

## Highway to corruption

### Massive irregularities, embezzlement in foreign-funded projects at RHD, JMB

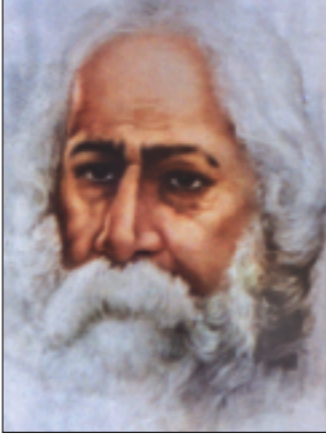
**RAFIQ HASAN**  
 The audit office has detected massive irregularities and misappropriation of funds in 13 foreign-funded projects implemented at a cost of Tk 182.97 crore in the 1999-2000 fiscal.  
 Eleven of the projects were implemented by the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) and two by Jamuna Multi-Purpose

Bridge Authority.  
 The irregularities include awarding contracts at higher rates than quoted in tenders, signing contracts with consulting firms without floating tenders, spending money beyond loan agreement and pocketing local currency gains due to inflation after conversion of foreign exchange.  
 The anomalies also include

paying for price adjustment beyond agreement, not realising money paid beyond the contract amount, not providing documents against releasing funds and spending extra money as travel allowances.  
 The Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) uncovered the irregularities in the projects bankrolled mainly by the International Development

Agency (IDA), the lending wing of the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).  
 The authorities concerned did not respond to the request of the audit office for submitting urgent documents against the expenditure of Tk 79.99 crore under the Third Road Rehabilitation and Maintenance Project, funded by the IDA.

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## Tagore's birth anniversary today

**UNB, Dhaka**  
 The 142nd birth anniversary of the great poet Rabindranath Tagore will be observed today.

Different socio-cultural organisations have chalked out elaborate programmes to celebrate the birthday.  
 Discussion meetings and cultural programmes will be held across the country, including the capital, Shilaidaha in Kushita and Shahjapur in Sirajganj district.  
 Newspapers will publish special articles and radio and television channels will air special programmes highlighting the literary works and songs of Tagore.  
 President Iajuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and opposition leader Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages paying rich tributes to the poet.  
 President Iajuddin Ahmed said Tagore had immense contributions to all branches of Bengali literature and art, including poetry, short story, novel, drama and songs.  
 Tagore's sense of beauty, truth and universality has been reflected in all his creations, the president said.

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## Remittance inflow up on war fear

**REJAUL KARIM BYRON**  
 Remittance inflow was at its highest this year during the Iraq war with \$285 million pouring in in April, belying fears that the war would impact foreign exchange reserves.  
 The same was \$227 million last April.  
 When the war against Iraq started on March 20, it was feared that Bangladesh would be under pressure as 80 per cent of its expatriates work in the Middle East.

During the first 10 months of this fiscal, the remittance inflow was \$2,530 million, about \$500 million higher than that of last fiscal's same period.  
 The highest flows were in March and April. In March, \$275 million was received.  
 According to bankers, expatriates were quite nervous when the war started and sent home their money, resulting in the fund influx.

The increase in remittance inflow also boosted foreign exchange reserves, which stood at \$1.984 billion yesterday, the highest since the government took over about one and a half years ago.  
 However, the government will have to pay up its liabilities to the Asian Clearing Union (ACU) within a couple of days and then the reserves will go down to around \$1.8 billion.

## Dogged by diarrhoea

400 children admitted to ICDDR,B in 3 weeks

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

More than 400 children with diarrhoea have remained under treatment at the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases and Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) over the last three weeks, said hospital sources yesterday.

The number of the child patients with diarrhoea was up to 150 three weeks ago, when the water-borne disease was on the wane.

Most of the children are under five and hospitalised in critical condition. Their numbers look set to rise further in the next two months like every year, say the sources.

Doctors suggest personal hygiene and sanitation to avoid the attack of diarrhoea caused by multi-

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A child with diarrhoea sleeps in a bed while his mother looks on at the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases and Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Sangsad goes into session today

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The Jatiya Sangsad goes into the seventh session at 7:00 this evening with the main opposition Awami League preparing to give the government a tough time on various issues.

The opposition deputies hinted they would bring up issues like frequent ferry accidents that left more than 300 people killed last month, deteriorating law and order, spiralling prices of essentials, police atrocity on students

and post-Iraq war diplomacy.

The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) meanwhile is determined to form the long-pending parliamentary standing committees on different ministries even if the opposition does not nominate its representatives for the bodies. The government however has not yet held a dialogue, let alone a consensus, on the formation of standing bodies.

The BNP also plans to turn this

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## Graft case Charges framed against Ershad and 4 others

**COURT CORRESPONDENT**

Charges were framed yesterday against former president H M Ershad and four others in a graft case.

Mohammad Azizul Haq, Judge of the Special Court for Dhaka Division, framed charges.

