpur unit. Sources said 12 youths attacked him while he was talking with the locals near Tarabaria Madrassah. They knifed him and cut his throat. He died on the spot.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Pabna Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

Nurul's son filed a case with the Pabna Police Station. Pabna police arrested six people. The murder was a result of personal enmity, police sources said.

Meanwhile, at least six people were hurt in a clash between two armed groups in Char Sanikdia village of Pabna Sadar upazila yesterday morning.

Of them, Hafizur Rahman was admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital in a critical condition.

## Rejoinder and our reply

The Power Development Board (PDB) in a rejoinder to a report published in The Daily Star on July 25 under the headline "AES to get string-free plant sell-off nod" said that the report was not based on facts and was misleading.

It said, "The proposal for selling of AES's interest in the two projects in Bangladesh to British investor CDC Global has not yet been approved. The PDB, in this respect, has forwarded its opinion to the Power Division, Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources

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## Fresh aftershock jolts Rangamati

'10-km crack opens in Borkol in Sunday's tremor'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

An aftershock struck Rangamati yesterday morning, opening a crack in a wall of the officers' dormitory at the Borkol upazila headquarters and sending about 40,000 people on edge.

The jolt with mild intensity, also felt at the district headquarters, lasted five seconds from 9:21am, the latest in a train of aftershocks in the hill area since Sunday.

Rangamati Deputy

Commissioner (DC) Dr Zafar Ahmed Khan said, "Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) of Borkol Ilias Bhuiyan informed me about the quake at 9:30am (yesterday)."

But there was no information about the fresh aftershock from national or international organisations.

Many hills and hillocks developed cracks in tremor shock waves that rattled the Chittagong Hill Tracts and Chittagong city on July 27 leaving one killed, 25 injured and

damaging 500 mud houses and buildings.

A 10-kilometre crack opened from Kolabunia to Bhusanchhara in Borkol upazila under the impact of Sunday's tremor measuring 5.09 on the Richter scale, said Shahidul Islam, associate professor of geography at Chittagong University.

Hundreds of cracks in the hills indicate a "massive geological change" in the CHI, which is

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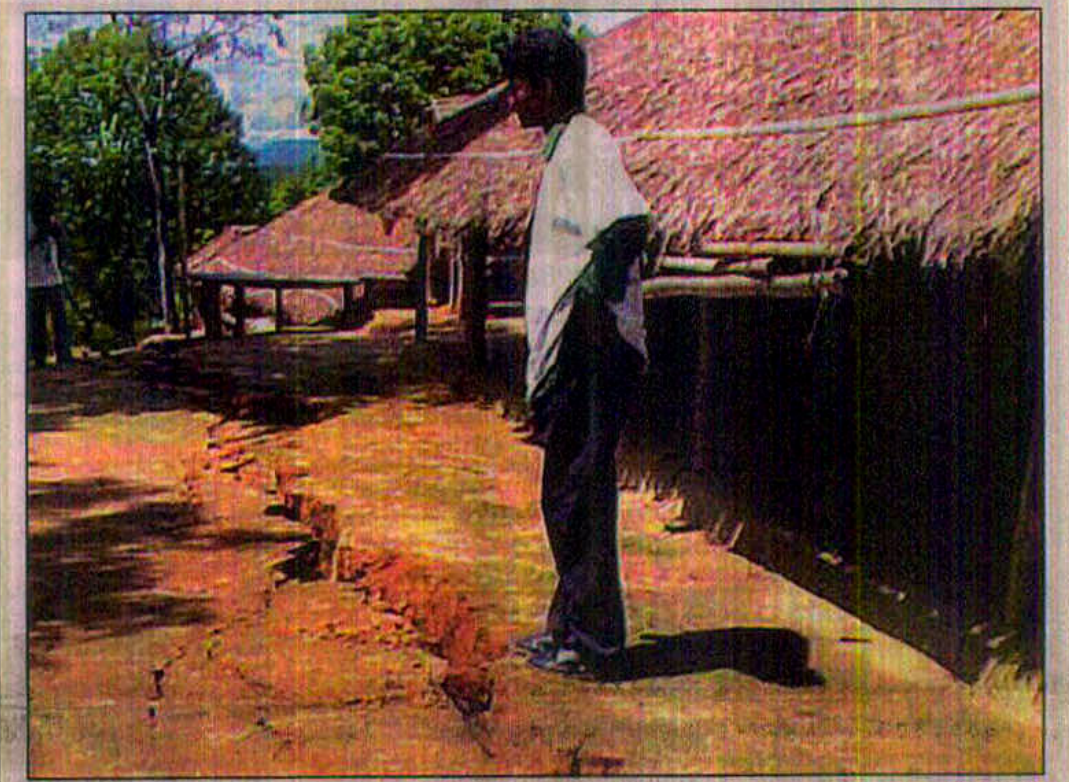


PHOTO: STAR

Shaken to the core, a man yesterday watches the crack in the ground left by an earthquake at Borkol upazila in Rangamati district. Yesterday's aftershock was the latest in a series that rattled Rangamati since Sunday's moderate quake.

