Stampede kills

FROM PAGE 20

terrain.

night.

The search for bodies and

survivors was hampered by

pilgrims in a rescue effort

that stretched deep into the

Antony called the incident "a

tragedy beyond anyone's

shrine, located in Idukki

district, about 200 kilometres

from the Kerala state capital

festival has been struck by

disaster. In 1999 more than 50

Hindu devotees died after a

landslide on a crowded hill-

crowd into congested areas.

Few safety regulations and

absent or inadequate polic-

ing mean panic can spread

quickly with deadly conse-

dent but occasionally simply

a rumour about a bomb or

attack leads to a crush.

Women and children fre-

quently make up the majority

popular holiday destination

and spice-growing region

with sandy beaches and lush

green mountains, said he was

Defiant Iran

says it's

enriching

uranium

'strongly'

A defiant Iran said yesterday

its controversial uranium

enrichment programme was

progressing "very strongly",

as it opened the doors of two

of its atomic sites to foreign

The declaration by foreign

minister and atomic chief Ali

Akbar Salehi came just days

ahead of a high-profile meet-

ing between Tehran and six

world powers over the

Islamic republic's nuclear

a reaction to US Secretary of

State Hillary Clinton's recent

comment that Iran's nuclear

programme was hampered

not create any problems for

our nuclear activities," Salehi

told a news conference

broadcast on state television

going forward strongly. Our

activities, especially in (ura-

nium) enrichment, are also

uphold the highest stan-

dards of ethical journalism

Editor and Publisher of

the newspaper Mahfuz

Anam welcomed the audi-

ence at the main auditorium

of Shilpakala Academy in the

Though an English news-

paper, The Daily Star always

tries to patronise Bangalee

The function began with

performances by classical

artistes -- Anup Barua,

Swani Zubayeer and

Priyanka Gope -- who capti-

vated the audience by their

Nrityanchal (Dhaka), Srishti

Dance Movement Centre

(Chittagong) gave a brilliant

performance that earned

The Daily Star began the

Friday with a series of

programmes across the

country.

Dancers from the

continuing very strongly."

A classical

FROM PAGE 20

in Bangladesh.

culture, he said.

unique rendition.

capital.

"Our nuclear activities are

from the central city of Arak.

"The recent sanctions did

by international sanctions.

Salehi's remarks were also

AFP, Tehran

diplomats.

programme.

The governor of Kerala, a

The spark is often an acci-

side at the site.

quences.

of the victims.

It is the second time in

Thiruvananthapuram.

Defence Minister AK

Ode to a fighter

FROM PAGE 20

He would not talk further, he said, as he had work to do. He then faded out in the field with fellow farmers.

Mostofa Kamal, superintendent of the madrasa, said Ranjit is the senior most English teacher there.

"We don't get salary from the government, as we are not on the MPO (monthly payment order) list. Most teachers have land or other support to manage their families, but Ranjit has nothing.

"So unfortunately he has to work as day labourer," Mostafa Kamal said.

The madrasa authorities cannot pay any of the 13 teachers, two of them female, as they have no income. All the madrasa's 280 students, boys and girls combined, are offered free education since they come from very poor families.

has adopted a unique work plan. He starts working in the field when it is still dark and continues till 10:00am. After giving classes at the

To earn his living, Ranjit

madrasa, he again joins his colleagues at the field after 4:00pm and continues till late in the evening. On holidays, he works

the whole day, said Joinul Hossain, a fellow labourer. At times, Ranjit works at

local brick kilns. After completing gradu-

ation from Dinajpur KBM College in 1995, Ranjit started his career at the madrasa as an assistant teacher in 1999 when it was established by the local He had hoped that the

institution would get MPO, he told The Daily Star at the madrasa.

Alongside his madrasa job, Ranjit wanted to do private teaching to feed the family. But he had to cancel that plan, as the students cannot afford to pay, he

So he preferred to do the hard work than to stoop.

"Ranjit's sense of selfrespect is strong. Despite being in such dire straits, he never came for any help," said Shahadat Hossain Bablu, chairman of the Goaldihi union of Khansama upazila where Ranjit lives.

