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9 killed in cinema hall collapse in Rangamati

RANGAMATI, Apr 22: Nine people, including two women and three children, were killed when a cinema hall collapsed at Bangal Hania Bazar in Rajshahi thana on Tuesday night, reports UNB.

Eight of the victims were identified as Shamsunnahar, 32, Cheman Ara Begum, 41, Arif, 3, Mostafa, 5, Shyamol, 8, Shamsul Haq, 18, Shafiqul Alam, 28, and Sobhan, 31.

Three of the victims were the residents of neighbouring Padua Union in Rangunia thana of Chittagong district.

Witnesses said the roof of the cinema hall, including a portion of its wall, collapsed just before the end of its night show. The collapse was believed to have been caused by faulty construction. Local administration has started investigation into the incident.

Embezzlement Sonali Bank official gets 72-yr RI

RANGPUR, Apr 22: An official of Sonali Bank main branch in Rangpur has been convicted in absentia and sentenced to 72 years rigorous imprisonment in a number of misappropriation cases, reports UNB.

Court sources said Principal Officer of the branch Sakhat Hossain Mondol was also fined Tk 3.25 lakh, in default, to suffer RI for four years more.

However, the Assistant Sessions Judge Court (1) here today acquitted businessman Hatem Mia, an account holder of the branch, as allegation against him was not proved.

According to prosecution, Mondol embezzled Tk 80 lakh from the branch of the state-owned bank through three accounts since 1981 to 1992.

The District Bureau of Anti-Corruption filed 11 cases against him after an investigation.

The Court after examining the evidences and records delivered the judgement of three cases separately.

Khaleda tells Cheney All cooperation to encourage foreign investment

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia assured former US Defence Secretary Dick Cheney of all cooperation to encourage foreign investment in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

"I assure you on behalf of my party to extend all cooperation to encourage foreign investment in the country," Begum Zia told Dick Cheney, Chairman and CEO of Halliburton Company.

Dick Cheney made a courtesy call on Begum Zia at her 29 official residence yesterday evening.

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TOMORROW

Abahani Kira Chakra is a big name in local sports, particularly in football, hockey and cricket. Recently its fan club celebrated, belatedly, its Silver Jubilee. This week's cover story is on the club which was born with a silver spoon, and orphaned at a young age.

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Sonali Bank branches in UK face closure

By Inam Ahmed



The London branch of Sonali Bank at Osborn Street. — Star photo

Sonali Bank's branches in the United Kingdom are likely to face closure after the management failed to carry out the reforms including retrenchment of excess manpower as required by the Bank of England.

The Bank of England had detected a number of irregularities in the UK branches of Sonali Bank (SB) and had told the government that it would close down the SB operation in the UK unless the changes were put in place, according to highly-placed sources in the bank.

Sonali Bank has six branches operating in the UK. Later, officials of the Bank of England came to Bangladesh and had several rounds of talks with the finance minister, Bangladesh Bank Governor and SB officials.

The Bangladesh side had persuaded the Bank of England that SB would carry out the required reforms including reducing the amount of default loans, developing proper accounting system, computerisation and shedding of excess manpower.

Based on this promise, the Bank of England had agreed

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Victims of liquor poisoning losing eyesight

From Our Correspondent

GAIBANDHA, Apr 22: At least 20 people who fell sick after drinking poisonous liquor on Bangla New Year's day, are now having problems with their eyesight, said Dr Fazlul Huq of Gaibandha Sadar Hospital.

The victims came to the physician complaining that their eyesights became hazy and they lost sharpness of their visions.

The doctor feared that the people who took the methanol-mixed toxic liquor may become blind.

At least 65 people were killed and an unspecified number of others fell sick after drinking the toxic liquor in Gaibandha on April 14.

Meanwhile, another victim Abdul Hye, 30, of Shibrampur village under Palashbari thana, was admitted to the Gaibandha Sadar Hospital. Besides, nine others were taken to Rangpur Medical College Hospital last night, said TNO of Palashbari.

