

## Rat meat served at RU hall

RU CORRESPONDENT

Motihar police on Sunday night arrested two employees of Sher-e-Bangla Hall of Rajshahi University (RU) for serving rat meat to a student at its dining hall.

Sources said Abdul Matin, a fourth year student of physics department and also a resident of the hall, found two pieces of rat meat in a chicken curry while having lunch.

Informed, other students confirmed the pieces as rat meat and beat up dining boy Najibur Rahman and chief cook Sultan Mahmud severely.

They also staged a demonstration protesting the incident and demanded immediate punishment of the staff involved. They ransacked the dining hall during the demonstration.

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# Hijacked ship heads towards Somalia

*Fate of 26 Bangladeshis unknown, pirates yet to contact authorities for ransom; website report claims 547 on 23 vessels from different countries taken hostage*

STAR REPORT

The fate of 26 abductees of the Bangladeshi ship hijacked by Somali pirates in the Arabian Sea on Sunday remain uncertain, as the Bangladesh authorities could not contact them until yesterday afternoon.

The pirates did not contact any authority or make ransom demand.

MV Jahan Moni, spotted in the Arabian Sea some 1,100 nautical miles off the Somali coast, started heading for the coast at a speed of 10 nautical mile an hour at 4:00pm, said the Mercantile Marine Department of Bangladesh that is

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The photo is from the website of European Union Naval Force-Somalia, which says the ship is Bangladesh-flagged MV Jahan Moni that has been hijacked in the Arabian Sea.



Abu Naser

## Families in depths of despair

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Wife of Abu Naser Mohammad Abdullah Mazumder, chief officer of hijacked ship MV Jahan Moni, considers herself and her baby girl extremely lucky, as they had to be left out of the trip for her illness.

"We didn't go with Naser as

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# MUNICIPAL POLLS BNP for army deployment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition BNP has demanded that the Election Commission move to deploy the army to ensure free and fair municipal polls next month.

A delegation of the party raised the demand at a meeting with the commission yesterday.

"We do not claim that the present law and order is not conducive to holding elections. We still raised the demand as we think holding of a free and fair election is not possible without army deployment," BNP leader MK Anwar said.

Anwar, a member of the party's national standing committee, was talking to newsmen on the EC Secretariat premises after the meeting.

Elections to 269 municipalities across the country will be held in mid-January.

Announcing the polls schedule on Thursday, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda said the EC would go for army deployment if necessary.

About the BNP's demand, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakhawat Hossain yesterday told reporters the EC was observing the situation and if necessary it would move for army

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# Power, fuel to be pricier

*Finance ministry proposes to give fertiliser subsidy directly to farmers*

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The finance ministry yesterday recommended that the prices of electricity and petroleum should be increased or else, it said the government will have to give an additional Tk 1,400 crore subsidy to these sectors this fiscal year.

At a meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair, the ministry also recommended withdrawing subsidy for fertilizer dealers, and giving it directly to farmers. They will be given cards for

getting the subsidy, it said.

The government has already allocated Tk 5,200 crore in subsidy to power and energy sectors. Now that it has opted for a large number of costly rental power projects, which operate on diesel and furnace oil, the subsidy requirement has gone up.

Explaining this, the finance ministry said rental plants will sell electricity at a rate much higher than the government will sell to the public. Moreover, prices of petroleum products are also increasing in the global market.

The subsidy requirement in agriculture sector has also gone up as local fertilizer production has decreased but the cost of imported fertilizer has increased. As a result, agriculture sector has sought Tk 1,800 crore additional subsidy on top of the already allocated Tk 4,000 crore.

Besides, local fertilizer production is directly affected by the declining gas production in the country. To minimise the country's power crisis this year, the government temporarily shut down some

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## 10-TRUCK ARMS CASE Babar on remand again

A CORRESPONDENT

A Chittagong court yesterday placed former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar on a five-day remand in the 10-truck arms haul case.

Chittagong Metropolitan Magistrate Mahubur Rahman passed the order after Criminal Investigation Department produced him before the court with a prayer for a 10-day remand.

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## JAIL KILLING CASE More time given for retrial plea

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday adjourned until January 9 the hearing on the petition for permission to appeal against the jail killing case verdict, granting the state counsels more time to place documents in support of their plea for retrial.

The order came after Anisul Huq, principal state counsel for the case, and Attorney General Mahububey Alam sought more time to place documents supporting their claim that the previous BNP-led government had influenced the trial at the lower court.

They also asked for retrial of the case filed for killing four national leaders inside Dhaka Central Jail on November 3, 1975.

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## Robbers kill 2 villagers in Sunamganj

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Two people were killed and five injured as robbers opened fire on the villagers in Derai upazila of Sunamganj Sunday night.

The deceased were Dipon Bala Das, 16, daughter of Sudhir Ranjan Das and Anup Das, 26, son of Baroda Das of Sutargaon village of the upazila.

The robbers also looted valuables, including 10 tolas of

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People sit around a fire in the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan to stay warm in cool breeze and drizzle yesterday.

## Early winter chill

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country had a cold lousy day soaked in drizzling bringing in the chill of mid-winter in this early December yesterday.

In the city, the sun was hardly visible. The sky was cloudy and a cool breeze was blowing. The Met office said winter might set in this week.

Winter usually arrives in the country in mid-December to January.

A depression in the Bay of Bengal caused the drizzling across the country, said Muhammad Saadul Alam.

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# Bill seeks to clip local govt wings

Lawmaker Menon speaks against the move at JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday placed a bill in parliament, seeking to bring some major amendments to the upazila parishad law in an apparent effort to consolidate further its authority over the local bodies.

Piloted by the LGRD minister, the proposed legislation gives the government the authority to remove any elected upazila representative and also to appoint an administrator to perform the parishad's functions if all the three posts--a chairman and two vice-chairmen--fall vacant.

Rashed Khan Menon, Workers Party president and chief of the parliamentary standing committee on the education ministry, objected to the bill.

He said the upazila parishad chairmen and vice-chairmen have already been agitating to press home various demands.

Constituted through elections in January 2009, the upazila parishads could not yet start

functioning in full swing due to "the government's indifference and the bureaucrats' opposition".

Besides, lawmakers have been made advisers to the upazila parishads and empowered to interfere in their activities.

"Under the circumstances, I will request not to place the bill and take it back to the cabinet for further discussion," Menon said.

Referring to Menon's objection, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam said there is still an opportunity to discuss the bill at the parliamentary standing committee.

After he placed the bill, the House sent it to the parliamentary standing committee on the LGRD ministry for scrutiny and asked for a report within a month.

The bill proposes a short-cut procedure to remove an upazila parishad representative.

It says the government can remove a chairman, a vice-chairman or any member of a parishad on grounds of misconduct, refusal to

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