Talking about the monthly payment order from the government, Zakir Hossain, assistant superintendent of the madrasa, said the institution is deprived of this state benefit despite fulfilling all the criteria. In recent years, their pass

rate in Dakhil examination has been between 60 and 70 percent, he added.

The madrasa management committee has also been reformed this year dissolving the previous one as per the recommendation of the Madrasa Board.

Local lawmaker Asaduzzaman Noor visited the madrasa on several occasions and gave some donations to run it.

"We had submitted the application for MPO with his [Noor's] recommendation," Zakir said.

The recommendation, however, did not work.

Mozahar Hossain, secretary of the district Teachers'

re-fixed the daily deposit of

cellation of route permit and

driving licence, if the owners

and drivers of CNG-run

auto-rickshaw violate the

passengers should hand

over those drivers to the

traffic police if found charg-

ing additional fare, tamper-

ing meter or refusing to run

on a short distance. In addi-

tion, passengers can inform

the police control room over

phone about violation of

However, less than 5,000

of the total 12,000 auto-

rickshaws have received

meter ok' clearance from

Bangladesh Road Transport

Authority, sources said.

rules.

The deal also says the

Tk 600 from Tk 450.

New CNG

FROM PAGE 20

Owners' Association and the workers' organisation. According to the agreement the government also

the auto-rickshaw owner at The government warned alliance but gained little. of stern measures like can-

danger in the coming days.

next elections, he added.

though the ongoing municipal polls are non-partisan, their results are not bearing

Jatiya Party Secretary Hawlader and presidium member Syed Abdul Mannan MP, among others,

Association, said many promising teachers like Ranjit are serving schools and madrasas in the country without salary for years hoping to get someday the benefit of MPO. "For some it never hap-

pens. It's frustrating," he lamented.

Sources in the district education office said the madrasa got academic permission in 2002, which is a prerequisite for being listed under the MPO. Students have been taking part in Dakhil examinations since then.

Roksana Begum, district education officer, said they have nothing to do regarding MPO, as it depends on the education ministry.

"The government has upgraded social and economic status of teachers by declaring a new pay scale for them. Government is also listing educational institutions for MPO in phases," she added. Until that happens for

Ranjit, he will go to the madrasa riding his bicycle to teach for free. And before and after his teaching hours, he will toil on the field to win bread for his family.

Little cheer FROM PAGE 20

Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) Research Director Zaid Bakht said different factors including change of design of the Padma bridge might have delayed the availability of foreign aid.

Though power is the government's highest priority sector, it got second highest allocation, of which the Power Division could utilise only 18 percent.

A power ministry official explains, "Many of the power tenders did not make timely start. However, we have gained a momentum. For instance, the Power Development Board was allocated Tk 1,000 crore in the ADP. Between December and January, the PDB prepared invoices worth Tk 600 crore. The PDB is likely to seek 25 percent more ADP allocation this year.'

Among the 10 major ministries or divisions whose performance was poor are the Bridge Division with 6 percent utilisation of its total allocation, Energy and Mineral Resources Division 15 percent, water resources ministry 15 percent, Roads and Railway Division 19 percent and health and family welfare ministry 23 per-

However, performance of some ministries and divisions was impressive -- primary and mass education ministry used 41 percent of its total allocation, Local Government Division 35 percent, education ministry 32 percent, and agriculture ministry 31 percent.

"As the government has taken a bigger ADP, its implementation rate has to be faster," said BIDS Research Director Zaid Bakht.

He said the areas where there is problem in utilising foreign aid has to be detected and quick corrective actions should be taken.

Ershad

FROM PAGE 20 seats in last parliamentary election while the alliance bagged 268," he said addressing a bi-annual conference of the party on the Bijoy Mela premises in

Manikganj. The JP boss said his party sacrificed a lot to join the

He warned that if the government fails to maintain law and order and contain the price hike of essentials, it would face great

Unity in the ruling combine is a must to overcome all obstacles and win the

Ershad observed that happy tidings for the grand alliance.

General Ruhul Amin addressed the conference.



yesterday, an evidence of how people are in need of grains.