Bankruptcy court opens 'Wilful defaulters to face stern action'

Law Minister Abdul Matin Khasru yesterday said stern action will be taken against the bank loan defaulters to revive the banking sector, reports UNB.

"We must be harsh against the wilful defaulters as people of the country are being deprived of proper banking services," he said.

The minister was addressing a function in the city, marking the opening of the country's first bankruptcy court and financial loan court.

The law minister said a section of bank officials and high

48363 bank loan cases pending

There are 48,363 cases still pending with the financial loan courts while 1000 new cases are being filed every three months, Bangladesh Bank Governor Lutfar Rahman Sarkar disclosed this yesterday, reports BSS.

Since 1991 nearly 64,000 cases have been filed with the financial loan courts, and of them, 15637 cases had been disposed of.

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government officials are also involved in the process of default culture. "They should be singled out as the nation wants to get rid of them."

"Though the percentage of corrupt officials is 'microscopic', yet it is due to them that the banking sector has been mismanaged," the minister said, adding that the nation's existence would be in 'difficulty' if this situation continues to prevail.

Khasru also underlined the need for reforming the banking and financial laws. "We would amend the Law Commission Act and appoint part time consultants to facilitate the amendment of banking and financial laws of the country."

Law Secretary Amin Ullah, Bangladesh Bank Governor Lutfar Rahman and Deputy Governor Khondaker Ibrahim Khaled also spoke on the occasion.

Referring to the activities of the combined bargaining agents (CBAs) in the banking sector, the minister said the CBAs should function properly and be democratic. "But we must identify those who are sitting on our money like robbers to realise their vested interest," he added.

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Tofael-Shamsul heated debate in JS

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday witnessed a brief debate between the present and former commerce ministers.

Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed became furious when BNP lawmaker Mashur Rahman challenged the export-import figures he cited during the question-answer session.

According to the minister, the country earned Tk 14,960.83 crore from exports in the first eight months of the current fiscal year against Tk 12,065.18 crore in the corresponding period of the last fiscal year.

During the same period, the volume of imports was of Tk 19,426.02 crore while the amount was Tk 17,840.01 crore in the previous fiscal year.

The statistics show that exports have risen while imports have declined during the present Awami League government, Tofael Ahmed said.

Noting that he took the figures from the Export Promotion Bureau, an angry Tofael Ahmed proposed the formation of a parliamentary committee, headed by Mashur Rahman, to probe into the export-import figures presented in the House.

Responding to Mashur Rahman's statement, quoting

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Gas supply from Sangu now likely from next month

By Sharier Khan, back from Chittagong

Chief Executive of Cairn Energy Bill Gammel yesterday said that his company made a mistake by conducting the test of the 48-km pipeline from the off-shore Sangu gasfield to the Chhillimpur Gas Process Plant without prior approval from the Directorate of Explosives of the government.

"We assure you that we have properly tested the pipeline. But we made a mistake by not informing the Directorate of Explosives," Bill Gammel told a group of journalists who visited the Chhillimpur Gas Process Plant yesterday afternoon.

Former US secretary of defence Dick Cheney who is now Chief of Halliburton, the parent organisation of Cairn's investment partner Brown and Roots, and Ton Van Der Helm, General

Manager of Shell Bangladesh — another partner of Cairn — were also present at the press briefing.

Cairn is committed to supply 160 million cubic feet of gas daily (mmcfcd) from the country's first off-shore gasfield — Sangu — to the national grid from late April under a Gas Sales Agreement.

It had planned to inaugurate the Sangu field yesterday, but due to some technical difficulties, it is yet uncertain whether Cairn and its partners can supply that amount of gas in time.

Besides, a deadline has been created as Cairn finished testing the 48-km pipeline which can supply up to 500 mmcfcd gas, without any prior approval from the Directorate of Explosives. As no representative of

the Directorate witnessed the test, it is now refusing to sign the delayed application for approval.

