

Tender to buy biased books scrapped

Funds for secondary school books to go to school infrastructure

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

In the face of widespread criticism, the government yesterday cancelled a tender on buying books worth Tk 13 crore for secondary students.

The director of the development of selected secondary schools project issued a letter scrapping the tender on purchasing a set of 200 books for 2,317 schools each.

The move followed a report headlined "Secondary goes primary way" run by The Daily Star on May 8. The tender was scheduled to be opened on May 17.

Political bias was the main yardstick for the books selected by a committee headed by Professor Wakil Ahmed of Dhaka University, alleged sources.

The list approved by the education ministry selected the books under the project bankrolled by the government. The books were meant for distribution among 317

government secondary schools and 2,000 non-governmental schools.

"The books could not be procured right now for unavoidable reason," Dr M Delwar Hossain Khan, the project director, said in the letter yesterday.

Headed by a joint secretary of the ministry, an inquiry committee has been formed to investigate the irregularities in producing the book list, Education Secretary Mohamamd Shahidul Alam told The Daily Star yesterday. He termed the list a gross violation of rules and unfortunate.

The funds for book purchase will be channelled into building school infrastructure and the books will be purchased after a fresh list through a fresh tender.

The committee selected 20 books out of 200 on late president Ziaur Rahman.

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Deadly negligence claims school staff's life

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An employee of Mastermind School at Dhanmondi died when a piling pillar crashed on her at the Elephant Road yesterday.

The victim was identified as Parveen Akhter Putul, 22, wife of one Mizanur Rahman. Parveen was walking down a footpath, on her way to work at 7:00am, when a pillar of an under-construction building fell on her.

The victim was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where she died at 8:30am.

Parveen was working as an attendant at Mastermind School.

Police neither arrested the builder for public safety negligence that led to the death of the school staff nor did they file any case.

Meanwhile, Tejgoan police recovered the body of a man, aged about 35, from under the Bailey Bridge in Zia Uddin near the Sangsad Bhaban yesterday.

The body was found at around 8:30am.

Police failed to ascertain whether the man was murdered or whether he had committed suicide as there were no injury marks on his body.



Putul, an attendant of Mastermind School was killed when poles used for piling for construction of a multistoried Prime Housing collapsed on her at Elephant Road in Dhaka yesterday (left); the victim's sister wails at Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue.



PHOTO: STAR

Saifur seeks MP help to cut waste

STAR REPORT

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman has sought cooperation of the lawmakers to minimise wastage of national resources.

"I can see a major portion of national resources being wasted through the Annual Development Programme (ADP). This cannot continue for long and we have to find ways of improving the situation," he told the Members of Parliament (MPs) at a pre-budget discussion at the National Economic Council (NEC) conference room in Dhaka yesterday.

Around 32 ruling BNP and Jatiya Party MPs were present at the discussion meeting.

Pointing out that all the ministers and members of the parliament have made lofty promises to the voters, Saifur asked the lawmakers, "Do we have the resources to meet the requirements of all? Around one hundred thousand crore taka will be needed if we want to implement all the projects under the ADP."

He underscored the need for a rapid economic growth, saying it will not be possible to generate sufficient employment to alleviate poverty without at least a seven per cent GDP growth.

Referring to the dismal situation in schools, colleges and hospitals in the rural areas, Saifur mentioned that a huge chunk of national resources is spent every year to maintain these institutions, but these are not rendering the required results.

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PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Bank employees attack the car of a director of the bank protesting a staff retrenchment move on the bank premises yesterday.

64 dead, 22 still missing after China mine blast

AFP, Beijing

Sixty-four workers died and 22 others are missing and feared dead after a gas explosion ripped through a coal mine in eastern China, officials said yesterday.

"Sixty-four miners have been confirmed dead and their dead bodies have been found," a mine official surnamed Zhang told AFP from the scene of the blast in Anhui province.

He said there were 22 still missing from the accident, which happened 590 meters (1,947 feet) deep in the mine shaft, and that rescue work was ongoing.

"The chances of their survival is not very good," Zhang said.

