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Top 'Huji man' Salam held

KAILASH SARKAR
An intelligence agency picked up Maulana Sheikh Abdus Salam, a founding member of Harkatul Jihad al Islami (Huji) and the ameer of Islamic Democratic Party (IDP) from his home in Bashundhara Residential area yesterday. His family sources said a three-member team of an intelligence agency picked him up from his home around 5:30pm. They dragged him out of his house without letting him talk to his family members, sources added. He returned to Dhaka from the northern region of the country around noon.

MILITANTS' LINK Faruk Khan backtracks on his views

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Commerce Minister Lt Col (ret) Faruk Khan yesterday retracted his earlier comments linking Islamist militants to the Pikhana carnage. He said the statements he had made before were not based on probe findings; rather they were his personal observations. He said this at a press briefing at BDR Pikhana headquarters.

1,600 workers lose job as knitwear unit shuts down

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Sunshine Knitwear Limited yesterday closed down its factory in Tejgaon, laying off at least 1,600 workers, after the company counted deep losses in fallout from the global financial crisis and labour trouble. SNR Towfiq, general manager of the factory, told The Daily Star that falling orders and low price-offers from international buyers in times of recession had forced the

IMF pledges help to tackle recession

UNB, Dhaka
The International Monetary Fund (IMF) will give Bangladesh and its neighboring countries all necessary cooperation in tackling possible negative impacts of the current global economic meltdown. Representative of Bangladesh, India, Bhutan and Sri Lanka in the IMF Dr Adarsh Kishore gave the assurance when he called on Prime Minister (PM) Sheikh Hasina

Video-audio evidence of BDR carnage found

Footage to help investigation greatly; another FBI team shortly; govt waits for post-mortem on BDR men's death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Investigators of the BDR carnage found audiotapes and footage of the BDR officers' meeting held on February 25 morning at Darbar Hall in Pikhana and the CCTV footage of arms being looted from the BDR arsenal. Commerce Minister Faruk Khan, assigned to coordinate the work of probe committees, disclosed it yesterday evening to reporters after holding the third meeting of a probe-coordination committee at the BDR headquarters. Faruk said the investigators are now looking into the audiotapes and footage of the Darbar Hall meeting and the CCTV footage of arsenal looting. The footage would greatly help investigators identify the BDR jawans involved in the killing of BDR officers and looting of arms. CID sources said it has a cell, led by an assistant superintendent of police (ASP),

looking into the footage to identify the criminals. According to sources in the cell, they are watching the footage to grab stills of suspects. The stills would be shown to witnesses so that they could identify the jawans involved in the carnage. They said they would also give the photos to BDR authorities so that they could identify and provide details of the suspects. BDR Director General Brig Gen Mainul Islam, chiefs of Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Special Branch of Police (SB), Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), other agencies concerned and senior officials of all three BDR carnage probe bodies were present at the probe-coordination committee meeting. Faruk said a committee headed by the BDR director general has been formed to submit a report on restructuring and renaming BDR. On the recent mysterious deaths of

BDR jawans, Faruk said the real cause of their deaths would be clear after receiving their autopsy reports. Meanwhile, the government probe committee was given four more days yesterday to submit its report. It had sought seven days' time. This is the second time the committee sought time. Headed by retired bureaucrat Anisuzzaman Khan, the committee was supposed to submit its report yesterday. Initially, it was supposed to file the report by March 9. Asked about the necessity of the 11-member government probe body when the army and the CID are investigating the incident separately, Faruk said, "The army is probing the incident for its own purpose, the CID is carrying out the criminal investigation and the government formed the probe body for the state's own purpose." Meanwhile, a few hundred family

Rice turns cheap

Good stock, low global market bring down prices

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The prices of both coarse and fine rice varieties are decreasing in this non-harvest season when rice prices normally remain high. Sufficient stock and supply of rice and paddy and a fall in food grain prices on the international market are the main reasons behind this unusual price fall, traders and wholesalers said. The prices of coarse rice varieties, including guti, have been hovering between Tk 23 and Tk 25 per kg in last one month in the retail markets. The prices were Tk 30-33 per kg at the same time last year. The prices of fine rice varieties are hovering between Tk 35 and 38 per kg, which was between Tk 42 and 45 a kg last year. The prices of coarse rice and medium varieties came down by Tk 2-3 per kg in last one week. Gutu was selling at Tk 21-22 per kg while parija at Tk 25-27 and lata at Tk 28-30 per kg yesterday. The price of fine rice dropped by Tk 2-3 per kg in the retail markets in last week. Najirshail of different qualities was selling for Tk 32-38 while minikate for Tk 35-37. Masud Rana, manager of Ekata Rice Agency at Mohammadpur Krishi Market, said the prices of all varieties of rice came down by Tk 100 per maund (37.32 kg) in the wholesale market in last one month when the prices usually increase by Tk 50-100 per maund. "Huge supply, poor sale and price fall on the international market are the main reasons behind the price fall of rice at this time," he said. The wholesale prices of coarse rice varieties at Badamtali, Babubazar and Mohammadpur Krishi Market were Tk 19.70-19.90 while the price of minikate was Tk 33.10-34.00 yesterday.

