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KAFCO can never be a profitable organisation, JS told

Amidst pin drop silence, Parliament yesterday heard the background of a "corruption story" during the Ershad era relating to Karnaphuli Fertiliser Company (KAFCO), reports UNB.

Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed narrated how the country's interest had been ignored while signing the contract with a Japanese company for setting up the factory in Chittagong in mid-80s.

Tofael opened the Pandora's box when former President and Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad disagreed with the Industries Minister's remark about the KAFCO during the question-hour.

Rising on a point of order, Ershad said KAFCO, built during his tenure, was the single largest foreign investment project.

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Rape: Medical board examines 6-yr-old girl

By Staff Correspondent

The four-member medical board yesterday examined the six-year-old girl who was raped in CMM's Court area on March 10.

The medical board is expected to submit its report to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate within a week.

CID police yesterday produced Maria (not her real name) before the four-member board headed by Dr Mizanur Hogue at about 11 am. The board examined her for about three hours at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

CID took her back to the Razabagh police hospital under their custody. Maria's friend, the lone witness, is also now under CID custody.

Rape in old city CID takes up investigation

By Staff Correspondent

CID yesterday took up the investigation of the rape of the seven-year-old school girl in the city last week.

Besides, CID took the arrested suspect, Mizanur Rahman, under its custody. Mizan was placed under a five-day remand on Monday.

AC Fazlul Karim of the CID has started working on the case as Investigating Officer with the cooperation of some other CID officials. CID officials yesterday interrogated a number of people in the PC Banarjee Lane area where the girl was raped early morning Friday.

Meanwhile, the victim was improving at the Intensive Care Unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). Police could not record her statement till yesterday.

Prof Mustafa Chy made PSC chairman

Prof Mohammad Mustafa Chowdhury of the Department of Political Science of Dhaka University has been appointed the Chairman of the Bangladesh Public Service Commission (PSC), reports BSS.

According to an official gazette issued yesterday, President Shahabuddin Ahmed appointed Prof Chowdhury the PSC chairman as per Article 138 (1) of the Constitution for the next five-year term.

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TNO/ADC to run office during interim period

One-third Paurashava seats kept for women

By Staff Correspondent

Jatiya Sangsad yesterday passed by voice vote a bill empowering the Thana Nirbahi Officer or the Additional Deputy Commissioner to run a paurashava during the period between expiry of the term of a municipal body and election of a new one.

The BNP legislators objected to the idea of running the municipal bodies by bureaucrats even for an interim period. They argued that it was inconsistent with the provisions of the Constitution. In this regard, they referred to a constitutional provision that says the local bodies would be run by the elected representatives of the people.

The legislation has also re-structured the conventional municipal bodies, reserving one-third seats of the total

number of commissioners of a paurashava exclusively for women. The provision for the reserved seats for women, however, would not bar them to contest for the general seats.

Besides, the present number of wards of a paurashava will be split into three, while one commissioner will be elected from each ward.

The law also said that election to any new paurashava, to be created in future, has to be held within 180 days from the date of creation of that municipality.

In case of the newly-created paurashavas where no polling has so far been held, the election has to be held "within 180 days from the date of coming into force of this Act."

While taking part in the discussion on the bill, the BNP

members criticised the government for its failure to hold elections to 69 paurashavas where polling was due in March last. Referring to the provision for running the paurashavas in thana head quarters by the TNOs and paurashavas in the district headquarters by the ADCs, the Opposition Bench MPs alleged that the Treasury Bench had proposed such a measure to make sure that the ruling party candidates win the municipal polls with the help of the bureaucrats concerned. MK Anwar of the BNP proposed that the TNOs and the ADCs be replaced by judicial officers.

Some 30 Opposition Bench members took part in the debate on the bill. Some of them argued for soliciting public opinion on the legislation.

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Crimes against women & children New law being framed, PM informs House

By Staff Correspondent

The government has decided to enact a 'more effective and complete' law to contain crimes against women and children, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

An experts' committee is examining framing of a timely law to cope with the changing nature and volume of such crimes and secure public life, she said.

Replying to a question from Tasmina Hossain of Jatiya Party during the Prime Minister's weekly Question Time, Hasina said experience has proved that the existing laws are inadequate to deal with

such crimes.

Loopholes in laws give the culprits scope to get free, she said. Cases relating to terrorist acts like acid-throwing, rape, child-trafficking and killing for dowry needed quick disposal, she observed.

Noting that the women and children constitute more than two-third (70.63%) of the country's total population. "Addressing the offences against women and children is very important and is a must" because they constitute more than two-third (70.63%) of the country's population.

The PM sought cooperation

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BNP stages walkout

Opposition BNP lawmakers, without their top leaders in parliament, staged a walkout from the House yesterday, alleging that they were not allowed to put questions to the Prime Minister, reports UNB.

