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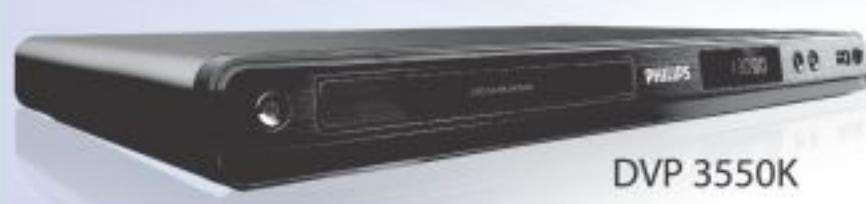
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Curtain drawn on Hay Festival

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the staging of Rabindranath Tagore's "Shapmochon" by Pallavi Dance Centre and rendition of Lalon Shah's mystic songs by Arif Ali Baul, the curtain fell on the three-day Hay Festival Dhaka yesterday.

At the closing ceremony, Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, thanked Bangla Academy for hosting the festival. He expressed the hope that Bangladeshi writers would get more exposure to the international arena through the festival.

Prof Shamsuzzam Khan, director of Bangla Academy, said it was an honour for Bangladesh to see so many writers from across the world gather here. "This [the festival] is the beginning of many more such events."

Throughout the day, the academy premises vibrated with music and dances. Young writers, even students of literature, went to meet their heroes. The students jostled around popular writer Muhammad Zafar Iqbal and took turns to take photographs with him.

"This festival allowed our writers to interact with and learn from writers of different countries. At the same time, it gave them an opportunity to intermingle with ours," said Zafar Iqbal.

The audience had cherished the moments spent with Vikram Seth in the auditorium over the last two days. And it was a refreshing change to see him outside on the lawns yesterday, signing books for adoring fans and giving a charming recital of selected verses from The Golden Gate.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 4
MORE ON PAGE 10-11



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Members of the Pallavi Dance Centre perform Tagore's musical Shapmochon at Bangla Academy as the curtain fell on the three-day Hay Festival Dhaka yesterday.

BNP slams PM for sharia comments

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two BNP leaders yesterday criticised Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for threatening to implement sharia and alleged that the government intended to create instability in the country by misleading the people.

Speaking separately at two programmes, BNP Standing Committee Member Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain and BNP acting general secretary Mirza Fakhruddin Alamgir said it was ironic to listen to the leader of the Awami League talk about implementing sharia.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 3

PRAYER TIMING November 18		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-05	5-40
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-21	5-24
Esha	7-00	7-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Bal Thackeray dies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Firebrand Indian right wing politician Bal Thackeray, who founded Shiv Sena party, died in Mumbai yesterday after suffering a cardiac arrest.

Thackeray, 86, "has breathed his last", his physician Jalil Parkar told a huge crowd assembled outside the politician's house in Bandra locality of India's financial capital Mumbai.

Considered one of India's most controversial

SEE PAGE 19 COL 8

Miracle herbal cosmetic maker lands in jail

Products of Botanic Aroma found to be highly harmful

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court in Dhaka yesterday sentenced the managing director of a cosmetics company, his director wife and a supervisor to two years' imprisonment for using harmful substances in the company's products.

Mohammad Asaduzzaman Liton, managing director of Botanic Aroma, his wife Ferdousi Akhter, a director of the company, and Akhter Bepari, a supervisor, were also fined Tk 1 lakh each in default of

which they have to spend three more months in jail.

The court also fined six company staff Tk 1 lakh each.

The mobile court with the help of Rab personnel launched a drive in Botanic Aroma's factory in Keraniganj in the morning and arrested nine people including the company's managing director. The court later delivered the verdict in the afternoon.

Executive Magistrate Anwar Pasha, who

SEE PAGE 19 COL 5
PHOTO ON PAGE 19

ROHINGYA REFUGEE Rights boss backs govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Human Rights Commission Chairman Prof Mizanur Rahman yesterday criticised a section of experts for favouring the entrance of Rohingyas into Bangladesh on humanitarian grounds.

The NHRC chief also strongly differed with their opinion that the government's policy in dealing with the Rohingya issue was wrong.

