

Boy burned to death as mother cries for help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A boy was burned to death in a fire at a house in Kafrul in the capital yesterday.

The mother, Helena Begum, cried and begged neighbours to rescue her child Hridoy, two and a half year old child, but all went in vein as they were busy removing their own belongings.

Fire fighters later recovered the charred body of Hridoy, son of a garment-worker Lal Miah, under the bed after dousing the fire.

The fire originated from a road-side gas-pipeline leakage at Baishteki area yesterday morning, said the locals and firefighters. The fire burned 40 shanties.

Witnesses said the fire took only a couple of minutes to reach the shanties, and the tenants tried their best to recover their belongings from the grasp of the raging fire.

"I rescued my children out of the shanty and recovered some belongings from the room," said Helena, mother of two boys. She

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Rice defends nuclear deal with India

AP, Washington

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice called on Congress yesterday to approve an unprecedented US plan to share nuclear technology with India, saying the deal will not trigger an arms race in Asia.

Her testimony was received cautiously. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Richard Lugar agreed that India under the deal would submit to more international safeguards.

But the senator, an Indiana Republican with a strong interest in arms control, said the agreement "would not prevent India from expanding its nuclear arsenal."

And Sen. Joseph Biden (news, bio, voting record), D-Del., said "it comes down to a simple bet we are making, that India appreciates as much as we that the two nations have the potential to be anchors for stability."

Biden, the senior Democrat on the committee, said he would probably vote for the accord.

And, taking a tough line, Sen.

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1,500 patients suffer for Ctg interns' strike

They threaten to stop emergency service if demands not met in 2 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

About 1,500 patients committed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) are suffering the most as the interns went on an indefinite strike yesterday demanding an allowance hike.

The interns at a rally also issued a two-day ultimatum and threatened to paralyse the hospital's outdoor and emergency departments if their demand was not met by April 7.

Intern Doctors Association (IDA), CMCH, enforced the strike demanding increased payment as per a declaration made by the prime minister on January 1 this year.

The association leaders said as

per the prime minister's declaration, interns at different government hospitals are getting increased allowance of Tk 6,500 each with effect from July 1, 2005.

However, 287 interns at all 34 CMCH wards are yet to get the increased allowance and receiving the previous amount of Tk 5,500 each.

A large number of patients were denied pre-scheduled admissions yesterday and forced to leave the hospital without receiving treatment.

The strike forced on duty doctors, assistant registrars and senior medical officers remain busy in giving new admission, primary treatments and taking care of the

admitted patients.

Dr Yunus Harun, assistant registrar of the surgery ward, told The Daily Star they are engaged in dressing, making list of medicines and keeping records of the patients' follow-ups when the critical patients badly need their service.

He said only five patients could be admitted to his ward until 12:00pm, while the number on a regular day raises over 50 by this time.

"We also had to cancel two major operations since the morning due to shortage of adequate hands in the ward," Dr Yunus added.

The patients of different wards came up with several complaints as

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Road closed two days into inauguration

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Traffic movement on the newly constructed Sylhet Airport Bypass has been suspended due to severe damage two days after its inauguration by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman on April 1.

The Roads & Highways Department has constructed the three-kilometre road at a cost of Tk 14 crore on the eastern side of Sylhet Osmani International Airport.

Earlier, another bypass road has been constructed on the western side of the airport's runway. But the road was scheduled to be abandoned due to the airport's runway expansion project.

Besides, the old bypass (Sylhet-Salutikor-Companigan) Road) running

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PHOTO: STAR

A girl plays in the pothole on the newly constructed Sylhet bypass yesterday. The road has been closed since April 3 as trucks got stuck on the dented road creating a severe congestion for about 10 hours.

Bad weather forces PM's chopper to land at Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

The helicopter carrying Prime Minister Khaleda Zia had to land at Barisal Airport on her way to Dhaka from Barguna due to bad weather in the capital yesterday.

After staying for one and a half hours at the airport, the PM left for Dhaka by road at 8:30pm.

