

## Ex-commerce adviser Bulu sued for extortion

A CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A case was filed against former commerce adviser Barkat Ullah Bulu and eight of his acolytes in Noakhali on Monday night for alleged extortion.

Kamal Pasha, a former member of Nateshwar Union Parishad (UP) in Noakhali's Sonaimuri upazila, filed the case with the local police station.

The other accused in the case are Nateshwar UP chairman Nurul Amin Swapan, Sakayet Ullah Saku, Shah Jalal, Farid Ahmed, Ripon, Tipu, Babul and Fakira.

Pasha in his first information report (FIR) complained that Swapan on instructions from Bulu demanded that he give them four metric tons of wheat out of 11 metric tons allocated for reconstruction work of Ghosonkata-Laxmipur road in 2002.

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## Conjoined twins born

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

A pair of female conjoined babies were born at a clinic in Nawabganj upazila of Dhaka district early yesterday.

Hashu Begum, 30, gave birth to the twins, who are joined at the chest and abdomen, through a Caesarean at Nawabganj Clinic General Hospital and Diagnostic Centre.

The twins were later shifted to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) and were being treated under Syed Mahmudur Rahman, associate professor of the DMCH paediatrics department.

DMCH paediatricians said the condition of the twins is quite sound and it seems that they may survive in this way.

Syed Mahmudur Rahman said if they do not go for surgery for separation, the conjoined babies could survive.

The twins weigh five kilograms and have separate heads, legs and hands. However, it is yet to be examined if their heart, liver, kidney and other internal organs are

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## Dhaka keen to join Shanghai cooperation body as observer

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh has expressed its interest to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) as an observer.

The organisation is comprised of four central Asian states and Russia and China.

Iran, Mongolia, India and Pakistan are its observers.

Foreign Adviser Iftekhhar Ahmed Chowdhury, now in Russia, expressed the interest in an interview with "Russia Today" television show, the Russian counterpart of BBC's "Hard Talk", in Moscow on Monday night.

Currently, there is a moratorium on the expansion of the number of SCO's observers, but the foreign adviser said he has received an assurance from Russian authorities that they will support Bangladesh as soon as the moratorium is lifted.

"We've excellent bilateral relations with each of the SCO member-states. We can make a huge contribution to this organisation in political and economic terms," he said.

## BARAPUKURIA COAL MINE

# Toxic gas leak leads to partial shutdown

SHARIER KHAN

Emission of serious toxic carbon monoxide (CO) gas has forced the Barapukuria Coal Mining Company Ltd (BCMCL) in Dinajpur to reseal yesterday a mining area that was only reopened two weeks ago after being closed for nearly two years.

As a result, the target coal production of the mine has once again dropped to half. Consequently, the mine will once again fail to provide enough coal to run the Barapukuria 250MW coal-fired power plant adjacent to the mine site.

The daily coal production target of the mine is 3,000 metric tons (mt), of which the power plant

requires about 2,400mt.

A set of mining equipment worth \$ 5.5 million has also been stuck inside the 1,100 feet deep sealed area of Phase 1110, a competent source at the BCMCL said. The mine will continue to produce coal from another phase using another set of equipment.

"We have been noticing an alarming rise of carbon monoxide emission for the last two days. We had been extracting the coal amid high risk. But the level of emission today has become too dangerous for any human being to work in," said a source.

In early October 2005, to avert a disaster caused by emission of toxic gases as well as a threat of

self-combustion, the mining authorities sealed off the Phase 1110 of the mine along with the expensive mining equipment. It became very difficult to reopen this phase as it was filled with carbon monoxide and methane gases.

Since April this year, the BCMCL with the help from Chinese experts has pumped in huge volumes of chemicals inside the sealed-off phase to reduce carbon monoxide before reopening it on August 18. It resumed coal production from this phase from August 22-23, rekindling the hope to turn this troubled mine financially viable.

But the hope was a short-lived

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## 2 Ctg businessmen, driver die in car crash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Three people including two leading businessmen were killed and three others injured yesterday in a road accident on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway at Nankara in Comilla.

The deceased are Standard Bank Director Harun Salam, also a relative of Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina, former Director of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce & Industry (CCCI) Shahedul Alam Quaderi and driver Zahir.

Of the injured, engineer Munwar Ahmed, former director of CCCI and brother-in law of detained

former BNP lawmaker Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, has gone into a coma.

Sources said the businessmen on board a Pajero jeep left Chittagong for Chandpur at about 7:30am to provide relief aid of Tk 2.5 lakh to the flood affected people in Chandpur under a relief distribution programme organised in association with Anjuman Mufidul Islam.

The accident occurred at about 10:00am when the jeep collided head-on with a covered van on

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## US denies N Korea off terror list

AP, Sidney

North Korea remains on a list of states that sponsor terrorism, a senior US diplomat said Tuesday, dismissing North Korean claims that Washington decided to remove the designation.

"No, they haven't been taken off the terrorism list," Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill told Japanese reporters as he arrived in Australia's business capital for a meeting of Pacific Rim nations. A State Department press officer separately confirmed the remarks.

