

# Fresh design in 6 months

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Bangladeshi officials, executives of a Canadian firm and some individuals. The global lender maintains it will finance the project if former communications minister Syed Abul Hossain is included on the list of accused in the case filed over the corruption conspiracy. At yesterday's meeting, the PM said when Abul Hossain was the communications minister, the local agent of Canadian firm SNC Lavalin met him. Abul Hasan Chowdhury, former state minister for foreign affairs, was the local agent. If it was corruption, Hasina said, it was the ex-state minister who should be held responsible. Both Hasan and Hossain would be arrested if probe found something against them, AL MP Sadhan Chandra Majumder quoted Hasina as saying. Earlier, the prime minister had said the government would look for alternative sources of funding if the World Bank did not give

a decision by this month. Hasina, also ruling Awami League chief, told her party deputies at the meeting that her government would get grants of \$200 million and it had also received proposals from China and Malaysia, said AL MP Shahiduzzaman Sarker. A source has told The Daily Star that \$200m of \$1 billion line of credit from India has been converted into grant. The government might use the money for Padma bridge construction. **ELECTION ON TIME** About the next parliamentary election, the PM said it must be held by January 25 next year. She reiterated the next parliamentary polls would be held the way other democratic countries arrange their national polls. He mentioned instances of elections in the US and the UK, said AL MP Israfil Alam. Hasina also lauded the formation and functions of the current Election Commission, Israfil said, adding that she also urged the party lawmakers to make public the govern-

ment's success stories. About the upazila elections, she said polls to this local government bodies would be held after the parliamentary polls. Warning her party MPs, Hasina said she had all the information about what lawmakers were doing in their areas. "MPs with bad records will not get nominations for the next polls." She added, "We won't allow any questionable election. If any of my MPs tries to interfere, the election in that area will be stopped." Sheikh Hasina asked the lawmakers to campaign drumming up public support for the ongoing war crimes trial. A number of AL lawmakers, including Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta and Abdul Latif Siddiqui, urged the AL chief to take measures strengthening the party network across the country. They said development activities are not enough to win the polls, meeting sources said.

# Outlaw killed in 'shootout'

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kusthia**  
A top cadre of Janajuddho, a faction of the outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party, was killed in a "shootout" between his cohorts and police at Mirpur upazila of Kusthia early yesterday. Police said the deceased Enamul Haq alias Ena Mondol, 35, was a member of the outfit's killing squad and was accused in nine cases. Acting on a tip-off, two teams of police raided the backyard of Hidimpur Govt Primary School around 2:15am, said Chokdar Abdul Halim, assistant superintendent of police. The outlaws were holding a secret meeting there, he said. "Sensing police presence, the gang opened fire and blasted two bombs triggering an hour-long firefight with the police," the ASP said. Police found the body of Enamul on the spot after the outlaws fled the scene. Enamul was son of Rafiz Mondol of Musainagar in the upazila. The teams recovered a rifle, a light gun, four bombs and eight bullets from the spot. The body was sent to Kusthia General Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

# Illegal

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She, however, claimed that it was not necessary to take Rajuk's approval since the site is located outside Mohammadpur flood protection dam. Nasima told The Daily Star over the phone that when the factory owners contacted her for renting a floor of the building, they told her that they were not big garment manufacturers. They also told her that they would bring light machines to the factory for sewing clothes. "The factory owners told us that they would sew clothes for major garment factories and they don't have any network abroad," she said. K h a n d o k e r Shamsuzzoha, assistant director of fire service department, told The Daily Star that Smart Export Garments does not have any fire licence and the factory had never applied for it. The department's Deputy Assistant Director Mamun Mahmud, also member of a probe committee on the fire incident, said, "If someone wants to set up a garment factory, he has to follow a legal process. None can launch an apparel factory without a fire licence." Some official documents found at the burnt factory confirmed that it had produced garments for European brands under subcontract with local exporters. The Daily Star found tags of some brands such as SOL's, Bershka, Lefties, Scott & Fox and Hawaiian Authentics strewn among burnt clothing items. Of the brands, Bershka and Lefties belong to Spanish retail giant Inditex. When asked, an Inditex official in Dhaka said they didn't know that their clothing items are made in such non-compliant factories. Inditex's owner Amancio Ortega is the third richest person in the world having wealth worth \$59.8 billion at the end of last year, according to media reports. "The main factories that got purchase orders gave the orders to Smart Export Garments under subcontract without informing Lefties," said the Inditex official asking not to be named. "We are now sifting through the purchase order documents to find out who were given the work orders and how Smart Export Garments Ltd got the orders under sub-contract. We have no direct dealings with Smart Export Garments. "The actual receivers of purchase orders gave the work orders to Smart Export Garment sneakily without informing the buyer," the official added. It was evident from the burnt clothes that the factory, which spread over a 10,000 square-foot floor, was producing long-sleeved off-white cotton jackets for Lefties, as tags of this brand were found attached to the jackets. The factory was also producing clothes for some other European brands such as Bershka, Scott & Fox, Pasadena Rider, SOL's, G blog, Hawaiian Authentics and max. A sub-contract deed signed between Smart Export Garments and Mahi Fashion on November 26, 2012 was also found in the factory. The agreement shows that Smart Export Garments gave an offer to Mahi Fashion for sewing, finishing and packing 3,000 pieces of cargo shorts. Mahi Fashion accepted the offer based on an 11-point condition stipulated in the deed. The date of the products' shipment was December 4 last year. Other documents also

