

Rejoinder, our reply

Public Service Commission (PSC) in a rejoinder to a story headlined "Telltale evidence corruption at PSC" published in The Daily Star on May 4 said the report is false and baseless.

The rejoinder signed by PSC Deputy Secretary (administration) Mdquz Hossain claimed that the incidents of taking bribe from aspirant candidates of 27th BCS on behalf of the PSC top office bearer are imaginary, malicious, defamatory and provocative. The main claims made in the rejoinder are the following:

1) Marks of written exams are kept in the computer system in coded form and not provided to the members of the viva board.

2) The allegation of placing bribe-offering candidates' reports at certain viva board is totally baseless and false as the viva boards are formed according to the registration serial numbers of the candidates.

3) It is false that not a single viva candidate on October 12, 2006 and

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Govt to repossess eight privatised textile mills

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

The government is planning to take back the ownership of eight formerly state owned textile mills from the current private management due to their failure to run those efficiently.

Government authorities alleged that the managements, whose personnel are former workers and employees of the mills, of misappropriation of funds, failure to pay any instalment of the share prices to the government, and of selling and leasing out mill lands violating contracts.

Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation (BTMC) prepared a position paper regarding the matter, to be submitted soon to the chief adviser to the caretaker government for consideration.

"Yes we are thinking of taking back the managements of eight

formerly state owned textile mills from the former employees of the mills to whom the government handed over the ownership. They breached the contract with the government in many ways. They failed to repay bank loans, and to pay other liabilities but siphoned off crores of taka by selling valuable machinery from the mills," Shariful Alam, chairman of BTMC, said.

BTMC is in a dire situation as different banks and other financial institutions have initiated processes to auction off the BTMC building, the chairman said. "We have to protect the once reputed institution from being ruined as it is still serving thousands of rural weavers who mainly depend on cheaper yarns from BTMC," he added.

BTMC will be able to successfully operate the eight textile mills worth over Tk 1,000 crore by leasing them out to more competent management contractors.

According to the agreement between the government and the workers and employees who currently possess the mills, the government is empowered to take back the ownership of those mills any time if the current managements breach the agreement.

The current managements of the mills also owe Tk 253 crore to banks as long term repayment of loans.

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Sylhet mayor freed on bail in graft case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Mayor of Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran, who was arrested in connection with a graft case, was released on bail from Comilla Central Jail yesterday morning.

A Sylhet court is to frame charges tomorrow against him and 18 others in connection with the case filed for graft in leasing out Shibganj kitchen market in Sylhet.

On April 30, a High Court (HC) division bench granted the SCC mayor ad interim bail but his release was delayed due to official formalities and public holidays.

The mayor went to Sylhet from Comilla following his release.

While talking to newsmen he claimed that the case was filed out of political grudge. "The BNP-led alliance government filed the case to harass me as they failed to defeat me in the election. I am hopeful of

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PHOTO: STAR

Sylhet City Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran being greeted by his close ones after his release from jail on bail. The photo was taken yesterday.

Star dies in brightest supernova

AFP, Washington

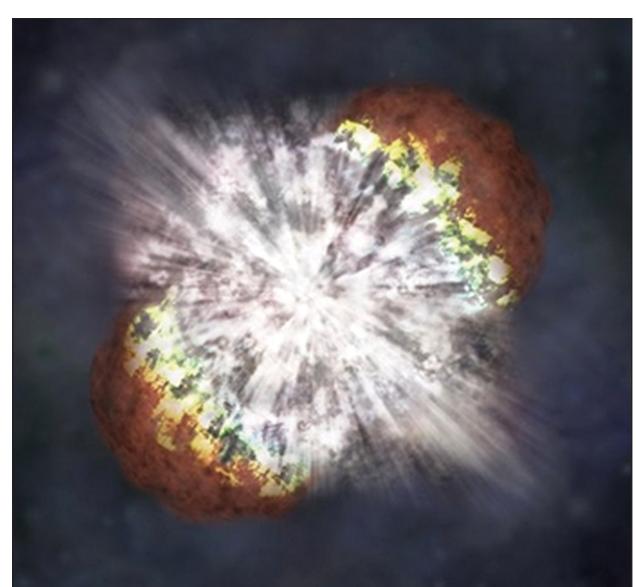
US stargazers beheld the most spectacular supernova ever seen when a massive star exploded in a cosmic flash 50 billion times brighter than the sun, the space agency Nasa said on Monday.

"Of all exploding stars ever observed, this was the king," said Alex Filippenko, one of the leaders of the Nasa-backed operations which observed the phenomenon that began last fall, in a statement presenting the find.

