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## KIBRIA KILLING Three give confessional statements

UNB, Habiganj

Three of the four persons arrested in connection with the killing of former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria gave confessional statements under Section 164 before a first class magistrate here yesterday.

The three are President of Laskarpur union BNP M Jamir Ali, President of Laskarpur union Zia Smriti O Gabeshana Parishad Zainal Abedin Momin and driver Tajul Islam of Bhadoi village.

But the other arrestee, AKM Abdul Qayyum, central president of Zia Smriti O Gabeshana Parishad and vice-president of district BNP, declined to give any statement.

All the four were produced before First Class Magistrate Shafiqur Reza Biswas yesterday morning.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

## A river run into the ground

Polluted and strangled, the Balu river and its inhabitants struggle to survive

MORSHED ALI KHAN and RAFIQ HASAN

As new industries and an entire new city sprout along its banks, the river Balu on the eastern fringe of the city is slowly dying, strangled by land encroachment and poisoned by industrial pollution, creating a serious health hazard for several lakh people living in the area.

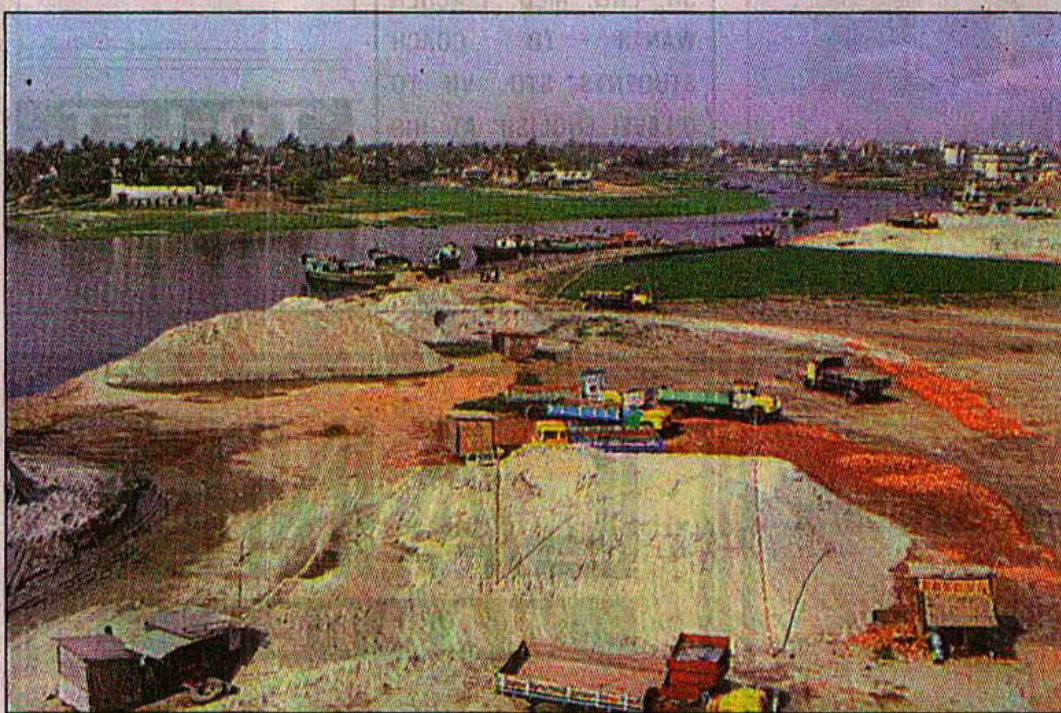
Local people say the stench in the river Balu is so strong during the lean period that they find it difficult to breathe. "We can not even think of touching the water during the lean season, which lasts for over four months. The water is so polluted and bad smelling that it turns the skin

white," said Nuru Mian of Boro Berajid village on the western bank of the river.

The river is also slowly shrinking, making navigation increasingly difficult, since many areas along its banks have been filled in to support a host of new buildings, including brick kilns, shops, cinema halls, pucca houses and ghats.

