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# The Daily Star

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## GDP GROWTH TARGET

The govt plans to set it at 7.2pc  
for the next fiscal year

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## SWIMMING INABILITY

18,000 children die from drowning  
every year

PAGE 8-9

## PALACE PLOT

Documents reveal how Edward VIII schemed  
to stop Elizabeth from being queen

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## AILA-HIT EMBANKMENT

# 50<sup>2</sup> km turned into wasteland

*Around 50,000 people forced into  
different livelihoods*

PINAKI ROY, back from Khulna

A 50-square-kilometre area in Dakop upazila in Khulna that remained submerged in saline water for two years after cyclone Aila hit the region in 2009 has become an uncultivable and bleak place.

Fierce tidal surges cracked the embankments in the coastal south-western region during the cyclone, driving saline water inward. Since then the water has kept on flooding the area twice a day during high tides.

The situation pushed around 50,000 people, mostly farmers living in 30 villages in Kamarkhola and Sutorkhali unions, to take refuge on embankments until 2011, when the government repaired the breaches and stopped saline water invasion.

A majority of the people returned to their villages and rebuilt their homes. But before they could resume their normal life, they found that the salinity had severely damaged the soil as well as surface and underground water tables. They could no longer cultivate any crops or plant trees on their land.

On a recent visit to villages in these two unions, this correspondent came across a bleak landscape dotted with a handful of palm, date and coconut trees. There was almost no cropland anywhere as far as the eye could see.

"Since there are not many trees around here, you cannot say from a  
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Many victims of Cyclone Aila still live on the embankment at Dakop upazila in Khulna. Even though four years have gone by since the storm ravaged the region, they have not been able to return to their homes as they have lost their means of livelihood.

PHOTO:  
PINAKI ROY

## Consider bail, please

*Speaker speaks for  
Anwar, Bulu*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speaker Shirin Sharmin Choudhury yesterday called upon a court to consider releasing two opposition MPs so that they can participate in the upcoming budget session of parliament that begins tomorrow.

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## CITY POLLS PARTICIPATION

# Hasina thanks Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday thanked BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia for her party's participation in the upcoming four city corporation polls, urging her again to join the upcoming parliamentary election.

"I extend my thanks to her as her party is participating in the city corporation polls. I hope her party will also participate in the next parliamentary election to continue the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

## Talks, not violence

*Canadian envoy  
urges parties*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Canadian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Heather Cruden yesterday urged the political parties to shun political violence and engage in a meaningful discussion.

"We are asking the  
SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

# Black money for real estate

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government is again considering giving scope for whitening money in the housing sector to earn more revenue in the next fiscal year and boost the ailing sector.

It is, however, mulling to annul the provision for whitening money by investing in the sharemarket, since the scope did not yield much dividend.

The government may also adopt different strategy for the existing provision for whitening money by paying a

fine, as this scope too failed to draw satisfactory response.

At present, to purchase a house or flat one needs to explain the source of investment. The tax rates for per square metre range between Tk 800 and Tk 2,000 subject to the location.

Now the government is planning to allow purchase and construction of a house or flat without raising any question about the source of the money.

An NBR official said this would make ineffective the provision that money earned by illegal or criminal

activities cannot be whitened through this scope.

However, as per the government planning, the tax for a house or flat measuring less than 200 square metres may range between Tk 2,000 and Tk 5,000 per square metre.

If a house or flat is located in Gulshan, Banani, Baridhara or Motijheel areas of the capital the tax may be fixed at Tk 5,000 per square metre. In other areas of Dhaka and in Chittagong it may be Tk 4,000 while  
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Amena Begum, whose arm broke in the Rana Plaza collapse, waited seven hours for aid near Sonargaon intersection in the capital yesterday.

## RANA PLAZA VICTIMS A long wait, all in vain

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Since eight in the morning yesterday, Amena Begum, with her fractured hand, was waiting outside the capital's Sundarban Hotel, with high hopes that someone would come out with some financial help.

She was not alone -- several hundred others like her gathered there, as well. They were all

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## Water prices to go up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The authorities have decided to increase water prices by 5 percent for households and commercial customers in the capital to offset its higher production and operating costs, officials said yesterday.

Households will have to pay Tk 7.34 per 1,000 litres of water, which is now Tk 6.99. Commercial customers will have to pay Tk 24.44 from Tk 23.28 for

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## Lawmakers linked to land grabbing *Alleges Qamrul*

UNB, Dhaka

Involvement of both the Awami League and BNP lawmakers in grabbing khas land remains a major obstacle towards ensuring poor people's right to land, State Minister for Law Qamrul Islam said yesterday.

"No one, who have been MPs for a long time, keep themselves off this process... regardless of whether they belong to the Awami League or BNP," he said referring to the corruption in using the country's khas lands.

The state minister was speaking at a roundtable dialogue  
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## Ershad's challenge to AL, BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party

Chairman

HM Ershad

yesterday

threw down

the challenge

to the ruling

Awami

League and

the main

opposition BNP that the

two parties combined

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