In addition, Cairn proposed Petrobranga — which is contractually the buyer of the gas — that it would start with a daily gas supply of 40 to 60 mmcfcd by end-April. But Petrobranga refused to accept the proposal on the ground that the Sangu field and the Gas Process Plant were not yet ready for a stable gas supply.

Now it is said that gas from Sangu would be supplied to the national grid from May.

"The inaugural ceremony will be held soon," said Dick Cheney who earlier met the Prime Minister in Dhaka.

"The Gas Process Plant is

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Maths exam 'not today'

The SSC mathematics examination will not be held today as published in a national daily yesterday. Rather it will be held on the scheduled date and time, reports UNB.

An Education Ministry press release yesterday said no changes were made in the examination schedule and all the examinations will be held as usual.

Award

The Government has announced an award of Tk 5 lakh for information about the culprits involved in leaking out the question papers of the SSC examinations, reports UNB.

The award will be given to that person who will provide accurate, specific and unbiased information about the culprits involved in the heinous act, said an official handout yesterday.

Question leak-out: Two BG Press men held

By Staff Correspondent

Two employees of the BG Press were arrested at Tejgaon in the city yesterday in connection with the leak-out of question papers of the SSC examinations.

A joint team of the CID and Special Branch arrested Kamaluddin alias Musa Miah, 45, a binder of BG Press and his brother-in-law Abul Hashem, a porter of the press in the afternoon, CID sources said.

Later, the team raided the houses of the two at Tejgaon Railway Colony and Nakhla-para.

Kamaluddin hails from Mirsarai in Chittagong while Abul Hashem is from Chhagalnaiya in Feni.

Both of them will be produced in the court today, according to UNB.

The joint team also talked to some officials and employees of

the BG Press involved in printing and distribution of question papers.

The team members told agency that they were convinced that the leakage of question paper started from the BG Press.

They also made a list of the suspects in BG Press and some outsiders involved in the racket.

Police said the BG Press started the printing of SSC question papers on December 10, 1997. The distribution was made between February 20 and April 5.

During the time of printing and distribution, the two arrested BG Press employees remained absent from the office several times without the knowledge of the authorities, police said.

Police yesterday arrested

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Question leak-out: Minister hopes to 'unearth mystery'

By Staff Correspondent

Education Minister ASHK Sadek told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday that the authorities were "close to success" in unearthing the "mystery" behind the leak-out of question papers of the on-going SSC examinations.

"We hope to catch the real culprits in a couple of days." Legal action will be taken against the persons responsible, he said.

Making a statement in the House, he also blamed teachers, guardians and local leaders for helping examinees in "copying" during examinations.

While the minister was making his statement, some of the BNP lawmakers were shouting at him and asking him to resign for his "failures".

As the House was adjourned for Magreb prayers after his statement, the Education Minister

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Hour-long gunfight at DU: Student stabbed

By Staff Correspondent

Gunshots rocked the Dhaka University campus when activists of Chhatra League and Jatiyatadabi Chhatra Dal were locked in a clash yesterday afternoon.

Two persons including a DU student were injured in clash.

The two sides exchanged about 50 rounds of gunshots during the clash, creating panic on the campus, witnesses said.

Kamruzzaman, a third year student of Islamic Studies sustained stab injuries while a truck driver, Abul Hossain, 40, was hit by bullet, police and hospital sources said.

Campus sources said that the pro-Awami League BCL activists took control of Suryasen Hall at the end of the hour-long clash that began over the incident of pulling the scarf of a female admission seeker.

Ramna police raided Jashimuddin and Bangabandhu halls following the incident.

The campus sources said the trouble began when Kamruzzaman, a JCD activist, allegedly pulled the scarf of a female student in front of the Kala Bhaban at about 4 pm. The girl along with her brother came to drop the application form for the forthcoming admission tests of the DU's honours classes.

The girl's brother protested the incident but Kamruzzaman



A plainclothes policeman searching a DU hall room yesterday. — Star photo

Mother of four gangraped at Gopibagh slum

By Staff Correspondent

A young mother was allegedly gangraped in front of her children at a slum in the city's Gopibagh area early hours Monday.

