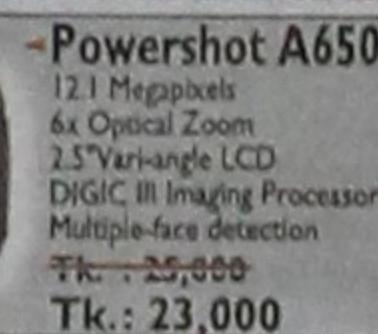


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Poachers are killing sharks indiscriminately in Patuakhali coastal region for their high demand abroad. Another picture, inset, shows shark meat being dried in the sun.

PHOTO: BANGLA CHOKH

Steps taken to ensure power for irrigation

Minister tells House amid lawmakers' discontent

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The state minister for power yesterday informed the House that the government has taken measures to ensure uninterrupted power supply for irrigating farm land, but a number of treasury bench lawmakers described how irrigation is being badly hampered due to acute shortage of power.

Relying to lawmakers' demands for uninterrupted supply of power for irrigation, Shamsul Haque Tuku also said the government has formed committees at each division to ensure this. And the committees are now monitoring the power supply situation.

Ruling Awami League (AL) lawmaker Iqbal Rahim however described acute shortage of power in Dinajpur. People of the district are now facing an acute crisis of power, he said.

"According to the government directive, power supply for irrigation is supposed to be

uninterrupted from 11:00 pm to 5:00 am. I have monitored the situation. Farmers are getting electricity only for two hours in between 11:00 pm to 5:00 am," Rahim said on a call attention notice on the crisis.

Another AL lawmaker, Shahiduzzaman Sarkar of Naogaon, demanded that shopping malls in the cities including Dhaka must be shut down after 8:30 pm to save power to supply it for irrigation.

"Farmers of my constituency are not getting even one fourth of the electricity required. Irrigation is being seriously hampered due to acute crisis of power," Shahiduzzaman said on a call attention notice.

Jatiya Party lawmaker Hafizuddin Ahmed of Thakurgaon said people of his constituency are demonstrating against shortage of power as the government a few days ago shut down a 10 MW power plant using diesel.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Mob clashes with BDR over smuggled goods: 40 hurt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

At least 40 people, including five journalists, were injured when Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) personnel charged truncheon following a feud over BDR refusing to disclose seizure list of smuggled goods at Shantahar in Bogra.

Witnesses said a group of BDR members led by Nayek Subedar Atiar Rahman raided Khulna-bound Rocket Mail and seized some smuggled goods when it paused at Shantahar Rail Station around 12:30pm.

When journalists asked for the seizure list, the BDR members refused to make it public and soon both sides locked into a row.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

MUMBAI ATTACK

India gets crucial FBI evidence on Pakistani link

IANS, Washington

A team of Mumbai police is headed home armed with crucial evidence provided by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) indicating that the Nov 26 Mumbai terror attacks were planned in Pakistan.

A three-member Mumbai police team headed by deputy inspector general of police Deven Bharti left for Mumbai on Wednesday with details of how the Mumbai attackers kept in touch with their Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) masters in Karachi.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Anti-polybag drive begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

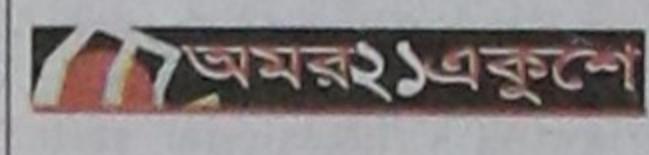
The National Taskforce on polythene bags launched fresh drives across the country yesterday to check environmental pollution.

On the first day of the drives initiated by the Department of Environment (DoE), a mobile court seized 25 sacks of polybags and fined 25 shopkeepers Tk 14,000 at Hazrat Shah Ali market in the capital's Mirpur.

The court filed 25 cases against the shop owners on charge of violating the Environment Conservation Act 1995.

Mostafizur Rahman, state minister for environment and forests, took part in the drive and urged the shopkeepers not to use polybags for selling goods.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



New writers unhappy over sales

AMENA KHATUN

A good number of new books arrived at the Ekushey Boi Mela this year but dismal pictures of sales of these books let new writers down.

Around 300 out of 1,705 new books arrived till yesterday evening at the fair on its

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Prayer Timing

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-20	5-55
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-03	6-07
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

UN asks Lanka not to kill civilians

LTTE says 100 more killed in airstrikes

AP, AFP, Colombo

The United Nations' top humanitarian official urged the Sri Lankan government and Tamil Tiger rebels yesterday to do everything possible to avoid civilian casualties amid accusations that 100 more civilians were killed in Lankan airstrikes.

John Holmes also was expected to discuss the conditions of more than 30,000 displaced ethnic Tamils currently in government-run camps south of the war zone and the plans for tens of thousands of others expected to join them in coming weeks.

The UN also launched an appeal on Thursday to raise 155 million dollars to fund aid projects in the regions of Sri Lanka devastated by the fighting.

Government forces have captured the main

strongholds of the Tamil Tiger rebels in the north in recent months and cornered them into a small sliver of land on the island's northeastern coast along with tens of thousands of civilians.

"We are concerned about reports of heavy casualties to the civilian population" trapped in the area, Holmes told reporters after meeting with Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama. He called on both sides to avoid civilian casualties and appealed to the rebels to allow civilians to flee if they wish.

Human rights groups have accused the government of indiscriminate shelling in the war zone and have also accused the Tamil Tigers of using the civilian population as human shields and of shooting at many who have tried to flee.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Kyrgyzstan MPs approve closure of US air base

AFP, Bishkek

The Kyrgyz parliament voted overwhelmingly on Thursday to close a US military base on its territory that serves as a key supply route for coalition forces in neighbouring Afghanistan.

The vote to close the US air base at Manas easily passed through parliament, with 78 out of a total 81 lawmakers present voting for the closure. One MP voted against and two abstained.

Ruling Ak Zhol party MP Zaynidin Kurmanov said after the vote that the legislation must now be signed by President Kurmanbek Bakiev, whose announcement last month of the base's closure shocked Washington.

"After that Bishkek should send a note by the ministry of foreign affairs to the American side and within the next 180 days the United States must remove its base from the territory of Kyrgyzstan," the lawmaker said.

Despite its importance, the vote proceeded with little fanfare with lawmakers then moving on to their next deliberations.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

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