

**NEWS IN** *brief*

**Two die as boat capsizes**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Two men died as a boat capsized in the river Kushiya in Balaganj upazila of Sylhet early yesterday.

Police recovered the bodies of Nishith Dass, 22, of Juri upazila, and Mithun Malakar, 18, of Rajnagar upazila, of Moulvibazar, yesterday.

Abdus Salek, officer-in-charge of Balaganj Police Station, said the duo fell into the river as the boat they were traveling in capsized. The other five on board except the two managed to swim ashore. They were on the way to Rajnagar to attend a Kirton (carol).

The bodies were handed over to their families in the afternoon, he added.

**JU freshers accorded reception**

JU CORRESPONDENT

Jahangirnagar University (JU) yesterday accorded a reception to its freshers under the 42nd batch of 2012-13 academic session at the Zahir Raihan auditorium on the campus.

Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqi, former JU vice chancellor and also adviser to a caretaker government, addressed the function as chief guest while JU VC Prof Anwar Hossain was in the chair.

The programme initiated around 10:00am where the freshers were handed over formally to the respective dean.

Pro-VC Prof Farhad Hossain, Treasurer Prof Nasir Uddin, Registrar Abubakar Siddique were also present on the occasion.

**Japan gives \$24.5m to construct food storage**

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Japan has provided a grant of US\$ 24.5 million to construct a multi-storeyed public storage facility with a capacity to store 25,740 metric tonnes of food grain as emergency national buffer stock.

Food and Disaster Management Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque and Ambassador of Japan to Bangladesh Shiro Sadoshima laid the foundation stone of the building in Santahar in Bogra on January 24, said a press release yesterday.

The project will be completed by October 2014 and the construction works will be undertaken by Japanese construction company, Shimizu Corporation, and Japanese consultation company, Kokusai Kogyo Co.



Work is going on in full swing to construct a road along Karnaphuli river, from Sadarghat to Kalurghat in Chittagong city, along with a walkway. The road is being constructed as part of Chittagong port's river training project with assistance from Chittagong City Corporation and Chittagong Development Authority. Once complete, the road is expected to act as a recreational facility for the port city's dwellers. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

**Hasina urges imams to help curb graft**

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the country's imams and muajjins to persuade people to stand against injustice, militancy, terrorism and corruption.

The prime minister was addressing the National Conference for trained bes imams (religious leaders) and prize distribution ceremony 2012 at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre (BICC).

Hasina said Islam teaches us to establish justice and urged the Imams and Muajjins to convince people not to violate human rights or do anything unfair to anyone.

The premier added that the government has made necessary arrangements to establish an Arabic university and also to create a post of religious teacher in every primary school.

**Schoolgirl killed in Madaripur road crash**

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Madaripur

A schoolgirl was killed when a passenger bus ran her over while she was returning home from school in Ghatkhar area of Sadar upazila yesterday afternoon.

The victim identified as Iva, 10, daughter of Hiron Fakir, was a class II student of Ghatkhar Primary School.

Sources said the accident occurred when the speeding bus crushed Iva while she was crossing the road in the area around 2:00pm, leaving her dead on the spot.

The bus driver managed to flee.

REGIONAL TRADE, TOURISM, POWER COOPERATION  
**Exploit Saarc potential**

Policy Research Centre conference told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Saarc potential must be exploited to thrive on sectors including regional trade, tourism and power cooperation in South Asia, if not on politics, said ministers and envoys at a conference yesterday.

Saarc is an indispensable tool for South Asian regional connectivity, security and economic development, said Dr Dinesh Bhattarai, Nepal's former permanent representative to the United Nations.

The region remains centered on India while indifference and lack of trust have overshadowed Saarc's potentials, he said.

Policy Research Centre (PRC), a civil society think tank, organised the two-day conference on regional integration and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) at a hotel in the capital.

The region must cash in on its

potentials of physical connectivity and hydro-power cooperation while it could easily be a global attraction with the world's highest mountain and longest sea beach, said Hari Kumar Shrestha, Nepal ambassador to Bangladesh.

Bhutan will eagerly support the initiative for regional connectivity and hydro-power cooperation, said Kinzang Dorjic, head of chancery of Bhutanese embassy.

Sarath K Weragoda, Sri Lankan high commissioner to Bangladesh, too echoed the view for regional tourism development under a Saarc arrangement.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni said government to government, business to business and people to people contacts were vital for Saarc.

Though it was expected to play a catalytic role for political, social and economic development, Saarc was not able to deliver as per people's

high expectations, she said.

Dr Sarath Amunugama, senior minister for international monetary cooperation of Sri Lanka, termed Saarc too bureaucratic and said the eight-member grouping, unlike European Union and Asean, was all about talks and less about actions.

Saarc, initially a seven-member regional forum, was founded in 1985 at Bangladesh's initiative with members -- Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Afghanistan joined later.

It currently has nine observers -- Australia, China, Iran, Japan, Myanmar, Mauritius, South Korea, USA and EU.

Myanmar Ambassador Myo Myint Than; Micky Wickremasinghe, chairman of Ceylon Biscuits Ltd; and Prof Mahbub Husain Khan, special advisor to PRC; spoke among others. PRC Chairman Prof Akbaruddin Ahmed chaired the conference's first session.

**Stop 6 brick kilns in Khulna: HC**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the authorities concerned to immediately stop construction of six brick kilns in Dumuria upazila of Khulna for the next six months.

It also issued a rule upon the authorities concerned and the brick kilns owners to explain in four weeks why their constructions should not be declared illegal.

The court came up with the rule and order following a writ petition filed by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) on Saturday.