ANISUR RAHMAN

Mercury FROM PAGE 1

Impoverished people in the

northern districts and the urban poor are the worst-hit in the persisting cold bite. Lalmonirhat Deputy

Commissioner Mokhlesur Rahman Sarker said they have already supplied 6,000 pieces of blanket among cold-hit people in the district. And his office has asked for allocation of more warm clothes from the ministry concerned

Ferry services on Mawa-Kawrakandi and Paturia-Daulatdia routes remained suspended for over 12 hours till yesterday noon due to thick fog. Our correspondents in

Munshiganj and Manikganj report that ferry services were suspended at about 10:45pm on Friday. Fog forced five ferries to anchor in the middle of the Padma on Mawa-Kawrakandi route, causing sufferings to more than 800 passengers. Several hundred vehicles,

including passenger buses, remained stranded on either side of the river, said Chandra Shekhar Roy, assistant manager of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (Mawa station).

Suspension of ferry and launch services on Paturia-Daulatdia route Friday night caused similar traffic jams on both sides of the Padma and sufferings to passengers.

Contacted, BIWTC Manager (Aricha section) Bidyut Kumar Saha said movement of ferry and launch was disrupted from 10:30pm on Friday and resumed after 10:30am yesterday as fog cleared.

Several thousand vehicles lined up at Paturia and Daulatdia at 11:00am yesterday. Passenger buses and vehicles carrying emergency goods were being ferried on a priority basis, he added.

Another killed

FROM PAGE 20 Chandra Talukdar, subinspector (SI) of Rampura

Police Station. The criminals opened fire on the law enforcers compel-

ling them to retaliate. Police found the two with bullet wounds after their associates fled the scene. added the SI. They also recovered one revolver and a bullet

Anik, however, claimed he didn't know Shyamol before and saw him for the first time in police custody.

from their (the two) posses-

"Police picked me up from near Salambagh mosque at East Rampura on Friday around 2:00pm and took me to Rampura Police Station around 6:00pm," he told The Daily Star at the hospital.

Police blindfolded us with pieces of cloths and took us handcuffed to the Mahanagar Project area around 2:00am, he added.

Later they (police) claimed we have stocks of arms and asked us to hand over those. "Give us the arms or we will shoot you dead," Anik said, quoting police.

With their denial to having any arms, police shot them, he mentioned.

Shyamol came from Savar on Friday to visit me and police picked him up from a shop in the evening, said Khairul Bepari, brother of the deceased.

He worked at a shoe factory at Savar and there is no case against him, claimed Khairul.

Pricier rice FROM PAGE 1

Like Salma nearly a hundred men and women waited in queues for hours to buy a 5-kilogram pack of coarse rice for Tk 24 a kg. It saved them at least Tk

500 on food for the baby.

55 every five-kg purchase as coarse rice now sells at a minimum of Tk 35 a kg in city markets. Queues are now longer

and more frequent in almost all OMS points with more people from fixed and lower income brackets thronging them to buy subsidised rice to save money for buying other essentials. Nearly 125 OMS trucks

with 3,000 kgs of rice each

sell subsidised rice to

75,000 people every five days a week while many return home emptyhanded in the city. The latest picture is a sharp contrast to the one just three months ago

small crowds. But they started to see longer queues as the gap between the OMS and retail prices of rice, apart from other essentials, widened over the last few months.

when the OMS points drew

Sixty-year-old Aleya Begum said, "It will save us some money to buy vegeta-

Abdul Khaleque said he leagues while on duty. had no choice but to take a break from his daily work to buy rice at the OMS point on Tipu Sultan Road in Old Dhaka.

Prices of coarse rice, consumed mainly by people from the lower income bracket, went up by 33 percent to Tk 35-37 a kg in the last one year.

Other essentials also saw their prices rise. Prices of unpackaged palm oil soared 49 percent to Tk 90-

Centre as a keynote speaker.

largest conference and

exhibition of renewable

energy and future energy

solutions, innovations and

investments in the sector,

Ban Ki-moon will address

the heads of state and gov-

ernment and other interna-

tional delegates who will

attend the WFES. The energy

summit will open up oppor-

tunities for collaborations,

innovations and invest-

ments in renewable energy

member delegation includ-

ing a 30-member business

team in the summit. Usually,

the businessmen bear their

Sheikh Rehana, Foreign

Minister Dipu Moni, State

Minister for Environment

Hasan Mahmud,

Ambassador-at-Large

Ziauddin Ahmed, eight

grassroots level Awami

League leaders in eminent

citizens quota and 10 secu-

As per the programme

schedule, on the first day of

the tour today, Gulf News

will interview Hasina. She

rity personnel.

