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Journalist Belal buried in Khulna

Nizami, Mujahid join burial

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Slain journalist Shaikh Belal Uddin was buried yesterday at his ancestral graveyard in village Royermahal under Khalishpur upazila in Khulna.

Several thousand people took part in his namaj-e-janaza held at Khulna Circuit House ground and at the deceased's village home.

Industries Minister Matru Rahman Nizami and Social Welfare Minister Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mujahid also attended the janaza and burial.

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SEC halts Premier Bank IPO for 'irregularities'

MONJUR MAHMUD

The Securities and Exchange Commission yesterday suspended a Tk 55 crore public floating of Premier Bank Ltd after around 25,000 beneficiary owners' (BO) accounts suspected to be fake had been found in an investigation.

The bank allegedly used a single address to open around 15,000

accounts. Only a few addresses were mentioned to open the rest around 10,000 accounts, mainly at its Mohakhali and Gulshan branches.

The capital market regulator in its preliminary investigations found Premier Bank's depository participant (DP), Equity Partners Ltd, which has been managing the largest ever initial public offering (IPO) in the banking sector, and Anwar

Securities Ltd also involved in the alleged irregularities.

It is now alleged that one of the bank's directors with political links may have a role in the opening of the accounts to subscribe the majority of the IPOs.

The SEC formed a four-member team led by its Executive Director Monsur Alam to further investigate

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

2 AK47s with bullets seized from hotel

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Bangladesh Army seized two AK47 rifles and 150 bullets from a hotel in the town and arrested an indigenous man and three others in this connection on Friday night.

Tipped off, an army troop in plain cloth led by Bandarban Sadar Zone Commander Lieutenant Colonel Itikhar raided the hotel at 8:30pm, said Bandarban army camp spokesman Major Humayun.

As the army circled the hotel, two Myanmar citizens who are thought to be the actual arms smugglers, managed to escape while the army arrested Ang Thoi Ching and three others and seized the two rifles.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

22 missing as boat collides with ferry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Twenty-two persons including a woman are feared drowned after an engine boat carrying 33 passengers capsized in the middle of the river Rupsha at 10:30am yesterday.

Eleven passengers swam ashore, but 22 were missing. According to eyewitnesses, the engine boat capsized when it was hit by a MV Rupsha-3, a mechanised ferry of the Road and Highways Department (RHD).

The missing passengers had not been identified as of the filing of this

report at 6:30pm yesterday. The survivors could not also be contacted as they left for their respective homes soon after swimming ashore.

The capsized engine boat was salvaged at 5:45pm, but divers from the navy and fire services were still trying to trace the missing passengers.

The rescue operation, which is also being assisted by security forces, is being hampered due to the river's fierce undercurrents and crosscurrents, said Khulna Super of Police Habibur Rahman.

The missing passengers include Bhuranath, the boatman of the ill-

fated engine boat. Ferry services remained suspended till the writing of this report.

Hundreds of people have been waiting on both sides of the river since the tragic accident took place.

A general diary, filed with Rupsha Police Station at 1:30pm, mentions that the accident occurred when the Rupsha east-bound RHD ferry launch hit the Khulna ferryghat-bound engine boat.

Over-loading and inclement weather caused nearly 260 accidents in waterways since 1977, killing over 3,000 people.

QUORUM CRISIS BNP asks MPs to be present in JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling BNP yesterday initiated steps to ensure quorum in parliament's current session that resumes today after adjournment on Thursday night in the face of worst quorum crisis.

Though the ruling Four-Party alliance has over 220 lawmakers, the House all too often starts day's affairs late, as the lawmakers do not appear in time to make the quorum (presence of 60 lawmakers).

The 15th session of the Jatiya Sangsad that began on January 31 in absence of the main opposition Awami League (AL) lawmakers has already seen four workdays with poor member participation.

On last Thursday, the House suffered the worst quorum crisis in recent history, and after two abortive attempts to start the sitting,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6



People from all walks of life line up in their thousands in Dhanmondi yesterday to express solidarity with the non-violent movement called by the family of assassinated former finance minister SAMS Kibria. The son and wife - Reza (3rd from R) and Asma (2nd from R) - of Kibria are seen with members of civil society.

