

Ershad Shikder buried

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Dreaded homicidal killer Ershad Shikder was buried at Tootpara graveyard at 9:53 yesterday morning after Khulna District Jail authorities handed over the body to his first wife Khodeja Begum at 7:20am.

His sons Jamal Shikder, Kamal Shikder and Helal Shikder and step brother Mahmud Azad Shikder were present at the time of burial. Earlier, his namaz-e-janaza was held at 8:50am at his palatial house, Swarnokomol, at Sonadanga under heavy police escort and 33 relatives including his three sons and the only daughter attended it.

Hundreds of people gathered in front of Swarnokomol to have a final glimpse of Ershad who was hanged at 12:01 Monday night. Police clubbed people who tried to enter Swarnokomol crushing the main gate.

His sons and daughter later drove out Ershad's only sister Selina and elder brother Ashraf Ali Shikder of Swarnokomol and did not allow them to see the body.

Extensive damage was caused to boundary wall and main gate of Tootpara graveyard when a crowd tried to prevent the burial there. But

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EPZ workers to vote on TU

Saifur, US envoy agree on draft proposal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Workers at the country's six export processing zones (EPZs) will vote to decide whether or not to have trade unions, according to a revised draft proposal agreed to by the finance ministry, US government representatives and EPZ investors yesterday.

Each factory within the EPZs will have a single trade union free from any outside political influence and union leaders will be elected by workers themselves.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza), US Ambassador Harry K Thomas, World Bank Country Director Christine Wallich and a representative of the investors agreed on the corrected draft proposal during a meeting at the finance ministry yesterday.

The revision follows a series of discussions on the subject over the last six months.

"We have unanimously endorsed the revised draft proposal and the draft law might be presented in the next budget session of the parliament," said Executive Chairman of Bepza Brig Gen (ret'd) Zakir Hossain while talking to reporters after the meeting.

Hossain said in the event that workers vote against trade unionism, the workers' welfare association currently in place will continue to function as it is.

The investor representative, however, declined to make any comment when journalists repeatedly asked him about the meeting.

US Ambassador Harry K

Thomas expressed his satisfaction at the finance ministry's decision to go along with the proposal and hoped higher authorities in Washington would also be satisfied with the outcome.

Since 1991, the US has been pushing for a decision on the contentious issue of trade unionism at the EPZs.

Thomas said for the last four months he held discussions on the matter with all parties concerned and is happy that a consensus could finally be reached.

He said the draft proposal is a very long and complicated legal document. "It will allow for workers to vote on the trade union issue and also to decide whether or not to have a collective bargaining agent within the EPZs."

Zealots besiege Ahmadiyya mosque today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, Bangladesh (AMJB) yesterday expressed concern for the security of its followers in Patuakhali town as religious bigots have threatened to lay siege to their mosque there.

Kawsar Ali Mollah, general secretary of the AMJB, in a statement said Ahmadiyyas in the southern district town are passing days under security threats after local zealots announced to lay a siege to an Ahmadiyya mosque at 10:00am this morning.

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Lender throws acid on 3 of a family failing to grab land

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A lender threw acid on three members of a family including a seven-year-old boy at Singair in Manikganj yesterday after allegedly failing to grab the land on which their house stands.

The child, Sumon, and his grandmother Achhia Begum, 50, are undergoing treatment at ward No. 33 of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). But hospital authorities refused to admit his aunt Jharna Begum, 20 on the grounds that her injuries were not serious.

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O, A levels examinees fear hartal fallout

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Guardians of O-level and A-level examinees are wary of hartals interrupting the examinations in the wake of the latest political uncertainty over the assassination of an opposition lawmaker.

The guardians have urged the political parties not to call hartal until the O-level and A-level examinations are over by July 1.

The O-level examinations began on Sunday and the A-level examinations are scheduled for a simultaneous

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ADB to fund 2 power units

UNB, Dhaka

Asian Development Bank (ADB) will provide fund to set up two power generation plants each with 450 megawatt at Sirajganj and Meghnaghat in Siddhirganj.

Besides, ADB has also shown interest to provide financial assistance to the private entrepreneurs for installing power transmission line of Power Grid Company, Bangladesh (PGCB) from Ashuganj to Sylhet.

The assurance came from a three-member delegation of ADB, led by Director of Private Sector Department S Chandar, when they met State Minister for Power Iqbal

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PHOTO: STAR

Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) candidates at the city's Badrunnissa College centre answer questions on the first day of the nationwide HSC examinations yesterday.

Proshika HQ raided again

Police arrest 12 staff

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law enforcers arrested 12 Proshika employees in a raid on the non-governmental organisation's headquarters in Mirpur yesterday for attacking some of their disgruntled colleagues, who demonstrated allegedly under police protection.

The raid -- a second in 10 days -- came after up to 25 Proshika rebel employees from its different units,

led by a deputy director who was suspended from the NGO a day before, marched to the head office and came under attack with brickbats at about 11:00am.

