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Rich feasts on rice for poor

Many flood-hit farmers fail to get VGF cards for graft

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Sunamganj

Affected farmers are not getting the rice of the government's VGF (Vulnerable Group Feeding) programme and the VGF cards are being sold in Rajanagar and Rofinagar unions of Sunamganj's Derai upazila, farmers have alleged.

They said relatives of the chairmen of the two unions were given VGF cards and they were selling off the rice in markets. Complaints have been filed to the upazila nirbahi officer against the chairmen for their alleged involvement in irregularities.

Sumon Das, a farmer in Ronarchar village under Rajanagar union, said, "Crops on my five acres of land were destroyed by floods. I did not get a VGF card because VGF cards were being sold now. I have no money to buy it."

Soilen Das, of the same village, alleged that some UP members were taking Tk 500-2,000 to be included in the VGF list.

Rekha Begum, widow of a farmer in Ronarchar village, said her five-member family was passing their days in hardship.

She went to the UP member for their ward for a VGF card several times, but she was asked to pay, Rekha alleged.

In this connection, Sumon, Soilen and Rekha lodged a complaint against Rajanagar UP Chairman Soumyo Chowdhury.

Talking to this newspaper, Soumyo claimed that there were no irregularities in the distribution of VGF cards in his union. The UP members did not take any money from anyone for VGF cards.

Joba Rani Talukder, a UP member of Rofinagar union, said affected farmers were not getting rice after standing in

SEE PAGE 13 COL 1



Rickshaw-van puller Masum, fondly called Doyal by his friends, with his constant companion -- a black and white dog he calls Mr Jonny -- at the city's Mohakhali Wireless Gate. He always keeps his pet with him in the rickshaw-van wherever he goes. The photo was taken last week.

Van helper, Mr Johny the Dog

ANANTA YUSUF

If you have recently been to Mohakhali or Banani, you might have seen a man pulling his rickshaw van, carrying a dog on it. The sight is not common in the streets of Dhaka, so at first glance, this might come as a surprise to passersby. Some were even scared seeing a dog standing majestically and enjoying his ride.

Curiosity pulled this correspondent to the Mohakhali Wireless Gate in search of this man and the dog. In fact, it was quite easy to find the rickshaw van driver, Doyal. Almost every single person in Mohakhali knows him. He is a legend, a mythic of sorts among his fellow workers. While his actual name is Masum, his

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

PHOTO: STAR

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Bangabhaban, Gono Bhaban, SC seem lakhs of km apart

Says chief justice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday criticised the government for seeking more time to issue a gazette notification on the rules determining the code of conduct for lower court judges.

The SC, the Gono Bhaban, and the Bangabhaban seem lakhs of kilometres apart, Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha said, referring to around two and a half years' delay in publishing the notification.

The chief justice was presiding over a five-member SC bench (of the Appellate Division) for hearing the Masdar Hossain case, known as

SEE PAGE 13 COL 1

Accused bragged police can't touch them

Says a Banani rape victim

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The two university students repeatedly begged the rapists to let them go. At one stage, the girls warned that they would go to police, but the men bragged about their money and influence and said police would not touch them.

"If I give money to police, they will not do anything," one of the girls quoted her alleged rapist Ahmed Shafat as saying.

Shafat, the prime accused in a case filed over the rape of the two girls, was angry at this and raped her twice while his friend Nayem Ashraf forced the other girl into another room of the Banani hotel and raped her.

"They were drunk and kept threatening to kill us and upload the video [of the rape] on the internet if we went to police," the victim told The Daily Star yesterday recalling the March 28 incident.

Invited to Shafat's birthday party, she along with the other victim went to the hotel around 9:00pm. Two of the victims' friends and two other girls were also present at the party.

The alleged rapists first started to hit them and slapped their "two friends, who were there and made them leave". The girls were led to a room at gunpoint and forced to drink. Their phones were already taken away.

Shafat phoned her 18 times the next day but she did not answer. The victims' friend Shadman Sakif, who introduced them to the alleged rapists early in March, contacted her three days after the incident on Viber and asked her to keep silent, she said.

The girl further quoted the alleged rapist as saying, "Don't think we are sparing you. You will meet us whenever we want, or else we will make sure the video go viral."

The girls kept mum for over 41 days. They finally went to Banani Police Station to file a case on Thursday

SEE PAGE 13 COL 1

Afghan IS head confirmed killed

REUTERS, Kabul

The head of Islamic State in Afghanistan, Abdul Hasib, was killed in an operation on April 27 conducted jointly by Afghan and US Special Forces in the eastern province of Nangarhar, US and Afghan officials said on Sunday.

