

Robbers take businessman to his flat to loot at will

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An armed gang reportedly looted about Tk 15.73 lakh in cash and valuables, from the apartment of a businessman at Shantinagar in Motijheel early yesterday.

Six to seven robbers entered the apartment complex at 67/3, Shantinagar at around 5:00am with Khaled Mahmud, the businessman, as the guard opened the gate to allow him in.

Khaled, a readymade garment-businessman, was returning home by his car from Zia International Airport after a visit to Hong Kong.

Motijheel police quoting a First Information Report (FIR) filed in this connection said, "The gang tied

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Caribbean flood toll nears 2,000

REUTERS, Port-au-Prince

The death toll from devastating floods and landslides in Haiti and the Dominican Republic rose to at least 1,950 on Wednesday with the discovery of more than 1,000 bodies in a Haitian town.

The toll rose dramatically when the bodies were found in Mapou, a rural southeastern Haitian town where communications are poor, said Margareth Martin, the head of the civil protection office for Haiti's Southeast region.

Rescue workers dug through mud and debris for bodies three days after torrential rains sent rivers of mud and swirling waters through

Hispaniola, the Caribbean island shared by Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Haiti's death toll stood at 1,660, including 1,000 in Mapou, 500 elsewhere in Haiti's Southeast region, 158 in the riverside town of Fond Verettes, and two in the south, at Port-a-Piment.

Authorities in the neighboring Dominican Republic said they had recovered 300 bodies, mostly from the disaster in Jimani near the Haitian border, where a river overflowed its banks before dawn and swept homes away as people slept.

In Haiti, troops from a US-led peacekeeping force flew helicopter loads of bottled water, fruit and

bread to the town of Fond Verette, where the storm washed out the winding mountainside road from Port-au-Prince and cut off ground transportation to the town of 40,000.

The floodwaters flattened fields of crops and ripped apart crude shacks fashioned from sticks and sheets of iron. Residents pulled furniture and other belongings from the streets, where they had been swept by the flood, and assembled mud-caked possessions in stacks along the sides of the roads.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Americas where the population of 8 million struggles for food and shelter. Four out of five people live in

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PHOTO: AFP

People from the border province of Jimani, 280km west of Santo Domingo in Dominican Republic, walk in a flooded road. Death toll from devastating floods in the Dominican Republic and Haiti rose to at least 1,950 yesterday.

Captors free teacher on ransom, kill trader

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Captors freed a schoolteacher of Kushtia on Wednesday night and killed a transport trader, who was abducted on Monday night, in Jhenidah yesterday.

The family members of Abul Kashem, 50, headmaster of Goswami Durgapur High School in Kushtia, bought his freedom for Tk 1.25 lakh, sources said. The abductors kidnapped Kashem on Tuesday, took him to Chuadanga and demanded a ransom of Tk 10 lakh.

On payment of the sum the abductors let go the schoolteacher on a bridge in Ershadpur village of Alamdanga upazila in Chuadanga. Sources said Kashem took a key

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PHOTO: STAR

A fire in the warehouse of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board, Dhaka in the city's Dhanmondi area yesterday destroyed chemicals worth about thousands of taka.

BOU students in textbook trouble

AKBAR HOSSAIN

Students of BA and BSS fifth semester of Bangladesh Open University (BOU) are yet to get their textbooks about five months after the semester began.

Non-availability of textbooks at the BOU teaching centres is greatly hampering their studies, the students alleged.

"We got admitted to the fifth semester in January paying Tk 1,500 each but our textbooks are not available till now," said one student, Zakir Hossain, who also works in a private company.

Most of the BOU students are employed in different government and private organisations and continue their studies through 'distance learning process'.

Another student who works at the Secretariat alleged, "Since the first semester, we never received our textbooks in time due to indifference of the BOU authorities."

"We go to Dhaka Regional Centre office for textbooks, but officials there ask students to copy textbooks from their respective teaching centres."

Many other students also alleged the BOU authorities show indifference to their problem despite repeated reminders.

The BOU authorities are supposed to supply books on political science, sociology, Islamic studies, philosophy, history and geography in the current semester, they mentioned.

BOU sources admitted the crisis

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Masrurul made acting Proshika president

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Proshika has appointed its chief financial officer as the acting president in absence of its imprisoned president Qazi Faruque and senior vice president David William Biswas, while international donor agencies and civil society organisations have sent letters conveying concern over the arrest to the government.

Masrurul Islam was appointed the acting president from a five-member management committee that was formed at an emergency meeting of Proshika's governing

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Govt plans no oil price hike

UNB, Dhaka

As oil prices shown downtrend on international market yesterday, the government ruled out any possibility of fuel oil price hike in the country in the near future.

