

PM opens textbook distribution

UNB, Dhaka  
Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday formally inaugurated the distribution of primary and ebtedayee levels textbooks and the marketing of secondary level textbooks for 2006 academic session that has just begun.

As a token marking the start of book distribution, she gave textbooks to some primary, ebtedayee and secondary-level students of different educational institutions at a function at the International Conference Centre of the PMO (Prime Minister's Office) complex.

This time, some 8.25 crore textbooks, 6.53 crore for primary  
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# Blasts rock Nepal after truce ends

UN 'deeply concerned' at Maoist rebel move

REUTERS, AFP, Kathmandu

A series of explosions rocked Nepal yesterday with one blast erupting in the popular tourist town of Pokhara, just hours after Maoist rebels called off a four-month truce, raising fears of a resurgence of violence.

No one was injured in the blasts in Pokhara, in central Nepal, or the western towns of Butwal and

Bhairahawa shortly after the rebels' unilateral ceasefire ended at midnight on Monday.

In its first official reaction to the end of the truce, Nepal's royalist government said it stood ready to protect the country.

"It is unfortunate. The state is prepared for any eventuality," junior Information Minister Shris Shumsher Rana told Reuters. "We are ever vigilant."

The explosions raised fears of a major resumption of violence across the troubled Himalayan kingdom if the rebels step up their attacks.

The Maoists first declared a three-month truce in September, but later extended it for another month under popular pressure.

The United Nations said yesterday it was "deeply concerned" that  
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14-party defers Dhaka long march to Feb 5

UNB, Dhaka

The 'Dhaka long march' sponsored by the Awami League-led 14-party opposition combine as part of their out-government movement has been deferred to February 5 from January 22 in view of Biswa Ijtema.

Talking to reporters after a meeting with leaders of the alliance that took the decision, opposition leader Sheikh Hasina said Awami League will take the decision whether to return to parliament or quit at an appropriate time.

"We will take the decision when time will come," she said as her allies suggested that Awami League  
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## Garos release first-ever album of Mandi songs

EMRAN HOSSAIN EMON, from Modhupur

Braving unspeakable poverty and lack of government patronage of the indigenous culture, the Garos of Modhupur forest have released the first-ever album of Mandi songs to hand their language, culture and thoughts on to their successors.

Titled *Abimaner Rasong*, the

Madhuri Nokrek, right, singer who took part in duet in the album. Teeres Nokrek, left, singer and composer of most of the songs of the album titled *Abimaner Rashong*.

pride of Modhupur, the album includes 13 songs composed, recorded and sung by the members of a family of Peergachha in Sholakori in Modhupur, Tangail.

Teeres Nokrek, a famous *Ringiba* or singer, had initiated the move, inspired the *Mandi*, a Garo community, and composed 11 songs for the album.  
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PHOTO: STAR

Govt hiding info about bombers to protect Jamaat

Alleges IOJ

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) yesterday alleged the government is hiding information about the arrested Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) bombers to protect Jamaat-e-Islami even after the arrestees claimed to be activists of Jamaat or its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS).

"The government is not letting the nation know about the activities of JMB cadres just to protect Jamaat," said the president of an IOJ faction Alhaj Michhbahur Rahman Chowdhury in a press release.  
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## Tk 18 lakh looted from 13 bookshops

Extortionists ransack computer firm in city, take away Tk 8 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Extortionists yesterday vandalised computer accessories at a private firm office at Paltan and looted around Tk 8 lakh while thieves stole books and cash worth around Tk 18 lakh from 13 bookshops at Banglabazar in old Dhaka Monday night.

Around 16 armed youths went to Global Colour Scan Limited at 32 Purana Paltan yesterday around 12:30pm and asked for its Chairman Mahbub Alam Mallik, said Executive Director of the firm Noor Alam Mallik. "The youths

said they came to collect Tk 1 crore they had demanded over telephone a few days ago," Noor said.

Finding their demand was not met, the youths opened fire on computer accessories and destroyed eight monitors, one television and one CPU worth around Tk 25 lakh. They looted over Tk 8 lakh from the office and also snatched cash and cell phone sets from the customers present at the firm, the Global Colour Scan authorities claimed.

Before leaving the office, the extortionists threatened its  
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PHOTO: STAR

Shopkeepers of Ali Reza Market in the city's Banglabazar area take out a procession yesterday to protest robbery in 13 bookshops Monday night.

## Top two leaders hampering probe

BNP, AL lawmakers trade blame over blast incidence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lawmakers of the ruling BNP and the main opposition Awami League (AL) at a meeting yesterday blamed each other's leaders for hampering investigations into the blast incidents and drives against the Islamist militants.

The blames were traded at a meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on home ministry after an unscheduled debate began on the recent remarks of the two top leaders of the ruling and the opposition parties about the militancy.

"How will the investigators carry out impartial probes into the blast incidents when the prime minister herself is publicly blaming the main opposition for patronising militants," AL lawmaker and committee member Mohammad Nasim questioned at the meeting.

"The government is trying to influence the course of the investigations to protect the militants and this is why the military commanders of JMB and Harkat-ul-Jihad are receiving VIP treatment in the police custody," the former home minister alleged.  
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## BSP-NOAB meet today to discuss price hike of newsprint

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An emergency meeting of Bangladesh Sangbadpatra Parishad (BSP) and Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (NOAB) will be held today at 3:00pm at the Jatya Press Club.

The prevailing problems facing the newspaper industry, especially the frequent price hike of newsprint, will be discussed in the meeting, says a press release.

Prayer Timing		
January 4		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-27	5-30
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation