

16 houses, shops gutted in Ctg**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg**

Sixteen houses and shops and two factories were gutted in a devastating fire in the city yesterday morning.

An electrical short circuit sparked off the blaze at Pathantuli, a densely populated area adjacent to Agrabad Sheikh Mujib Road, causing an estimated loss of Tk 30 lakh.

The fire that started at around 6.00am engulfed a factory of well-known sweetmeat house, Banoful, and at least 16 other shops and houses, fire service sources said.

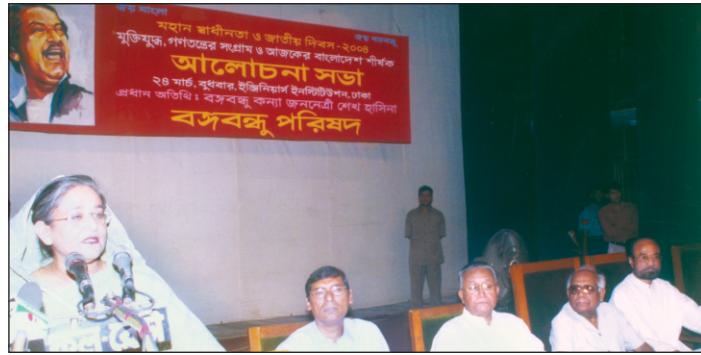


PHOTO: STAR

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League president Sheikh Hasina speaks at a discussion on 'Liberation War, struggle for democracy and today's Bangladesh' yesterday, organised by Bangabandhu Parishad.

PM inaugurates exhibition on War of Liberation**UNB, Dhaka**

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday inaugurated a photography and art exhibition on the War of Liberation at Shilpkala Academy in the city.

Some 130 photographs and 48 paintings, including eight art works of eminent artist Murtaza Bashir depicting incidents of the War of Liberation, have been put on display at the week-long show.

Organised by the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, the exhibition will remain open to public from 11.00 am to 7.00pm everyday.

On the occasion, the prime minister released a commemorative stamp of Tk 5 denomination. Bangladesh Post Office also issued a First Day Cover valued at Tk 6.

On her arrival at the Shilpkala Academy, Khaleda Zia was received by State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Prof Rezaul Karim and Director General of Shilpkala Academy Ahmed Nazir.

Ministers, MPs, freedom fight-

ers, artists and photographers were present at the function.

Before inaugurating the exhibition, she exchanged greetings with a number of injured freedom fighters.

Dhaka condemns Yassin killing**UNB, Dhaka**

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday strongly condemned the brutal killing of Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, saying the incident would further deepen the Middle East crisis.

"We strongly condemn this heinous killing and call for an immediate halt to mass killings at Palestine refugee camps," he said in a statement in parliament in the evening.

The foreign minister also appealed to all concerned to come forward to accelerate the peace process in the Middle East by establishing an independent state for the Palestinians.

Reiterating Dhaka's position, he said Bangladesh always stood for the struggle of the Palestinians and in every international forum, raised its voice in favour of establishing an independent and sovereign Palestine.