PHOTO: STAR

Floods, avalanches kill 260 in Pakistan

REUTERS, Quetta

Pakistan launched a huge relief operation for some 20,000 people affected by torrential rains in the southwest, as floods and avalanches pushed the death toll over 260 nationwide, officials said yesterday.

Authorities rushed in thousands of troops to help rescue efforts in the remote province of Baluchistan. Local government spokesman Razak Bugti said 500 people were missing after a dam burst following the country's worst deluge in 16 years.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

KIBRIA KILLING Thousands line up to demand arrest of killers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thousands of people came down onto the streets in the capital and elsewhere in the country to press the government for the arrest and trial of the killers of former finance minister and Awami League (AL) lawmaker Shah AMS Kibria. The streets in the capital were crowded with people from all walks

of life who wore black badges and carried black flags to express solidarity with the non-violent movement called by Kibria's family.

Led by Asma Kibria, widow of the slain lawmaker, people lined up by the hundreds in front of Kibria's Dhanmondi residence forming a human chain, a week after holding a similar demonstration there.

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Cops' abduction story cooked up

Money deals, women main reasons

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A police investigation has revealed that the sensational 'abduction' story of two police sergeants was cooked up, rather they were confined by a few people who bribed one of the sergeants for job.

They used a woman to lure Asaduzzaman and Monirul Alam to go to a house in Kafrul where they were confined, said investigator Faruq Ahmed, additional commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP).

"The abduction story was not true. When Asad took me to his girlfriend's house Wednesday, some armed youths took us hostage," Sergeant Monirul told reporters yesterday, claiming innocence.

"The youths confined us to realise Tk 5 lakh which they said they had given to Asad as bribe for job," Monirul added.

The two sergeants were released yesterday afternoon on completion of interrogation by Faruq Ahmed, who was tasked with verification of

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Ministers' squabble blamed for Ctg's underdevelopment

Grassroots BNP leaders talk party problems

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The ruling BNP's grassroots leaders yesterday blamed inertia, insincerity and feuds among ministers and party high-ups in Chittagong as major reasons behind 'underdevelopment' of the district.

About 20 union-level BNP leaders focused mainly on the party problems in their respective areas, especially Mirersarai, Rangunia and Raazan, and criticised the local lawmakers and party leaders for the problems.

A total of 42 grassroots leaders addressed the north district BNP union conference at MA Aziz Stadium here.

A brief pandemonium before and during the speeches by some union leaders marked the conference that also witnessed repeated interruptions from the dais and participants.

Party leader Gasuddin Quader Chowdhury criticised the role of north district BNP President Golam Akbar Khondker, who was sitting on

the dais. Party problems apart, issues like price hike of rice and other essentials, role of the finance minister and local ministers, development, crimes, corruption, problem of Sitakunda industrial belt, river erosion in Sandwip and Hathazari and canal digging were discussed by the union-level leaders.

Senior Joint Secretary General of the BNP Tarique Rahman chaired the conference and Health and Family Welfare Minister Khondker Mosharrif Hossain was the chief guest.

Banshbaria union (Sitakunda) BNP President Abul Bashar Chowdhury blamed the finance minister for the price hike of essentials across the country, and closure of state-owned jute and textile mills in Sitakunda industrial zone.

"BNP's image is being tarnished due to wrong leadership and planning of the finance minister," Bashar alleged. "He (derives) pleasure in having a healthy foreign exchange

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Two killed in 'crossfire'

Total count now 230

STAR REPORT

A top leader of an outlawed political party and a wanted criminal were killed in 'crossfire' in Kushtia and Dhaka yesterday.

The dead are Mohidul Islam alias Samim Malitha, 46, the 'second-in-command' of Janajuddho faction of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-ML), and Pintu, a wanted criminal of Dhaka.

With these, the count of deaths in 'crossfire' stands at 230.

Pintu was killed in crossfire during Rab action near

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200 hurt at garment factories

BSS, Narayanganj

At least 200 garment workers were injured, ten of them seriously, when they were trampled while fleeing fire at three garment factories at Siddhinganj yesterday.

Demra fire service sources said the panic ensued as a fire broke out at a re-rolling mill, Iqbal Group of Industries, at 11:30am.

The re-rolling mill is adjacent to

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