



PHOTO: STAR

Sutrapur police yesterday recovered 2,500 copies of geography textbook, a consignment for Maushumi Publisher, from Victoria Park area in the city. Miscreants looted the books on Sunday.

Govt emptied relief fund, Hasina retorts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad and Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government has looted the country's resources in last four months.

Referring to BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan's statement in the Jatiya Sangsad (parliament) Monday, Hasina said her government did not leave the Prime Minister's Relief Fund empty. "The past BNP government had plundered Tk 22 crore from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund by doing out Tk 25 lakh to each of the party MPs. They are doing the same now and shifting the blame on Awami League," Hasina said.

"It is very natural that the fund will be empty if 9500 sarees are distributed in the Prime Minister's election constituency and 4000 more are distributed in the election area of her brother."

The former prime minister was

speaking at the inauguration of "New member collection and renewal of membership programme of Dhaka City Awami League" at the AL office in Dhanmondi yesterday. Dhaka city Mayor and President of Dhaka city AL Mohammad Hanif presided over the function.

Hasina inaugurated the programme by renewing her membership. AL General Secretary of Zillur Rahman and other senior central leaders followed her.

The member collection and membership renewal programme will run through the next month. Council of ward and thana units will be held in April and the biennial conference of city AL in May this year, city AL leaders said yesterday.

"We will try to have a consensus while electing the leaders and if we fail to do so then they will be elected through direct vote of the members," the AL chief said.

Terming the programme 'a very good initiative', she said it has been

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Mother, son burnt alive in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A mother and her son were burnt alive when a fire broke out at their house at village Bangala in Chatmohar upazila of the district in the early hours of yesterday.

The dead were identified as Julekha, 30, and her son Abdus Jalil, 7.

Police said the fire broke out at one Keramat Ali's house from a kerosene lamp at about 3 am. Keramat, however, managed to come out of the house but his wife Julekha and son Jalil roasted alive.

The fire engulfed the adjacent houses and gutted nine houses and a poultry farm. About one hundred chickens of the farm were burnt.

'Distortion of history' BCL calls strike at educational instts today

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), student wing of opposition Awami League, has called a strike at all educational institutions across the country today protesting alleged distortion of history in the school textbooks.

BCL brought out a procession and held a rally on the Dhaka University campus yesterday in support of the strike.

Presided over by Beg Shahin Jahan, the rally was addressed by

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Freight operators call off strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Freight operators yesterday called off their indefinite strike after the authorities assured them that the luxury bus terminal, which was the centre of the dispute between the freighters and the bus workers, would be shifted within three months to nearby site.

The decision was taken at a meeting among leaders of the freight operators, the Bangladesh Railway and top police officials at the office of the DC East, Traffic Department, Noor Mohammad Khan.

A source who attended the meeting told The Daily Star that the government also agreed to 'withdraw' a case filed with the Sabujbagh Police Station against some leaders of the freight operators. The case was filed after the freighters went on a strike Sunday and laid siege to the Kamapur inland container depot (ICD).

The site now to be developed to house the luxury long-distance coach terminal is located just opposite the disputed terminal at Tilipara. The Bangladesh Railway and the Ministry of Communications would take steps to fill it up with rubbish and make it convenient for buses to park.

Meanwhile, the Traffic Department has specifically asked the freighters not to block any roads by parking haphazardly.

"We have asked them to be patient for a few more months until the authorities develop an alternative site," the official who attended the meeting said.

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Iranian plane crashes killing 118 on board

REUTERS, Tehran

An Iranian airliner carrying 118 people crashed into a mountain while trying to land in western Iran yesterday, killing all aboard, a government official and local residents said.

The Russian-built Tupolev-154, belonging to Iran Air Tours, an affiliate of the state carrier Iran Air, was flying from the capital Tehran to Khorramabad when it disappeared off radar screens southwest of the city.

Low clouds and heavily overcast skies may have hampered landing, residents said.

The official, who declined to be identified, said those killed - 105 passengers and the rest crew - included four government officials and at least two foreigners.

"All 118 are dead," the official told Reuters. Khorramabad lies to the east of the Zagros mountain range running along the border with Iraq. State radio

said villagers in the area were startled by an explosion early in the morning.

"There is a mountain close to the airport and the plane crashed into it as it was landing," said a local resident who visited the crash site.

"The plane was totally destroyed and scattered in small pieces across the mountain," the resident said.

A Transport Ministry spokesman said four Italians were among the passengers, but a diplomat at the Italian embassy in Tehran said he could not confirm his countrymen were among those missing and said four names he had been given appeared to be Hispanic.

The government official could only confirm two foreigners were among the dead.

Iranian airlines have been dogged by a history of accidents in recent years.

Subject to US sanctions, the country has had diffi

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14 nominated for Ekushey Padak 2002

BSS, Dhaka

Fourteen eminent personalities of the country, including seven posthumously, have been nominated for the prestigious "Ekushey Padak-2002" for their outstanding contributions in the fields of literature, education, journalism, language movement, and art and music, an official handout said last night.