Many examples of such destructive building activities were clearly visible at several points during a visit to the river on Saturday. A mosque was built on the eastern side of the river at Eshapur, 75 per cent of it on the river. Its first floor was erected on a number of pillars directly on the river.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



Unscrupulous businessmen have for long been using this huge encroached area of the Balu riverbed on the eastern fringe of the city as a field to unload and upload sand for construction work.

## PRE-ELECTIONS IRREGULARITIES 2001 CAG finds irregularities in experts' recruitment

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has detected irregularities in the recruitment of five experts by the Election Commission (EC) ahead of the last parliamentary elections as well as in an expenditure of over Tk 74 crore for electoral reforms.

Examining the EC's documents on the recruitment, the CAG office found the irregularities and termed the Tk 3.37 crore paid in salaries and allowances to the experts a financial loss, putting the blame on Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Syed.

The CAG office also questioned an expenditure of over Tk 74 crore from the electoral process improvement project funded jointly by the UNDP and the government which

was spent from 1997. Of the amount, Tk 3.37 crore was paid to the experts as their salaries before and after the general elections 2001.

The Daily Star tried to communicate with the CEC seeking his comments about the allegations. After failing to contact him by several attempts over telephone and by visiting his office, a copy of this story was faxed to his office seeking his comment in last February.

But, even after 48 hours, we did not receive any response from his side.

The CAG office, a constitutional body to examine government expenditures, in its report said the CEC did not give due consideration to other election commissioners' opinions in making the appointments.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

## ANTI-AHMADIYYA CAMPAIGN

# Cops help Bogra bigots pull down mosque signboard

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Anti-Ahmadiyya bigots, backed by police, yesterday forcibly hung a signboard reading "A place of worship of the Kadianis in Bogra Town; no Muslim should be deceived into considering it a mosque" on an Ahmadiyya mosque at Seuzgari of Bogra.

About 10-12 thousand zealots of the International Khatme Nabuwat Movement after Juma prayers yesterday gathered in the town and held

a meeting followed by a rally that continued till 4:00pm.

Rods in hand, the religious fanatics marched towards the Ahmadiyya mosque. When police intercepted the procession at Seuzgari, the Khatme Nabuwat leaders demanded that the police search the mosque and hand over the Ahmadiyya publications to them. They also asked the police to replace the existing signboard reading 'Ahmadiyya mosque' by the one brought by them.

Police agreed and took five Nabuwat leaders to the mosque. Members of the Ahmadiyya community led by Abdul Awal Khan protested the move and engaged in an altercation with the police.

At about 6:00pm, Additional Superintendent of Police Zakir Hossain ordered his men to replace the Ahmadiyya signboard with the Nabuwat one.

Following the incident, the Ahmadiyyas held a press conference

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3



Two policemen, on behalf of religious fanatics, fix a signboard on the wall of an Ahmadiyya mosque at Seuzgari in Bogra yesterday dubbing the building as a 'place of worship of Kadianis', who it says are non-Muslims.

## AL, allies to form human wall tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) and its left allies will form no-confidence human walls across the country tomorrow as part of the combined opposition's simultaneous movement to overthrow the ruling alliance.

The hour-long demonstration from 4:00pm to 5:00pm will be observed simultaneously in six divisional headquarters—Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Sylhet and Barisal, and all the 64 district towns. Different social and cultural organisations and professional bodies will also join the demonstration expressing solidarity with the opposition's demands.