confirmed that Smart Export Garments had signed similar agreements with some other companies, including Omas Packaging Ltd, Naz Jeans Processions and MAC-TEX. Abdul Kader, who looks after the building and also runs a bakery on the ground floor, said the two-storey building has a foundation for five floors. He said the building's construction began in 2011, and its owner entered into an agreement with Smart Export Garments towards the end of the same year. The garment factory went into production on the 1st floor in January last year while the bakery on the ground floor was launched later. He said the apparel factory had electricity connection but it did not have any gas connection or water supply from Wasa. It used pumps to extract groundwater. Kader said what caused the fire still remained unknown but he believed that external sources like a dropped cigarette might have sparked the fire. "Someone might have started the fire because it was originated from a corner where there was no electric device that could cause short-circuit," he said. However, Home Minister Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir yesterday told reporters at his secretariat office that a primary investigation found that Saturday's factory fire was caused by an electrical short-circuit. Kader said he had met an inspector of Rajuk before the construction of the two-storey building. The Rajuk official had told him that the building did not require an approval of Rajuk as the area was outside its jurisdiction. Kader, however, could not name the inspector. Asked if the building's owner had checked whether Smart Export Garments Ltd had all the legal papers required before he rented out the first floor, Kader said, "We considered them [factory owners] as mere tenants." Smart Export Garments is not a member of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) or Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA). The factory looked like a very informal trade venture where no safety measure had been taken, putting at risk the lives of some 350 employees. It seemed to have employed labourers, ignoring the mandatory 18-year age requirement. Many minor boys and girls had been appointed at the factory, said some workers and neighbours. Moyna Akter, a 20-year-old girl, worked for only two months after the company began its operation in the building in January last year. Her younger sister Kohinur Akter continued her job as a helper until she died in Saturday's deadly fire. The great loss has a serious impact on Moyna who said, "I will never work for a garment factory." She also said one of the factory's owners was Sharif whose wife had worked as a supervisor there. Smart Export Garments used to manufacture men's shorts and jackets with flammable foams. The fire was originated from the store room near the toilet on the factory floor, survivors said. All offices, store rooms, sample rooms and toilets were on the same floor. During the fire, more than 300 workers were inside the factory, said some workers. BGMEA President Shafiul Islam Mohiuddin said the trade body could not avoid its responsibility though the

factory was not its member. "We are closely monitoring the matter. We are trying to reach the owners of the factory." Subcontract has become a reality of the garment industry now. Foreign buyers are squeezing the prices and so to get the production cost reduced, garment owners subcontract their orders, the BGMEA chief said. If the buyers increase even 20 cents per piece of garment items, the whole issue of compliance would turn overnight, he added. Kalpana Akter, executive director of Bangladesh Centre for Workers Solidarity, however, said, "Frequent fires [at garment factories] are taking place for weak monitoring of the government and BGMEA. BGMEA cannot avoid its responsibility though the factory is not its member."

# 11 fishermen

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their lives, said Abul Kalam, a fish trader. A fishing boat found six injured fishermen floating in the waters and brought them ashore around 9:00pm, Kalam added. Meanwhile, another boat rescued five more and rushed them to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital around 2:00pm, said Sudarshan Chakrobarty, ward in-charge of the hospital. However, neither the police nor the coastguards have been informed of the incident, said officers-in-charge of Cox's Bazar and Moheshkhali police stations and Lt Commander Md Yusuf of Bangladesh Coast Guard (East Zone).

# Teacher

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abusing a class-X student, said the director general (DG) of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education yesterday. The incident took place nearly 15 days back and the victim's father informed the college authority last week, said DG Prof Fahima Khatun. The college had formed a probe committee on receiving the complaint that English teacher Tarakchandra Mandal abused the student whom he tutored. In the meantime, Fahima said, the teacher sought relief from his duties in a letter to the principal. "Seeing the news in the media, I contacted the college principal and asked him to take legal actions against the teacher," she said, adding dismissal could never be a punishment for such a heinous crime. The college authorities, however, in a notice on Saturday said Tarakchandra was dismissed for his acts which went against the college discipline and teacher-like behaviour.

