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WITH TODAY'S ISSUE

A Weekly Publication of The Daily Star
theSTAR
 stories behind the news



STATEHOOD BID

Palestinians present UN resolution seeking final peace deal with Israel in a year

PAGE 9

WAR CRIMES AND JUSTICE

Auschwitz guard, 93, to be tried in a case that could make German legal history

PAGE 8



GOVT OFFICIALS

Khaleda denies meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Khaleda Zia yesterday dismissed reports of her recent meeting with government officials, saying intelligence agencies provided Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with wrong information.

"Intelligence officials have given you [Hasina] false information about the meeting as you are running out of time," said the BNP chairperson.

"I was the country's prime minister and also the opposition leader. So, even if they [public servants] meet me, what's wrong in that? However, they did not meet me," she said at a

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



COLOUR SPEAKS OF CRIME

The soil of this low-lying piece of land in Rasulpur of Rupganj in Narayanganj has turned cyan underneath as revealed by the boy, *inset*, trying to collect his cricket ball. Nearby dyeing and textile factories have been dumping toxic waste on the land. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



OIL SPILL in SUNDARBANS

Shipping ministry comes under fire

JS panel slams movement of vessels through Sundarbans, Shajahan's irresponsible comments; UNDP team arrives to extend help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A House committee yesterday deplored Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan's remarks that the oil spill in the Sundarbans would not adversely affect the world's largest mangrove forest and its biodiversity.

The parliamentary standing committee on the forest and environment ministry also expressed resentment over the shipping ministry's rejection to imposing a permanent ban on plying of commercial vessels through the Shela river, to save the Sundarbans.

"We have recommended that the shipping ministry makes the Mongla-Ghasiakhali-Morolganj route eligible for plying of water vessels," Hasan Mahmud, chief of the committee, told reporters at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

The committee questioned the shipping ministry's response over the spill and its course of action to minimise the impact on the Sundarbans, a world heritage.

"The committee also asked the shipping ministry to make sure that no unfit and faulty oil tankers can ply any river," said Mahmud, also a ruling Awami League leader.

The environment ministry informed the JS body that the Southern Star 7, which sank in the Shela river on December 9 carrying some 3.58 lakh litres of furnace oil, was an unfit and faulty vessel.

On December 14, Shajahan Khan rejected the environment ministry's pleas to permanently ban playing of commercial vessels on the Shela.

The environment ministry said they

SEE PAGE 17 COL 2

'DEAD' Hefajat man returns

19 months after Motijheel incident, he was found at a Ctg shrine

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

Al Faruk, 15, had gone missing since the May 6 police crackdown on Hefajat-e-Islam in the capital last year. The missing list Hefajat circulated soon after, too, had his name.

His ghaibana janaza (funeral-in-absentia prayers) was held two days later; his kulkhwani followed accordingly. His family even observed his first death anniversary in May this year.

One and a half years later, he appeared out of the blue and called his parents from a majar (shrine) in Chittagong. "I'm alive and am residing in Chittagong," Faruk told

SEE PAGE 17 COL 1

COMMENTARY

The massacred children are 'Ours'

For a "Moral Voice" of the Muslim World

MAHFUZ ANAM

Ever since the massacre of children in Pakistan I have been thinking about the mindset of the people who carried it out. I was trying to understand what sort of a narrative could have made the assailants so barbaric and how could events have been so perversely interpreted for them as to make these Taliban radicals consciously decide that killing innocent children is somehow justified. I was trying to place myself in the shoes of the bereaved parents and trying to guess how I would have felt if my children -- who have given me so much pleasure, happiness, pride, satisfaction, stability and a sense of security as I grew older -- would have been so brutally taken away from me when they were children.

Obviously, I would have been overcome by a sense of rage and obsessed by a sense of revenge. But at the same time I would have been heavily burdened by the fact that all this had been done by people who professed to build a society, a nation, a country and a future in light of the religion that was mine, and of whose contribution to civilisation I was acutely aware and extremely proud. So how could some people, who claimed to follow my religion, kill my children? For I know what my religion says.

I would also be acutely aware that condemnation for an act of this nature -- indiscriminate killing of children -- was not as widespread and

SEE PAGE 14

In the cold with no food, shelter

Helpless victims of Rangamati arson wait for justice

M ABUL KALAM AZAD, from Rangamati

She was looking for something she could salvage in the hope that it would help her get through what apparently was the worst time of her life. Two days after the arson, her razed home was still smouldering.

Pieces of half-burnt clothes and mangled pots were all Sumoti Bala could collect. They were kept in a neat pile at a corner of the torched house, even though she knew none of that would be useable.

Still, she kept on looking for things. There was little else she could do.

Sumoti and her husband are farmers. The house they had built with corrugated iron sheets, wood and mud meant the world to them. It was their home and the home of their two children.

Her house was special to her but it was just one of 57 houses, of indiginous people in Suridaspara of Naniarchar upazila in Rangamati, which were torched by Bangalee settlers Tuesday morning.

Sumoti could save nothing from the sudden attack. "We all ran to the jungle as I saw a group of people coming towards us brandishing sticks and sharp weapons," she told The Daily Star standing in the ashes of her home.

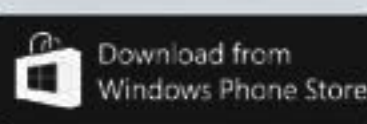
"When I returned after two hours, I saw the house was burning. We lost everything we had," she said.

As the sun was about to set yesterday, the cold of the hilly area started to roll in.

Another indiginous woman Bimola was preparing to make a fire for the night. It was an irony that they lost their

SEE PAGE 17 COL 5

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