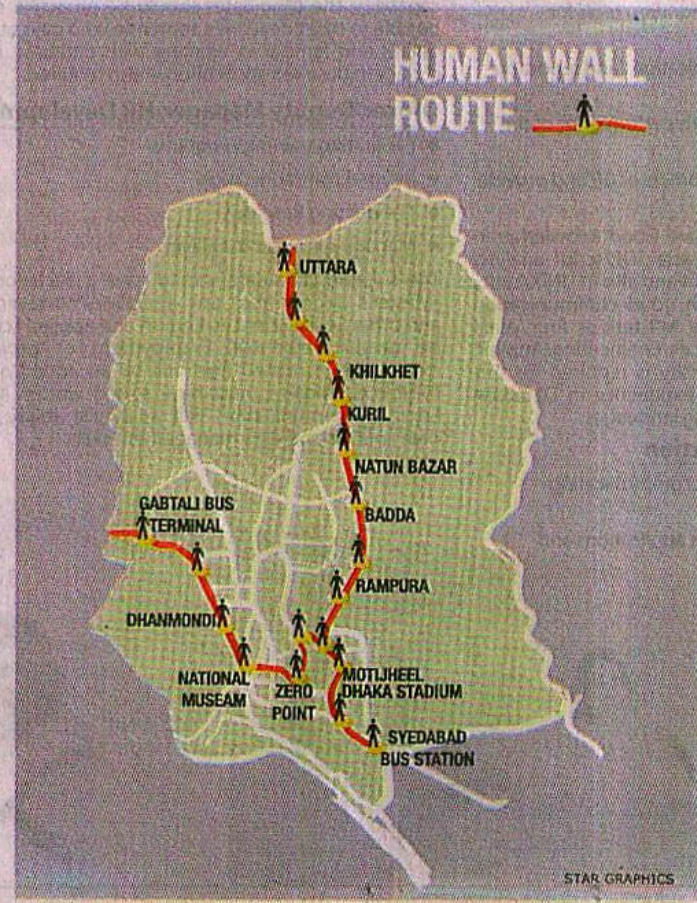
A huge contingent of the police and paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) will be deployed at different points of the human wall route in

the capital and other district towns to avoid any untoward incident.

In Dhaka, opposition demonstrators will form a circular human wall touching the Jatrabari roundabout in the east, the Tongi Bridge in the north and Gabtoli in the west. Beginning from Jatrabari, the human wall will touch Sayedabad, Tikatuli, Ittefaq crossing, Shapla Chatter, Gulistan, Noor Hossain Square, Paltan crossing, Bijoynagar, Kakrail, Malibagh crossing, Mouchak, Rampura Bridge, Kuril, Airport Road, Uttara and Tongi Bridge.

Another part of the human wall will start from the Noor Hossain Square and end at Gabtoli via the Golap Shah Shrine, Nagar Bhaban, Curzon Hall, High Court crossing, Matshya Bhaban, Shahbagh, Elephant Road, Science Laboratory

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7



## Criminal dies in 'crossfire' Death toll rises to 243

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A criminal was killed in 'crossfire' between members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and his accomplices at Uttara in the capital in the early hours yesterday.

The Rab arrested Syed Monir Hossain alias Chikna Monir, who was jailed for 12 years in a criminal case, from his Uttara house on Thursday afternoon. The Rab also seized 20 hand bombs, 84 bullets, one fake passport and Tk 1.3 lakh.

Monir was also accused of

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

## Nepal frees Deuba, 17 others

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal freed yesterday former premier Sher Bahadur Deuba and 17 other detainees held since King Gyanendra seized power last month, a party official said, amid mounting pressure on the nation to restore civil liberties.

"Our party president Deuba and other senior leaders were set free today (Friday)," Nepali Congress Democratic party secretary Jivan Prem Shrestha told AFP in the capital Kathmandu.

King Gyanendra dismissed Deuba's multi-party government on February 1 and seized control of Nepal, imposing emergency rule and vowing to tackle an increasingly bloody Maoist revolt that has claimed 11,000 lives since 1996.

"In the process of liberalisation of the political situation in Nepal, other political detainees are also being released gradually," a cabinet source said, giving no further details.

However former prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala, Nepal's first

elected premier, remained under house arrest, with human rights activists and members of his Nepali Congress party increasingly concerned about the 82-year-old's health.

Madhav Kumar Nepal, a senior leader of the main opposition Nepal Communist Party-United Marxist Leninist which formed part of the dismissed coalition government, was also still under house arrest.

The release of the 18 came after a day after security officials freed

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

## Powerful bomb seized in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Police seized a powerful bomb from Alhaj Nagar under the Kotwali Police Station yesterday morning.