At the end of the 30-minute Question Time of the Prime Minister, BNP members MK Anwar, Major (ret'd) Hafizuddin Ahmed, Mashur Rahman and Major (ret'd) Akhteruzzaman sprang to their feet and shouted that their written questions submitted to the parliament office for the PM's question time yesterday were not included.

Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury ignored their protests, but assured that he would allow points of order of three members after the disposal of notices under rule 71.

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OSCAR WINNERS: (From left) Kim Basinger, Robin Williams, Helen Hunt and Jack Nicholson pose with their Oscars at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles yesterday. Basinger and Williams won Best Supporting Actress and Actor for "L.A. Confidential" and "Good Will Hunting" respectively; Hunt and Nicholson won Best Actress and Actor, both for "As Good As It Gets." And "Titanic" won nine awards. (Details on Page 8)

— AP/UNB photo

On this horrific night in '71

By Staff Correspondent

The 'black night' of March 25, 1971 is back again with the memory of the holocaust unleashed by the then Pakistani forces to silence the voice of the freedom-loving people of the country.

Unmarking their barbarous agenda, veiled under a mock dialogue, the Pakistani military junta had resorted to a mass killing in Dhaka city, the then provincial capital of East Pakistan, to negate an election mandate.

In the wake of the military crackdown, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, then leader of the majority party in the then Pak-

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Lightning kills seven during nor'westers

At least seven people were killed by lightning during nor'westers that lashed five districts of the country yesterday, report agencies.

Of them three were killed in Barisal, three in Jessore and one in Jhalakati.

UNB from Jessore says: Khalil Sardar, 45 and his son Hiraq, 18, of village Andulbaria in Bagharpara, and Shukur Ali, 38, of village Modhukhali in Jhikargachha were killed by lightning when nor'wester lashed the district yesterday.

Heavy rains have affected public life and damaged crops in the district.

Met Office recorded 73 mm rainfall in Jessore during the day.

Another report from Jhalakati adds: Abdul Matin of

Nalchhiti thana was struck down by lightning during nor'wester yesterday.

Nor'wester also damaged a number of thatched houses and educational institutions in four thanas of the district and uprooted a large number of trees.

Electricity supply was suspended in different areas in the wake of storm. Telecommunications of Rajapur and Nalchhiti were snapped.

Report from Feni says: About 40 thatched houses were damaged in Chhagalnaiya and Sonagazi thanas of the district by nor'wester.

UNB correspondent from Pirojpur reports: A severe storm lashed Sadar, Kaukhali and Bhandaria thanas of the district yesterday afternoon.

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Tornado kills 105 in India

NEW DELHI, Mar 24: A tornado driven by winds of up to 500 kph (310 mph) ripped through several villages in eastern India on Tuesday, killing 105 people, including 16 children who died when a school building collapsed, a domestic news agency reported, reports AP.

The death toll was expected to rise as another 500 people were missing, Press Trust of India said.

At least 80 people were killed and another 1,100 were injured in Midnapore district in West Bengal state, district officials said.

More than 8,000 were left homeless in Midnapore district, where nearly 1,000 mud and thatched huts in five villages were flattened.

Twenty-five people, including 16 children, died in the neighbouring Balasore district in Orissa state after a school building used as a shelter was destroyed by the twister.

Drizzles may continue today

By Special Correspondent

After on and off drizzles throughout the day, a sudden burst of heavy rain partially disrupted life in the city late yesterday evening.

A 'westerly disturbance' coupled with moisture-laden southerly winds triggered intermittent rainfall in most places of the country. Meteorological department here said.

Barisal recorded the highest rainfall of 163 mm in 12 hours. The rainfall recorded in Dhaka city yesterday was 10 mm.

The Met Office last night

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Naogaon Jubo League leader stabbed to death

NAOGAON, Mar 24: A Jubo League leader was stabbed to death by a group of miscreants near the Sub-register's office in Atrai thana here on Monday night, reports UNB.

Victim was identified as Mohammad Lal, 32, Vice-president of Atrai thana Jubo League. He was attacked on way to his home by the miscreants at about 8 pm.

Police and witnesses said Lal was injured critically when the attackers stabbed him indiscriminately.

Local people took him in a critical condition to Atrai thana health complex and then shifted him to Naogaon Sadar Hospital where he succumbed to his wounds.



A relative wailing over the body of a young man who was shot dead at Goran in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Young man shot dead in city

By Staff Correspondent

A young man was gunned down at Goran under Shabujbhan thana in the city yesterday afternoon.

Police identified the dead as Mamun Sarwar alias Dipu, 32, son of Sikandar Ali, a resident of Tilpapara in Khilgaon area.

The motive behind the killing could not be known immediately.

