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## AL HIQMA CHIEF Cops wait for clearance to press sedition charge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A magistrate court yesterday granted police 15 days for filing a fresh sedition case against the self-proclaimed Shahadat-e-Al Hiqma chief Sayed Kawsar Hussain Siddiki Raja.

The court granted the time following a police plea that they were waiting for a home ministry response to an earlier permission to press sedition charges against Kawsar.

Rejecting Kawsar's bail appeal, the court sent him to jail.

Investigators said Kawsar was interrogated thrice by the joint

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## KILLING OF KIBRIA

# Khaleda talks of administrative deficiencies

But says prompt actions have been taken

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said despite administrative deficiencies the government took instant actions after the January 27 grenade attack that killed former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria and four others.

"There may be some lapses in the administration. But we did not hesitate to take actions. An investigation is going on. We want cooperation from all of you," she told the Jatiya Sangsad replying to a query of an opposition lawmaker.

Khaleda told Krishak Sramik Janata League lawmaker Abdul

Kader Siddiqui that her government has initiated measures to improve the efficiency of the administration, the police department and the intelligence agencies.

The prime minister said this when Siddiqui during the question-answer session in parliament

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## 3 Bangladeshi cattle traders lynched in West Bengal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkhira

Three Bangladeshi cattle traders were lynched by a mob after an Indian national was shot dead by miscreants on Tuesday night at village Nekuadah in North-24 Parganas district of West Bengal, India, according to a report received here across the border.

The dead Bangladeshi traders are Rabiul Islam Gazi, 30, Deldar Rahman, 25, and Abdul Malek, 26, of Sathkhira sadar upazila. The Indian national was identified as Birendra Nath Sardar of Nekuadah village in North-24 Parganas.

Another Bangladeshi cow trader, Nayan, 18, was injured in the mob beating. He is now undergoing

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PHOTO: STAR

Moni Begum, a home help, cries in despair as her life savings, Tk 17,000, were burnt to ashes in a fire at a Rayerbazar slum yesterday.

## Democracy in death bed

Say discussants

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Democracy now lies mortally ill under intensive care, with the Jatiya Sangsad supposed to be the principal venue of democratic practices turned into a commercial body, the elite of the country's civil society lamented yesterday at a discussion on current politics.

They also observed that nominees of the major political parties have been contesting elections

making huge investments only to get that back with handsome profits.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Barrister Moudud Ahmed was the chief guest of the event organised to mark the floating of an organisation named Centre for Democracy. The president of the centre, Abul Ahsan, chaired the session styled 'Towards a Politics of Dialogue and Tolerance' at IDB Bhaban in the

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## Minister denies rice shortage

BSS, Dhaka

Food and Disaster Management Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf yesterday said there is no shortage of rice in the country.

"The country has now a stock of six lakh metric tons (MT) of rice and wheat. A total of 18.5 lakh MT foodgrains were imported by the private sector in the last seven months. Besides, import of five lakh MT foodgrains is in the pipeline," he said.

Talking to the BSS, the minister, however, said that there might be an ill attempt by some unscrupulous traders to create an artificial crisis of

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## SPIRALLING RICE PRICES

# Taskforce for duty cut

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a bid to keep rice prices stable, a national taskforce on essential prices at a meeting yesterday recommended a temporary withdrawal of import duties on rice.

Besides, steps should be taken to revive the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) so that the state-run body can import essential items in case of emergency and tackle any manipulation by the importers and

hoarders, it suggested.

The recommendations will be sent to the prime minister for her approval, the taskforce decided at a meeting with Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury yesterday.

Adviser to the commerce ministry Barkatullah Bulu, President of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) Abdul Awal Mintoo and senior officials of

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## Body to screen Bac staff into ACC

Miah ire overlooked

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The investigation officers of the pending corruption cases filed by the now-defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac) will be attached temporarily to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to carry on the investigations.

The commission took the decision at a meeting yesterday, ACC Chairman Justice Sultan Hossain Khan told reporters after the meeting.

The anticorruption watchdog also decided to form an eight-member committee for screening the former Bac staff for absorbing them into the commission.

