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Speaker rejects 50 notices of opposition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speaker Abdul Hamid yesterday turned down again the BNP-led opposition lawmakers' demand for holding discussion on various issues in parliament, adjourning the scheduled business of the House.

The opposition lawmakers submitted 50 notices to the parliament secretariat with demands for having discussions on issues including the government move to sign transit agreement with India, formation of regional anti-terrorism taskforce and Trade and Investment Framework

PRIMARY EDUCATION IN SHAMBLES-3

Govt faces big task to get total literacy

7 lakh new teachers, 30,000 schools needed

SURANI TH DEABNATH and RAIHAN SABUKTGIN

The government faces a great challenge in realising its election pledge of total literacy in the country by 2014 because of the heavy dropout of children from primary schools and acute shortage of teachers.

Academicians and researchers think that to reach these targets, the government will have to recruit seven lakh new teachers -- preferably trained -- and build 30,000 new schools and 60,000 new class-

rooms in existing schools within the next two years.

Experts also suggest that the government allocates at least four per cent of the GDP towards primary education. At present, this remains at less than two per cent.

About three million children in the country still don't go to schools while 50 per cent of students who get admitted to class 1 drop out before completing five years of primary education, mainly due to poverty.

Achievement in primary education remains tremendously low, with the literacy rate being only 63 per cent. About 73 per cent of all teachers are untrained and there remain 19,043 villages which have no schools at all.

Educationists term the AL election pledges as unrealistic, but not impossible. They say the government will have to take pragmatic steps to achieve the targets.

"It is a tremendous challenge for the government because millions of children



Students of Godagari Government Primary School in Sariakandi, Bogra, are doing class work without the teacher who had to leave for another class as the school has only two teachers for five classes.

Fishing cat beaten to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Villagers beat a fishing cat to death on Sunday evening at Bhourghata under Khangapur union of Gouranadi upazila in Barisal.

As the cat started killing domestic animals the villagers trapped it in a betel-leaf field and killed it with iron rods, sticks and spears, the locals said.

Later they disposed of the body into a nearby river around 5:30pm.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



This fishing cat was beaten to death at Bhourghata of Gouranadi in Barisal Sunday evening after villagers trapped it in a betel-leaf plantation.

Election to JS reserved seats likely on Mar 22

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday set March 22 as a tentative date for holding elections to the reserved seats for women in parliament.

Before finalising the date, the EC will send letters to three major political parties representing the House and seek their opinion or objection on the tentative date, sources at the EC said.

The commission also set date for holding Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) elections in April.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Fix target people for food rationing

Suggest experts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Introduction of rationing system will not be effective without identifying the target group and enhancement of administrative capacity, experts said yesterday.

"The government must conduct research and improve the capacity of the administration before introducing the rationing system," Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud told reporters after chairing a seminar on 'Market volatility, vulnerability and food security in Bangladesh: Strategic choices and policy options' at Sheraton Hotel in the capital.

Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) and the Department for International Development (DFID) jointly organised the seminar attended by experts from India, England and Thailand.

A sudden decision will not benefit the target group, said Prof Wahiduddin, a renowned economist and former adviser to a

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Check graft in CHT rationing

CHT Commission urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Commission yesterday requested the government to check corruption of the rationing system in CHT and provide rations to the Bangalee settlers who want to return to their previous places.

The commission also urged the government to activate the CHT Land Commission as settlement of land problems will help to resolve more than 80 per cent problems of the indigenous

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Zillur moves to ease city traffic jam

UNB, Dhaka

President Zillur Rahman has brought some changes in his movement schedule in the city and urged all concerned for logical traffic control to reduce public sufferings, said a Bangabhaban release yesterday.

The changes have been brought considering the importance of timely presence of SSC examinees in their examination centres, the release added.

55 hurt in cow trouble

UNB, Bagerhat

At least 55 people, including six police personnel, were injured in a fierce clash over a trifling matter between two groups of villagers at Singati village in Mollarhat upazila yesterday.

Police and witnesses said there had been a longstanding dispute between Kabul

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Altaf, Falu barred from going abroad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Immigration officials at Zia International Airport barred former minister Air Vice-Marshal (ret'd) Altaf Hossain Choudhury and Mosaddek Hossain Falu, political secretary to former prime minister Khaleda Zia, from leaving the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

India goes for big defence budget

Mumbai attacks prompted govt to make a 34pc hike

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India today announced a 34 per cent hike in its defence budget keeping in view the security scenario in the wake of Mumbai terror attacks last year.

Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee, who presented the interim budget in parliament, said the allocation has been increased as the security environment has "deteriorated considerably."