# BNP council

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national standing committee at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office last night. Tariqul, also the party's standing committee member, however, did not mention any specific date for the council. BNP would sit with its alliance partners tonight to discuss the current political situation, he told reporters. Asked about the president's speech in parliament yesterday, the BNP coordinator said it was the statement of the government, not his [president]. "He just read out the statement prepared by the ruling Awami League's policymakers, and it is very unfair," he added. At the meeting, the committee also decided to hold a rally in the capital's Paltan tomorrow, demanding unconditional release of the party's acting secretary general and other leaders.

# Fire service emergency number

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**  
Fire Service and Civil Defence yesterday urged the factory owners to preserve its emergency number 9555555 and put it on display so that workers could see it clearly and call the fire brigade fast in case of fire. "The fire service is open round the clock. Fire engines will set off for the scene within 30 seconds of a call from any place in the country," said a press release. The fire service's statement came against the backdrop of Saturday's fire that killed seven workers at a garment factory in the capital's Mohammadpur. "We have found that people affected by fire and other disasters delay calling the fire service. Maybe this is because many do not know our number or they just can't remember the number in an emergency situation," read the press release.

# Pak PM probe official committed suicide

**Police tells SC**  
*PTI, Islamabad*  
A senior anti-graft investigator, who was found dead in mysterious circumstances while probing corruption charges against Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf, had apparently committed suicide, Pakistani police has told the Supreme Court. Officials of Islamabad Police submitted an initial investigation report regarding the death of Kamran Faisal, an assistant director of the National Accountability Bureau, to the Supreme Court on Saturday. The report, based on an autopsy, "revealed suicide as cause of the death", state-run Radio Pakistan reported.

Earlier this week, Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry formed a two-judge bench to investigate Faisal's death after his colleagues and relatives alleged he was murdered. The bench subsequently issued notices to NAB Chairman Fasih Bokhari and senior officials of Islamabad Police and a state-run hospital to provide information regarding the death. Faisal was found hanging from a fan in his room at a government hostel on January 18.

# 2 more die

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through human contact. Prof Rahman stressed that people showing symptoms must be admitted to hospitals immediately. He also warned all not to drink raw date sap to avoid contamination with the deadly virus. The IEDCR has five regular surveillance sites in Rajshahi, Rangpur, Faridpur, Rajbari and Tangail. Meanwhile, Dr Tom Frieden of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) yesterday said Bangladesh has been hit hard by Nipah virus. He was addressing a discussion at the capital's International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B). Dr Frieden also advised people to avoid drinking raw date and palm sap. "We are working closely on this here [Bangladesh]," he said adding that CDC has been offering diagnostic facilities for Nipah related cases in Bangladesh. Nearly 78 percent of the people who were infected with the virus in Bangladesh died.

# Acid attacker jailed

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Monir had been running an illegal factory at his rented house at Zakir Hossain Road where he manufactured energy drinks, shampoos, toothpastes etc without any clearance from Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institute (BSTI), police said. "We discovered the existence of this factory during his [Monir] remand", said Masudur Rahman, deputy

commissioner of the Media Centre of Dhaka Metropolitan Police. "Monir, a medical representative by profession, has some basic knowledge of various chemicals and drugs which he used to manufacture acid, fake medicines and cosmetics and sold those in the market," he added. Following his confession, DB men raided the factory

and informed the mobile court. Police arrested Monir last Thursday from Kurkutichhari of Rangamati for stabbing Sharmin Akhter Ankhi and pouring acid on her for refusing to marry him at a marriage registrar's office in the capital's Chankharpul. Ankhi is now undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Meanwhile, a High Court bench yesterday praised the law enforcers for the speedy arrest of Monir. During the hearing of a rule issued earlier by the HC, a bench of Justice AHM Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik and Justice Mahmudul Haque said the law enforcers have played a commendable role which is very encouraging.

