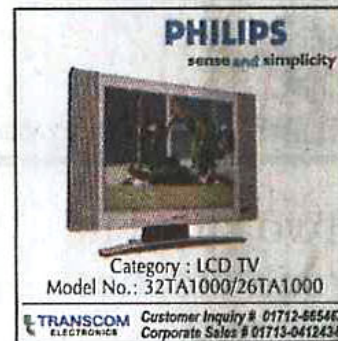




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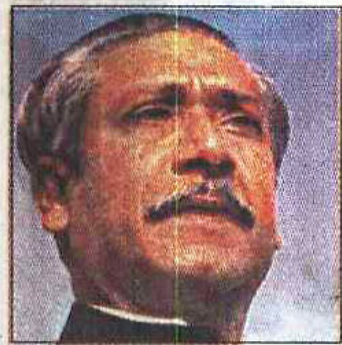
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Anniversary of Bangabandhu's birth today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 87th birth anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, father of the nation and architect of the country's independence, will be observed today. Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed will go to Tungipara today to visit the grave of Bangabandhu.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Govt moves to block Mohiuddin's asylum in any country

SHARIFUL ISLAM

If AKM Mohiuddin Ahmed, who is condemned to death for the killings of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family, seeks asylum in any country, the Bangladesh Government will request that country not to give him shelter.

Moreover, the government will take state level initiatives to bring him back to the country using benefits of cooperation among countries as part of their mutual anti-terrorism measures, as he is a convicted fugitive.

"He will have to come back to the country if he doesn't get asylum in any other country after being deported from the US. It is almost certain that the US will not allow him to stay there," Law Adviser Mainul Hossain told The Daily Star last evening.

Asked whether the government will try to dissuade a country if Mohiuddin seeks asylum there, Mainul said, "We will request that country not to give him asylum."

When BBC Bangla Service asked Mainul what state level initiatives will be taken when there is no extradition treaty between

Bangladesh and the US, he said bringing Mohiuddin back will not be a problem.

"Now countries are cooperating with each other formally and informally as part of their anti-terrorism measures. So bringing him back will not be a problem, if nothing else arises," Mainul said.

Also sentenced to life in prison for aiding and abetting the killings of four other national leaders on November 3, 1975, Major (ret'd) Mohiuddin Ahmed was arrested by officials of the Bureau of US Immigration and Customs.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

5 more JMB men arrested in Bagmara

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police in separate drives arrested five more activists of outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) in Bagmara upazila yesterday.

The arrestees are Afzal Hossain, 33, of Hamirkuta, Zahidul Haq, 45, of Madhya Jhina, Chanchal, 20, of Jhokra, Emaj Uddin, 25, of Jhargram, and Abdur Razzak, 26, of Sripur villages.

On Wednesday, the law enforcers arrested two JMB men--Aftab Hossain and Abdus Salam--in the same upazila.

The officer-in-charge (OC) of Bagmara Police Station said the arrestees are listed JMB cadres.

They were associates of Siddique Islam alias Bangla Bhai and involved in so-called operations against outlaws in the upazila in 2004, he added.

At least 25 people were killed and several hundred maimed during JMB operations, led by Bangla Bhai, in the upazila.

GOVT DECIDES, MINISTRY DEFIES

Autonomy of Petrobangla Cos violated all too often

SHARIF KHAN

Though the government had taken a decision in April 2003 on respecting autonomy and financial freedom of all the 11 companies of Petrobangla, the energy ministry continues to violate the rights of these concerns by reshuffling their boards unilaterally.

Top officials of the energy ministry still head the boards of seven of these companies and this has become the main impediment to ensuring any check and balance, senior officials said requesting anonymity.

The remaining four companies are headed by the newly appointed Petrobangla chairman.

The energy secretary himself

holds the posts of chairman of four major companies, including the corruption-plagued Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Ltd, Bangladesh Gas Field Ltd, Rupantarita Prakritik Gas Company Ltd and Bapex.

