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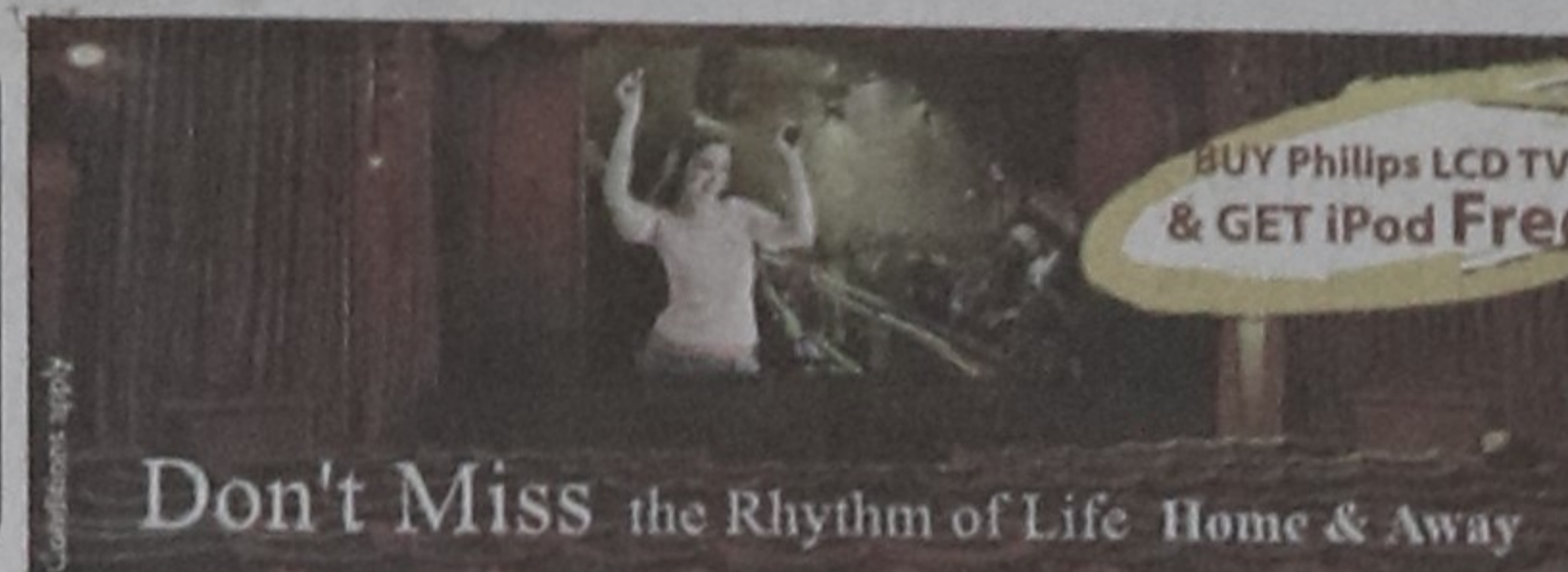
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Delwar slates CEC remarks on BNP issue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Blasting the chief election commissioner (CEC) for his remarks about the BNP constitution and the expulsion of Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, pro-Khaleda faction of the party yesterday said the CEC broke the rules and lost neutrality by making biased comments.

Pro-Saifur leaders, meantime, said the top election official did not give any new information as he merely explained the BNP constitution.

CEC ATM Shamsul Huda said Friday that the expulsion of Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan was not lawful as the party constitution according to which he was ousted was not ratified by the party council.

This is beyond his (CEC's) jurisdiction and an unethical interference in a political party's internal affairs, acting Office Secretary Ruhul Kabir Rizvi quoted.

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Groundwater depletion hampers irrigation

PINAKI ROY

Groundwater-based irrigation system is experiencing difficulties in different parts of the country as shallow aquifer level is getting out of reach due to fast depletion of groundwater table.

Shallow tube-wells (STWs) now cannot draw water for about 46 percent irrigated cropland during dry season thanks to current level of groundwater depletion, says data from Survey and Monitoring of Groundwater Project and groundwater zoning map.

STWs can draw groundwater for irrigation within a depth of 2-7 metres.

"The problem persists mainly in the dry season when farmers irrigate their cropland," said Khondakar Fazle Hasan, chief

geologist of Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC).

Asked how farmers do the irrigation if STWs don't work, he said they make a pit five to six feet below the surface and put the shallow pump there to draw groundwater.