"Some intellectuals have been trying to put the government as well as the state in the dock for barring Rohingyas from entering the country," he told a discussion

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

Myanmar to look at Rohingya rights

President Thein Sein writes to UN; OIC decries 'genocide'; Suu Kyi remark shocks many in India

STAR REPORT

Myanmar's president has pledged to consider new rights for the stateless Rohingya minority ahead of a landmark visit by President Barack Obama, but stopped short of a full commitment that citizenship and other new freedoms would be granted.

In a letter sent to the United

Nations on Friday, President Thein Sein made conciliatory remarks that condemned the "senseless violence" in western Rakhine state between Rakhine Buddhists and Muslim Rohingya.

Almost 200 people have died and more than 1,00,000 have been displaced since June in fighting between the two communities,

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



There seems to be no respite from illegal toll collection on highways of the country but it becomes doubly difficult if the collector is on an animal as big as this. Occupying almost both lanes of the dual carriageway, the elephant makes sure no vehicle swerves and gets away without paying toll. The photo was taken at Genda near Savar on Dhaka-Aricha highway on Friday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Israel strikes Hamas HQ

REUTERS, Gaza/Jerusalem

Israeli aircraft bombed Hamas government buildings in Gaza yesterday, including the prime minister's office, after Israel's cabinet authorized the mobilization of up to 75,000 reservists, preparing for a possible ground invasion.

Israeli planes shattered the office building of Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh - where he had met on Friday with the Egyptian prime minister - and struck the Interior Ministry.

Loud explosions regularly rocked the densely populated Palestinian territory, sending plumes of smoke billowing into the sky. The occasional hiss of outgoing rocket fire showed Islamist militants were pursuing their defiance of the assault.

Despite the violence, Tunisia's foreign minister arrived in the coastal enclave on Saturday in a show of solidarity, denouncing the Israeli attacks as illegitimate and unacceptable.

Officials in Gaza said 41 Palestinians, among them 20

SEE PAGE 19 COL 2

Low paddy price may cost vote

Fears Speaker Hamid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speaker Abdul Hamid yesterday expressed frustration over the low prices of paddy, saying if the farmers do not get fair prices for their produce, it may have a negative impact on the ruling Awami League's votes in the next general election.

"Prices of paddy really need consideration. Otherwise, I don't know about other regions, but it [low prices of paddy] will create a big problem in our region [haor areas] in the coming election," said Hamid, who was elected to parliament from a

SEE PAGE 19 COL 1

The Daily Star

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ONLINE POLL

Do you agree with Human Rights Forum (HRF) that the government had not made any progress in improving the country's human rights situation during its tenure over the last four years?

Yes

(87%)

No

(12%)

No Comments

(1%)

TOTAL VOTES: 497

TODAY'S POLL

Do you agree with BNP leader Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain that the government wants to create instability in the country by misguiding people in the name of Sharia law?

Yes

(12%)

No

(87%)

PLEASE CAST YOUR VOTE AT www.thedailystar.net

YOU MAY ALSO VOTE AT facebook.com/dailystarnews

TERROR PLOT IN AMERICA Nafis declined consular access

Insists US envoy; father doubts the version

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The family of Quazi Mohammad Rezwanul Ahsan Nafis, a Bangladeshi arrested by US federal authorities in a sting operation last month, hopes the government will provide the youth with legal aid.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Nafis's father Quazi Mohammad Ahsanullah said Bangladesh embassy

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

Tangail-3 goes to by-polls today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Tangail-3 (Ghatail) constituency goes to by-election today.

Voting begins at 8:00am and continues till 4:00pm at the 96 polling centres under a municipality, a cantonment board and 11 unions in Ghatail upazila.

The parliamentary seat for the constituency fell

SEE PAGE 19 COL 5

Flying boat to cross Atlantic

MAIL ONLINE

An adrenaline junkie soared through the air in a boat attached to hundreds of balloons on Friday as part of a test flight for an ambitious attempt to cross the Atlantic.

Jonathan Trappe was cheered on by crowds this at the Festival Del Globo del

SEE PAGE 19 COL 2



Up, up and away: Jonathan Trappe takes off in his cluster balloon craft with co-pilot Nidia Ramirez during a test flight at the Leon International Balloon festival.

PHOTO: DAILYMILL