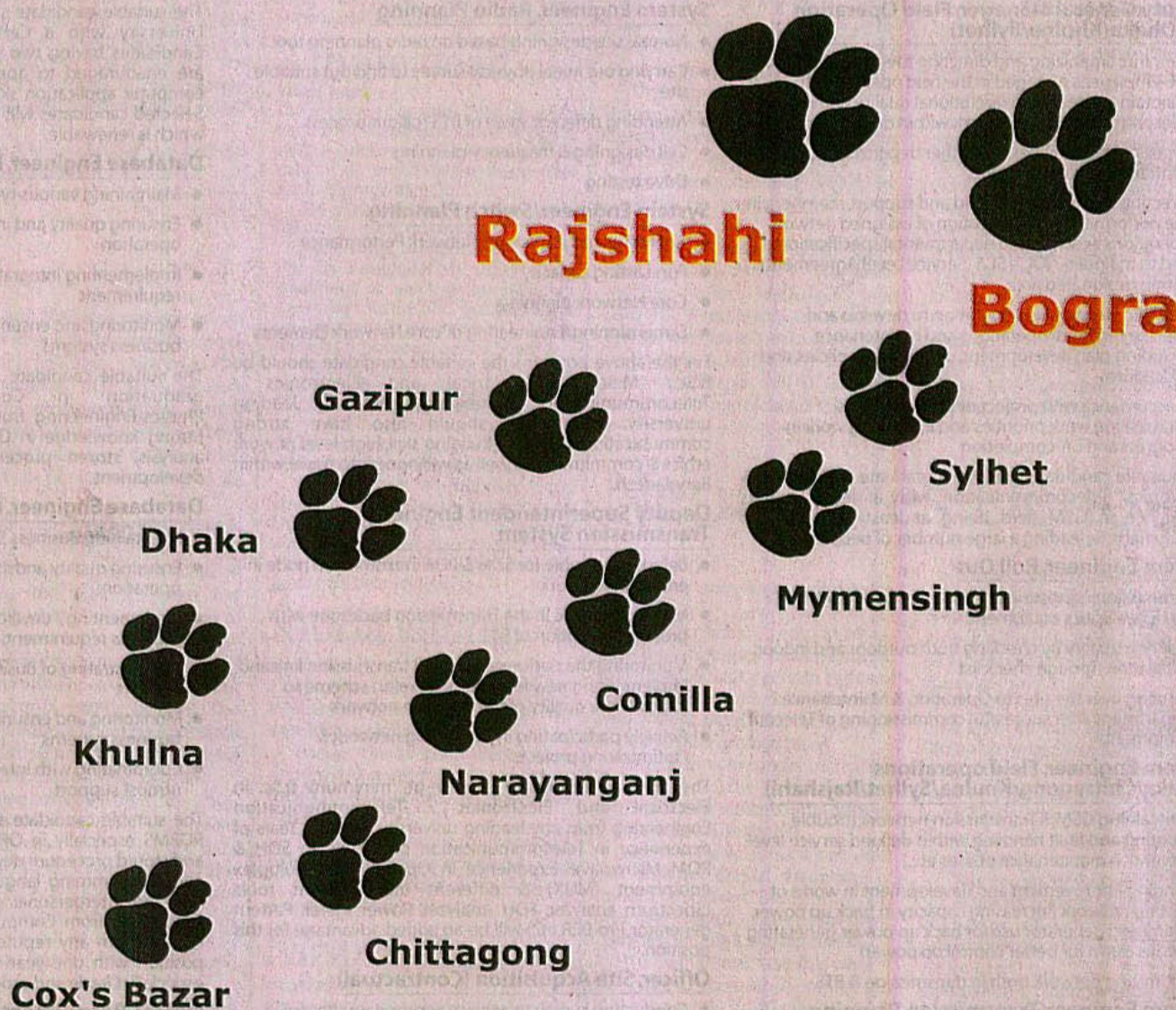
Shopkeeper Anwar found the bomb wrapped up in red tape near his shop, 150 yards from Jatiya Party President Ershad's house and 300 yards from a Brac office, locals said.

Being informed, Superintendent of Police Mahbub Mohshin along with some officers rushed to the spot and seized the bomb.

Later, a team of explosive experts from Rangpur cantonment led by Lt

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

## Extending our Footprint! Rajshahi & Bogra linked



Banglalink: A promise made - a promise kept! We promised to aggressively expand our coverage areas and that's what we are doing. Just a month since launch and we have Rajshahi and Bogra linked. 11 districts now, 61 by end of year.