According to 2006-07 irrigation survey report of the government, around 10 million farmers have overwhelming dependence on STWs for almost 70 percent of 47.8 lakh hectares of irrigated cropland in the last Rabi season.

The groundwater zoning map of BADC prepared in 2006 shows that a record high of 78 percent irrigated cropland in Pabna has become critical for STW operation.

The level is 75 percent in Comilla, 60 percent in Kustia and Naogaon, 55 percent in

Mymensingh and Cox's Bazar, 50 percent in Joypurhat, 49 percent in Chittagong, 45 percent in Bogra and Rajbari and 30 percent in Jhenidah, Netrakona, Gazipur and Narayanganj.

In 62 upazilas, the groundwater level goes down more than seven metres. In 14 of these upazilas from the country's central and northern parts, water level goes over 11 metres down in dry season, says the quarterly monitoring report of Survey and Monitoring Project for Development of Minor Irrigation.

Besides, farmers are being unable to draw water by STWs for 28 percent of the land in Sherpur, 20 percent in Jamalpur and Tangail, 18 percent in Natore, 16 percent in Manikganj, 15 percent in Dhaka, Narsingdi and Sirajganj, and 10

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Ancient stone statue, terracotta tiles found in 2 districts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Rab members yesterday recovered some artefacts including an over thousand-year-old stone statue of Vishnu in Gaibandha and Dinajpur on Friday night.

Sources said acting on a tip-off, members of Rab-12 led by Captain AM Mahabub and Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Md Osman Shafi recovered a Vishnu statue of 9th century AD at Chappra village of Gobindganj upazila in Gaibandha.

They also recovered several artefacts including ancient terracotta tiles at Shahargachhi village in Gaibandha and Kamarpada village in Dinajpur.



The artefacts including the over-thousand-year-old Vishnu statue, centre, recovered by Rab members in Gaibandha and Dinajpur.

Four doctors to visit Hasina at jail today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four personal physicians of detained Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina will examine her health today and place recommendations to the jail authorities.

ENT specialist Prof Pran Gopal Dutta, ophthalmologist Prof Modasser Ali, medicine specialist Dr ABM Abdullah and heart surgeon Dr MH Millat have been asked to visit her at the sub jail and give

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Huji operating in Bogra in new name

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra

Leaders of banned militant organisation Harkatul Jihad al Islami (Huji) formed a new political party "Islami Gono Andolan" to carry out political activities openly.

They already formed a seven member committee led by Maulana Abdus Salam, founder of Fatematz Zohra women's madrasa in Sherpur, Bogra, to carry out organisational activities. Former deputy commander of Huji and founder of Ommulura Al Islami madrasa of Shahjahanpur in Bogra, Abdul Hannan Sabbir and Huji leader Abdul Aziz are also on the committee.

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Mob beats 2 robbers to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

An angry mob beat two robbers to death and injured another yesterday at Kaliakoir upazila in Gazipur.

The dead are Kabir Mia, 30, and Anwar Hossain, 35, of Shibpur in Brahmanbaria.

Sub-inspector (SI) Mohammad Mithu of Kaliakoir Police Station told The Daily Star that a gang of armed robbers stormed the houses of Alfaz Mia and Ali Hossain at Bringraj village of Kaliakoir upazila at about 3:00am.

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Man found dead in cop custody Torture alleged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A man was found dead in police custody at Batiaghata Police Station Friday evening.

The body of the man, Abul Hossain, 25, was found at around 7:30pm inside a toilet of the lockup at the police station. Police had arrested him the same day at around 3:00pm.

Hossain, arrested from a Khulna-bound bus in Satkhira for possession of Phensidyl, has committed suicide by hanging himself from the iron rod of the toilet window with a rope made out of torn pieces of blanket, claimed the police.

However, Hossain's cousin Ziaul Huq in a press statement yesterday alleged that Hossain was beaten to death in the police custody.

Ziaul Huq demanded proper investigation into the death.



These people earn their livelihood by pushing rickshaws up the slope of Kamrangirchar Bridge under Kamrangirchar Police Station in the capital in exchange for just Tk 1. The photo was taken yesterday.

JOURNALIST HAMID MIR From Pakistan

Nawaz-Zardari love will not last long Musharraf believes

President Pervez Musharraf is confident that the new friendship between Nawaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari will not last long and that they will part soon. The president has met almost all the newly elected PML-Q members of the National Assembly and urged them to remain united on one platform.

