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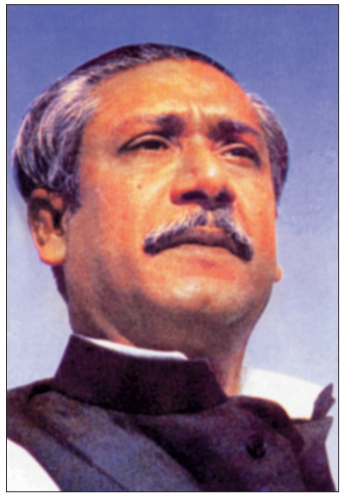
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Bangabandhu's birthday today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 83rd birthday of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will be celebrated across the country today. The nation's great independence leader was born in Tungipara village of Gopalganj district on this day in 1920.

The Awami League and its sympathisers will hold various programmes to observe the day as the "National Children's Day" which the previous AL government introduced officially, but the new government of the BNP-led alliance has dropped.

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Mohiuddin Alamgir remanded for 2 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State minister in the immediate past Awami League government Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir was arrested Friday night on charge of "instigating" government officials and employees to join the agitation led from the Janatar Mancha (people's dais) in the capital that dislodged the BNP government in 1996.

Alamgir was produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court.

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Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib: The symbol of our freedom
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Law and Our Rights 6

Freedom of information from secrecy; and Gujarat riots point to need for police reform

| | Sun Rises | Sun Sets |
|--------|-----------|----------|
| Mar 17 | | 6-09 pm |
| Mar 18 | 6-05 am | |

Prayer Timings

| Mar 17 | | |
|---------|-------|--------|
| | Azan | Jamaat |
| Fajr | 5-15 | 5-50 |
| Zohr | 12-45 | 1-15 |
| Asr | 4-45 | 5-00 |
| Maghrib | 6-15 | 6-20 |
| Esha | 7-30 | 8-00 |

Source: Islamic Foundation

Fire kills 7 girls at women's madrassah

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least seven girl students were burnt alive and over 100 injured when a fire gutted a women's madrassah at Shanir Akhra in Demra area in the city in the early hours of yesterday.

All the victims are aged between 6 and 13. The death toll may rise as some of the seriously injured students are fighting for life at city hospitals and teachers and students of the madrassah say some minor girl students are missing.

This correspondent while visiting the site saw charred lumps of human flesh and limbs at two places.

The fire broke out at the Jamia Islamia Ashrafal Ulum Women's Madrassah and Orphanage at about 3:00am when all the inmates were asleep. The two-storied structure made of bamboo and CI sheet was completely gutted.

As the fire spread, the screaming girls ran towards the main gate to escape, but it was locked from outside and the guard was away, some of the traumatised victims told.

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PHOTO: STAR

Burnt remnants of a women's madrassah at Shanir Akhra where seven children were burnt to death in a devastating fire yesterday.

Attack on women up despite tough laws

SHAIKH NAZRUL ISLAM

Despite enactment of several tough laws over the years, repression on women across the country continues its upward rise.

The eighth Jatiya Sangsad has recently passed the Acid Crime Control Act, 2002 that seeks a maximum penalty of death or life-term imprisonment for acid attackers. It also calls for a national council to restrict production and sale of acid, and special tribunals for speedy dispensation trials of acid abuse.

Earlier, the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 1995 was enacted with a view to curbing rape, dowry-related violence, and women and child trafficking.

The act, which also seeks a maximum penalty of death for the culprit, was further strengthened in 2002 by making it broad based and including similar punishment for offences like sexual harassment and

child abduction.

However, upward curve of repression on women suggests that these laws have failed to make much of an impact.

According to information gathered by non-government organisations, there have been 12,991 incidents of repression on women last year. In 1995, 2,048 such cases were filed and the number rose to 5,434 in 1997, 6,210 in 1998 and 9,572 in 1999.

Last year, 720 women were raped, of whom 171 were children and six committed suicide. Also, 150 women were tortured to death.

Police records, on the other hand, show that 13,339 of 114,191 crime incidents reported last year were committed against women. There were 3,189 incidents of rape, up from 3,140 in the previous year.

One hundred and fifty-three incidents of acid attack were

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Police bar AL procession

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Top AL leaders and on-duty police officials locked in an altercation in the capital yesterday as police barred several thousand Awami League activists from bringing out a procession in protest against the government bid to remove Bangabandhu's portrait from all government establishments through legislation.

Soon after a protest rally at the Muktangan ground, a procession of the main opposition party was intercepted by riot police at the Purana Paltan crossing at 6:40pm.

Infuriated by the police blockade, senior AL leaders including Sajeda Choudhury, Tofail Ahmed, Amir Hossain Amu, Motia Choudhury, Mohammad Hanif and Saber Hossain Choudhury quarrelled with ADC (South) Abdul Mannan and other police officers, arguing that the authorities did not impose any ban on procession.

They also reminded the police officials that Jamaat-e-Islami held a procession in the same area on Friday. In defence, the officials however referred to an order by the

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4,700 expelled on 2nd day of SSC exams

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over 4,742 Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinees were expelled from different centres across the country for cheating on the day of the English second paper examination yesterday.

Also expelled were 15 teachers for their alleged connivance in cheating.

As many as 2,266 students were expelled from different centres of the Rajshahi Education Board. One teacher was expelled in Naogaon and Nawabganj each.

Forty-three candidates were expelled in Nawabganj, 127 in Naogaon, 76 in Pabna, 380 in Dinajpur, 283 in Rangpur, 178 in Kurigram, 321 in Gaibandha, 97 in Nilphamari, 78 in Lalmonirhat, 297 in Thakurgoan and 79 in

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AL MPs start submitting resignation letters

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League MPs have started submitting their resignation letters in response to the decision of the party's central working committee on Thursday.

"We've started collecting the resignation letters from our MPs," AL presidium member Abdul Jalil MP told UNB last night.

In reply to a question, he said all resignation letters would be collected within a week. "Inshallah, we will be able to hand over the resignation letters of our MPs to our leader Sheikh Hasina next week," he said.

Jalil, however, would not say how many MPs have so far submitted

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PHOTO: STAR

Huge concrete slabs of the footbridge at Science Laboratory still haven't been taken down even after Thursday's accident that killed two persons.

Fatal omission

DCC tampered with footbridge tender documents, compromising quality

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The DCC's the then Tender Committee in 2000 tampered with the tender conditions, omitting 'three items' from the document, which were originally tagged to ensure use of quality materials in the project for construction of 10 footbridges, sources said.

In the tender, the technical committee had set prices of some vital construction materials to ensure their quality, keeping in mind public safety. This mandated purchase of certain materials by the construction firm at the set prices because materials bought below those prices from the local market could be substandard or adulterated.

"But the tender committee dubiously omitted the items and allowed the firm to buy construction materials for the foot bridges at any price they wanted," said a DCC engineer.

The top DCC engineer however did not question the quality of construction materials for Thursday's accident in which two persons were crushed as a huge slab collapsed. He said Thursday's accident was due to total lack of professionalism and negligence by the construction firm - Surma International.

Sources said the LGRD ministry in 2000 also played a 'mysterious role' and changed the original Tk 8.42 crore Third Crash Project proposal and asked the DCC to revise it and use 'pre-stretch technology' to complete ten foot bridges in the city.

The Ministry also awarded the entire work to Surma International, one of the three bidders which had no experience in the technology. Surma was disqualified in the first phase of the tender because it had submitted the third lowest bid.

"In the tender committee, the then Chief Engineer

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