Noting that the Mumbai attacks had amounted to the threshold being crossed on the security front, he said, "We are going through tough times. The Mumbai terror attacks have given an entirely new dimension to cross-border terrorism."

With the total revised expenditure for defence last year standing at Rs 1,14,600 crore, Pranab said the increased 'plan expenditure' for defence this year would be Rs 86,879 crore.

Last year's 'plan expenditure' was Rs 73,600 crore with an increase of Rs 13,279 crore this year.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

50,000 school textbooks seized in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The taskforce on textbooks seized 50,000 school textbooks from a publishing house in the city's Banglabazar area early yesterday.

A team of the taskforce led by Flight Lt Nazrul Kabir raided Raihan Printers Limited on RM Das Road in Banglabazar at about 1:00am and recovered the textbooks.

But the taskforce could not arrest its owner. The books were stored there despite directives from the government to sell all textbooks to ease the prevailing textbook crisis.

Meanwhile, National Curriculum and Textbooks

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Sharia law enforced in Swat valley

Pakistan signs deal with Islamists; US missile strike kills 30

AFP, AP, Peshawar

The Pakistan government yesterday signed a deal with Islamic hardliners to enforce Sharia law in a northwestern region, hailing the agreement as a precursor for peace in the troubled area.

Earlier a suspected US missile strike on Monday destroyed an Afghan Taliban camp and killed 30 in Pakistan's northwest tribal area of Kurram, a security official said.

The deal, seen by analysts as a government concession, followed talks between ministers in the troubled North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and a local militant leader, Soofi Mohammad, on formalising the implementation of Islamic law.

The deal will cover Pakistan's Malakand area, one of the districts of NWFP, which

includes the Swat valley, and home to around three million of the estimated 20 million people who live in the northwest province.

Until two years ago, Swat was a jewel in the crown of Pakistani tourism, frequented by foreign and local holidaymakers escaping to the mountains for skiing in winter or cooler climes in the punishing heat of summer.

But the region descended into chaos after radical cleric Maulana Fazlullah embarked on a terrifying campaign to enforce Taliban-style Sharia law, prompting tens of thousands to flee and suffocating day-to-day life.

"Today an agreement has been signed between the government of NWFP and Maulana Soofi Mohammad," provincial information minister Mian Iftikhar Hussain told

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Demand for sci-fi books on rise

RAKIB AHAMMED

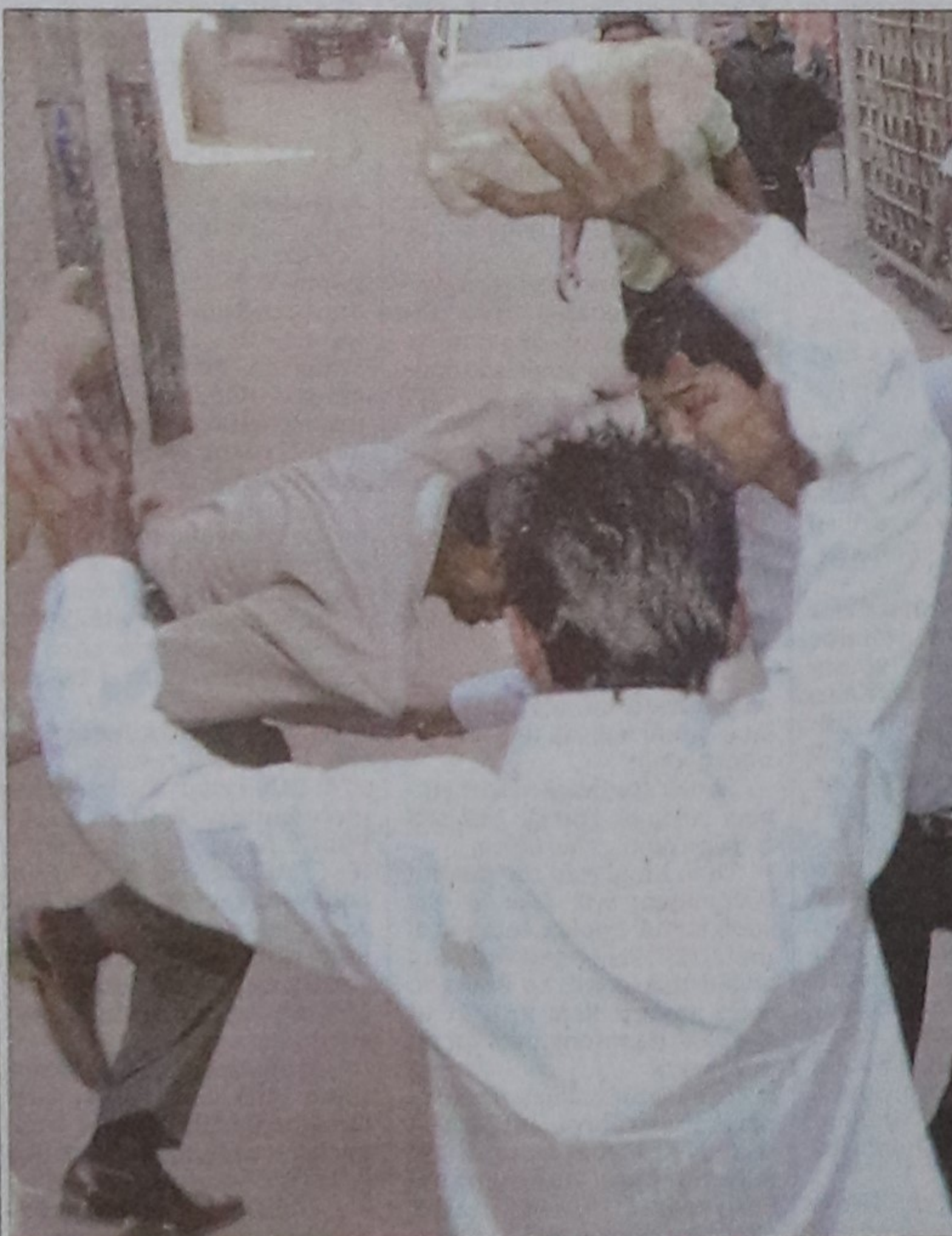
Three boys of class X -- Russell, Mithun and Jewel -- were moving from one stall to another to find some newly arrived science fictions at the Amar Ekushey Boli Mela.

