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Kibria's role recalled amid recession

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country badly feels the absence of economist Shah AMS Kibria at a time when the global economic meltdown is shaking the world, speakers said at a discussion in the city yesterday.

Speaking at the Kibria memorial speech at the National Museum marking the fourth death anniversary of the former finance minister, they demanded punishment to the killers of Kibria.

"By his commitment and brilliance, Kibria strengthened the country's economy as a finance minister during 1996-2001. The inflation rate hovered around two percent at that time," said Finance Minister AMA Muhith.

He hoped that the government would be able to punish the killers of the former finance minister.

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COALMINE SUBSIDENCE Ministers talk to villagers on compensation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two ministers and an adviser to the prime minister Tuesday visited Barapukuria coalmine area and held a meeting with villagers affected by land subsidence in the area to discuss rehabilitation and compensation issues.

Prime Minister's Adviser Dr Towfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, Environment Minister Mustafizur Rahman and State Minister for Energy Shamsul Haq Tuku held the open discussion.

The meeting started in the evening and ended at 9:00pm. The adviser and ministers, later, held another meeting with the Barapukuria Coal Mine Company Ltd (BCMCL) officials that continued till 11:00pm.

Sources said that they discussed with villagers issues related to land subsidence, loss of arable land and sufferings of people caused by the coalmine project.

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ILLEGAL MIGRANTS IN THAILAND

Barefoot 62 fail to pay fine, land in jail

AP, Ranong

A Thai court yesterday convicted 62 barefoot, disheveled migrants detained at sea of illegally entering the country, raising the prospect they could be deported despite fears they could face persecution or death if sent back to Myanmar.

A Ranong provincial court judge fined each defendant 1,000 baht (\$30) a sum that none of them could produce. So he sentenced them to five days in prison.

The Thai navy detained the Rohingya migrants on Monday after their rickety boat was found adrift in the Andaman Sea off Thailand's southwestern coast.

The Thai government contends the

migrants do not qualify for refugee status, and a police official said they would be turned over to immigration police after they served their sentence and could be expelled.

"Have pity on us," migrant Mamoud Hussain said before the ruling at the provincial Ranong Courthouse.

"They'll kill me and my family if I go back."

Hussain, 50, was among 78 migrants on the boat. Four others were hospitalized. Twelve minors were being held separately by immigration police because they are too young to be tried in the court, said Ranong police Col Weerasilp Kwanseng.

The plight of the Rohingyas a stateless,

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Ferries stop for 13 hours due to fog

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Several hundred vehicles got stranded on the both sides of Paturia-Daulatdia and Paturia-Kazirhat routes yesterday as ferry services were

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Prayer Timing January 29		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:35	6:10
Zohr	12:45	1:15
Asr	4:15	4:30
Maghrib	5:46	5:50
Esha	7:15	7:45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Obama's envoy for stronger Gaza truce

Flies to Israel from Egypt in quest of ME peace

AFP, Jerusalem

US middleast envoy George Mitchell arrived in Israel yesterday after saying it was critical to consolidate the Gaza ceasefire, as tensions rose after a deadly raid by Palestinian militants.

He flew into Israel from Egypt on the second leg of his maiden trip to the region, instructed by President Barack Obama to "engage vigorously" in order to resuscitate the lifeless Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

"It is of critical importance that the ceasefire be extended and consolidated. We support Egypt's continuing efforts in that regard," he said after meeting Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

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SHIP BREAKING INDUSTRY 7,000 child labourers doing hazardous job

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nearly a quarter of the total workforce in the ship-breaking industry in Chittagong is child labourers who are primarily used for the more hazardous jobs at the yards, a survey of two NGOs revealed this yesterday.

Young Power in Social Action (YPSA) and International Federation for Human Rights (Fidh) in the jointly prepared report, with technical support of NGO Platform on Ship Breaking, said at least 7,000 workers in the industry are below the age of 18.

Around 30,000 workers are employed in the ship-breaking yards of Chittagong.

Mohammad Ali Shahin, YPSA official and focal person of NGO Platform on Ship Breaking, while publishing the report at Dhaka Reporters Unity said, "Children are primarily used for

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3 whipped over teasing schoolgirl

UNB, Shariatpur

Three young men were given 50 lashes each for teasing a schoolgirl at Char Kumuria in Vederganj upazila yesterday.

The village elders at a meeting found Shipon, Bulbul and Rana guilty.

Shipon had offered love to Jamila (not the real name), a student of class ten in Islamia Senior Aleem Madrasa but was bluntly refused.

Angered, Shipon in connivance with Bulbul and Rana held Jamila on way back home from the madrasa on January

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Re-polling sought in 3 JS seats

Petition filed with HC

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Three petitions have been filed with the High Court (HC) since the December 29 parliamentary polls seeking cancellation of election in three constituencies, and directives to the Election Commission (EC) to hold fresh election for these seats.

Two independent candidates who lost the polls race and another person filed the petitions.

The petitioners are ASM Feroz Alam (Patuakhali-2), Mamunur Rashid Kiron (Noakhali-3) and Brig Gen (ret'd) Kazi Mahmud Hossain (Narsingdi-4).

