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## Gunfight kills 5 in Rangamati hills

Jana Sanghati Samiti claims 7 deaths; 1 gunned down in another incident in same district

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati  
At least five people were killed in a gunfight between Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti and United Peoples Democratic Front at remote Fakirchhara Bastipara of the district's Juraichhari upazila early yesterday.

The fight between archrivals PCJSS and UPDF erupted around 4:00am. The five died on the spot. Of the deceased, Kalachan Chakma, Santosh Kumar Chakma, Niranjana Chakma and Jiban Tangchangya were PCJSS activists while Lulongkar Chakma belonged to UPDF, local sources said. PCJSS, however, told this correspondent two other members of the

outfit, Ratan Chakma and Binod Chakma, also died in the clash. Rangamati Superintendent of Police Masud-ul-Hassan said he heard some five persons had been killed in the gun battle. Army and police personnel from the upazila headquarters were conducting a spot inspection as of 5:00pm. Commander of Bana Jogichhara



## A KINGDOM lost to grabbers

PINAKI ROY

Over 83 percent of the Bhawal estate's 2,516 acres of land has disappeared in the last 60 years from the hands of its custodian, the Ministry of Land.

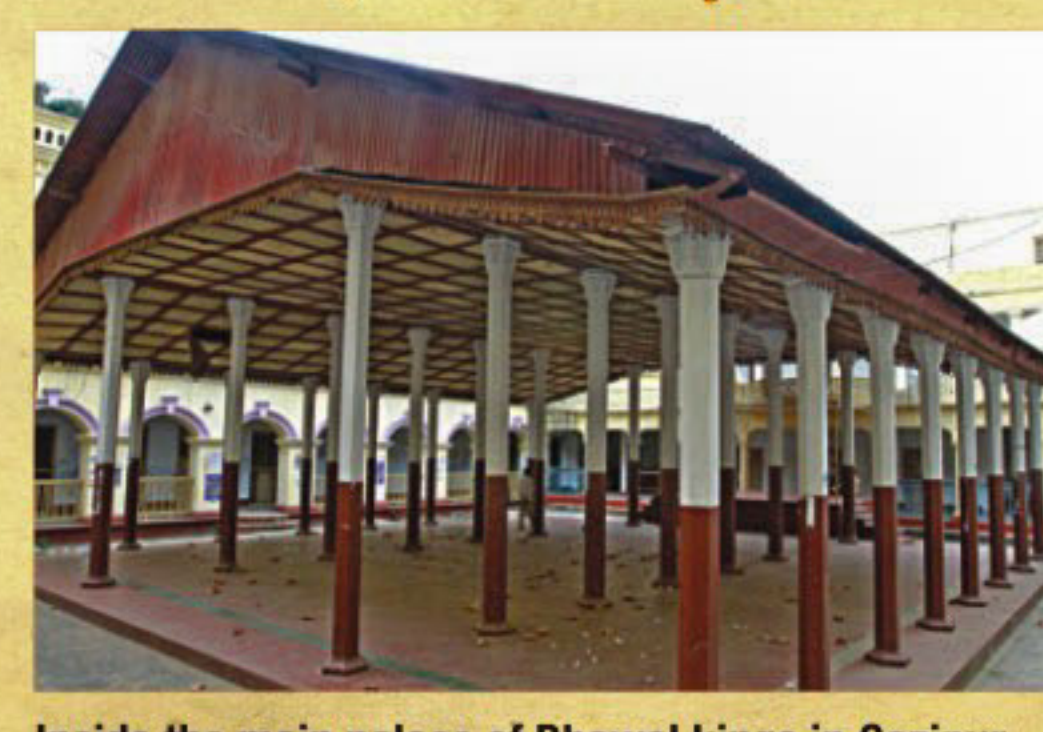
Currently, only 443 acres of the total Bhawal land is registered in the name of its custodian, the Court of Wards under the ministry. Surprisingly, 442 civil cases are now pending with the courts of justice regarding the fate of the 443 acres of land, the remnant of the Bhawal estate.

The Court of Wards is also erratically trying to settle an additional 6,977 land settlement petitions to "save" the remaining 443 acres from influential land grabbers.

After the death of Kumar Ramendra Narayan in 1936, the last heir to the Bhawal estate in Gazipur, the Court of Wards became the custo-

dian of the entire estate under the Courts of Ward Act. Since 1995 the Court of Wards is operating under the Land Reform Board, the government's assigned body for taking care of the Bhawal estate.

*Politically influential people, developers with the help of some corrupt govt officials grabbed most of the 2,516 acres of land*



Inside the main palace of Bhawal kings in Gazipur. Top, the turret of a temple in the complex.

Plundering of the estate has been in such a proportion that officials of the court have no clue whatsoever about the location of 60 percent of the 443-acre land. They however maintain the documents for the Bhawal estate, the second largest zamindar estate of Bengal after the nawabs of Dhaka.

"We have the documents but we cannot locate 60 percent of that property," said Abdur Rauf, who has been serving as the manager of the Court of Wards (Bhawal Estate) for over a decade.

