

LAUNCH TRAGEDY  
Death toll now  
41 as 10 more  
bodies found

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Ten more bodies of the dead from Thursday's launch tragedy were recovered yesterday raising the death toll to 41. At least 10 people are still missing.

Eight of the dead were identified as Faruk Hossain, 45, a teacher of Vashanchar Secondary School, Nur Mohammad Bepari, 50, a retired teacher of Char Hoglea Lakkhipur madrasa, Abdul Khaleque Mollah, 55, husband of expatriate Kohinor Begum of Barisal, Nurunnesa Begum, 65, of Mehendiganj, Bimol, 32, of Patarhat, Rubel, 22, of Dhaka, Hanif Mia of Armatol of Barisal.

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## BNP returns to JS soon Responds to speaker's 'respectable seat order'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition BNP may return to parliament today ending an absence of 17 consecutive workdays.

The decision to get back in the House came yesterday at a two-hour meeting of the lawmakers from BNP and allies. It followed assurance from Speaker Abdul Hamid of "respectable seating arrangements in the House".

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia presided over the meeting that began at around 5:00pm at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

"We have decided to return to parliament very shortly as the speaker has assured us of respectable seating arrangements there," Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abidin Faroque told reporters after the meeting.

Referring to the February 19 talks at

the speaker's office, he said, "The treasury bench chief whip has assured that we will be given chairs of four parliamentary standing committees in line with our recommendations."

"He also said the earlier inclusion of names as chiefs of two standing committees will be scrapped."

Faroque however did not specify when they will return to the legislature. "We will join the House proceedings in the current session. It might be as soon as tomorrow," he said.

However, talking to The Daily Star after the meeting, some of the BNP lawmakers said they would join the House today to protest the treasury bench's move to ratify ordinances promulgated by the immediate past caretaker government.

The special committee of Jatiya Sangsad has recommended that parliament ratify 54 out of 122 promulgated

during around two-year rule of the interim administration.

The BNP-led opposition lawmakers have submitted dozens of notices of resolutions for disapproval of the ordinances.

But they have already missed the opportunity to move their motions on three bills seeking ratification for as many ordinances as they were not present yesterday.

If they go to parliament today they will be able to at least register their disapproval of the ordinances on the budgets under Fakhruddin Ahmed-led government as their resolutions concerned are set down in today's Orders of the Day.

The opposition lawmakers, who were present at the inauguration of the ninth parliament on January 25, began boycotting the proceedings on January 28 in

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BTCL gets  
new MD as  
incumbent  
on leave

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a surprise move yesterday, the government appointed an official, who was forced to retire in 2002, as the managing director (MD) of Bangladesh Telephone Company Ltd (BTCL) when the incumbent MD is on leave.

S.M. Khairuzzaman  
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### Thank you readers, patrons, advertisers

Starting today, our three-part, 200-page 18th Anniversary supplement will be distributed over the next two days along with your daily copy, FREE of any extra charge. The theme for this year is "Time to Turn a Corner" which has been presented in three parts: a) Expectations from the new government; b) Revisiting the caretaker government; and c) Global trends: Adversity or opportunity.

We sincerely believe that time has arrived for us to turn a corner. The return to democracy and representative government, the firm commitment for a politics of change and the massive rejection by our voters of corruption and extremism give Bangladesh a real chance to move forward in the globalised world. The current economic meltdown

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## Govt plans major defence spending

Missiles, frigates, tanks, choppers on purchase list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday unveiled in parliament plans to strengthen the country's defence system by procuring new military hardware including anti-tank and air-defence missiles, aircraft for maritime patrol, frigates, tanks, and choppers.

Planning Minister Air-Vice Marshal (retd)

AK Khandker, who is in charge of the armed forces affairs in parliament, said the purchases will be made in the current and next fiscal years.

He however did not give any idea about the cost. He said the government measures to make the forces well equipped and trained will be in line with the country's financial capabilities.

Answering a question from ruling alliance

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## Illegal industries pressurise govt

State minister tells House on industries set up on forestland

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The state minister for forest yesterday told the House that he was under pressure from some industrialists who set up factories and industries illegally on forest and khas land in Gazipur area as they were now asking for environment clearance.

"Many of the industries were not set up properly. But they are demanding clearance, arguing that investment of thousands of

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Indian Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee at the orientation programme for newly-elected members of Jatiya Sangsad at Hotel Sonargaon yesterday.

## Hasina urges BNP to return to Sangsad

Lok Sabha speaker says strong opposition must

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon the people to remain alert, so none may harm the country's democracy, 'coming through the backdoor'.

She was addressing an

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## Some expats in ME fund JMB greatly

KAILASH SARKAR

A large chunk of the funding for Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) come from like-minded Bangladeshi expatriates, mostly living in the Middle East countries, who also provide the JMB operatives with shelters in the country.

JMB collects explosives from neighbouring countries and has a number of dens in Gazipur, said sources.