The 26-year-old woman lodged a case with Demra thana yesterday as she fell sick and could not come to the thana earlier after being violated by a gang of four local men.

The victim told police that the violators also threatened her with death if she reported the incident to police.

Police failed to arrest any of the alleged rapists till last night. The victim identified three of the accused as Ali, Mamun and Rashid, all between

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Nor'wester kills 3 in Sirajganj

SIRAJGANJ, Apr 22: Three people were killed and 13 others injured in a norwester that lashed Chowdhali thana of the district early today, reports UNB.

Several hundred thatched houses and standing crops on a vast track of land were damaged, and a large number of trees uprooted during the storm.

Two of the victims were identified as Babar Ali, 35, In-san, 14, of Ghorjan village.

Bangabandhu Murder Case Defence counsels warned as their clients found exchanging chits

The trial court of the Bangabandhu Murder Case yesterday warned the defence counsels of the five accused for 'secretly exchanging chits with relatives inside the court room', reports BSS.

The court warning came after security officials yesterday complained to District and Sessions Judge Kazi Golam Rasul that the accused persons were found exchanging chits and receiving unauthorised drugs from relatives during races in the court proceedings.

"You have been given all facilities including the scope to meet your relatives inside the jail as well as during the trial hours. Then why such complaints have come to me. Is the allegation true?" the judge asked the accused before adjourning the court to resume on next Monday.

Advocate Sharfuddin Khan Mukul, defence lawyer for Tahaeddin Thakur, apologised admitting that his client received medicines from his wife.

Mukul and other defence lawyers assured the court that such incidents will not happen further.

Prosecution lawyers, however, told the court that they had no objection to supplying

medicine to the accused subject to the approval of the court.

Earlier, state defence counsels for absconding Major (ret'd) Bazul Huda, LD (ret'd) Abul Hashem Mridha, Capt (ret'd) MA Majed and Dafadar (ret'd) Marfat Ali Shah cross-examined the investigation officer of the case.

Replying to queries from them, IO Abdul Kahhar Akand, also 61st prosecution witness, said names of Mridha, Majed and Marfat were not mentioned in the *ejahar* of the case.

Their names were also not

mentioned in the newspaper reports, said the ASP of Criminal Investigation Department (CID). But, he said his investigation detected that they were involved in the August 15 carnage.

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Shafiullah refutes allegation, blasts BNP founder

By Staff Correspondent

Refuting a BNP lawmaker's allegation that he was involved in the killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the then army chief KM Shafiullah said in the parliament yesterday. "I had been involved I would have been the president instead of your party's founder," Gazi Mohammad Shahja-

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Eliminating poverty by 2020 is not a dream



Participants at the Roundtable on 'Bangladesh 2020' at Sheraton Hotel in the city yesterday, jointly organised by The Daily Star and BCAS. — Star photo

The Daily Star-BCAS roundtable told

Star Report

Bangladesh can totally eliminate poverty, attain an annual eight per cent growth, provide universal adult literacy and basic healthcare to its populace by the year 2020.

This was said in a study presented at a Roundtable on 'Bangladesh 2020', organised by The Daily Star and the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS) at a city hotel yesterday.

This is not a pipe dream, but an attainable vision, for which, the participants said, there has to be accountability and good governance with a strong local government system.

The study further said there should be more emphasis on

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Financial and Technical Proposals are invited for establishment and operation of one or more than one Radio Stations under Private Sector from Local or Foreign firm individually or under joint venture. Conditions for establishment of Radio Station and tender schedule will be available on or before May 15, 1998 during office hours from the undersigned on payment of Tk 1000/- (Taka one thousand) only through Pay Order/Bank Draft in favour of Secretary, Ministry of Information.

Financial and Technical Proposal in sealed cover will be received by the undersigned in his office on May 25, 1998 at 11-30 AM. Technical offers will be opened on the same day at 12-00 Noon in presence of the bidders (if they are present) and subsequently the bids will be evaluated by a Technical Committee.

The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal without assigning any reason.

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