Besides, Manzur Quader, who was BNP nominee for Sirajganj-5 constituency, filed an election petition with the HC seeking its orders for recounting of the votes cast, and then declaring him elected from that constituency.

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Rights out in cold

HR commission ordinance waits to be made law; office pushed out of Hare Road to Lalmatia; starts a fresh ordeal without electricity, staff

EMRAN HOSSAIN

It was tough to recognise the building as a government office at first sight. There was no reception or guard but only a gardener who confirmed it as the headquarters of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

Covered with smoke from burning weeds on the yard, the office building called Kalatan on Hare Road looked deserted during a visit last week. The view was almost same inside, where two of the three staffs on the ground floor of the two-storey office were absent.

The commission had to shift its office to Lalmatia yesterday as Kalatan is meant for a minister's residence. Its officials believe the new office would be "functional" although utility facilities like



New NHRC office at Lalmatia.

electricity and gas are not available there.

Two of the three commissioners were found busy in writing a press release on Israel's aggression on Gaza upstairs. Munira Khan, the only female member of the commission, was writing Bangla version of the news release, while her

colleague Prof Dr Niru K Chakma was writing in English.

"Writing a press release is very tough to me as I have never practiced it in my life. I am trying to write one since morning," Munira told The Daily Star correspondent around noon.

The only staff present at the office was a computer composer against a requirement of 65 employees proposed in the draft organogram of the commission.

The NHRC secretary finally showed up at 4:00pm and signed the press release. All the national human rights office did that day was preparing a press release.

During visits to the commission next three successive days, activities of NHRC were found to be 'stepped up' a little. The commission members were found going

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NBR to unfreeze 45 bank accounts

Evaded tax, fine to be deducted

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) is likely to allow reactivation of 45 out of 309 frozen bank accounts primarily after deducting the tax evaded by the account holders and 10 per cent fine.

Sources said the NBR will give directives to the tax commissioners concerned after having discussions with government high-ups on the matter.

During the tenure of the immediate past caretaker government, 335 accounts of both Awami League and BNP leaders and businessmen were frozen. Of those, 26 accounts were reactivated at different times.

NBR is seeking guidelines from the government high-ups on the rest 309 accounts.

Anti-corruption task force had conducted investigation and submitted 119 reports on the bank accounts before its abolition on January 1, NBR sources said.

It will ask the tax commissioners concerned to find out the amount of tax evaded by the account holders and take necessary steps about the accounts on which task force reports are available but no case has been filed. There are about 45 such accounts.

NBR has classified the frozen accounts into three categories--

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MADRASA STUDENTS SC upholds HC order on DU rules

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday upheld the High Court (HC) verdict that earlier declared illegal the Dhaka University's (DU) new admission rules disqualifying madrasa students for admission to the university's seven departments.

The four-member full bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice MM Ruhul Amin passed the order rejecting the DU's petition for staying the HC judgement.

The apex court also asked the DU authorities to file a regular appeal with this court against the HC judgement after getting certified copy of the verdict.

During the hearing of the

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Firefighters with the help of a diver, circled, try to recover yesterday the body of Lalu Pahlowan who was burned to death in the fire at a slum of Mir Hajirbagh in the capital Tuesday night. Story on page 3

PHOTO: SHAFIQUE ALAM

BNP district units to be dissolved

Process starts next week

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is likely to start dissolving party's district units from next week in consultation with upazila level leaders to revamp the organisation that faced a huge debacle in the last national polls.

Party insiders said a series of meetings between the party chairperson and upazila level leaders is likely to start next week and top leaders of district units may also be asked to be present at those meetings.

The party high command has already collected reports on the activities of district committees which will also be placed before the party chairperson prior to holding meetings with field level leaders, said the insiders.

Following a directive from the chairperson party central leaders have also prepared letters for field level leaders asking them to attend the meeting with the chairperson.

According to the plan chairperson will talk to the leaders of party's upazila units to get the true portrait and recent activities of grassroots level leaders. She will also enquire about the activities of the district committee leaders.

"The chairperson may take actions against any of the district committees that has failed to do their respective duties properly immediately after the discussion with the field level leaders," a central leader said.

The district level leaders, however, said they were yet to get any such directive from the party high-ups regarding the organisation revamping process.

"Officially we have not received any directive but we are ready to do whatever the central body ask us to do," Waliullah Rabbani,

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Huda gets bail in all 20 cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday granted ad-interim bail for three months to former BNP lawmaker Nazmul Huda in connection with a Tk 6 lakh bribery case filed by the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC).

After hearing a bail petition filed by Nazmul Huda, an HC bench of Justice Syed AB Mahmudul Huq and Justice Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury also issued a rule upon the government to explain why the petitioner should not be

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Ferry service between Paturia and Daulatdia resumed yesterday morning after a 14-hour halt due to dense fog. Queues of vehicles on both ends remained for hours more.

JAGANNATH CLASH 7 students granted bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The seven Jagannath University (JNU) students, who were detained by police during Tuesday's clash, were granted bail after being produced before the court yesterday.

The detainees are: Abul Khayer, Mizanur Rahman, Kabir Hossain, Zahedul Islam, Saikat Majumder, Abdul Mannaf and Abdul Baten. Meanwhile, police beat up two journalists as they tried to enter the JNU campus yesterday.

Members of Jagannath

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