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FLASH FLOODS
Farmers in trouble

MINTU DESHWARA, from Sylhet

Flash floods triggered by heavy rain and hailstorms have damaged Boro paddy massively in the haor areas of Sunamganj and Sylhet.

Paddy on 50,000 hectares of land was destroyed in 90 villages in Dirai, Tahirpur and Dharampasa upazilas of Sunamganj and 15 villages in Bianibazar, Balaganj and Osmaninagar upazilas of Sylhet, according to a primary estimation of the agricultural extension department of Sylhet.

Prasanna Talukdar, a farmer of Perua village in Dirai upazila, said the hailstorm was so severe that branches of many roadside trees were broken and fell on the paddy fields.

Farmers alleged that as the damaged dykes were not repaired, the flood water entered their fields and damaged paddy.

Mukaram Hossain, chairman of Sukhair Rajapur Dakhin union in Dharampasa upazila, who visited the affected areas,

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Flash floods triggered by heavy rain over the last few days have caused extensive damage to Boro paddy in haor areas of Sylhet's Bianibazar, Balaganj and Osmaninagar upazilas. In the photos taken yesterday, a farmer is seen harvesting paddy at Pukriya Haor in Khadim Nagar union of the district. *Bottom left*, a paddy field under water, and, a man threshing damaged paddy at Khaiya Haor in Fenchuganj, *bottom right*.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR



DEATH PENALTY
SC verdict on Nizami's review plea today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All eyes are on the Supreme Court as it is set today to pass an order on the petition of war criminal Motiur Rahman Nizami, seeking review of its verdict that upheld his death penalty for wartime crimes.

A four-member bench of the Appellate Division, headed by Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha, is scheduled to pass the order.

On Tuesday, the bench concluded the hearing on the petition and fixed today for passing the order.

The other judges of the bench are Justice Nazmun Ara Sultana, Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Justice Hasan Foez Siddique.

The review petition of Nizami tops the day's cause-list of the apex court bench. The verdict will be delivered at 11:30am, according to the SC website.

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Luxury car seized over tax dodging

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs intelligence yesterday seized from capital's Banani area a luxury sports utility car brought into the country dodging over Tk 8 crore in taxes.

Acting on a tip-off, a Customs Intelligence team raided the office of Versatile Automobile located at block-G in Banani and seized the white AUDI R8, Moinul Khan, director general of customs intelligence, told The Daily Star.

The officials had been keeping a close watch on movement of the car since last Saturday, he added.

With the yesterday's seizure, Customs intelligence seized 14 luxury vehicles over last couple of months that had dodged taxes.

Moinul said the car was brought in

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Trump, the last man standing in GOP race

Cruz, Kasich bow out as the NY billionaire urges party unity; sets off battle with Clinton in the Nov election

REUTERS, Washington

Donald Trump yesterday became the last man standing in the race for the Republican US presidential nomination as one after the other his sole remaining rivals, Ted Cruz and John Kasich, faded out of the picture.

Anointed the presumptive nominee after winning Indiana on Tuesday, the 69-year-old New York billionaire turned to a new phase in his campaign, planning to set up a vice presidential selection committee and stepping up efforts to seek unity with more Republicans.

But the wounds from a brutal primary battle were still raw among many Republican loyalists who simply cannot bear to support Trump because they worry he could spell disaster for the party in the Nov 8 elections.

Kasich, the Ohio governor who stayed in the race in hopes of persuading Republicans to choose him as the nominee at a contested convention in July,



Donald Trump



Ted Cruz

made plans to get out of the race now that a contested convention has been averted.

News reports said Kasich would suspend his campaign, making it official in Columbus, Ohio, at 5:00pm EDT (2100 GMT).

Trump has overcome sustained opposition from Republican rivals by using his star power to give voice to an anti-establishment movement. His supporters have been wildly enthusiastic about his "America First" platform, which has strayed far from some conservative bulwarks like free trade and military interventionism.

Trump's immediate challenge is to mend deep fissures within the Republican Party, easing tensions with party loyalists who have been appalled by his bombastic, bullying style, his denigrating comments about women and his proposals to build a wall on the border with Mexico and deport 11 million illegal immigrants.

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'Drop-off box' for unwanted babies



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A "safe haven baby box" facility allowing parents to anonymously "drop-off" unwanted newborn babies has been introduced in Indiana, USA.

The box is accessed from the exterior of the Woodburn Volunteer Fire Department building by the parent and is padded with climate control inside.