The petition said Mostafa Rashidi Suza, former Awami League lawmaker from Khulna, and his brother SM Moazzem Rashidi, have been constructing the six brick kilns on 61 acres of land in Telikhali Mouza of the upazila without taking environmental clearance certificate.

Quoting the petition, Iqbal Kabir Lytton, the lawyer for Bela, told The Daily Star that as per the relevant rules, a brick kiln has to be constructed on only 1.5 acres of land, but the two have started constructing six brick kilns of 61 acres of land illegally. If the brick kilns are constructed, it will damage huge quantity of agricultural land and environment, he said.

The HC ordered the deputy commissioner and SP of Khulna and Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) of Dumuria to ensure the execution of its order.



**Save 2-yr-old Tasmia**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tasmia Islam, a two-year-old girl, is suffering from heart diseases and has been undergoing treatment at different hospitals, including National Heart Foundation Hospital and Research Institute.

She needs an immediate life-saving operation, as per recommendation by doctors, estimated to cost around Tk 5 lakh, says a press release.

Her father Syed Fahadul Alam, a farmer from Lohagara thana in Narail, already spent his savings for the treatment and is unable to arrange the amount needed for the operation.

Tasmia's family fervently appeals to the affluent and kind-hearted individuals of society to come forward with financial assistance to save their daughter's life.

Financial contributions can be sent to Syed Fahadul Alam, Account No 11321090021290, Prime Bank Ltd, Karwan Bazar Branch, Dhaka or can be handed directly to the family after contacting over phone -- 01734-630241.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with a US Congressional delegation from the House of Representatives of the USA led by Jack Kingston during a courtesy call by the latter on her at Gono Bhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

MEETING WITH US CONGRESSIONAL TEAM  
**PM for continuation of democracy for progress**

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday stressed the importance of smooth continuation of the democratic process in the country for its rapid progress.

"The democratic process should go ahead smoothly as no country could achieve its desired goal without it," she said when a five-member US Congressional delegation led by Jack Kingston called on her at her official residence Gono Bhaban.

After the meeting, the prime minister's Deputy Press Secretary Bijan Lal Deb briefed journalists.

The prime minister said her government was working relentlessly to put democracy on a strong footing. "We believe in people's rights to vote and their empowerment," she said.

In her previous term, the prime minister said initiatives were taken to boost US

investment in the country. As part of that, US investment increased manifold in the last couple of years, she said.

Hasina mentioned the Meghnaghat and Haripur power plants which were built with US investment.

The US Congressional team lauded Bangladesh's tremendous success in various sectors, including agriculture, education and women empowerment. They also praised the contributions of Bangladesh to UN peacekeeping missions by providing troops.

The US Congressional delegation also laid emphasis on strengthening bilateral ties between the two countries.

Ambassador at-Large M Ziauddin, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Shaikh Md Wahid Uz Zaman, PMO Secretary Molla Waheeduzzaman, PM's Special Assistant Dr Abdus Sobhan Golap and US Ambassador to Bangladesh Dan W Mozena were present on the occasion.

**Huge amount of Phensedyl seized**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday seized 4090 bottles of contraband Phensedyl from Bagha and Godagari upazilas in Rajshahi and arrested three people including a local "drug godfather".

During a drive conducted in Bagha, Rab personnel recovered 3088 bottles of Phensedyl and arrested Kalam Mollah, 35, drug godfather in the upazila, Al Amin, 24, of Rustampur, and M Mukul, 25, of Charghat upazila, said a press release.

Being informed by Rab intelligence unit, a team of Rab-5 chased a car heading for Dhaka and finally halted the vehicle at Harirampur village around 2:30am.

They recovered the Phensedyl bottles from the car and arrested the three. During primary interrogation the three confessed that they smuggled the drugs from India.

Meanwhile, in Godagari upazila around 4:30am, another Rab-5 team recovered 1002 intact bottles of smuggled Phensedyl and 100gram heroin abandoned in Sonaikandi village.

Rab members filed two cases with Bagha Police Station and Godagari Police Station in these regard.

**DHAKA TODAY**

**Open letter** 3:30pm.  
Bharatia Oikya Parishad will deliver an open letter concerning their demands to lawmakers and the Speaker; Venue: Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban; Time: 3:00pm.

**Discussion**  
Shamprodayikota-Jongibad Birodhi Mancha will organise a discussion, "Trial of Bachchu Razakar, threats of Jamaat-Shibir and what needs to be done in the future"; Venue: Liberation War Museum; Time: 3:30pm.

**Rally**  
The women's cell of Communist Party of Bangladesh will organise a rally protesting the recent torture and killing of women and children; Venue: before Jatiya Press Club; Time: 4:00pm.

**Discussion**  
Jatiya Press Club and ADD International will hold a discussion on "Media's role in developing sustainable livelihoods of coastal

**WEATHER TODAY**

**Cold wave may continue**  
UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country in 24 hours till 6:00pm today.

Moderate to thick fog may occur over the river basins and north and north-western parts of Bangladesh and light to moderate fog elsewhere over the country during midnight till morning, Met Office said.

Severe cold wave is sweeping over the regions of Kushtia and Srimangal and mild to moderate cold wave is sweeping over Dhaka, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Barisal and rest part of Khulna and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Sitakunda, Rangamati, Comilla and Feni and it may continue.

Night temperature may rise slightly and day temperature may fall slightly over the country.

**The sun sets in the capital today at 5:42pm and rises tomorrow at 6:40am.**

Country's highest temperature 25.3 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sitakunda and lowest 05.0 degrees at Chuadanga.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max:	Min:	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	22.4	11.4	76	54
Chittagong	22.7	10.7	77	63
Rajshahi	23.5	06.5	97	59
Rangpur	19.6	06.6	100	76
Khulna	24.0	09.2	90	71
Barisal	23.5	08.0	95	73