Four other accused in the case are Maksud Ali, former Chairman of T&T Board, Anwarul Kader Choudhury, former General

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## Politics with text books Secondary goes primary way

**MUSTAK HOSSAIN**

Political consideration seems to have prompted selection of as many as 20 books for students of secondary schools, which would cost the government Tk 9.5 lakh.

A selection committee headed by Prof. Wakil Ahmed of Dhaka University enlisted the books.

Of the books, 17 are on the life and works of late president Ziaur

Rahman and three on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. The books are in two categories -- on liberation struggle and reference books.

The list includes books written by a minister, several parliament members of the ruling BNP, bureaucrats, committee members and their wives and friends, publishers alleged.

Similarly, 18 books on the Zias were also selected as rapid readers for primary students.

Besides, the education ministry has selected 200 books under the Development of Selected Secondary Schools Project (DSSSP) funded by the government. The books will be distributed among 317 government secondary schools and 2,000 non-government schools.

Many books of unfamiliar writers were put on the list of text-books while those of renowned writers were ignored.

The education ministry would buy 63,000 copies of the books selected by it. To take advantage of this, a number of the books were prepared in haste. "If one's book is on the list, one can sell more than 2,000 copies of it in a single order. Naturally, it is very lucrative," a publisher said.

In the category of reference books, the 17 enlisted ones on Ziaur

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## Delhi repeals act to detect, deport illegal migrants

**PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi**

The Indian cabinet Tuesday night approved a legislation to repeal the controversial Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) Act of 1983.

This would help the government to detect and deport illegal migrants who entered Assam after March 25, 1971, officials said.

The repeal of the IMDT Act was done on the ground of it being

discriminatory because the law was applicable only in Assam while the rest of India was covered by the Foreigners' Act to handle illegal migrants problem, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj told reporters after the cabinet meeting presided by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

The IMDT Act had empowered the Indian government to expel those who were declared illegal migrants by the Tribunal set up under the act.

The cabinet decision to bring a bill for repeal of the act needs parliamentary approval and it remains to be seen how Congress, which rules Assam but is the country's main opposition party, and the Left parties react as they had in the past opposed such a measure.

The BJP and Asom Gana Parishad, which had ruled Assam for nearly a decade before being

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## Tripura rebels gun down 21 Bangalees

**AFP, Guwahati**

At least 21 Bangalees were shot dead and eight wounded in two attacks early yesterday by tribal rebels in Tripura, police said.

Some 20 rebels wearing hoods and armed with assault rifles and machetes dragged sleeping villagers from their houses in Fimnacherra, 25 km north of Agartala, lined them up and shot them at close range, police said.

Nineteen -- including women and children -- died on the spot while eight villagers were severely wounded, said Gautam Das, chief of Tripura's counter insurgency unit.

He said the rebels were from the banned All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) and that a manhunt had been launched to find the assail-

ants.  
 The injured were being treated in hospitals in Agartala. The condition of two was critical, medical personnel said.

In the second attack, two people were gunned down by members of the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) near Agartala early yesterday, Das said.

All the 21 killed were ethnic Bangalees, he said. Tribal militants charge that Bangalee settlers have changed the demographic makeup of Tripura, turning the indigenous population into a minority.

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Sarkar said the militants could have escaped across the porous 856-kilometre border between the state and Bangladesh.

"The militants come from bases

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## Rajshahi zoo in deer distress

### 200 of the fast-breeding animals to be set free in forest or sold off

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi**

Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) has decided to free more than 200 deer of Shaheed Kamaruzzaman Central Zoo as the authorities expressed their inability to rear these fast-breeding animals.

"The deer will be freed at the Sundarban mangrove forest or distributed among people if anybody wants to rear them," said the RCC mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu, MP, in a pre-budget meeting with the press at the City Bhaban on Tuesday.

"The RCC spends around Tk 50 lakh for the zoo every year and Tk 31 lakh i.e. 62 per cent of the total

cost is spent for rearing the deer which has become an impediment to running the zoo smoothly," Minu said.

He said a letter was sent to the related ministry asking for necessary approval for freeing the deer.

"Yet there will be one or two dozens of deer at the zoo for public entertainment," he said.

The mayor also discussed various development programmes of the city and exchanged views with local journalists on how to make the city attractive.

He also said two major projects of road construction, water treatment plant, construction of

a residential model school and various other development programmes would cost Tk 86 crore and would be started in the next fiscal.

The mayor gave assurance that proper steps would be taken for preservation of the archaeological heritage, which are now on decay.

RCC Secretary Abdul Gaffar, Chief Engineer Sarit Dutt Gupta, Chief Executive Officer Khalilur Rahman, ward commissioners, editors of different local newspapers and the journalists of national newspapers and news agencies were present at the meeting.

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## Plan for dearness allowance for govt staff

**STAR REPORT**

The government plans to allocate about Tk 700 crore in the next budget to foot the bill for dearness allowance for government staff.

Allocations will also be made to pay off retrenched workers of state-owned mills next fiscal. The money would be spent in the form of golden handshake.

The government may announce 10-20 per cent dearness allowance in the next fiscal in the face of demand for a new pay scale by government staff.

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