Emergency staff are notified when a baby is placed in the box via a security system and can get to the infant within minutes.

Knights of Columbus, the world's largest Catholic fraternal organisation, will pay for the first 100 baby boxes. Each box costs between \$1,500 (£1,030) and \$2,000 (£1,400).

Monica Kelsey, founder of the Safe Haven Baby

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Gold price sees 5th rise this year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gold prices have gone up by Tk 1,225 a bhoi, the fifth rise this year, because of a rise in the price of bullion in the international market in recent months.

The price of silver has also shot up by Tk 58 a bhoi.

Bangladesh Jewellers Association (BAJUS) announced the new prices yesterday.

The new prices will be effective from tomorrow,

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SIBL
Social Islami Bank Limited
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PRAYER TIMING MAY 5

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-20 12-45 4-45 6-29 8-00

JAMAAT 4-55 1-15 5-00 6-34 8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

168 CASES
SC today may pass order on rehearing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court is set to pass an order today on rehearing 168 cases in which former chief justice Md Muzammel Hossain and former SC judge Justice AHM Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik wrote judgments and orders after their retirement.

The Appellate Division bench led by Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha is expected to pass the order.

The issue of fresh hearing of the cases surfaced last month, about three months after the CJ said that writing of judgments or orders after retirement was unconstitutional.

On the occasion of the first anniversary of his taking office, the CJ in a message on January 19 said some judges made unusual delays in writing verdicts while others continued to do it long after their retirement, "which goes against the law and the constitution".

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3 YEARS OF HEFAJAT'S MAY 5 MAYHEM
Only 3 of 53 cases see progress in probe



STAR REPORT

Fifty-three cases were filed over the May 5 mayhem by thousands of Hefajat-e Islam men in the capital three years ago, but investigators have made headway in only "three cases".

On this day in 2013, the Hefajat men got locked in deadly clashes with law enforcers and the ruling Awami League men and turned the capital city into a battlefield.

They set fire to hundreds of shops, vehicles and police outposts and

looted shops, including those having Islamic books.

Although Hefajat claimed that 2,000 of its leaders and activists were killed in the incident, the government's death figure stood at only 13, including three policemen. Hefajat could not provide names and addresses in support of its claim.

Of the 53 cases, 33 were filed with Paltan Police Station, six with Motijheel Police Station, three with Shabbagh Police Station, two with Ramna Police Station and the rest

with other police stations in the city. At least seven of them were lodged as murder cases.

Police, government officials, relatives of the victims, Islamist leaders, businessmen, shop owners, employees of different offices and political parties filed the cases. More than 50,000 leaders and activists of Hefajat-e Islam and Jamaat-e-Islami were made accused in the cases for carrying out the violence.

The charges being brought in the

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Bring ethnic minorities to mainstream development
Seminar told

UNB, Dhaka

Experts yesterday stressed the need for bringing different ethnic minority communities to mainstream development and policymaking processes to ensure sustainable development in the country.

At a seminar, they also suggested that the authorities concerned should engage in talks with the communities to resolve some long-standing unsettled issues.

The issues include full implementation of the 1997 Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Accord, land ownership complexities and recognition of the national identity of the minorities.

The experts, including academics, bureaucrats and retired military officers, also suggested widening the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs.

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THREATENED WRITERS
US urged to grant humanitarian parole for some

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United States should provide humanitarian parole for a limited number of Bangladeshi writers at imminent risk of assassination by extremist groups, said US Commission on International Religious Freedom.

The commission, set up by Congress as an independent body under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, made the recommendation in its annual global report 2016 upon analysing the situation in Bangladesh.

Citing last year's gruesome murders of bloggers, it said dozens of individuals had either fled the country or their areas of residence following threats that include "Hit Lists" of individuals targeted for assassination.

The commission urged Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and all government officials to frequently and publicly denounce religiously-divisive language.

The US government should provide technical assistance and encourage the Bangladesh government to further develop its national counterterrorism strategy, it said in the report.

It also urged the government to investigate claims of land grabbing and to repeal its blasphemy law.

Land grabbing by people, including police and political leaders, is widespread throughout Bangladesh, causing it to be a serious concern, said the commission on religious freedom.

"Attacks on property holders and arson almost always accompany incidents of land grabbing. Religious minorities, particularly Hindus, believe that a lack of political representation makes them especially vulnerable," it said.

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