Hill's comments were the first US denial since North Korea's Foreign Ministry, in a statement carried Monday by the country's official news agency, said that Washington decided to scotch the terror designation and with it related economic sanctions. The North Korean statement said the change came in a weekend meeting between Hill and his counterpart in Geneva.

Under a deal reached in February after years of tortuous negotiations, North Korea agreed to relinquish its nuclear programs, including one that has produced bomb material. In return, Washington agreed to open talks

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## Bush hints at US troops cut in Iraq

AFP, Al-Asad Air Base

President George W Bush, on a surprise visit to Iraq Monday, said a reduction in combat troops was possible but sniped at "nervous" US politicians ahead of a showdown with Congress.

Bush flew from Washington in total secrecy to this desert base in Anbar province, where the US administration has taken heart from the sight of former Sunni insurgents joining with US forces to fight al-Qaeda extremists.

He convened a meeting of his "war council" with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and other Iraqi leaders just days before US commander General David Petraeus and US Ambassador Ryan Crocker report to Congress on the progress of Bush's military "surge" strategy.

Petraeus and Crocker believed that "if the kind of success we are now seeing (in Anbar) continues, it is possible to maintain the same level of security with fewer American forces," Bush said.

"I urge members of Congress to listen to what (Petraeus and Crocker) have to say," he said, standing in front of two military Humvees spotted in the gathering night.

The White House is to make a formal report to the Democratic-led Congress by September 15 aimed at persuading US lawmakers to continue funding the Iraq war, four and a half bloody years since

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Prayer Timing		
September 5		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-35	5-10
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-20	6-25
Esha	7-45	8-15
Source: Islamic Foundation		



PHOTO: STAR

People gather at the shore of the Jamuna near Kalitali of Sariakandi upazila in Bogra yesterday after a huge chunk of land was washed away by the river.

# Thousands marooned as fresh flood grips Sylhet

## Part of Bogra dam washed away

STAR REPORT

Several thousand people in Zakiganj, Beanibazar and Golapganj upazilas of Sylhet were left marooned as fresh areas of these upazilas went under water in the past two days following a rise in the water level of the rivers Surma and Kushiya.

Meanwhile, around 120 metres of a flood control dam by the river Jamuna at Sariakandi in Bogra

was washed away yesterday panicking several lakh people of the eastern part of the district.

Quoting the locals, our staff correspondent from Sylhet reports that villages in four unions of Zakiganj were submerged by the floodwaters.

Kushiya was flowing 150cm above danger level at Amolshid, while the Surma was flowing 101cm above danger level at Amolshid border, the originating

point of the two rivers, Water Development Board officials said.

Onrush of water from the hilly regions of India triggered by torrential rains caused the rise in the water level of the rivers, sources said.

The flood situation in the district is also likely to deteriorate further in the next two days, as Surma is likely to rise by 7cm in Sylhet and by 2cm in Sunamganj,

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## Boat capsizes in Brahmaputra; 20 missing

UNB, Jamalpur

At least 20 passengers went missing after a boat capsized in Brahmaputra River near Melandah upazila yesterday morning.

Locals said the mechanized boat sailed for Shyampur with around 100 passengers from Kazaihata in Melandah and sank in the river at about 11am due to bad weather.

All but 20 of the passengers swam ashore.

Local people salvaged the sunken boat but could not trace the missing people till filing of the report at about 2pm.

The search for the missing people was on but it was being hampered due to huge waves.

## 2 held for killing girl

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested two people yesterday for killing the three-year girl Sadia in her residence at Hajariabagh in the capital on Monday.

The two arrestees-- Shahinur Begum, Sadia's stepmother, and Shahinur's lover Abul Qaushem-- were arrested after Shahinur confessed that they chopped the minor girl to death, sources said.

Police said Sadia was killed as she witnessed illicit activities between her stepmother and Qaushem, who was arrested from the city's Dhanmondi area in the early hours yesterday.

Liakat Ali, sub-inspector of Hazariabagh Police Station, quoting Shahinur said Qaushem entered the house after Sadia's father went to office at around 10:00am on Monday.

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# Progress in Dubai talks on Benazir-Musharraf deal

## Sharif vows to oust military ruler by Oct 15

AFP, PTI, Islamabad

Negotiators trying to thrash out a power-sharing deal between Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf and self-exiled former premier Benazir Bhutto made some progress on Tuesday, her party said.

At a meeting in Dubai they focused on US ally Musharraf's powers over the Pakistani parliament and on forthcoming presidential and general elections, Pakistan People's Party spokesman Farhatullah Babar said.

Talks held in London last week between the two-time prime minister and military ruler Musharraf's aides ended in deadlock, with Benazir saying that she would fly home ahead of general elections due by early next year.

"Discussions were held on some unresolved issues relating to the powers of the president and parliament and to arrangements on the holding of elections," Babar told AFP.

"There was some progress on holding free and fair elections," Babar added. "The dialogue will

continue."

Government spokesmen were not immediately available to comment.

Efforts to formulate a deal stalled after the ruling Pakistan Muslim League Party opposed Benazir Bhutto's demands that Musharraf should quit as army chief before being re-elected for another five-year term as president.

Benazir said he should also cede his powers to dissolve parliament, allow premiers to serve a

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