The seven posthumously nominated personalities are Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani for language movement, Dr Mohammad Shahidullah for literature and language movement, Kabir Ramesh Shil for Gano Sangeet, Dr Manzur Hossain for language movement, Shaheed intellectual Prof. Abul Kalam Azad for education, Abdul Jabbar Khan for film and Ahmed Safa for literature.

The seven others are National Professor Sufia Ahmed in flourishing culture and for language movement, Sirajur Rahman for journalism, Sadeque Khan for language movement and film, Gazi Mazharul Anwar for music, Advocate Gazi Golam Rahman for language movement, Professor Sharif Hossain and Pratiba Mutsuddi for education. Each of the winners will receive Taka 40,000 in cash along with a gold chain weighing three tolas and a certificate.

Meanwhile, a decision has been taken to hand over the awards to those nominated for the year 2001 along with the winners for the year 2002.

"From now on, the 'Ekushey Padak' would be handed over when it will be announced each year," the handout said.

Poverty reduction strategy Half-hearted move may prove futile: Saifur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Look before you leap, and that was exactly the message that Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman gave to the policy makers, lawmakers and political parties before embarking on a poverty reduction strategy.

The quintessential element of such a strategy is painful reforms and any half-hearted effort would lead to nowhere, the minister said to back up his view.

Saifur was addressing the inaugural session of a three-day seminar on designing a poverty reduction strategy for Bangladesh jointly organised by the government, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

"We must make up our mind first and then put in wholehearted efforts

to implement the strategy. We can't back out in the middle of it because of the pains. We must keep in mind that implementation of any development strategy is a painful process," Saifur said.

He also said political commitment, national consensus and good governance are the key elements of poverty reduction programmes and are also crucial for bringing about a qualitative change in the development process.

"Each political party or group must have a clear vision to address the issues important to reduce poverty and push up growth. A half-hearted approach won't yield any positive result and no strategy will do any good if we don't have the

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Statue of Krishna recovered: One held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Motijheel police recovered a statue of Krishna made of black stone from a waste paper shop at Motijheel in the city on Monday and arrested one person in this connection.

Acting on a tip off, a police team raided the shop, recovered the statue weighing five kg and arrested shopkeeper Babul.

A case was filed in this regard.

Prime suspect in Pearl's abduction arrested

AP, Karachi

The chief suspect in the abduction of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl was arrested yesterday in the eastern Pakistani city of Lahore, an Interior Ministry official said.

Ahmad Omar Saeed Sheikh was being sent to the southern port city of Karachi where he will be interrogated, ministry secretary Tasneem Noorani told The Associated Press.

Noorani said Saeed was arrested Tuesday afternoon but refused to give further details. Pearl's whereabouts remain unknown. He has been missing for three weeks.

Saeed, a 27-year-old British-born Islamic militant, was freed from an Indian jail in December 1999 in exchange for passengers of an Indian Airlines jet that was hijacked

to Kandahar, Afghanistan.

The arrest was announced one day before Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf is to meet U.S. President George W. Bush in Washington. The kidnapping had embarrassed the Musharraf government, which is seeking U.S. aid as it attempts to combat Muslim extremism in this predominantly Islamic country of 147 million people.

Correction

In our front page news item published yesterday headline 'Six diplomats made secretaries', the name of Dr Toufiq Ali, Bangladesh Representative to UN offices in Geneva, was inadvertently omitted. Toufiq Ali is also holding the rank of a Secretary.



PHOTO: STAR

Voters queue up at the Shahapur Government Primary School centre during election to Sonargaon municipality yesterday.

Businessman abducted in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A young businessman was abducted by a gang from Beparipara in the city's Agrabad area yesterday morning and later a ransom of Tk three lakh was demanded for his release.

The victim was identified as Jainal Abedin, 30, the only son of former ship surveyor of James Finlay Mainuddin Ahmad.

Family sources said Jainal runs a partnership business in garments accessories in Agrabad Commercial Area. He went out of the house at around 9:00 am and was missing

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6 chargesheeted in Simi suicide case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Six people, including Abul Basher, SI of Khilgaon Thana, have been chargesheeted in the Simi Suicide Case.

Sub-Inspector Abdur Razzak, investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the CMM's Court, Dhaka, yesterday evening.

The five other charge-sheeted accused are Mofazzal Hossain, Enayet Karim Doel, Akibur Rahman Khalil, Mohammad Ripon and Mohammad Enayet Chowdhury.

The IO submitted the charge

sheet after 38 days of investigation.

The IO recorded statements of 44 prosecution witnesses during the investigation. He recovered a letter and a diary of Simi as evidences to prove the case.

Police arrested SI Abul Basher in connection with the incident. The five other accused have been absconding since the incident.

The IO prayed for attachment of moveable property of the accused.

Simi, 21, a final year student of Narayanganj Institute of Fine Arts, committed suicide on December 23 last year after being harassed by

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