Besides, some NGOs patronise the JMB men who operate a number of taxicabs across the

country for income as well as their own transport purpose, the sources added.

The two JMB dens unearthed by Gazipur police on Saturday and Friday were set up in the houses of two Bangladeshi expatriates living in Saudi Arabia.

The JMB hideout busted on Friday was set up in the house of expatriate Yusuf Ali of Gharatol village in Tongi while the other discovered on Saturday belongs to expatriate Mojibur Rahman of East Kalomeshwar.

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## Social safety net programmes to be expanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday decided to revitalise the social safety net programmes by expanding the test relief (TR) and food for work programmes in the rural areas and keeping open market sale (OMS) of rice only for the target groups to ensure food security of the people.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Food Planning and Monitoring Committee held at food and disaster management ministry

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## HEARTY CONGRATULATIONS

Md. Musa Meah  
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Bangladesh Frozen  
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(BFFEA)



We warmly congratulate

Mr. Md. Musa Meah, the Hon'ble Chairman of Continental Insurance Limited for being elected as President of the Bangladesh Frozen Foods Exporters Association (BFFEA) for the year 2009 & 2010

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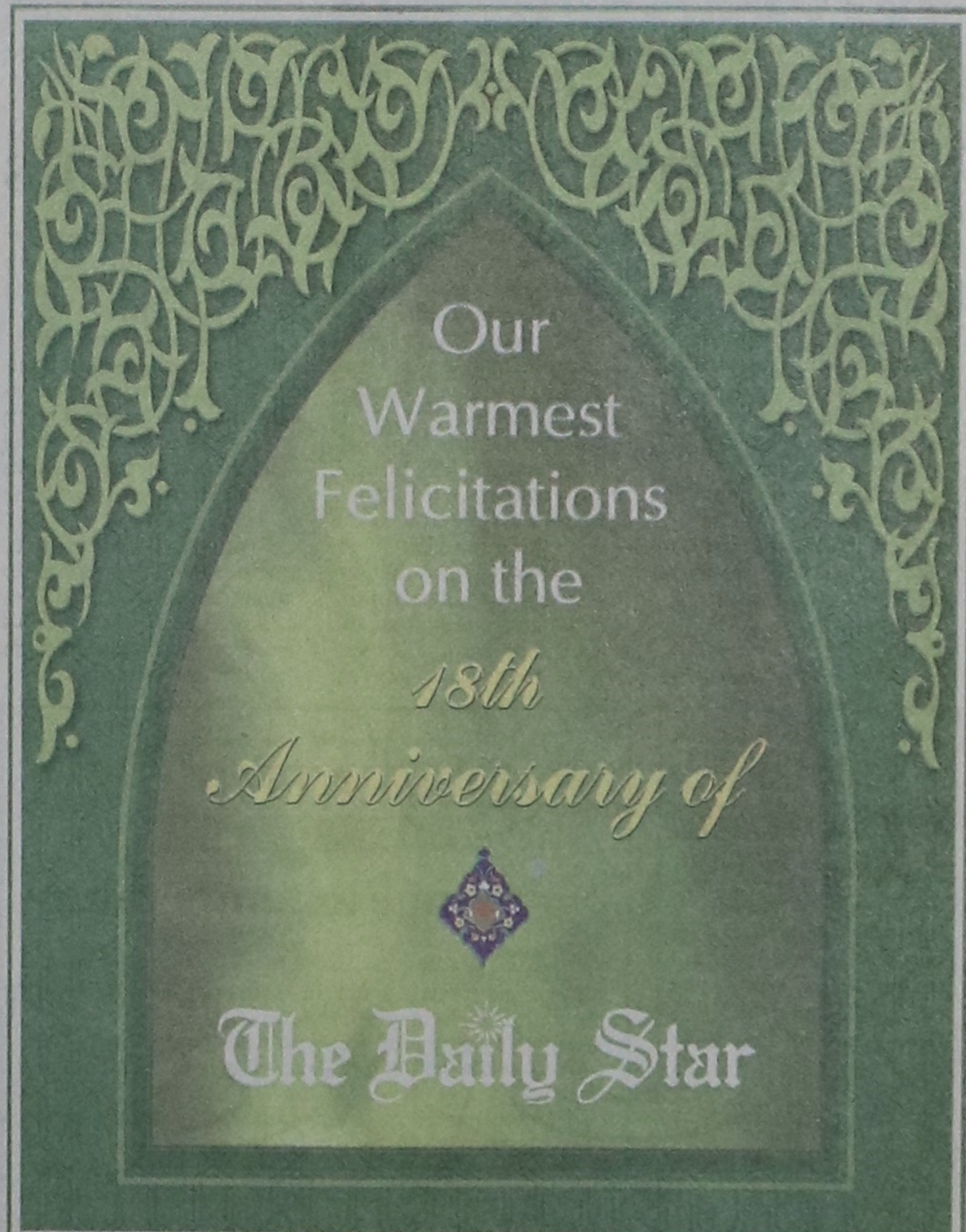
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