Contrary to expectations, the latest shake-up in these companies that took place last month did not cancel all political appointments made by the previous alliance government. Eleven such directors are still on these boards.

Till 1999, the boards of these companies predominantly consisted of Petrobangla board members, managing directors of the respective companies and some high officials of the energy ministry.

Legally, the energy ministry cannot constitute these boards.

These companies pay the government an annual revenue of around Tk 3,000 crore despite cases of corruption in some of those.

NO CHECK AND BALANCE
"The risk of having an energy ministry high official on the board of any of these companies is that when a company procures something, the ministry official is involved right from the beginning. When relevant files go to the ministry, the same official is looking after the matter. So, no one raises any question. If there is corruption, who is going to check that?" said an official who has been involved with Petrobangla for more than 20 years.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7



Driven to despair, farmers charge a dealer (marked) at his shop in Nilphamari for failure to supply fertiliser, left, and the empty buffer godown for urea in Bogra.

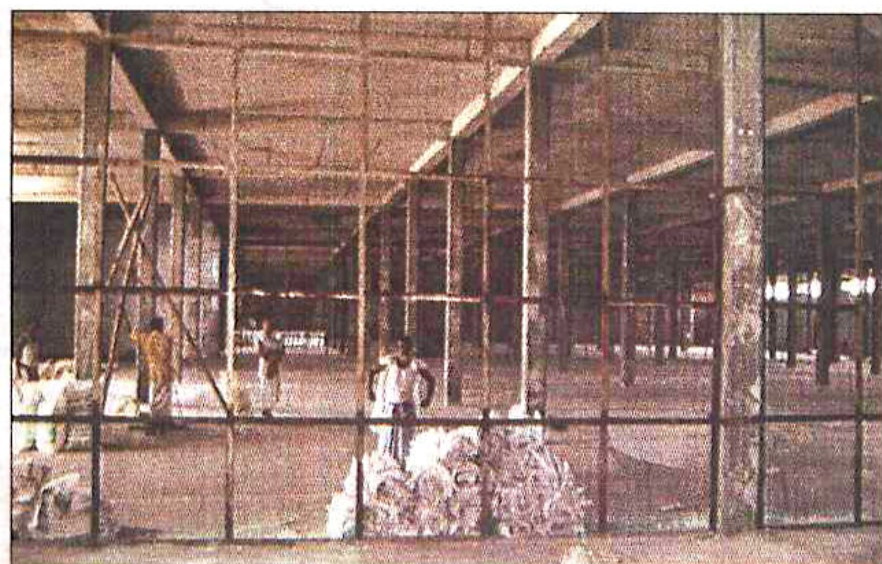


PHOTO: STAR

EXTORTION CASE

Charge sheet against Tarique tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police investigating the extortion case against Tarique Rahman, eldest son of former prime minister Khaldia Zia, will submit the charge sheet of the case tomorrow.

"I have almost completed the investigation and will submit the charge sheet to the court on Sunday", said Officer-in-Charge (OC) Obaidul Haque of Gulshan Police Station.

Obaidul Haque, however, did not go into the details of the charge sheet.

Tarique has been charged with extortion of Tk 1 crore from a construction firm, Al-Amin Construction.

Owner of the construction firm, Amin Ahmed, who got BNP ticket for contesting the cancelled January 22 election from a Noakhali constituency, filed the case against Tarique with Gulshan Police Station on March 8.

Meanwhile, the health condition of Tarique Rahman, now in the hospital of Dhaka Central Jail, is getting better, jail sources said.

"Now there is no complexities in his physical condition," said Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Prisons.

"Civil surgeon will examine Tarique again on Monday and then the decision will be taken whether he (Tarique) will stay in jail hospital."

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Urea crisis hits north as buffer stocks dry up

Supply vessels stranded for poor navigability

STAR REPORT

Farmers of northern districts are facing an acute fertilizer crisis in the peak season for boro rice cultivation as the warehouses have been remaining almost completely depleted of buffer stocks of fertilizers for several days due to a transportation problem.