"So far 17 rescue workers have been sent into the mine. They have been divided into two groups and they are trying to find those still missing."

"It was a gas explosion. Twenty-seven people have been rescued and 10 are in hospital."

The blast struck the registered Luling coal mine in Anhui province's Huaibei city shortly after 4:00 pm (0800 GMT) Tuesday.

Rescue workers were feverishly trying to find those trapped in the mine shaft, said family members and friends of employees who were helping.

"They haven't been home for two days," said a man in his 20s, whose father and uncles work in the mine, but were not in the same shaft at the time of the accident.

The man and other residents reached by phone Wednesday said the mine, located near Suzhou city, was the largest in the Huaibei Coal Mine Administration.

It employs 7,000 workers, an official in the company-run union said.

The young man, who declined to give his name, said his family members had worked in the mine for years, beginning when it was built some 35 years ago.

Few major accidents have happened in the state-run mine.

"It's a safe mine, but mines always have some accidents happening," said a friend of a mine office employee. She said that while accidents were few and far between they had happened in the past and a few people had died.

Many family members of the miners were at the scene, waiting at the gate of the mine hoping their relatives would be found alive, said another employee's friend.

Chinese mines, many illegally operated, have an appalling safety record with thousands of deaths reported last year in explosions, floods and cave-ins.

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FBI hunts for Saudi bombers

Death toll now 34

AFP/ REUTERS, Riyadh

At least 34 people, including a Briton and an Irish national, were killed in suicide car bombings that devastated three expatriate compounds in Riyadh, the Saudi interior ministry said Wednesday.

The updated figures carried by the official SPA news agency added five more to a previous Saudi toll -- one Briton, one Irish national, an Australian of Lebanese origin, a third Filipino and one unidentified corpse.

Saudi Arabia has offered no explanation for conflicting death tolls.

In Washington, State Department officials contradicted themselves, giving figures ranging as high as 50 dead after announcing a

preliminary toll of 91, which Vice President Dick Cheney cited. Up to 12 Americans had died, they said.

FBI agents meanwhile are heading to join Saudi troops hunting for suspects who Riyadh has vowed will be sorry for masterminding triple suicide bombings.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal promised on US morning television on Wednesday to find those behind the suicide bombings in Riyadh which killed at least seven Americans and has been blamed on al Qaeda by the United States.

The Monday night blasts gutted housing complexes for foreigners in what was the first major attack on the kingdom since the September 11 attacks.

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WISPA starts out to stop violence against women

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Women's Initiative for Peace in South Asia (WISPA) has begun its journey in an effort to prevent violence against women and address other socio-political issues.

Leader at a press conference in the yesterday city said they would work not only to establish peace between India and Bangladesh, but also in other South Asian countries including Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka. They said they would also try to prevent violence, repression and human rights abuses.

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Miladunnabi today

UNB, Dhaka

The holy Eid-e-Miladunnabi will be observed in the country today commemorating the birth and death anniversary of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH).

The prophet was born in Makkah in 570 AD on the 12th day of Rabiul Awal. He passed away in Madina in 632 AD on the same date.

Muslims across the country will observe the day with various programmes including special prayer, milad mahfil, discussion meeting, rally and waz mahfil.

Various socio-cultural and religious activities will be held across the country.

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Saturday in the Star WEEKEND MAGAZINE

Every neighbourhood or para has its own group of miscreants who, apart from being involved in all kinds of crime, also prey on young, helpless girls who have no option but to travel unchaperoned. These are the girls who, while travelling along lonely alleys, are mercilessly taunted by the para mastaans. They are forced to hear obscene comments or declarations of love, they are pursued relentlessly.

Nine Iraqi children killed in explosion

AFP, Basra

Nine Iraqi children were killed and seven wounded in the south of the country when unexploded ordnance they were playing with detonated, a UN spokesman said Wednesday.

"Nine children were killed and seven were injured in Missan governorate on Monday when they were playing with unexploded ordnance," David Wilmhurst told a press conference in Basra.

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
May 15		6-34 pm
May 16	5-15 am	
Prayer Timings		
May 15		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-15	4-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-40	6-45
Esha	8-00	8-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		