A gang of about three assailants shot Dipu from a close range while he, along with his friend, Chandan, was going to Tilpapara Community Centre by a car at about 1:30 pm.

When Chandan, who was on the driving seat, slowed the car down to take a turn at Shantipur, the killers appeared on the scene and fired several shots at Dipu. However, Chandan escaped unhurt.

Immediately, Chandan took fatally wounded Dipu to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the doctors declared him dead.

The body has been sent to DMCH morgue for autopsy.

Police arrested Chandan late last night in this connection. Shabujbhan police is likely to produce him before the CMM's Court today, police said.

Eden Girls' College student succumbs to burn injuries

By Staff Correspondent

A student of Eden Girls College who suffered burn injury at her house on Saturday night died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

Nazmeen Huda alias Tumpa, 20, daughter of Nurul Huda, suffered fatal burn injury when her dress caught fire while preparing tea in a gas stove at her Aga Sadek Lane house in the city, police said. She died at the hospital at about 8 am yesterday.

She was a Honours student.

Boycott foreign goods, save industry: Khaleda

NARAYANGANJ, Mar 24: Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia today called upon the nation to boycott foreign goods for saving the domestic industry which is closing down one after another, reports UNB.

Addressing a big public meeting here this afternoon, the BNP chairperson asked the government to give voter's identity card so that the people could freely and fairly exercise their right of voting.

Giving a grim picture of the industrial belts of the country, Begum Zia accused the government of destroying the mills and factories at the behest of its alien masters in New Delhi. The ruling party is engaged in protecting Indian interest, she

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69-point proposal to NBR Raise income tax ceiling to Tk one lakh : DCCI

The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) has suggested raising the income tax ceiling to Tk one lakh from existing Tk 60,000, reports UNB.

In its 69-point proposal to the National Board of Revenue (NBR), DCCI said people are being compelled to keep their income secret due to low income tax limit.

It said fixation of the limit was unjustified, for the minimum monthly expenditure of a middle class family in the city is Tk 8,000.

DCCI also proposed that the government officials be brought under the purview of the same income tax rules. Presently, the government officials pay income tax through tax at source.

It urged the authorities to reduce the corporate tax by 10 per cent to 25 per cent for publicly traded and 30 per cent for non-publicly traded companies. The

present rate of corporate tax is 35 per cent for publicly traded company and 40 per cent for non-publicly traded companies.

Arguing in favour of reducing corporate tax, the chamber said reduction of the tax was necessary in the interest of industrial development. Corporate tax is being reduced around the world.

It urged the NBR to enhance the limit of 'tax credit' from the existing rate of 15 per cent to 40 per cent to encourage investment.

The rate of Value Added Tax (VAT) should be reduced to 10 per cent from the current rate of 15 per cent, DCCI proposed. It has also suggested the NBR to keep baby food, education and health sectors out of the VAT network for the interest of the general people.

It said if the rate of VAT was reduced, collection would increase substantially.

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All the chamber bodies are urging the government to reduce the VAT rate since 1995.

Suggesting computerisation of the whole VAT administration, the chamber body urged the government to simplify the VAT return system.

It suggested that the investment limit of a cottage industry should be raised to Tk 15 lakh from Tk 5 lakh. Moreover, the difference of investment limit between the ministry concerned and NBR should be resolved. The limit of NBR is Tk 3 lakh while ministry's limit is Tk 5 lakh.

It said duty on industrial raw materials should be 30 per cent less than the duty on similar goods imported.

Specialty, tariff protection for some of the domestic industries producing consumer goods should continue for some more time.

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'Number of CHT insurgents was 7,000 to 10,000'

By Staff Correspondent

Former Army Chief Lt General (ret'd) Abu Saleh Mohammad Nasim yesterday said as Chief of Army Staff he had an estimate that there were 7,000 to 10,000 Shantibahini insurgents in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, BBC reported.

"It was impossible to estimate the correct number of the rebels when we were fighting them but we continued our offensive according to our own estimates", the BBC quoted him as saying in an interview. The interview was broadcast in the evening session of BBC's Bangla service.

Responding to a question Nasim said "I want to believe that all the rebels have surrendered. Future will determine whether all have surrendered or not."

A total of 2000 Shantibahini insurgents have surrendered arms following a peace accord signed between the government and the Parbatyia Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity in December.

He, however, said the prospect for peace in CHT has brightened following the peace accord.

5 merchant banks, 2 issue managers get SEC approval

Star Business Report

Five merchant banks and two issue managers got approval from the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) at its board meeting yesterday.

The SEC hopes these merchant banks will play active role in supporting the market and hopes to bar the non-licensed issue managers from the market.

"By September 30, we will have sufficient merchant banks to operate in the market and allow only registered merchant banks and issue managers to

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