Hasib, appointed last year after his predecessor Hafiz Saeed Khan died in a US drone strike, is believed to have ordered a series of high profile attacks including one in March 8 on the main military hospital in Kabul, a statement said.

Last month, a Pentagon spokesman said Hasib had probably been killed during the raid by US and Afghan special forces in Nangarhar during which two US army Rangers were killed, but prior to Sunday's announcement there had been no confirmation.

"This successful joint operation is another important step in our relentless campaign to defeat ISIS-K in 2017," the top US commander in Afghanistan, Gen John Nicholson said in a statement from US military headquarters in Kabul.

The statement, following an earlier announcement by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, said Hasib directed the March 8 attack on the main Kabul military hospital

SEE PAGE 13 COL 3

Things get Messi for Iranian lookalike

AFP, Tehran



Iranian student Reza Parastesh looks so much like his sporting hero Lionel Messi that it almost landed him in jail for disrupting public order this week.

So many people came out to take selfies with Parastesh in the western city of Hamedan over the weekend that police rushed him into a station and impounded his car to stop the chaos and clear traffic.

The resemblance is so uncanny that Eurosport UK reportedly used his photo by accident on Twitter recently when talking about the real Messi.

The furore began a few months ago when Parastesh's football-mad father pressured the 25-year-old into posing in a number 10 Barcelona jersey and sending the pictures to a sports website.

"I sent them one night and by the morning they had called me and said I should come in quickly for an interview," he told AFP.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

ERSHAD HC deals with 3 pleas today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court is scheduled to deliver its verdict today on three separate appeals filed in connection with a 25-year-old graft case against Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad.

The bench of Justice Md Ruhul Quddus and Justice Bishmadev Chakraborty will announce the judgement. Earlier on April 12, the justices concluded hearing

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4



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Ahmadiyyaa imam hacked inside mosque

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Miscrants hacked and injured imam of Ahmadiyyaa mosque in Ishwarganj upazila of Mymensingh last night.

The victim, Mustafizur Rahman, 32, sustained injuries to his neck, back, hands and other parts of the body, said SM Azharul Islam, a doctor of Mymensingh Medical College Hospital where he was receiving treatment.

A group of four to five men attacked the imam at the mosque with sharp weapons after the Maghrib prayer, said Badrul Alam Khan, officer-in-charge of Ishwarganj police, quoting local people.

Hearing him screaming, people rushed to the spot, caught one of the attackers and beat him up before handing him over to police. The one held could not be identified yet, the OC said.

Police got both the imam and the attacker admitted to the hospital. Ahmed Tabshir

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4



An engrossed Gulzar Hossain Garib writes a poem at his rented house in Jhenidah town's Paglakanai area. The 35-year-old labourer, who studied only up to class-IV, pens poems and songs in his leisure hours.

PHOTO: AZIBOR RAHMAN

Poet at heart

Jhenidah's day-labourer dreams of a fairer world

AZIBOR RAHMAN with ANDREW EAGLE

The world of prejudice, constant division and conflict in which we live is enough to confuse. It's easy to feel overwhelmed. To better understand the human predicament, what sort of a world it is that one might dream of, it's as well to turn to a poet.

Through his words, Jhenidah's own 35-year-old labourer poet Garib, whose name means Poor, shares valuable insight into how the world should be. Even the life story of this most unlikely and obstinate of poets may remind us that, despite everything, not much is impossible.

Of a day Gulzar Hossain Garib from Maharipur village in sadar upazila is to be found at Jhenidah truck terminal. He works as a labourer, unloading sand from trucks with his spade.

"Garib is as honest as he is hard-working," says labourer colleague Masum Ali. "He seeks to prove that profession cannot prevent someone from doing something great. To achieve great things needs untiring labour, honesty and sincerity: all qualities that Garib possesses, though he has no money."

"He does not spend any time in vain," says another truck-stop colleague, Swapan Ali. "In his leisure hours Garib composes poems and songs."

Garib earns Tk 300 per day with which to support his wife and two school-going children, daughter Mitnur in class-VI and son Ikramul in class-IV. The family lives in a rented house in the Paglakanai area of the district town.

Economic hardship has lasted for the whole of Garib's life thus far and he was only able to study to class-IV. But even at that young age he had developed an unquenchable thirst for reading.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2