## Survey ordered to resolve food yield, import jigsaw

REAZ AHMAD

The government is planning to conduct a survey to resolve the mind-boggling food import jigsaw in the fiscal 2002-03 despite official claims of surplus domestic yields.

The official statistics show that Bangladesh harvested 242.69 lakh tonnes of rice and wheat in the fiscal year, 19.18 lakh tonnes more than domestic requirements.

But the private sector imported 30.53 lakh tonnes of the grains worth Tk 2,500 crore over the same period in what is the second largest commercial grain import in two decades.

In the fiscal 1998-99, 42.56 lakh tonnes of grain were imported in the wake of a devastating flood that brought Bangladesh to its knees, swamping 75 per cent of farmlands for several months.

Failing to set the pieces of the jigsaw, ministers and policy planners at a meeting of the Food Planning and Monitoring Unit (FPMU) last week ordered the survey on food imports and market prices of food grains.

The meeting asked the finance ministry to foot the bills for the study.

Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Food Minister Abdullah Al Noman and State Minister for Planning Anwarul Kabir Talukdar joined the meeting.

It was also attended by Cabinet Secretary Dr Sadat Hossain, Agriculture Secretary Aiyub Quadri, Planning Secretary Badir Rahman and Food Secretary Khairuzzaman Chowdhury and senior officials

from government offices concerned.

The food secretary illustrated the food grain production, import and demand, prompting Bhuiyan to propose the survey by the FPMU and Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies to find an answer to the puzzle.

The meeting also directed the Economic Relations Division (ERD) to step up the drive to get a larger volume of wheat in food aid.

It pointed out that although Bangladesh grew enough to feed its people, a chronic shortfall existed in wheat output what was met by food aid.

As the aid dried up dramatically in recent years, domestic wheat demand turned out to be a nagging problem.

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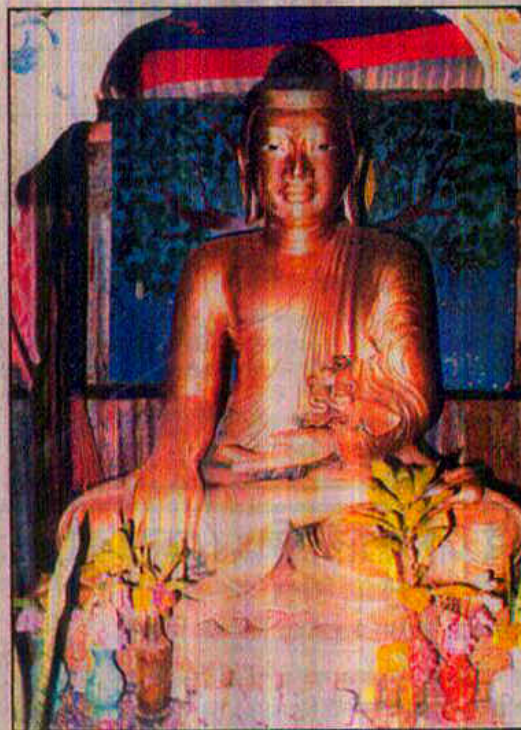


PHOTO: A K M MOHSIN

The Rakhine community at Keranipara, living under the shadow of lawlessness, is anxious about the security of the ancient Buddha statue, left, and a helpless Rakhine mother in front of her Kuakata hut, right, with her daughter cradled in her arms ponders over life.

## PBCP claims responsibility for killing contractor Rezaul in Jessore

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Purbo Banglar Communist Party has claimed responsibility for the killing of LGED contractor Rezaul Islam.

A fax message was sent in this regard on Thursday night to Dainik Lokshamaj published from Jessore town.

Contractor Rezaul was gunned down in Jessore town on Wednesday morning.

One of the three arrestees, Habibur Rahman Habib, has confessed his involvement in the murder.