The delegation includes

Hasina will lead a 93-

and clean technology.

expenses of the visit.

UN Secretary General

energy policy and vision.

This will be the world's

92 and onion 26 percent to Tk 38-44 a kg in city mar kets.

9 cops die FROM PAGE 1

Rahman, 50, Krishna Kanta Barman, 50, Rezaul Karim 40, Masud Parvez, 42, Narayan Chandra, 45, and Reaz Uddin, 40. Their bodies were later taken to the district hospital. Constable Priyotosh, 50,

the injured, was admitted to Combined Military Hospital in the capital. Namaz-e-janaza of the

dead was held at Narsingdi Police Lines in the afternoon. Their bodies were handed over to relatives. Later, Inspector General of Police Hassan Mahmood

Khandaker granted Tk

50,000, and Akkasuddin

Bhuiyan, Narsingdi superin-

tendent of police, Tk 10,000 each for the families of the deceased from the central and local police funds. In a condolence message President Zillur Rahman prayed for the departed souls and asked the authorities concerned to ensure proper

treatment of the injured cop, reports BSS. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed deep shock at the deaths and conveyed sympathy to the bereaved families.

In a press release Bangladesh Police Service Association leaders condoled Another consumer the tragic death of their col-

Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsu Huda condoled the deaths, and wished fast recovery of the wounded constable.

Contacted last night, Narsingdi Superintendent of Police Akkas Uddin Bhuiyan said a three-member committee headed by Additional Superintendent Bijoy Boshak has been formed to probe the accident, and submit its report within three days, reports our correspondent in the district.

will also visit Zayed Grand

Mosque and attend a dinner

to be hosted by the

Tomorrow morning

Hasina will address the sum

mit and in the evening she

will meet leading business-

men and investors at the

She will address a gather-

ing to be organised by the

UAE Federation of Chambers

and Commerce of Industries

Bangladesh and the UAE

are expected to sign two

agreements on promotion

and protection of investment

and another on avoidance of

Official sources said sign-

ing of the agreements would

following the agreements.

reception. Tuesday evening,

Hasina will attend Zayed

Future Energy Prize Award

Wednesday afternoon.

She will return home

ceremony.

double taxation on the day.

Emirates Palace.

on Tuesday.

Hasina off to UAE

the UAE.

in CNG station fire STAFF CORRESPONDENT

fire at a CNG refuelling station on Dhaka-Aricha highway at Genda, Savar yester-Fire officials suspect that

Two people were injured in a

the flames might have started from a leak gas pipe in the engine room around 8:15am. Two fire fighting units

an hour. The fire has gutted the engine room and an array of the station's infrastructure,

Hossain, 25, and Mokbul Hossain, 28, of the filling station received minor burn injuries in the incident. They received first aid at a local hospital.

charge of the filling station, said the pump was operating when the fire broke. They immediately switched of the engine and moved the vehicles waiting for gas.

Better gas

FROM PAGE 20 Sylhet.

Advocate Manzill Musrhid sent the legal notice on behalf of Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB) on the basis of reports published in different newspapers saying that many families living in Dhaka are unable to cook food due to irregular and insufficient gas supply.

None can survive without food and therefore supply of gas is related to right to life, which is guaranteed as per article 32 of the constitution stated the notice.

taries to the ministries of power, finance and planning, chairman of Petrobangla, and managing directors of Gas Transmission Company and Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company.

FROM PAGE 20

Kathmandu has confirmed that former lawmaker of the Maldives Fathimath Dhiyana Saeed will be appointed Saarc secretary general on March 1, said diplomatic

The present chief, former three years term on Feb 28. Fathimath, 36, also a

the youngest Saarc secretary general ever. The 8-nation regional forum rotates its secretary general among the member

certainly boost the scope for The Maldives will host the investment in both the coun-17th Saarc summit scheduled for November 10-11 in tries. Potential investors from the South Province. the UAE would enjoy a secure

the organisation.