State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharrar Hossain said officials concerned at his ministry as well as Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) were watching the world oil-market situation and keeping him updated.

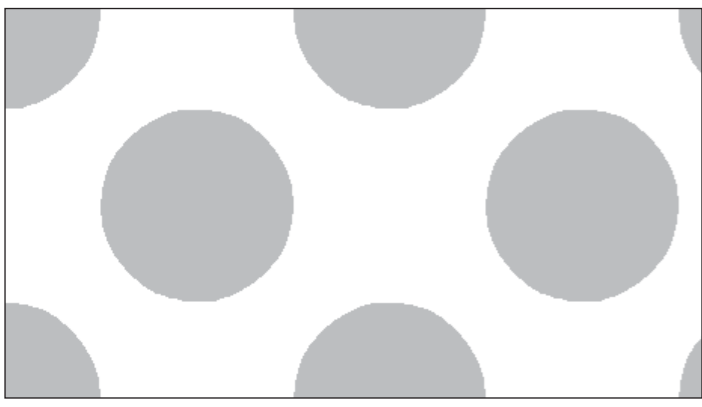
However, since the price indices

have shown downtrend on the international market in the past two days, Mosharrar said sharp rise in the past weeks would not affect the country because of having a good stock position.

"We have a stock for three months. So the present price hike on the international market will not affect us right now," Mosharrar told the UNB.

Prices are up about 24 per cent this year because of tight inventories, fears for a gasoline shortage in

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JS probe into CNG scam faces hurdles

Communications ministry still non-cooperative

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliamentary sub-committee assigned to investigate the alleged corruption in import and distribution of CNG (compressed natural gas)-run three-wheelers is facing difficulties due to communications ministry's non-cooperation in the probe.

Nadeem Mostafa, convener of the three-member probe body formed on January 7, alleged the non-cooperation at a meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on communications ministry yesterday.

The committee will sit tomorrow to finalise the probe report, its chairman Syed Manjur Hossain told reporters after the meeting.

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda, who was present at the meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) Bhaban, directed the secretary concerned to help the subcommittee by providing all documents.

One of the allegations raised at the January 7 meeting of the parliamentary body was that each imported CNG-run auto-rickshaw

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DCC razes 300 motor parts shops at Dholaikhal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) yesterday freed Dholaikhal main road, pavement and median long under illegal occupation mainly by motor parts shop owners.

More than 300 motor parts shops on both sides of the nearly 2km-long road from Raishaheb Bazar to Begumganj used to pile up motor parts and iron materials blocking the main road partly and footpath and median fully, creating a heavy traffic congestion over the last 20 years, DCC sources pointed out.

An unauthorised truck terminal for around 600 trucks on the road in the old part of the capital will also be shifted to a permanent site within three days, DCC and traffic police officials said.

The DCC drive bulldozed makeshift shops and extensions onto the footpath and removed garbage

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Court rejects Faruque's bail petitions

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday rejected the ad-interim bail petitions for Proshika President Qazi Faruque Ahmed in the two graft cases filed against him by the Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac).

The Court of Metropolitan Sessions Judge Matir Rahman passed the order following criminal appeals filed by Faruque's defence lawyers seeking bail against the rejection order of a lower court.

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Prayer Timing		
May 28		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-05	4-40
Juma	12-15	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-43	6-47
Esha	8-05	8-35

Source: Islamic Foundation

Iraq cleric offers truce, US silent

Three Marines killed in action

AGENCIES, Najaf/Baghdad

Moqtada al-Sadr pulled his Shia militia from strongholds in Najaf yesterday and a US-appointed Iraqi official said American forces had agreed to a truce offered by the radical cleric in the holy city.

But U.S. officials in Iraq refused to say whether they would accept a deal which would mean withdrawing from the city without meeting their previous conditions -- that Sadr be arrested and that he completely disband his Mehdi Army guerrilla force.

Hundreds of Mehdi Army fighters left frontline positions to parade in the city centre while three Shia members of Iraq's Governing Council, including Ahmad Chalabi, held talks with aides to Sadr in an attempt to negotiate an end to

fighting. Chalabi said the U.S.-led administration had given tentative approval to a ceasefire and there would be more negotiations on the ground with commanders of the U.S. 1st Armoured Division.

"The momentum of a ceasefire is already there," said Chalabi, a former U.S. favourite who has criticised the military offensive against Sadr's men in the holy city.

Iraq's U.S.-appointed national security adviser, Mowaffaq al-Rubaie, said Sadr had agreed that fighters not normally resident in Najaf would return to their homes and had demanded in return the suspension of a murder warrant on which he is wanted.

Sadr also called on U.S. forces to stay in bases near Najaf.

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