# In depths of despair

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"We came to Dhaka for jobs as my parents are unable to run the family of three sisters and one brother," said Sumi. The 13-year-old herself has been working at another garment factory near Smart Export for two months. After the fire, Sharmin was taken first to Shaheed Suhrawardy Hospital and later to Dhaka Medical College Hospital as her condition worsened, said her uncle Shahbuddin. Doctors' comment on her condition was not available, but Shahbuddin said she did not suffer any burns but her head was badly hurt from jumping. "We are worried about her as she is still unconscious," said Shahbuddin, adding that the girl's family was unable to afford her treatment. Sharmin's father works at a brick field in their village in Bhola. According to Shahbuddin, a representa-

tive from the BGMEA visited the girl in the hospital and assured them of bearing the treatment cost, but nobody from the company went there. Fatema Akhter, another victim, had always wanted to continue her studies. But education, she was told by her family, was a luxury they could not afford. She was forced instead to work at Smart Export, where she died. She was 16. "I have killed her with my own hands," cried Dolon, the inconsolable elder sister of Fatema, as she blamed herself for compelling her sibling to take up the job. "We didn't know we were sending her to a death trap." Hasina Begum, 25, worked day and night to save up for her children's education, said her husband, Md Shafiq, overtaken by grief at the untimely death of his wife. "She always thought of the children's future, working even on Fridays. Now that she is gone, their future is

bleak. Who will look after them now?" The garment owners' mismanagement and irresponsibility had snatched away her from him, he said in a broken voice. Their six-year-old son was crying and asking why his mother died. "Who will give him the answer?" asked Shafiq. The bodies of the seven victims were buried yesterday. Workers alleged there were no fire extinguishers in the factory and the two exits were locked, one of which was later opened. Altaf Hossain Sikder, father of victim Razia Akhter, filed a case with Mohammadpur Police Station on Saturday night accusing five factory owners and officials. Chowdhury Manjurul Kabir, Tejgaon division deputy commissioner of police, said police were trying to arrest the accused. An investigation into the

fire started yesterday. Meanwhile, five people injured in the stampede in the factory, were being treated at Sikhdar Hospital and one in Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Doctors said there conditions were improving. Mosharraf Hossain, 16, was among those injured in the fire. When he saw the fire outside of the bathrooms, he along with six other boys tried to douse the blaze with water from toilets. Having realised it wasn't working, they burst the pipes of 12 toilets, hoping the water would contain the flames. By the time, it was too dark for them to see anything. They crawled towards the exit in the dark, almost suffocated, after rescuing two girls who were trapped in a bathroom. "I don't know what happened to those who were with me, or if they are still alive," said Mosharraf, lucky to be alive.

# Learning too comes along

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In Dhaka, Chittagong and Tangail to pick divisional round qualifiers. In Tangail, Sristy Academy School, Bindu Bashini Govt Girls' High School, Shivnath High School, class 8), Pratik Goon (Shivnath High School, class 10), Simanta Gope (Sristy Residential School, class 10), Mahamudul Hasan Raju (Bulbul Residential Model School, class 10) and

Nawshin Poulomi (Bindu Bashini Govt Girls' High School, class 6). Alongside the regular competitions, there were eight different stalls where students played spelling-related games and did other activities. Prizes were up for grabs for students that performed well in the activities. In Dhaka, Champs21 visited three schools. The qualifiers from Queen's School are Anika Farzana (class 10), Sabah Sadia (class 10) and Sanjida Rahman (class 8). From Dawn Grammar School, Fariha Tabassum (class 9), Ishrat Islam (class 8) and Shwapno Neel Badruddoza (class 9) won. From Hurdco International School, Taswar Karim (class 9), Bushra Zaman (class 9) and Soumno Sakil (class 7) were through to the divisional round.

In Chittagong, two schools were visited. The qualifiers from Chittagong Government School are Prasun Datta (class 10), Prottoy Chakraborty (class 10) and Istiak Bin Mahmud (class 9). From Bangladesh Nou Bahini School and College, Jannatul Munera Nepun (class 10), Zuraiz Ibrakram (class 10) and Md Mohiuddin Mollah (class 10) came out on top. Students of class 6-10 who want to take part in the spelling competition and move on to the divisional round can play the Spelling Bee game on champs21.com as many times as they wish. Only their best score will be considered. The bulk of qualifiers will be selected from among the top scorers in the online game. The online round ends on February 28.

# 37 desperados

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One after another, the job seekers had all been directed to the hotel solely by phone, the Rab official quoted the hotel manager as saying. At the hotel on Saturday, the three brokers snatched their mobile phones and money. Each of the the job seekers paid the brokers Tk 10,000 to 25,000. The elite force handed over the middlemen and the Rohingyas to Cox's Bazar Police Station yesterday afternoon. The rest were handed over to Youth Power in Social Action, an organisation that works against human trafficking, that will arrange their return home. Rab-7 has detained 73 people including five brokers since July last year in Cox's Bazar, according to the force's data.



Teams from BIAM Model School, Rangpur; Brighton School, Rangpur; Dawn Grammar School, HURDCO International School, Queen's School and College, Chittagong Government School and Bangladesh Noubahini School pose with golden tickets. Search continues in Tangail for more divisional round qualifiers of Spelling Bee yesterday.