



WITH TODAY'S ISSUE
LIFE
STYLE



OPPOSITION DISPUTES WIN

Int'l monitors say Turkey referendum was held on an "uneven playing field"

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CRISIS OUT OF NOTHING

Operators take buses off Dhaka roads causing sufferings to passengers

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Misappropriation of fertiliser by a syndicate involved in shipment and transport, and mismanagement by its custodian -- the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation -- have scuttled government's commendable initiative for farm sector. This systematic graft has cost the state about Tk 100 crore each year since 2009. HASAN JAHID TUSHER follows up his recent four-part series on this institutional corruption with two more reports. Here is the second part.

Staff vanishes with Tk 10cr fertiliser

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

Fertiliser "disappearing", fund embezzlement, and corrupt officials going unpunished plague the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) but a class-I civil servant "vanishing into thin air" with fertiliser worth crores of taka was a new low for the corporation.

The rot in BCIC prompted the industries ministry to commission a probe but this incident was something the BCIC had not seen before.

Harun-ar-Rashid, a manager who was in charge of the BCIC warehouse in Patuakhali, ran away in November with over 2,800 tonnes of fertiliser unaccounted for, which is worth around Tk 10 crore.

Harun left with most of the relevant warehouse logs as well, according to sources.

Yet, BCIC probes appeared lacklustre, half-hearted and

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Vast tracts of Boro fields in Moulvibazar's Hakaluki Haor have gone under water due to flashfloods triggered by heavy rain recently. Inset, a boy carries a sack of OMS (Open Market Sale) rice he bought recently for Tk 15 a kg in Sunamganj municipality. Losing all their crops, farmers now have to depend on the government-subsidised food grains for survival. PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA, SHEIKH NASIR



'STATUE OF JUSTICE' 2 options for CJ

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said she had suggested Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha either remove the statue of Greek Goddess Themis from the Supreme Court premises or reinstall it at another place so that it cannot be seen from the National Eidgah.

She was having informal talks with her cabinet colleagues during yesterday's cabinet meeting, said meeting sources.

The PM had made the suggestion to the chief justice while talking to him at the inauguration ceremony of the newly constructed Judges Complex on Saturday, the sources added.

At a meeting with the Ulema from Qawmi madrasas on April 11, Hasina said she didn't like the statue, and that she would discuss the matter with the CJ soon.

"Why would the statue of Greek Goddess Themis be set up in Bangladesh? The

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Man killed in 'gunfight'

Family claims he was in DB custody

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man was killed in a "gunfight" with detectives in the city's Bhashantek area early yesterday, four days after he was called out from his Ashulia house allegedly by a criminal gang.

Deceased Sohel Sheikh, 30, was on bail in a murder case after spending several years behind bars. Last week, he was named in the murder case of alleged criminal Chiku Jamal of Bhashantek.

Sohel's family members alleged that suspected criminal "DSP Babu" called him out from his home on Thursday to talk about the gun attack on Chiku.



Sohel Sheikh

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Growers now buyers

Flashflood-hit farmers in haor area queue up for cheap rice, flour

REAZ AHMAD

Queues get longer under the scorching sun at midday at the backswamp of Sunamganj for subsidised rice and wheat flour.

People start lining up at 10:00am at points of open market sale (OMS) across the district to buy rice and flour at Tk 15 and 17 a kg, a lot cheaper than the market prices.

The local administration expanded the OMS facility on April 9 after early flashfloods damaged Boro crops on most parts of the district.

Those who belong to a predominantly farming and fishing community of the northeastern wetland, life upended by the late March's flashfloods is not going to be same again any-

time soon.

With most of their standing mono crops gone under water for excessive rains and onrush of floodwater from hills, they are now hard-crunched with little cash in hand to buy food and meet other immediate needs.

Of 1.6 lakh hectares of farmland under Boro cultivation this season, 1.13 lakh hectares have been submerged while crops grown on nearly one lakh hectare completely destroyed.

This made Sunamganj the worst-hit among flashflood-affected haor regions, including Sylhet, Habiganj, Netrakona, Kishoreganj, Brahmanbaria and Moulvibazar.