"We were astonished to see how bright it got, and how long it lasted," said Filippenko, who headed teams at the Lick Observatory at Mount Hamilton, California, and the Keck Observatory in Mauna Kea, Hawaii.

The supernova, named SN 2006gy, was likely caused by "the death of an extremely massive star," said Dave Pooley of the University of California at Berkeley, who headed the overall observation project by NASA's Chandra X-ray Observatory.

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A NASA illustration shows what the brightest ever supernova may have looked like when it exploded.

Wolfowitz fights to keep job as scandal sends top aide packing

Ethics panel finds him guilty

AFP, Washington

World Bank president Paul Wolfowitz was fighting to keep his job after a top-level Bank ethics panel ruled he was guilty of a conflict of interest over his girlfriend's pay raise, US media reported yesterday.

The news came as the scandal entangling Wolfowitz claimed its first victim earlier in the day when

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Illegal workers get 2 months to leave Kuwait freely

PORIMOL PALMA

Several thousand Bangladeshi workers, living in Kuwait with irregular status, fear that they have to return home voluntarily or face deportation, as the country's government announced an amnesty period allowing illegal foreign workers to return to their own countries without facing any penalty.

According to a report published in the Kuwait Times, the Ministry of Interior of that country on April 24 declared the amnesty to be availed by illegal workers and

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Govt procurement prices of rice, paddy raised

UNB, Dhaka

The caretaker government yesterday re-fixed the internal procurement prices of Boro paddy and rice in view of the present market rates to provide fair price to the growers.

An unscheduled meeting of the Council of Advisers with Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed in the chair approved a proposal, re-fixing price of paddy Tk 11.25 per Kg, up from earlier-fixed Tk 10, while rice Tk 18 per Kg from Tk 16.

The government hopes that the measure will encourage the farmers and help increase the government's domestic procurement of paddy and rice.

The government will procure 3 lakh tonnes of paddy and 10 lakh tonnes of rice this year.

Members of the Council of Advisers, the cabinet secretary and the press secretary to the chief adviser attended the meeting at the CA's office.

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Detained JMB men disclose plan to blow up NGO offices

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

The three Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) militants, who were placed on a five-day remand in Rangpur Thursday, disclosed sensational information about their regrouping, technique and plans to blast bombs in NGO offices and other important establishments.

Sources in Gangachara Police

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Charges pressed against ex-BNP MP Pintu in two criminal cases

Former AL lawmaker Lotus Kamal remanded

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Police have pressed charges against detained former BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu in connection with two separate criminal cases filed in February this year.

In the meantime, former Awami League (AL) lawmaker Lotus Kamal was placed on a two-day remand in a case filed under the Emergency Power Ordinance 2007.

The criminal cases against Pintu were filed with Kamrangirchar and Hazaribagh police stations on February 13. The investigation officers (IO) of the two cases pressed charges against him and three others on May 6.

KAMRANGIRCHAR CASE

SI Tajul Islam, IO of the case, pressed charges against Pintu on May 6 in an attempted murder case.

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Proceedings of graft case against Harris Chowdhury adjourned

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court adjourned the proceedings of the graft case against former prime minister Khaleda Zia's political secretary Harris Chowdhury until tomorrow as two witnesses did not appear before the court yesterday.

Judge Mohammad Ashraf Hossain of the Fifth Special Court set up at the MP Hostel at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar adjourned the hearing following a time petition by the prosecution lawyers.

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Prayer Timing

May 9		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Magrib	6-34	6-38
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Bomb dents Iraqi govt's credibility

16 people killed in car bomb blast

AFP, Baghdad

A powerful car bomb exploded in the Iraqi city of Kufa yesterday, killing 16 people and unleashing a wave of anger at the government's apparent inability to protect the Shia heartland.

Iraq's southern shrine cities of Najaf, Karbala and Kufa have often been targeted by Sunni insurgents waging a sectarian war against the country's majority population.

"The final toll of the attack in Kufa is 16 killed and 70 wounded," Bassim Naema, spokesman for the provincial health department, told AFP.

Mayor Abu Dhar Yussef said a car packed with explosives appeared to have targeted a two-storey restaurant popular with pilgrims who flock to the shrines in this Shia town 140 kilometres (87 miles) south of Baghdad.

"Why did it take security forces more than half an hour to get to the area?" demanded the enraged mayor amid a scene of devastation in the marketplace.

"Why did they not send us more support than just some ambulances and firemen?"

Angry crowds filled the main square and brandished bloodied body parts to news cameras while chanting anti-American slogans

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