

FLY ASH FREE  
**AKIJ CEMENT**  
bonding forever

100+ YEARS  
ASSURANCE OF DURABILITY

THE DAILY **Star** ON FRIDAY

www.thedailystar.net

Your Right to Know

ধুলো ময়লার স্মৃতিসংগম  
**BERGER**  
Weather Coat  
**ANTIDIRT**  
SUPREME

REGD. NO. DA 781 | VOL. XXIX No. 323 | AGRAHAYAN 28, 1426 BS | RABIU SANI 15, 1441 HURI | 24 PAGES PLUS TOGGLE PRICE: Tk 12.00

**"No concert or musical show will be allowed in open spaces in the capital or elsewhere in the country."**  
HOME MINISTER ASADUZZAMAN KHAN ON NEW YEAR CELEBRATION. (PAGE 3)

**"The election commissioners are not in a position to understand that interference in the recruitment process while holding constitutional posts amounts to moral turpitude."**  
TIB'S IFTEKHARRUZAMAN ABOUT SQUABBLE OVER APPOINTMENT AT EC (PAGE 20)

**"If Congress cannot fulfil its duty to act as a check and balance against the Executive, the president becomes a dictator."**  
US HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN JERRY NADLER AS TRUMP'S IMPEACHMENT DEBATE OPENS (PAGE 9)

# It was a death trap

*Keraniganj plastic factory had only one gate for entry, exit; no emergency exits; been running for 10 yrs; death toll now 13*

RAFIUL ISLAM and WASIM BIN HABIB

It did not look like a factory or a workplace; rather, it looked like a large compound for confinement.

The fire-ravaged plastic factory in Keraniganj, with around 15,000 sqft floor space, had a single gate for entry and exit and no emergency exits whatsoever. It had six large rooms inside, but everyone there had to use that one gate to get out.

A perfect recipe for disaster.

Wednesday afternoon's fire originated close to the gate and it trapped around 150 workers at the unapproved Prime Pet and Plastic Industries set up in a residential area of Chunkutia neighbourhood.

Survivors, witnesses and firemen told The Daily Star that it was difficult to get out of the burning factory as smoke engulfed all the rooms and it was near impossible to see and breathe in there.

They blamed this for the high number of casualties.

So far, 13 workers have died of burns. Of the injured, 10 are on life support at the ICU of Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery and nine others were stated to be in critical condition at the high dependency unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

"First of all, the factory is not compliant. And the area is not suitable for such a factory," Abul Hossain, a deputy director of Fire Service and Civil Defence, told this newspaper.

"If the factory had a couple of more gates, the workers probably could have come out before the fire spread," said Abul, who also leads a four-member fire service probe committee that visited the spot yesterday.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



**Rickshaw puller Gulzar Hossain, left, breaks down after noticing his son Mahub's bracelet around the wrist of a charred body at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. The remains of the worker were found at the plastic factory devastated in Wednesday's fire in Keraniganj, inset. The authorities will hand the body over after DNA verification.**

# Requiem for dreams

*Distraught, families stare at bleak future after losing loved ones in factory blaze*

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MUNTAKIM SAAD

With burns all over his body, 20-year-old Mehedi Hasan kept asking his sister whether he would be able to attend yesterday's college entrance exams.

"Will I be able to get into a college? I have viva voce in the morning. Can I go?" he asked.

With 100 percent burns on his body, Mehedi died at Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery about 11:30am yesterday, around the time his viva voce was scheduled.

After taking his charred body to their home in Keraniganj on the outskirts of the capital, his sister Sonia Akhter said, "He wanted to study management and dreamt of becoming a banker. But he had to work due to poverty."

The family dreamt of better days, hoping Mehedi would get a decent job after completing his studies, Sonia added.

Mehedi passed the admission tests to seven colleges affiliated with Dhaka University. He was supposed to pick his subject and college yesterday.

Mehedi was the youngest of four siblings. Soon after his mother died three

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



# GRAFT CASE AGAINST KHALEDA SC denies her bail

*Asks BSMMU to provide her with proper treatment*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday rejected BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's petition for bail in the Zia Charitable Trust corruption case.

A six-member bench of the Appellate Division, led by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, however, asked the Bangladesh Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) authorities to provide the BNP chief with advanced treatment immediately.

The petition sought bail for Khaleda on health grounds.

The BNP said it was frustrated and aggrieved over the order and alleged Khaleda was being deprived of justice.

Its senior leaders held an emergency meeting at the chairperson's Gulshan office to analyse the post-verdict situation and decide on the next course of action.

After the meeting, the party's Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir announced BNP will stage demonstrations and bring out processions across the

country on Sunday to protest the SC verdict.

Seeking bail at the hearing, BNP chairperson's Adviser Advocate Khandaker Mahub Hossain said, "I plead that you grant the aged woman bail considering her ailments."