Background interviews with many PML-Q legislators who recently met Pervez Musharraf revealed that the president is sure that the issue of restoring the deposed judges will remain a great

source of difference between the PPP and the PML-N.

The president even predicted to one group of the lawmakers that the PPP will have no other option than to make a coalition with the PML-Q and the MQM after a few weeks. On the other side, the PPP leadership has decided that they will not form the federal government in case the PML-N is not ready to share the "responsibility" by joining the cabinet in the centre.

"We can even sit in the opposition

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Miladunnabi on March 21

UNB, Dhaka

The holy Eid-e-Miladunnabi marking the birth and demise of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM) will be observed across the country on March 21.

The National Moon-sighting Committee took the decision in a meeting at the Islamic Foundation as the moon of Rabiul Awal was not sighted yesterday. The month will begin from tomorrow.

Chaired by Religious Affairs Secretary Muhammad Ataur Rahman, the meeting was attended, among others, by Islamic Foundation Director General M Fazlur Rahman and Principal Information Officer Iftakhar Hossain.

On this day, the 12th of Rabiul Awal of the Hijri calendar, Muhammad (SM) was born with divine blessings and messages of peace for humankind. He also passed away the same day.

APOLLO HOSPITAL Doc, nurse demo disrupts medical services

UNB, Dhaka

Most employees of the Apollo Hospital, including doctors and nurses, yesterday staged demonstrations to press for immediate resignation of its chief executive officer Dr EDL Hansen, seriously disrupting its medical services.

Around 1,000 employees of the hospital went on a sit-in strike at about 8:00am, also demanding immediate withdrawal of a decision under which the hospital authorities "forcibly sacked" 150 members of the staff, including docs and nurses, without giving any prior notice.

During the daylong demonstrations, the medicare systems of the

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Probe finds anomalies in NGO registration

Now Sylhet NGO vanishes with money from 500 depositors

STAR REPORT

The Social Welfare Directorate (SWD) yesterday stand-released two officials of Natore office as primary investigation revealed irregularities in registering fraud NGOs that disappeared with members' about Tk 500 crore.

Meanwhile, the tendency of disappearing with public money spreads elsewhere, as another NGO vanished, this time in Sylhet, with Tk 50 lakh from over 500 depositors, report UNB.

Sources said, Social Welfare Deputy Director Mir Bux has been transferred to Bhola and registration officer Ismail Hossain to Bandarban, reports our Roving Correspondent from Natore.

The steps were taken after the three-member SWD team from Dhaka probed discrepancies in Natore office in the last three days.

Headed by SWD Additional Director Sallendranath Paik, the team also comprises Deputy Director (HQ) Badiuzzaman and Assistant Director Nasir Uddin.

"Now they [two officials] are transferred, but punitive action might be taken against them and some others who are now working in other districts once the probe completes," said one of the team.

Meanwhile, an impending threat on law and order is being widely apprehended in Naldanga and neighbouring upazilas as victims attacked and torched two more houses yesterday.

A mob swooped on the house of Wabaidul Haque at Sonapatil

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Staffs of Apollo Hospitals in the city's Bashundhara residential area stage a demonstration in front of the hospital protesting the decision of retrenching employees.

Spin holds key for Tigers

First ODI against SA today
SPORTS REPORTER

With the bitter Test series done and dusted, Bangladesh will focus their attention to a relatively comfortable domain of one-day cricket with the first limited-overs international against South Africa being held at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium today.

The match will be telecast live on BTV and NEO Sports from 9:30am.

Mohammad Ashraful will be pinning his hopes on this series to

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POWER PLANT CASE Charge-framing hearing resumes today

UNB, Dhaka

The hearing on charge framing against detained former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and six others in the barge-mounted power plant graft case resumes at a special court today.

The court deferred the hearing five times following time petitions from both the defence and the prosecution.

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CA to attend OIC summit

Leaves for Dakar Tuesday

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed leaves for Dakar on Tuesday to attend the 11th summit of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) to be held in the capital of Senegal March 13-14.

The summit will focus on four topics including implementation of the OIC ten-year programme of action and adoption of the revised OIC charter. It will have two brainstorming sessions on economic cooperation and knowledge sharing among the member states.

The OIC headquarters says 42 heads of state or government have so far confirmed their attendance at the summit of the 57-member organisation.

Pakistan will have ministerial

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Prayer Timing		
March 9		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-10	5-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-07	6-11
Esha	7-30	8-00

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