Referring to the district administration and Rab-8, Barisal Airport authorities said the PM took to the podium of a public meeting in Amtali upazila just at 5:35pm and left the spot after her 25-minute speech. The helicopter carrying her started for Dhaka at 5:52pm from Amtali.

After a few minutes into the helicopter's taking off, the pilot received information of bad weather in Dhaka and decided to land at Barisal Airport, said a minister who accompanied the PM.

Political Advisor to the PM Haris Chowdhury, Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Nurul Islam Moni and some other ministers were accompanying Khaleda Zia.

CNG AUTO-RICKSHAWS

Body formed to probe anomalies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The communications ministry yesterday formed a high-powered committee to investigate irregularities in operation of CNG-run auto-rickshaws in Dhaka city.

The seven-member committee will investigate the allegations of plying of illegal CNG auto-rickshaws, meter tampering, charging additional fare from passengers, owners' realising higher daily rent than the fixed rate and maintenance cost of the vehicles.

The committee comprising representatives from the Ministry of Communications, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority and leaders of auto-rickshaw owners and workers union, has been asked to submit its report within 14 days.

Following a heated debate at a meeting of CNG three wheeler owners, leaders of workers and the government at communication

ministry's conference room yesterday, the committee was formed.

The debate started when the auto-rickshaw owners demanded increasing the minimum fare from Tk 12 to Tk 14 and the daily rent from Tk 300. They argued that the running of auto-rickshaw became a losing concern as the spare parts and maintenance cost of the vehicles went up following the devaluation of local currency against dollar.

They also demanded increasing the number of three wheeler passenger vehicles as existing 13,000 CNG vehicles are not sufficient for a city with over one crore population.

As the number of vehicles was kept low many drivers became unemployed, they said.

But Communications Minister Nazmul Huda declined to increase the number of vehicles and minimum fare.

He said the number was decided taking into consideration the space

needed for plying of increased number of big buses that carry much larger number of passengers in the city.

He said the CNG auto-rickshaws were imported four years ago and it would not be logical to consider the recurrent currency devaluation in case of fixing the fare.

Although the cost of operation of the three wheelers had decreased to one fourth after the introduction of CNG system, people are not getting its benefit, the minister said.

He underscored the need for bringing discipline in the sector without increasing burden on the passengers.

The meeting was told that the passengers become hostage to the CNG drivers who often demand

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BCL council elects young leaders

Ripon new president, Roton GS



Mahmud Hasan Ripon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mahmud Hasan Ripon and Mahfuzul Haider Roton were elected new president and general secretary of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the student wing of main opposition in the parliament Awami League (AL), yesterday.

Ripon and Roton both were members of the last BCL central committee. Ripon is an MSS student of sociology department at Dhaka University (DU) and Roton is an MPHil student of Philosophy at DU.

After the announcement of the election results, the new president and general secretary met Leader of the Opposition also President of AL Sheikh Hasina at her Sudha Sadan residence after placing wreaths at a portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Bangabandhu Bhaban on Road 32 of Dhanmondi in the capital.

Welcoming the new BCL top leaders, Hasina directed them to work together to establish students' rights at first with campuses free of hooliganism. The AL chief also directed the new BCL leaderships to



Mahfuzul Haider Roton

fight against militancy, criminal activities, corruption and 'misrule' of the BNP-Jamaat alliance government.

"We have created a milestone in student politics through casting votes into transparent ballot boxes," Hasina said adding, "What we have done in the history of student politics, the alliance government could not."

Hasina asked them to concentrate on education along with forging movements against the alliance government. She also directed them to take necessary steps to form committees for all organisational units with regular students as early as possible to teach a 'good lesson' to the BNP-Jamaat coalition government.

Ripon won the post of president receiving 1008 votes while his nearest competitor Kamrul Hasan got 763 votes. Fourteen persons competed for the post of the president.