His judicial confession was recorded on Thursday under Section 164 in the court of First Class Magistrate Shamsul Alam. Two others -- Jubair Banna Litu and Sirajul Islam -- are being quizzed on remand.

Habibur in his judicial confession said that they were hired for

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## Rakhines: Well diggers of Kuakata Persecution and poverty force them to flee home

AKTER FARUK SHAHIN, Barisal

Rakhines, an ethnic Buddhist sect with independent social and cultural heritage, were driven out of Akyab, about 400 years ago by Mughals, who after conquering new territories failed to subjugate them.

Some Rakhines settled in Teknaf and Bandarban and some sailed in fleets of Sampans -- indigenous rowboats -- to the coasts of Patuakhali. The uninhabited stretch of land with rare scenic beauty attracted them and they began digging wells to find out sweet water. They built their first settlement around the first well that gave them sweet water. Hence the name Kuakata -- the place where the well was dug.

Since then, digging wells inside homesteads became a Rakhine tradition that is practised even

today. The unique customs and centuries of Rakhine families and a century-old Buddhist temple at Kuakata bear testimony to the traditional Rakhine religious and cultural heritage that contributed to the social and cultural diversity in the region.

After landing on Kuakata coast, these Arakanese Buddhists established homesteads in Rangakhali, Baliatali, Amtali, Kuakata and Tiakhali in Barguna and Patuakhali.

According to a 1997 census, 472 Rakhine families with 2,642 members lived in 45 villages in the areas. Among them, 29 villages were at Kalapara-Kuakata and three at Talatpali-Amtali and one at Sadar in Barguna.

Typically, every Rakhine village has a pagoda style temple housing several images of the Lord Buddha

cast out of metal or carved out of stone or wood. At least 50 big and 20 medium-sized images of Buddha were worshipped at these temples. These precious images apart, there were also crockery, bells, lamps and other typical temple items made of valuable metal or stone for use during religious rituals. Kalapara-Kuakata Rakhine settlement was listed by the census as the largest in the region with 29 villages and 1,166 members.

The generally peace-loving, honest and hospitable Rakhines were once a majority in these areas. But a persecution similar to which their ancestors had once suffered at the hands of Mughal rulers of Arakan has visited upon their descendants in recent times. Local musclemen and gangsters have grabbed Rakhine land and property

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## First one-dayer in Cairns today

AGENCIES, Melbourne

Australia's one-day captain Ricky Ponting has warned his players to show more discipline in the limited-overs series against Bangladesh which begins today.

The world champions raced 4-0 up in the one-day series in the West Indies in May and June but skipper Ponting said the team let themselves down badly when they fell away to lose the last three games.

"That hurt a little bit," Ponting told reporters in Cairns on Friday.

"I was particularly disappointed with the way we played those last three games and that was one thing we addressed this morning in the team meeting."

"We made mistakes in those three games that you haven't seen this team make for a long time. We didn't respect the basics of the game and if you don't do that in one-day cricket it's going to come back and bite you every time."

"We dropped a lot of catches, we didn't have batting partnerships, there were a lot of misfields, those sort of things. Looking back we felt we'd let ourselves down big time."

The series starts with back-to-back games in Cairns in tropical north Queensland today (Saturday) and Sunday. The final match will be in Darwin on Wednesday.

The match will be shown live on BT from 5.30 am

Bangladesh must have hoped that, after their two Test losses, they would face a decreased degree of pressure in the one-day series, but events this week have precluded that.

Once it was confirmed that off-spinner Sanwar Hossain was still eligible to play for Bangladesh in the ODIs, despite his bowling action having been reported as suspect, attention very naturally turned to

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## 150-strong police team to rescue Ctg magnate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A contingent of around 150 police led by DC (north) Mian Md Lutfur Rahman and AC (Panchlaish) Shawkat Hossain was posted in Fatikchhari to continue the operation until rescue of the abducted businessman Jamal Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury.

BNP leader and Chittagong business magnate Chowdhury still remained untraced after eight days of his abduction on July 24.

Police yesterday placed Paroiyakora UP Chairman Akter Jamal Chowdhury of Patiya on a five-day remand.

Police sources said they are vigorously hunting for the prime suspects -- top-notch criminals Gittu Nasir, BDR Salim, Habib Khan, Kanchon Nagor UP Chairman Abul Kashem of Fatikchhari and Aochia UP Chairman Ahmedul Haq.

However, all the police effort are yet to yield any result.

Earlier, four nabbed relatives and

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