Rauf refused to elaborate as to how, despite

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

### STOCK MARKET CRASH

## Muhith says he, SEC had errors

Pledges immediate steps to restore investors' confidence

STAR REPORT  
Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday said he and the Securities and Exchange Commission made mistakes in dealing with the recent stockmarket chaos. "The regulator certainly has faults, and so do I. Many decisions were not right. We are trying to identify the mistakes," the minister told reporters at the finance ministry conference room. After a meeting with Canadian Minister for International Cooperation Beverley J Oda, the finance

## Party is over. What next?

SARWAR A CHOWDHURY and SOHEL PARVEZ

The stockmarket that appeared to be a miracle has now turned into a scourge.

It grew too fast, just in the last two years. The share index trebled, so did market capitalisation. Daily average turnover grew by seven times. It was a market that pulled in tens

of thousands of new investors from across the country. Those who were once desperate to make quick bucks from the miracle, are now walking out on the bourses only to save what is left of their investment. The last two weeks were the most desperate time.

### NEWS ANALYSIS

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## Ruling party's grip on grassroots loosens

HASAN JAHD TUSHER

The ruling Awami League has taken a backseat leaving the front to the government with its ministers and lawmakers stealing the limelight from the party-only leaders in the last two years. Since taking over power in January 2009, the party has tried to inject new blood into the leadership sidelining some of the stalwarts to lesser roles. This has also led to some internal fissures. On occasions party leaders publicly disagreed with ministers on some key



issues. The debates have been seen more as a clash of personalities than a difference on real issues.

Awami League as an organisation has come under scrutiny about its role in mobilising public opinion for the trial of war criminals and against the militants.

The ruling party has reportedly done little in stopping its wayward workers from grabbing tenders and property.

There have been talks about a widening

### BANGABANDHU BRIDGE

## Delay in cracks repair to cost additional Tk 120cr

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

The public exchequer will have to fork out around Tk 120 crore extra due to a delay in repairing cracks on Bangabandhu Multipurpose Bridge.

Experts said the repair cost will increase due to development of many new cracks while the old ones became bigger.

Numerous cracks were detected on the 4.8-kilometre long bridge over

the Jamuna River in 2006, but successive governments failed to appoint a contractor for repair, compromising its lifespan and load carrying capacity.

The estimated cost for the repair was Tk 207 crore last year. The amount was revised at Tk 327 crore in the latest offer of the government as the previous attempt failed to find a contractor, sources in the Bridge Division said.

"The entire bridge deck has to be repaired," said Khan Mahmud Amanat, a professor in the civil engineering department at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet).

He said a synthetic material that looks like plastic sheet will be used to repair the cracks.

"The volume of work has increased due to expansion of the

## BSF tortures 2 Bangladeshis

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkira

Two Bangladeshi cattle traders, who were tortured and left unconscious by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) in border areas of the district's sadar upazila, are fighting for life at Sathkira Sadar Hospital.

Of the two, Rafiqul Islam, 35, is from Sultanpur of Sathkira town and Fazlur Rahman, 45, from Mahmudur village of sadar upazila.

On Thursday night, the

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## Devotees throng Ijtema ground

3-day congregation of Muslims begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A large number of devotees thronged the bank of Turag in Tongi yesterday as the first phase of Biswa Ijtema, one of the largest congregations of the Muslims, got underway.

The Ijtema venue literally turned into a human sea during the Juma prayers. Pesh Imam (prayer leader) of Kakrail Mosque Hafez Maulana Md Jobayer led the prayers.

Muslims from home and abroad gathered at the site, some 20 kilometres north of the capital, to seek divine blessings.

For the first time since its inception in 1967, this time the rituals are being held in two phases. The first stage will continue till Sunday while the second will commence on January 28 after a four-day break.

Devotees from 33 districts including Gazipur, Narsingdi, Mymensingh, Kishoreganj, Sherpur, Faridpur, Rajbari, Shariatpur, Chittagong, Khagrachari, Rangamati, Bandarban, Chandpur, Sylhet, Habiganj, Rajshahi, Natore, Sirajganj, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Khulna, Bagerhat, Jessore, Narail, and Kushtia are attending in the first phase.



Devotees stand for Juma prayers at the Biswa Ijtema ground on the bank of Turag yesterday.

PHOTO: SHAWKAT JAMIL

## One held on charge of AL leader murder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detectives yesterday arrested a heroin addict and claimed that he was one of the gang members who killed Fazlul Haq, DCC ward-41 unit Awami League general secretary.

The bereaved family, however, believe that the arrest was actually made to save face and protect the real killers.

Detainee Mohammad Dulal, 32, in a press briefing at the Detective Branch (DB) office yesterday claimed that Kalu and he shot dead Fazlul Haq on January 14.

He said Kalu, allegedly an accomplice of drug peddler Liton of Agargaon BNP bazar, hired him while Liton masterminded the assassination.

"They gave me two

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