Roton won the post of general secretary by bagging 660 votes. Two other general secretary candidates

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2 additional secretaries promoted

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Two additional secretaries of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have been promoted to the rank of secretary, says an official notification issued yesterday.

The newly promoted officials are -- AHM Moniruzzaman, additional Foreign Secretary (Multilateral) and Major (Retd) Khairuzzaman, Bangladesh Ambassador to Myanmar.

They will enjoy the rank and status of secretary.

At present, there are several secretary ranked officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Bangladesh High Commissioner in New Delhi Liaquat Ali Chowdhury, Ambassador in Berlin Manjur Rahim and Ambassador in Moscow Amir Hossain are among them.

Frequent power outages at Sudha Sadan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sudha Sadan, the residence of Awami league chief Sheikh Hasina, has been facing frequent power outages for the last couple of days what the Desa chief said was due to technical faults in line caused by

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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		

Opposition frustrated at development flow

Alleges PM

UNB, Amtali, Barguna

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has said the opposition is unleashing terrorism in the name of politics to foil the ongoing development programme of the government.

Addressing a public meeting at Amtali Degree College ground, she said her government has carried out massive development activities across the country and ensured peaceful life for the people.

The prime minister said the opposition has become frustrated to see the flow of development, as it could not meet the demands of the people during its rule.

They had established a reign of terror through creating godfa-

thers in every district of the country and did not do any development work, she said.

"People wanted to get rid of past Awami League (AL) rule for their misdeed and terrorist acts," she told her audience.

BNP had pledged to the people to eliminate terrorism before 2001 general elections and "we have done it".

The prime minister said as they (Awami League) have no issue, they frequently speak of resignation of an elected government.

She said while BNP was in opposition it had demanded resignation of the then Awami League government as they had established a

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Bangladesh draw with Palestine

SPORTS REPORTER

A series of heroic saves by goalkeeper and stand-in captain Aminul Haque and Mehdi Hassan Topu's equaliser inspired the second-string Bangladesh side to hold favourites Palestine 1-1 in an exciting Group D match of the AFC Challenge Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on Wednesday.

Palestine, who took the lead against the hosts on the hour through tournament top scorer Fahed Attal, emerged group champions by virtue of a better goal difference despite finishing level with Bangladesh on seven points.

Having booked their quarterfinal berths before the clash, Palestine

rested four regular starters while the hosts kept eight in the bench from their starting line-ups of the first two games.

After a cautious start from both sides, the game came alive on 28 minutes when Bangladesh forward Kanchan, who put the opposition backline under constant threat with his speedy runs, sent a teasing cross from the left. But second-choice goalie Ramzi came out of his line to fist the ball out before Topu could reach it.

Ramzi then went full-stretch to parry the ball for a corner a minute later when Topu unleashed a scorching left-footer from the edge of the box after being set through by a nice ball from Zahed Parvez.

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TRIAL RESUMES

Saddam trashes evidence

AFP, Baghdad

Former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein launched into a new tirade against his trial yesterday and

lambasted the interior ministry as the tumultuous process resumed after a three week break.

The only defendant in the court,

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PHOTO: AP

Former Iraqi president Saddam Hussien argues with prosecutors while testifying during cross-examination in his trial held in Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone yesterday.

Hartal enforced in Khulna for uplift demand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The Greater Khulna Development Action Co-ordination Committee (GKDACC) enforced a daylong hartal in the city yesterday to press home its demands.

The demands include supply of gas through pipeline, construction of deep seaport at Akram point, reopening of all closed Jute mills and Khulna Newsprint Mill, installation of a 210MW power plant and a TV centre, and construction of an airport.

Normal life came to a halt as all modes of vehicles went off the roads and shops and educational institutions remained closed during the shutdown. There were no financial transactions in private and state-owned banks and production in mills and factories were suspended.

All political parties, including the ruling BNP, extended their support to the hartal. The GKDACC took out a procession in the city at noon. Leaders, activists and supporters of all political parties and socio-cultural organisations joined the procession.