Later in the day, police arrested a retired army man, Jahangir, believed to be the bodyguard of Proshika President Qazi Faruque

A h m e d

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Six Israeli troops blown up in Gaza

REUTERS, Gaza

Palestinian militants yesterday blew up six Israeli soldiers riding in an explosives-packed troop carrier during a raid in the Gaza Strip in the deadliest ambush against Israeli forces in 18 months.

The militants struck while troops and tanks backed by helicopters stormed a neighbourhood of Gaza City yesterday, killing six Palestinians, including at least three

gunmen, and wounding more than 100.

Israel responded to the bloody ambush within hours with a missile strike on a car in another part of the densely populated city. Medics said an 18-year-old was killed and five people were wounded. Their identities were not immediately known.

The fresh cycle of violence followed a May 2 vote by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's rightist

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PHOTO: STAR

Agriculturist Mohammad Jasim Uddin inspects a sweet variety of black grapes (Black Ruby) he has grown in a tub on the rooftop of his residence at Nayapaltan in Dhaka after a yearlong research and experiments with a special kind of fertiliser.

US to slap sanctions on Syria this week

AFP, Washington

President George W. Bush will this week impose sanctions on Syria for allegedly supporting terrorism and failing to close its border with Iraq to forces targeting US troops there, a US official said Monday.

The official, who requested anonymity, said that Bush could levy the punitive measures on Damascus "as early as Tuesday" but that the precise date of the announcement could change.

Deputy Secretary of State

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US, UK seek to limit abuse damage

Red Cross asked to drop confidentiality policy on dealing with Iraqi prisoners

AGENCIES, Washington/London

The United States and its main Iraq war ally, Britain, sought Monday to limit fallout from the Iraq prisoner abuse scandal as a leaked report said the Red Cross alerted them months ago to such mistreatment.

Defence Secretary Donald

Rumsfeld, facing calls he resign over the scandal that has outraged the Arab world and shaken US prestige, got a resounding vote of support from President Bush, after a one-hour meeting at the Pentagon.

Bush also viewed more graphic photographs of prisoner abuse, which the Pentagon was consider-

ing making public. British Prime Minister Tony Blair, already under pressure at home for backing the Iraq war, followed Bush in apologising for the mistreatment.

"We express our total condemnation and disgust at any abuses that have been carried out," he said,

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3 artillery units, 3 infantry battalions soon: PM

UNB, Parbatipur

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said three more artillery units, three infantry battalions, three field workshop companies and three field ambulance units would be commissioned soon to strengthen the armed forces.

This will also open up the scopes for employment and promotion and enhance the opportunity to work in the peacekeeping missions abroad, she said.

Khaleda, who is also in charge of the defence ministry, made the announcement at a 'darbar' of officers and soldiers of the newly formed 16 Infantry Brigade of 66

Infantry Division. Earlier, she raised the flag of the new brigade and laid the foundation of its headquarters at Bir Uttam Shaheed Mahub Cantonment at Kholahati in Parbatipur.

Army Chief Lt. General Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury and 66 Infantry Division GOC and Rangpur area commander Major General Rezaul Hayder received the prime minister at the venue.

The prime minister mentioned that her government had raised more army units, including two new brigade headquarters, six infantry battalions and three brigade signal companies.

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PHOTO: STAR

Retired major Abdul Mannan of Bikalpa Dhara (2nd from left) files nomination for the upcoming by-election to Dhaka-10 parliamentary seat at the commissioner's office at Dhaka's Segunbagicha yesterday.

AHSANULLAH KILLING AL asks govt to withdraw press note

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday asked the government to withdraw what it said is the false, baseless and motivated press note on the killing of AL lawmaker Ahsanullah Master and demanded immediate arrest and proper trial of the accused named in the first information report of the case.

"The government will have to bear the responsibility for its dirty game on the killing," the AL president said at a meeting chaired by acting president of the party Abudus Samad Azad at its Dhanmondi office.

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PBCP kills four rival outlaws

Another extremist leader hacked to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Suspected underground operatives of the outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) yesterday killed four members of a rival extremist group and seriously injured another at Ataikula of Sadar upazila.

Police quoting eyewitnesses said some 30 armed members of the PBCP attacked the five men with sharp weapons and firearms while they were harvesting paddy in the morning along with scores of other

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Alliance picks Falu, Momin for by-polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) yesterday nominated Prime Minister's Political Secretary Mosaddak Ali Falu and Momin Ali as candidates of the ruling four-party alliance for the June 6 parliamentary by-polls of Dhaka-10 and Munshiganj-1 constituencies.

The nomination was finalised at a BNP Parliamentary Board (BNPPB) meeting at the Prime Minister's Office in the afternoon

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Prayer Timings		
May 12		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-10	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-36	6-40
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation