



PHOTO: STAR

From left to right: Pro-government JCD activists chase students in front of the DU vice-chancellor's office; a student bleeds from the forehead after police action; a policeman fires teargas into Curzon Hall to disperse agitating students; and unruly students torch the symbolic coffins made by Fine Arts students to protest the attack on the author.

Six more BDR battalions to be raised: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday announced that six more battalions of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) would be raised gradually to further strengthen and expand the paramilitary force.

The government after assuming power formed two new battalions of BDR in 2002, the prime minister said opening the Rifles Reunion 2004.

Addressing a function at parade ground at BDR headquarters in the city, Khaleda said the government had taken steps so that BDR members could take part in UN peace-keeping missions.

A BDR contingent gave guard of honour to the prime minister. She witnessed a march past of the paramilitary force and took salute.

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Saifur blasts commerce ministry for price hike

Money launders may face speedy trial

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday came down heavily on steel and re-rolling mill owners for the recent price hike of rod and other construction materials and criticised the commerce ministry for failing to check prices.

Inaugurating the four-day first Dhaka International Textile and Garment Machinery Exhibition-2004 at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, Saifur also informed that the government was actively considering to

try money launders under the Speedy Trial Act.

"I've already talked about the issue with the law minister," he added.

Underscoring compliance with business ethics, Saifur slammed businessmen for unethical practices that spiked the prices of construction materials, saying some dishonest traders did that deliberately.

"They continued to raise prices of those items even the day after the

finance ministry declared reduction of import duties on scrap iron from 15 percent to 7.5 percent."

Saifur was also critical of the commerce ministry for its failure to check the soaring prices of construction materials and essentials.

He also censured the ministry for trying to implement Saarc cumulation, saying he was not clear what Bangladesh would gain from it.

Saifur reprimanded dishonest

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Hasina promises 'fall of govt'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition would be dislodged from power through a united mass movement, predicting a broader unity of all pro-liberation political parties soon.

"A united movement of mainstream political parties against the government begins on March 6 and there will be concrete unity soon," a buoyed up Hasina, also the leader of the opposition, told a group of injured Jubo League adherents at her party's Dhanmondi office.

The activists of Jubo League, youth front of the main opposition

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Fish gets dearer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The fish prices in the city's kitchen markets soared Tk 10 to 20 a kilogram and are likely to become dearer as supply of local fishes are set to dwindle in the coming months, fish traders said.

A huge difference between the retail and wholesale prices is also visible. In Karwan Bazar market yesterday, local ruhi was selling at Tk 160-170 a kg, up from Tk 140-150 two weeks earlier and Tk 100-120 just before Eid.

In the same market, prawn was selling at Tk 200-250 a kg depending on their sizes, which was sold at Tk 150-200 only two weeks ago. Local catfish was being sold at Tk 300-350 a kg against Tk 250-300 two weeks ago.

Fish traders of Karwan Bazar blamed the price spiral on an increase in transportation cost due to the price hike of diesel and also inadequate supply.

"In the competitive market everybody wants to sell goods. If the supply is smooth, the traders would not be able to keep the prices illogically high," Jasim Uddin, a whole seller of Karwan Bazar.

"The [transportation] cost of goods this time increased due to extortion and shortage of carrier," Jasim said adding that in the capital, the fish pricing depends totally on the supply from across the country.

"The middle class is going to take fish off the dish soon as the current prices have gone beyond

our purchasing capacity," said Laila Zaman, a buyer in the city's Mirpur-1 kitchen market.

"I went to the fish market to buy ruhi but the sellers charged Tk 180 for each kg which seems unbelievable to me," Laila added.

In Hatirpool market, ruhi was selling at Tk 185-190, prawn at Tk 220-250 and local catfish at Tk 330-360 for a kg.

Fish sellers in Karwan Bazar and Mirpur-1 markets said the fish prices in the city markets are unlikely to come down immediately.

In Hatirpool and Mirpur-1 kitchen markets, meanwhile,

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SSC, Dakhil, SSC Vocational exams start today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations, Dakhil and SSC Vocational examinations under nine education boards across the country start today amid tight security to check cheating.

Education ministry has also taken steps to hold the examinations in a peaceful academic atmosphere.

Teachers will frisk the bodies of examinees at hall gate while local political leaders, student leaders and members of school managing committee will be barred from entering the exam centres during the test, sources said.

If copies are found with students during the examinations, they will face summary trials under the Public Examination Act, 1980.