Reports received from Doulatdia said 11 urea-laden cargo ships have been stranded at Daulatdia cargo terminal for the last three days due to poor navigability of the river. The authorities sent some sacks of fertilizers to Baghabari by engine boats yesterday

in a bid to tackle the shortage there. But the effort is not enough to meet the huge demand for fertilizers in the area.

Farmers in some remote areas stand in long queues in front of fertilizer shops because it is high time for fertilizing croplands.

Our correspondents from Bogra, Sirajganj and Nilphamari reported that sources said over one lakh tons of urea are now stacked at Daulatdia terminal due to poor navigability of the river.

At least nine feet depth of water is required for smooth sailing of loaded vessels on the river route which now has only five to six feet

depth of water at some points. The fertilizer-laden vessels have been stranded for a week, said the reports.

Our Bogra correspondent reported that buffer stocks of urea in several warehouses including the one in Bogra are almost completely depleted.

Official sources in Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) said about 85,000 metric tons of urea were supplied to 16 northern districts from buffer stocks while the minimum requirement is 1,05,000 metric tons for the current boro season.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



ICC WORLD CUP 07

Nixon, Plunkett give England hope as Gibbs makes history

AFP, St Lucia

An unbroken stand of 71 between Paul Nixon and Liam Plunkett gave England's bowlers hope after New Zealand had broken the back of their opponents' innings in the teams' opening World Cup Group C match here Friday.

England, who had slumped to 138 for seven, finished on 209 for seven with wicketkeeper Nixon 42 not out and Plunkett unbeaten on 29.

New Zealand were 76 for 4 after 16.3 overs. Scott Styris was batting on 32 while Jacob Oram (1).

Nixon faced just 41 balls with five fours while paceman Plunkett's 34-ball stay featured a straight six off left-arm spinner Daniel Vettori.

However, England may still not have enough runs to play with.

Kevin Pietersen, in his first full international since January after sustaining a rib injury during the Australia one-dayers, top scored with 60 but then got himself out.

From 133 for three, England lost four wickets for five runs with the worst part of the collapse seeing three go down for one run in seven balls as key batsmen Paul Collingwood (31), Pietersen and Andrew Flintoff, out for a first ball nought, all fell in quick succession.

Fast bowler Shane Bond, who finished with two for 19 off his full 10 overs, took two wickets in four balls as Pietersen tamely holed out to James Franklin at long-on before

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Spirited Bangladesh meet India today

SPORTS REPORTER

The mercury will definitely rise in the country today when a spirited Bangladesh launch their Cricket World Cup campaign against serious title contenders and former world champions India in Trinidad.

The Group B match will start at 7:30pm Bangladesh time with state-run Bangladesh Television (BTV) beaming live coverage from

the Queen's Park Oval, a 25,000-capacity ground which is generally thought as the most picturesque of the old grounds in the Caribbean.

Habibul Bashar's men left home with a promise to make at least one upset in their group, which also includes ex-champions Sri Lanka, to win a place in the second round in cricket's showpiece event and their stunning success in the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

ROAD MISHAP IN KHULNA

Manzarul, another cricketer killed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A tragic road accident yesterday took the lives of national all-rounder Manzarul Islam Rana and fellow cricketer Sajjadul Islam Setu.

The two cricketers, who were going to Satkhira on a motorbike, were killed in a head-on collision at 4.15pm near Baliakhali bridge of Chuknagar under Dumuria upazila in Khulna district.

A left-arm spinner and a useful lower-order batsman, Rana played six Tests and 25 one-day internationals for Bangladesh after making debut in 2004.

According to eyewitnesses and police, the accident occurred as a Khulna-bound microbus collided



Manzarul, left, and Setu

head on with the motorbike. Rana died on the spot receiving several head injuries while his co-riders Setu, succumbed to injuries on way to Dumuria Health Complex, according to police sources.

Eyewitnesses said that the motorcycle crashed into an electric pole beside the road, which

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



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