The government has estimated loss of nearly half a million metric tonnes of Boro rice culti-

vated in the wetlands of these northeastern districts, but at the same time said the loss would not have much impact on the projected national Boro output of 19 million tonnes.

Meanwhile, people in distress, who took credits to invest in yearly Boro cultivation, demand that they be exempted from loan repayment, the region be declared "disaster prone area" and steps be taken to stop recurrence of floods through building protection embankments.

An executive engineer of Water Development Board in Sunamganj was withdrawn four days back amid allegations of

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RELATED STORY, PHOTO ON PAGE 2

Hefajat hails PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Hefajat-e-Islam Nayebe Ameer Mufti Izharul Islam Chowdhury yesterday praised Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for recognising certificates of Dawra-e-Hadith exams of Qawmi Madrasa as equivalent to Master's degree.

He also lashed out at the critics of the government move and termed them "anti-islam".

"Some secular persons, organisations and a section of the media are raising a hue and cry about the recognition. We strongly

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



Seventy-five-year-old Babur Ali wheels a rubbish cart in front of Faridpur General Hospital. He has been working on a day-to-day basis for the last 45 years to keep the town clean. PHOTO: SUZIT KUMAR DAS

Sweepers grow old, too

SUZIT KUMAR DAS with ANDREW EAGLE

The assurance of an employment-related pension in old age is an important consideration for many who choose to pursue public sector careers. But for sweepers like Faridpur town's 75-year-old Babur Ali, retirement is unimaginable. Despite 45 years service in keeping the town clean he is still hired on a day-to-day basis, without any of the benefits one might expect from such dedicated public service.

At 3:00am when the town is asleep, Babur leaves his residence with basket and broom. He wanders Faridpur's roads collecting rubbish to empty into the rubbish cart being wheeled alongside him by a co-worker. He does this every day, without any holiday. He is on duty seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Babur is honest and hardworking, struggling to make ends meet. His meagre salary affords a one-room house of ten by eight feet in an unhygienic neighbourhood set within a

maze of alleyways. Such dwellings which about the municipal abattoir and the railway station are most often shared by extended families. His has no kitchen so food must be prepared on the footpath in front of their home. Babur is one of 250 Muslim sweepers, both male and female, to call the Faridpur Municipality Muslim Sweepers' Colony home.

Of a morning in the colony parents are often absent with children left to fend for themselves. "My parents and

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BNP's rejoinder, our reply

The BNP has issued a rejoinder to our report headlined "Huji kingpin Mufti Hannan Hanged" published on April 13. For better understanding of our readers, we have numbered each paragraph of the rejoinder and replied accordingly.

BNP'S REJOINDER (TEXT UNEDITED)

1. Our attention has been drawn to the news headline captioned "Huji kingpin Mufti Hannan Hanged" on April 13, 2017 published in your esteemed daily written by Mr. Shariful Islam and Shakhawat Liton. We are extremely annoyed with some portion of the feature which wrongly mentioned the involvement of some BNP leaders with the grenade attack on Awami League rally on 21 August

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SCHOOLGIRL RISHA MURDER

Lone accused indicted

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday framed charges against Obaidul Khan, the lone accused in a case filed over last year's killing of Suraiya Akter Risha, a student of Willes Little Flower School in the capital.

The trial will begin on May 8, it said.

Obaidul, now in jail, pleaded not guilty and demanded justice after Judge Abul Kashem of the Eighth Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court read out the charges to him.

Risha, who was studying in class eight, died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital on August 28 last year, four days after she was stabbed allegedly by her stalker, Obaidul, in front of her school at Kakrail.

The murder case was then filed against Obaidul with Ramna Police Station.

Obaidul was arrested in Domar upazila of Nilphamari district with the help of locals a week after Risha was stabbed.



Risha

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MG!

"Farm chickens have infiltrated into the Awami League. Local chickens have been cornered by those. Local chickens are needed, not farm chickens. Farm chickens are not good for health."

AL GENERAL SECRETARY
OBABDUL QUADER
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