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PHOTO: STAR

Shia Muslims bring out a procession from Hossaini Dalan in the city Tuesday commemorating the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hossain (RA).

ATTACK ON MAYOR

Protesting KCC staff clash with cops, 30 hurt

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

At least 30 people including seven policemen were injured in a fierce clash between police and employees of Khulna City Corporation (KCC) in the city yesterday morning in connection with a protest over the recent grenade attack on KCC Mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman.

The clash occurred at the Picture Palace Cinema Hall Square where the KCC employees had gathered to form a human chain as part of a protest against Sunday's grenade attack on the mayor's car.

Eyewitnesses said an on-duty traffic constable was assaulted by some agitated KCC employees after police prevented them from gathering at the spot. Following this, a large contingent of police from Khulna Police Station rushed to the spot at around 9:50am and baton-charged protesters. The police and demonstrators fought a pitched battle for

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Prayer Timings		
March 4		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	5-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-10	6-15
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

Two traders gunned down in city

Body of an SSC examinee found

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Armed assailants gunned down two traders at Sutrapur and Demra in Dhaka in the last 48 hours to yesterday evening.

A gang of four pumped two bullets into the head of Anwar Hossain, a sanitary trader, near his

Swamibagh home in Sutrapur at 1:00pm yesterday when he was going to work, his family said.

"As Anwar reached the end of Swamibagh Lane, the gang opened fire," the victim's younger brother Mohammad Hanif told reporters at Dhaka Medical College Hospital

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1140 foot-prints found so far

Weeklong tiger census ends in Bangladesh part of the Sundarbans

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A weeklong tiger census carried out jointly by Bangladesh and India and funded by the UNDP ended in the Bangladesh part of the Sundarbans yesterday with an encouraging find of 1,140 pugmarks or tiger paw prints.

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B Chy not allowed Paltan Maidan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury did not get permission to hold a public rally at Paltan Maidan on March 9 from where he was scheduled to launch his platform.

The National Sports Council, the authority that oversees the ground, is yet to reply to Chowdhury, founding secretary general of the ruling coalition leader BNP.

State Minister for Sports Fazlur Rahman told The Daily Star last night that they had earlier decided not to allow the ground to anyone until March 10 for the ongoing Under 19 World Cup cricket tournament.

Chowdhury is now planning to hold a procession from Ramna Green or the Engineers Institution and announce the national committee of his platform from a rally

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PHOTO: STAR

Armed men retrieve four unexploded bombs, buried at least 32 years, from near the runway at Zia International Airport on Tuesday.

Kerry wraps up nomination

AFP, Washington

Senator John Kerry wrapped up the Democratic presidential nomination on Tuesday, chasing his sole major rival from the race and challenging George W. Bush to "bring it on" for the November election.

The Massachusetts lawmaker forced Senate colleague John Edwards to abandon his bid for the nomination by taking nine of 10 party contests held from coast to coast on "Super Tuesday."

Kerry spoke by telephone with Edwards, received a congratulatory call from Bush and then threw

down the gauntlet to the Republican incumbent in a victory speech to cheering supporters here.

"I believe that in 2004, one united Democratic Party, we can and we will win this election," he said. "Tonight, the message could not be clearer all across our country -- change is coming to America."

Kerry ticked off a list of campaign promises, from repealing Bush tax cuts to health coverage and efforts to create new jobs. He again accused Bush of conducting an "inept, reckless arrogant and ideological foreign policy."

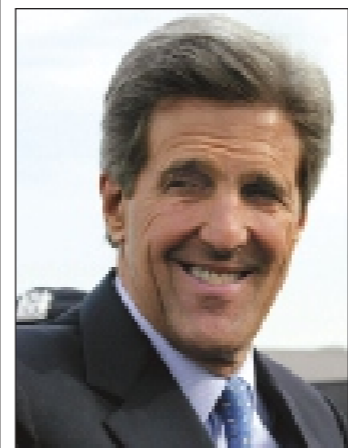
"If George Bush wants to make national security the central issue of the campaign of 2004, I have three words for him that I know he understands -- bring it on!"

For the 60-year-old Kerry, a four-term senator and Vietnam war hero, the nomination capped a roller-coaster campaign that saw him go from front-runner to struggling underdog and back to the top again.

It also followed a remarkably blood-free primary election season for the Democrats, who whittled down a field of 10 and emerged unified and hungry for battle against a president whose popularity has dropped sharply.

Kerry had kind words for Edwards, 50, who has won praise for his courteous and unflinchingly positive campaign and has been

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John Kerry