The committee will be comprised of a former PSC chairman, a former comptroller and auditor general, a former vice-chancellor, a former secretary, a former inspector general of police, a senior lawyer, a serving additional secretary and a distinguished citizen.

But the ACC meeting did not discuss the prevailing crisis stemming from the conflicts among its core members and the issues

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## Farm subsidy lost to fertiliser prices

BNP's rural leaders tell high-ups

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The ruling BNP's grassroots leaders yesterday told party high-ups that the Tk 600-crore agricultural subsidy did not yield any positive results as fair prices of fertilisers and seeds were not ensured while load-shedding hampered irrigation.

Moreover, rising prices of essentials including rice were creating discontent among people, said the union-level BNP leaders from three districts of Rajshahi Division.

They alleged problems of rural areas were not properly reflected in parliament as lawmakers hardly visited their constituencies after they got elected.

The leaders also called upon the government to reorganise the state-owned media as those have lost credibility to people.

Some 2000 party leaders from 215 unions in Rajshahi, Naogaon and Chapainawabganj districts yesterday attended a daylong conference at Rajshahi stadium.

Senior Joint Secretary of BNP Tarique Rahman chaired the confer-

ence and Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman was the chief guest. A number of ministers and MPs were present on the occasion.

Bishnupur union BNP Organising Secretary Subol Chandra said at the conference farmers now needed fresh agricultural loan as the Tk 600-crore subsidy did not reach them. "crops in vast areas are getting damaged as load-shedding hampers irrigation."

Badalgachhi union BNP leader Abdul Hamid said fertilisers and seeds were selling at higher rates, and many dealers stored fertilisers to create artificial crisis and raise prices.

Tarique Rahman instantly asked Hamid to disclose the names of dealers engaged in such black marketing. Hamid then said, "I know them but I should not name them in public."

Jhilimpur union BNP President from Chapainawabganj said he has only one demand- checking the prices of essentials. "We face

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আমার স্বাস্থ্য

ফুলের গন্ধে সুবাসিত

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## Southwest Khulna waterlogged

### Global climate change, unplanned river management main reasons

SHAMIM ASHRAF

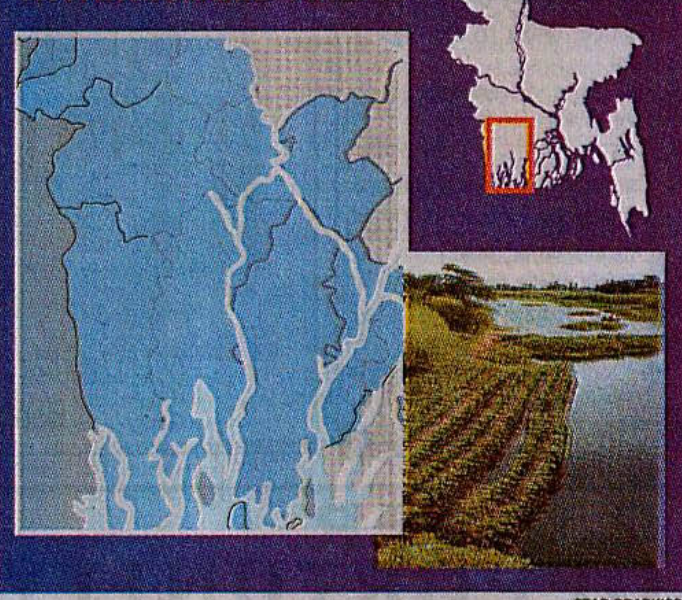
Situated in an area highly vulnerable to the ravages of global climate change, the southwestern part of Bangladesh has fallen victim since 2000 to the ill effects of waterlogging, forcing local inhabitants to migrate and adopt new ways of life.

People of the region, having already suffered through a long litany of natural disasters - long tropical cyclones, river erosion, salinity intrusion, as well as tidal and storm surges due to low sea level elevation - are now suffering from a new threat, since their river-beds are filling with silt, which has resulted in the flooding of their homesteads and croplands.

As a result, regular crop and fishery cultivation has ceased, compelling farmers to pursue alternative crops and methods of cultivation to adapt to water-logging, which now appears to be a permanent problem in the region.

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### WATERLOGGED AREAS



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