Khaleda's lawyer Zainul Abedin claimed the BNP chief was suffering from various illnesses and was not given proper treatment.

The state counsel, however, claimed she was not giving consent to advanced treatment.

Both Attorney General Mahubey Alam and Khaleda's lawyers presented their arguments at the two-hour long hearing.

Citing a medical report, Zainul said Khaleda is becoming "crippled".

"There are instances the Appellate Division granted bail in other cases. ... she [Khaleda] was the prime minister of the country. She would not flee if she is granted bail," he said.

Countering Zainul, the attorney general

SEE PAGE 7 COL 3

**SEVEN RINGS CEMENT**  
FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE

# Rajshahi, Khulna seal easy wins

SPORTS REPORTER

All of the matches played on the second day of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) were one-sided affairs as Rajshahi Royals and Khulna Tigers romped to easy wins in their respective fixtures at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

An unbeaten 47-ball 56 from Afghanistan opener Hazratullah Zazai and another unbeaten run-a-ball 36 from Pakistan all-rounder Shoaib Malik helped Rajshahi Royals secure a nine-wicket victory

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

# ROHINGYA GENOCIDE TRIAL

# Her silence speaks more than words

*Gambia slams Suu Kyi for keeping mum on sexual violence against Rohingyas; she urges UN court judges to scrap genocide case against Myanmar*

AGENCIES

The Gambia yesterday said Aung San Suu Kyi's "silence" over allegations of sexual violence and rape carried out against Rohingya people "says far more than" her words, a day after the Nobel peace laureate defended Myanmar against genocide charges at the UN's top court.

Prof Philippe Sands QC told the court: "Not a word [has been said by Aung San Suu Kyi] about the women and girls of Myanmar who have been subjected to these awful serial violations. Madame Agent [her status in court], your silence says far more than your words."

Myanmar has not disputed at the ICJ hearing reports that 392 villages were destroyed in military clearance operations, or commented on widespread allegations

of organised sexual violence and rape, the court was also told.

Sands was speaking for the Gambia, which has brought the charge that Myanmar's military carried out mass murder, rape and destruction of Rohingya Muslim communities. Yesterday was the last day of the three-day hearing at the top UN court.

The African country alleges there have been "extrajudicial killings ... sexual violence, burning of homes and destruction of livestock ... calculated to bring about a destruction of the Rohingya group in whole or in part."

"The word 'rape' did not once pass the lips of the agent," added Sands, as Suu Kyi sat impassively in the courtroom, wearing traditional Burmese dress and flowers in

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

# Two ministers cancel trips to India

*Convoy of Bangladesh's assist high commissioner comes under attack from protesters in Guwahati*

STAR REPORT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan have cancelled their scheduled trips to India.

The cancellations come at a time when India is seeing protests over the passage of Citizenship Amendment Bill in parliament.

Farid Hossain, minister (press) at the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi, confirmed the cancellation of the foreign minister's visit. He, however, did not give any reason.

The minister was scheduled to fly to Delhi yesterday afternoon to attend the Indian Ocean Dialogue and Delhi Dialogue XI, to be held today and tomorrow.

During his three-day visit, Momen was also expected to meet Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on the sidelines of the Indian Ocean Dialogue.

This newspaper could not reach the minister for comments.

A foreign ministry official said Momen rescheduled his tour to join programmes at home on the Martyred Intellectuals' Day and the Victory Day. He is likely to visit India next month.

SEE PAGE 17 COL 2



**Indian soldiers walk past the burnt wreckage of a vehicle during a curfew in Guwahati yesterday following protests over the government's Citizenship Amendment Bill. Indian police fired blanks as thousands of protesters ignored a curfew in the north-east of the country in a fresh day of demonstrations against contentious new citizenship legislation.**

# PROTESTS OVER CITIZENSHIP BILL Cop firing kills two in Assam

*Thousands defy curfew, military; India's northeast leaders fear turmoil may engulf the region*

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Violent mobs in India's northeastern state of Assam torched buildings and clashed with police yesterday, leaving two dead and 11 with bullet wounds, as protests grew over a new citizenship law for non-Muslim minorities from some neighbouring countries.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist government has said the Citizenship Amendment Bill, approved by parliament on Wednesday, was meant to protect minorities from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The law seeks to grants Indian nationality to Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jains, Parsis and Sikhs who fled the three countries before 2015.

But thousands of protesters in the state of Assam, which shares a border with Bangladesh, say the measure would open the region to a flood of foreign migrants.

Others said the bigger problem with the new law was that it undermined India's secular constitution by not offering protection to Muslims.

Police in Assam's main city of Guwahati fired bullets and tear gas as groups of protesters, some numbering several hundred, demonstrated in the streets, defying a curfew imposed on Wednesday.

Ramen Talukdar, superintendent of Gauhati Medical

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1