



# The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XIV No. 176

DHAKA SATURDAY JULY 17, 2004

COMMITTED TO  
People's Right to Know

www.thedailystar.net

SRABAN 2, 1411 BS

JAMADIUL AWAL 27, 1425 HURI

16 PAGES PRICE: Tk 7.00

## Witness to Ahsanullah murder dies hours after Rab arrest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A key witness to the killing of Awami League (AL) lawmaker Ahsanullah Master died in hospital in Tongi early yesterday apparently from torture during interrogation in the custody of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab).

The death of 30-year-old Sumon Ahmed Majumder, vice-president of Juba League's ward No. 10 unit, came 10 hours after arrest spiking the death count in the wake of Rab interrogation to four in the last 20 days.

Rab officials arrested Sumon two hours after the police raided his house at 1:30pm Thursday, his mother Solema Begum said, adding: "They (Rab members) tortured my son severely in custody that led to his death."

The police went to Sumon's Amali house in the industrial town with a local BNP leader to search for firearms, Solema said. "The police said my son possessed firearms but



PHOTO: STAR

Relatives try to console a wailing sister of Sumon Ahmed Majumder, in inset, at Gazipur Hospital yesterday after the Juba League leader died in hospital apparently from torture during interrogation by the Rapid Action Battalion.

## German FM arrives, talks today

BSS, Dhaka

German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer arrived in Dhaka last night on a two-day official visit at the invitation of his Bangladesh counterpart.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan received Fischer at Zia International Airport. Foreign Secretary Shamsur Mobin Chowdhury was also present.

Official talks between the two foreign ministers will be held today.

Talking to reporters at the airport, Morshed Khan described Dhaka-Berlin ties as excellent and said Germany has been extending cooperation to Bangladesh since its independence, according to the UNB.

Germany is perhaps the second largest export destination of Bangladeshi products, mainly garments, after the United States, Khan said and hoped that Bangladesh's export to Germany would exceed \$1 billion in the near future.

The German foreign minister is leading a high-powered delegation comprising members of German parliament, senior officials and media representatives.

Fischer will call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office this afternoon. He is expected to meet Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina.

Villagers are on wary watch as rain-fed Jamuna waters slosh around a flood control embankment partly breached by saboteurs in Bogra on Wednesday.

PHOTO: STAR



## Dhunat waters flood Kazipur in Sirajganj

5.5 lakh marooned, 60 still missing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

The flooding triggered by Wednesday's Bogra embankment breaching that swamped all the 284 villages in Dhunat upazila has also hit adjacent Sirajganj district inundating entire Kazipur upazila on Thursday night.

More than 5.5 lakh people are now marooned in Dhunat and Kazipur upazila, facing food and drinking water crises.

Some 5,000 people have taken shelter on Dhunat-Goshaibari road and around 4,000 on Kazipur-Sirajganj road, while thousands more are stranded on their rooftops and living under the open sky, waiting to be rescued.

The Brahmaputra flood control embankment breaching, blamed on saboteurs allegedly engaged by two pro-BNP groups of contractors, led to the deluge already leaving six

people killed and 60 others still missing. Relatives of the missing fear they might have drowned in the fierce-flowing Jamuna.

Flood-victims in Dhunat said many of them may have to starve to death soon as the local administra-

tion distributed a meagre quantity of rice only in parts of the 10 flooded unions.

People were seen erecting makeshift houses on Kazipur-Sirajganj road and boats plying to rescue

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## JS manoeuvring proves coalition slogan empty

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The ruling alliance often asks the opposition to join parliament shunning street agitation to make it the centre of all national activities, but when the main opposition joins the Jatiya Sangsad the scenario rapidly changes proving the coalition's call a 'blank slogan'.

The 12th session of parliament that closed on Wednesday saw the display of the same political culture by the key ruling party BNP when the main opposition Awami League (AL) joined the House ending about a yearlong boycott.

The AL tried to discuss some vital national issues in the session and

submitted the list of its lawmakers for incorporation into 45 parliamentary standing committees.

But the treasury bench opposed the discussion and sat on the hands to include AL lawmakers in the standing committees in the session citing the opposition delay in submitting the list in a parody of its earlier promise.

When the committees were formed in the budget session last year the treasury bench committed that the AL deputies would be incorporated into the committees as soon as their names were sent.

The 8th parliament has already passed two years and 10 months of its five-year tenure and the standing

committees are functioning without opposition participation for about a year.

The parliamentary standing committees are formed to ensure accountability and transparency in government activities.

The AL demanded discussion on law and order downside, price hike of essentials, activities of dreaded operations commander of Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) 'Bangla Bhai', distortion of Liberation War history, foreign policy, police killing and the flood situation.

Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar and the treasury bench asked the AL

## Outlaws kill WP leader in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Underground operatives gunned down a local leader of Workers Party of Bangladesh in Uzirpur Upazila and wounded his wife and five others last night.

The deceased, Babulal Sheel was elected general secretary of Uzirpur Upazila unit of Workers Party in 2002 and 2003.

Twenty to 25 armed members of outlawed Purbia Bangla Sarbahara Party (PBSP) attacked Babulal at around 7:45pm while he was sitting on the veranda of his house at Panerbazar in the upazila town. They shot him point-blank several times. Babulal, also a freedom fighter, died instantly.

Babulal's wife Sima Rani Sheel

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## Dam-cut: WDB men under pressure to revoke comment

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Deputy Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Asadul Habib Dulu Thursday night asked Water Development Board (WDB) officials to withdraw their comment that Wednesday's embankment disaster in Dhunat upazila in Bogra was an act of sabotage.

The deputy minister told reporters at Bogra Circuit House that the embankment was

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Bangladesh cricketer Javed Omar, right, plays a shot as Hong Kong wicketkeeper Tim Smart, left, looks on during the Asia Cup match between Bangladesh and Hong Kong at Sinhales Sport Ground in Colombo yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Bowlers make it convincing

AL MUSABBIR SADI from Colombo

Bangladesh all but confirmed a second-round berth in the Eighth Asia Cup after thrashing Hong Kong by 116 runs at the Sinhales Sports Club ground yesterday. It was their maiden win in the history of the tournament.

The margin of victory, which was also the biggest ever for the Tigers, reflected the huge gap that exists when a Test-playing country comes up against a team from the game's lower rung.

Habibul Bashar's men easily defended a modest 221-9 on a sluggish pitch as the part-timers of the former British colony were eventually skittled out for just 105 in 45.2 overs. Tight bowling at one end by pace-

man Tapash Baisya, who conceded 12 runs in his first six overs, made it easy for Mushfiqur Rahman to claim two quick wickets. One of them a high return catch to get rid of one-down Alex French as the minnows slumped to 15-2 by the tenth over.

Debutant Abdur Razzak, who got only three deliveries in the Bangladesh innings to score five not out, came on as first change and celebrated his maiden one-day wicket when he trapped Tim Smart lbw after the Hong Kong opener had stubbornly hung on for 79 minutes to score nine.

The 22-year-old left-arm spinner finished with best figures of 3-17 from nine overs.

Veteran Khaled Mahmud joined

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## India school fire kills 100 children

REUTERS, New Delhi

As many as 100 junior grade and kindergarten children were killed yesterday when a fire raged through a girls' school in the southern Indian

state of Tamil Nadu, police said. A police officer in the district control room said at least 100 people had died, but other officers said they had counted 75 bodies so far.

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