

Mourning day for Pope today

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh observes mourning day today to show respect to Pope John Paul II, who died early Sunday in holy Vatican City.

All the government, semi-government, autonomous and private organisations and Bangladesh missions abroad will fly the national flag at half-mast, said a handout yesterday.

2 accused in Ctg arms haul surrender

UNB, Chittagong

Two more accused in the Chittagong arms haul case surrendered to Chittagong Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court yesterday.

Din Mohammad and Sanwar Hossain surrendered to the court at about 3:00pm. The court rejected

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

POLYBAGS

Banned yet found in plenty

ASHIQUR RAHMAN

Influential organised groups in connivance with the law enforcers have flooded the city with banned polythene shopping bags, posing a threat to sewerage system and environment in general.

Having visited a number of city's wholesale polythene markets in Chawkbazar, polythene bag factories in Islambagh and kitchen markets, the Star correspondent saw that polythene bags are no longer unavailable, although the government banned it from January 1, 2002.

Banned polythene bags are openly sold in Chawkbazar markets although the area is just a few yards from the Lalbagh Police Station.

"Police never interrupt our polythene business because we always keep them satisfied by giving percentage (bribe)," said a polythene shop worker in Chawkbazar.

Besides, most of the banned polythene bags are produced in Islambagh area which is also not far from the Lalbagh Police Station. "Installing small machines, these factories produce lakhs of kilograms of polythene bags every day and supply to Chawkbazar and Mirpur from where these are distributed to different areas of the city," said Nurul Alam, a resident of Islambagh.

Police never raid these polythene factories as the local businessmen can easily manage them by giving bribes, he added.

"Local criminals guard the area

so that outsiders like reporters can not enter there," another resident Shah Alam said.

A kg of polythene bags is now selling at Tk 90 while the price was Tk 60 before its ban, a polythene shopping bag supplier said, adding, "Despite huge supply of polythene bags the price has increased as we have to pay the police."

"Often police raid the bazar and arrest people for using polythene bags, but release them after receiving bribe of Tk 200 to 500," said a chicken trader in the city's Boubazar kitchen market.

Denying the allegation of taking bribe, Lalbagh Police Station Officer in Charge (OC) Golam Mustafa said, "Police regularly raid the polythene

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Wrong identity costs him a year in jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

An innocent young man has lost about a year of his life in jail custody just because police wrongly identified him as a criminal.

A court in Barisal yesterday ordered release of the victim, Iqbal Hossain Masud alias Khokan, after long 11 months in jail.

The Court of Third Assistant Sessions Judge of Barisal also ordered action against the police personnel who arrested him on May 4 last year.

Iqbal, son of Joynal Khan of Rujparjhor village under Bakerganj upazila of Barisal, was arrested by

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Blair sets May 5 as election date

BBC NEWS ONLINE

The general election in Britain will be held on 5 May, Prime Minister Tony Blair has formally announced. Speaking after asking the Queen to dissolve Parliament next week, Mr Blair said Labour had a "driving mission" for a third term in office.

The Conservative and Liberal Democrat leaders pre-empted the announcement by starting nationwide tours of key seats.

Michael Howard accused Mr Blair's government of "losing the

plot" while Charles Kennedy said he would focus on people's hopes, not their fears.

The prime minister's audience with the Queen at Buckingham Palace lasted for just over 20 minutes. Returning to Downing Street, Mr Blair said the election presented a big choice.

"The British people are the boss and they are the ones that will make it," he said.

Mr Blair said his biggest motivation was ensuring everybody had the chance to reach their potential,

whatever their class, background, colour or religion.

"We are proud of what we have achieved in the last eight years but we should never stand still," he added. The government must now rush to get its remaining legislation through Parliament. Some key bills are likely to fall.

Earlier, a Labour candidate said he was defecting to the Liberal Democrats. Ribble Valley candidate Stephen Wilkinson said he was disillusioned with Tony Blair's

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Housewife found dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered the body of a housewife at city's Lalbagh area and a mob beat a youth allegedly for attempting to abduct a child at Khilgaon yesterday.

On information Lalbagh police broke into the house at 251 Shaheednagar and recovered the body of Sufia Begum, 22, wife of Al Amin, at 11:30am.

A scarf was tied around the neck of the dead body suggesting the victim had been strangled, police

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

MANIK SAHA MURDER 'Improper probe, faulty charges weaken case'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Lack of proper investigation and faulty charge sheet have weakened journalist Manik Saha murder case for punishment of the accused.

Special Public Prosecutor (PP) of the Khulna Speedy Trial Tribunal conducting the case Abu Zafar yesterday said the case is yet to have 'any merit for punishment of the chargesheeted accused' due to lack

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Prayer Timing		
April 6		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-40	5-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-21	6-24
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation



PHOTO: STAR

Building materials jammed haphazardly along the road near the Baitul Mukarram footbridge make movement of traffic and pedestrians risky, as seen in the photo taken yesterday.

Vatican gridlocked as hordes mourn

REUTERS, Vatican City

Hundreds of thousands of mourners intent on seeing their beloved Pope John Paul one last time have poured into the Vatican, jamming the narrow cobbled streets and filling them with song, prayer and sorrow.

On the Via della Conciliazione, a broad avenue leading from St. Peter's Square to the River Tiber, a quiet, disciplined crowd was contained on Tuesday between metal barriers with police and paramedics

stationed at regular intervals.

But in the adjacent warren of medieval alleys, pilgrims were flooding in at such a pace that they were blocking streets before police had time to clear the traffic, trapping a few unlucky drivers in an impenetrable mass of people.

"It's out of control. But everyone is so patient, so nice, it's a very peaceful multitude," said a policeman, who did not wish to give his name.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