Saarc summit in Thimphu in The premier will also visit April last year recommended Bangladesh Community School in Abu Dhabi where she will be accorded a civic

> founded in 1985 in Dhaka. The regional bloc included its eighth member, Afghanistan, in 2007.

2 injured

from Savar rushed to the spot and doused the blaze in

said fire fighters. **Employees Shakhawat**

Firoz Alam, shifting in-

It was sent to six government high officials -- secre-

Legal steps will be taken against the officials if they fail to take steps in this regard within seven days, the notice

Saarc to get

Bangladesh ambassador in

Indian envoy to Austria Sheel Kant Sharma, completes his

former attorney general of

the island nation, will also be

countries every three years. It is the Maldives' turn to lead

Foreign ministry sources environment in Bangladesh said the Maldives during 16th

> them a round of applause. Fathimath Dhiyana for the The artistes expressed their gratitude to The Daily Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Star for organising the event. Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka celebration of its 20th are the members of Saarc founding anniversary on

the remote location, heavy Manmohan Singh said his mist and the thick forest thoughts were with the relatives of the victims and Indian television showed announced compensation pictures of casualties being payments of 100,000 rupees passed over the heads of (2,200 dollars) to the dead's tightly packed crowds of

the loss of life.

next of kin. Anxious pilgrims with missing relatives thronged local hospitals yesterday, as officials tried to identify the bodies brought down from the stampede site.

"shocked and saddened" at

Prime Minister

imagination" and the Most of the victims were Southern Naval Command from the neighbouring states dispatched an emergency of Tamil Nadu, Andhra medical team to the accident Pradesh and Karnataka. Under the customs of the The stampede occurred pilgrimage, hundreds of on the final day of the pilthousands of men and grimage at the Sabarimala

groups for the Sabarimala temple, each carrying a cloth bundle containing traditional offerings. But many of the elderly, or recent memory that the those short of time, opt to cram into overloaded buses and jeeps to travel as close as

possible to the temple, which

is believed to be where the

women set off on foot in

god Ayyappa meditated. Stampedes at public The shrine is packed with events in India are common devotees throughout the as large numbers of people pilgrimage season from November to January.

In March last year, police

in the northern state of Uttar

Pradesh blamed lax safety for the deaths of 63 people -- all of them women and children -- in a stampede outside another Hindu temple. At least another 10 people died in a stampede at a tem-

ple in the state of Bihar in October. Hillary-Hasina

FROM PAGE 20

of all-out support in fighting extremism. Hillary called Hasina around 10:00pm, PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad told The Daily Star.

assured the prime minister

The US secretary lauded the Bangladesh government for the steps taken to entrench democracy and the rule of law, attain food security and widen social safety

During the 15-minute talk, the two leaders also discussed some issues of

mutual interest. Hasina invited the US leader to visit Bangladesh.

Smoking

FROM PAGE 1

those who smoke. The study is the first on humans to track how substances in tobacco cause DNA damage, and appears in the peer-reviewed journal Chemical Research in Toxicology, issued by the

American Chemical Society. Using 12 volunteer smokers, scientists tracked pollutants called PAHs, or polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, that are carried in tobacco smoke and can also be found in coal-burning plants and in charred bar-

becue food. They followed one particular type -phenanthrene, which is found in cigarette smoke -through the blood and saw it form a toxic substance that is known to "trash DNA, causing mutations that can cause cancer," the

study said. "The smokers developed maximum levels of the substance in a time frame that surprised even the researchers: just 15-30 minutes after the volunteers finished smoking," the study said.

"These results are significant because PAH diol epoxides react readily with DNA, induce mutations, and are considered to be ultimate carcinogens of multiple PAH in cigarette smoke," the study said.

Lead scientist Stephen Hecht said the study is unique because it examines the effects of inhaling cigarette smoke, without interference from other sources of harm such as pollution or Cultural Centre (Dhaka), a poor diet. Manipur Nrittyalaya "The results reported (Sylhet), Odissi and Tagore here should serve as a stark

> warning to those who are considering starting to smoke cigarettes," Hecht said. Lung cancer kills about 3,000 people around the

> percent of those deaths are attributable to cigarette smoking. The research was funded

Institute.

world each day, and 90

by the National Cancer