PM for united move against terrorism in Saarc region

UNB, Dhaka
Prime Minister (PM) Sheikh Hasina yesterday called for united efforts of all to root out terrorism and eradicate poverty from South Asia. The PM made the call when South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) Secretary General Dr Sheel

Saarc Summit likely to be deferred

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT
The 16th Saarc Summit is likely to be deferred until at least the first quarter of 2010 as the host the Maldives expressed its inability to arrange the gathering before October 2009 amid the current economic recession.



Ruma, as many other RMG workers and employees, is concerned about her future, as House of Sunshine Knitwear Ltd in Tejgaon area was declared shut down.

PDB's rental woes go on

2 inexperienced power companies continue to default on plant delivery, penalty

SHARIER KHAN
Two local companies awarded with rental power contracts by the caretaker government despite their inexperience have become a pain in the neck of authorities for their continual failure to deliver the power plants and refraining from paying penalty as per contracts. Energy Prima of Hosaf Group and Venture Energy Resources that never dealt with rental power projects before are now dictating their own terms and deadlines about delivering three rental power plants totalling 104 megawatt capacity and asking the Power Development Board (PDB) to forgo the

penalty. Energy Prima even went to the court last year to prevent PDB from obtaining penalty and is now asking the Board that through an amendment to its existing contract it should be allowed to deliver its 20mw Bogra power plant, initially, with 14mw only and without paying penalty. Ironically, Energy Prima "promised" to withdraw its case against PDB if the latter agrees to amend the contract. The two other power schemes that keep on missing deadlines are Energy Prima's 50mw Fenchuganj Power project and Venture Energy's 34.5mw Bhola powerscheme. All these plants were supposed to

come into operation within May 2008 -- 120 days from signing of the agreements in January last year. Now Energy Prima is proposing that it can bring its Bogra power plant in two phases from May 15. The company however could not give a clear schedule for its Fenchuganj 50mw power plant and Venture Energy is asking for a March 31 deadline. "The concept of rental power plant is that the contractor owns power units that can be mobilised and installed within a short period for a short-term or mid-term period. Because of this easy mobility, the government was ready to pay higher

Source, cause of fire not known

Probe report blames Bashundhara for negligence in safety

HASAN JAHID TUSHER
The probe committee that investigated the fire incident at Bashundhara Shopping Complex in its report yesterday could not identify the source and cause of the fire but mentioned gross negligence of the Bashundhara authorities regarding fire safety. The Bashundhara authorities did not cooperate with the committee in providing necessary information and assistance, alleged the probe body in the report submitted to the home minister. The committee found that the fire broke out at the complex at least an hour before the Bashundhara authorities called the fire fighters at about 1:45pm on March 13. The fire exit doors at the shopping complex had been kept under lock and key during the incident, said the report. The probe body said six people died inside a lift but if they

Minister craves for luxury car

Violates govt rules to get one at cost of public money

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
In breach of government rules, Roads and Highways Department (RHD) has lately invited tenders for a cross-country vehicle to be used by Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain. According to procurement rules, a department cannot usually purchase of its own accord any vehicles, computers, furniture or other things. For a purchase, it must go through the establishment ministry. Only in certain circumstances can a department make a purchase and that too on approval from the establishment ministry or the ministry concerned. However, this rule does not cover buying a vehicle for use by a minister.



1st Death Anniversary

Today, the 24th March 2009 is the 1st death Anniversary of Late Mainul Islam (Shapon) who had been a member of the Board of Directors of Brothers Ltd. Brothers Garments Ltd. S.P. Chemicals Ltd. Dhaka Bank Ltd. and Dhaka Phone Ltd. respectively. Mainul Islam (Shapon) died on 24th March 2008 at 6.15 a.m. in the Appolo Hospital, Dhaka. On this sad occasion a "Doa Mahfil" has been arranged at his family Graveyard at village Vulta, under Arahazhar Upazilla in the district of Narayanganj. All the relatives, well wishers and friends of Late Mainul Islam (Shapon) are requested to pray to the Almighty Allah for eternal peace and salvation of the departed soul.

Sincerely
Farjana Islam (Anna)
& Children

CBA leaders blame CUFL men for arms offloading

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg
Five former CBA (Collective Bargaining Agent) leaders of Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd (CUFL) blamed CUFL officials for the offloading of 10 truck-loads of deadly weapons at the CUFL jetty. There was no scope for any sort of goods offloading at the restricted jetty without CUFL authority's permission, said the former CBA leaders during CID interrogation yesterday. Criminal Investigation Department (CID) investigators interrogated the former CBA leaders to know if they had any knowledge of the arms consignment hauled at

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