The boys have been saving money for last couples of months.

"We have bought three science fictions by Muhammad Jafar Iqbal and looking for few more of popular native and foreign writers," Mithun said.

"I have managed Tk 400 from my mother and saved Tk 500 more during last two months to buy science

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5



Grassroots leaders of BNP attack, left, so-called reformist President of BNP's Chittagong (South) unit Ahmed Khalil and Assistant Secretary Mohiuddin in front of BNP central office in the capital yesterday. The grassroots leaders tear the clothes, top, of one of them. The clash erupted when supporters of Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury allegedly resisted their rival Abdullah Al Noman group while entering the party office.

মহামান্য রাষ্ট্রপতিকে বাংলাদেশ ঔষধ শিল্প সমিতির প্রাণঢালা অভিনন্দন

বর্ষিয়ান রাজনীতিক এবং বঙ্গবন্ধুর ঘনিষ্ঠ সহচর মোঃ জিল্লুর রহমান বিনা প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বিতায় গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশের ১৯তম রাষ্ট্রপতি হিসেবে নির্বাচিত হওয়ায় আমি ব্যক্তিগতভাবে এবং বাংলাদেশ ঔষধ শিল্প সমিতির কার্যনির্বাহী পরিষদ, উপদেষ্টা পরিষদ এবং সকল সাধারণ সদস্যবৃন্দের পক্ষ থেকে আপনাকে আন্তরিক অভিনন্দন ও মোবারকবাদ জানাচ্ছি।

আমরা আশা করি আপনার প্রজ্ঞা, সূযোগ্য ও বলিষ্ঠ নেতৃত্বে দেশের জনগণের আশা আকাঙ্ক্ষা তথা গণতান্ত্রিক শাসন ব্যবস্থা অধিকতর গতিশীল ও কার্যকর এবং সঠিক দিক নির্দেশনার মাধ্যমে জাতীয় ও আন্তর্জাতিক অঙ্গনে দেশের সুনাম বৃদ্ধি পাবে। আপনার দেশপ্রেম এবং ব্যক্তিত্বের মাধ্যমে দেশের রাষ্ট্রপতির মত মহৎ প্রতিষ্ঠানের পৌরব ও মর্যাদাকে সমন্বিত রাখার লক্ষ্যে যুগান্তকারী অবদান রাখতে সক্ষম হবেন।

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশের রাষ্ট্রপতি তথা সমগ্র জাতির অভিভাবকের যে গুরুদায়িত্ব আপনি এখন করেছেন তা সফল ও স্মৃতি বাস্তবায়নে বাংলাদেশ ঔষধ শিল্প সমিতির পক্ষ থেকে আপনাকে সর্বাত্মক সহযোগিতা প্রদানের আশ্বাস প্রদান করছি।

আমরা আপনার সুস্বাস্থ্য, দীর্ঘায়ু কামনা করছি। মহান সর্বশক্তিমান আল্লাহ আপনার সহায় হউন।

ধন্যবাদান্তে
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এস এম শফিউজ্জামান, সভাপতি

Prayer Timing

February 17

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-52	5-56
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation