

## BDR beefs up troops as push-in bids continue

### New Delhi terms claims baseless, absurd

SHAIKH NAZRUL ISLAM, from Benapole

The Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) has doubled its troops in the Benapole area as the Indian Border Security Forces (BSF) tried to push in hundreds of people overnight.

The push-in attempts were made at 14 points close to the Benapole border outpost. The BDR with the help of villagers resisted the

attempts.

Meantime, New Delhi yesterday termed the push-ins charges 'baseless' and 'absurd' and asked Dhaka to realise the seriousness of the problem of illegal immigrants.

"There is no question of Indian nationals being pushed into Bangladesh. Any such allegation is baseless and absurd," a spokesman of the Indian external affairs ministry told reporters in New Delhi.

"There is a serious problem of illegal immigrants. We have repeatedly drawn the attention of the Bangladesh government to this problem."

Earlier, the BSF tried to push 150 people into Barnabaria village at 10:00pm last night from the its Shialbari camp without success. Half an hour later, another attempt was reported near Baghdadanga. Again at around 11.30pm, the

BSF again tried to push in about 40 people at Kathalpur. The BDR also got informed that more people were being pushed into 12 other areas.

These are Roghunathpur, Ghiba, Gatipara, Teroghar, Taltola, Railgate, Kolachipa, Napatbari, Idubari, Doctorbari, Pota and Kathalpur.

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A bird's eye view of a section of the Gulshan Lake at Road No. 29, encroached upon overnight about two weeks back. The encroachers knocked down a wall and filled part of the lake.

## High turnout marks BGMEA polls

### Sammilito Forum heads for victory

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Voters turned out in large numbers in yesterday's election of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) amid fears of further government intervention.

Despite a last minute boycott by the Oikya Jote panel that enjoys the ruling BNP's blessings, 73.6 per cent votes were cast during the polling of the largest trade body. In the last election 86 per cent votes were cast. Voting in Dhaka and Chittagong began at 8:00 in the morning and ran through 4:00pm.

The Oikya Jote's rival Sammilito Parishad Forum was cruising to a comprehensive victory having bagged 1232 of the 1561 votes in Dhaka and Chittagong, according to the first unofficial count.

Two rival groups announced their panels with 27 candidates from

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A voter drops her ballot during the BGMEA election yesterday. Foiled once, the polls were finally held under strict police protection.

## Final talks on IMF loans begins

STAR REPORT

The government yesterday began the final round of talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a loan under the poverty reduction growth facility (PRGF).

Any IMF commitment, however, depends on its assessment of the economy and how the government has so far fared in macroeconomic management and reforms.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman held talks with an IMF mission for more than two hours at his Planning Commission office.

"They (IMF) are impressed with our achievements in the last one year, especially in the macroeconomic field. We are hopeful to get assistance from the PRGF," Saifur told newsmen after the meeting.

The minister said he also expected support from the World Bank. To this end, a positive IMF report on the government macroeconomic management is a precondition.

The IMF is still not happy with the banking sector, Saifur said.

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## Lake robbed overnight

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It is a typical case of lake grabbing. At about 10:00pm two weeks ago, a group of people arrived at the Gulshan-Baridhara-Banani lake at the end of Road No. 29 at Gulshan-1.

The group stood on guard while labourers started demolishing a wall that barred land-grabbers from dumping earth in the lake. Within minutes, the wall was knocked down. The labourers quickly built a way to the lake, using bricks from the broken wall.

Soon, an earth-laden truck arrived at the site and unloaded its cargo into the lake. One after another, more trucks arrived and did the same. Few residents around Road No. 29 suspected foul play as the lake-filling continued under cover of night without much noise.

At one point, a police van from the Gulshan Police Station arrived. According to a witness, a police sub-inspector and several constables got out of the vehicle and asked the labourers to stop filling the lake.

"The man in charge of the earth-filling asked the police officer, 'Why are you asking the labourers to stop? You come with me and I'll explain everything to you,'" recalled the witness.

The man in charge walked away from the site with the officer and talked to him. The police officer then returned to his vehicle and drove away with a smile.

By the time the sun broke, the job was done and over 0.21 acres of the lake was filled up, ready as a plot.

The same stretch of the lake came under similar onslaught about a year ago. The so-called 'owner of the lake area' had to stop earth-

filling in the face of demonstrations by several organisations and residents. They asked the Rajdhan Unnyan Kartripakkhya (Rajuk) to stop filling up the lake and save the environment.

Under pressure, Rajuk was forced to clamp down on the lake-grabber and removed the dumped earth.

Rajuk then built a wall along the lake to prevent further encroachment. But the claimant to the so-called plot obtained a status quo from the court in his favour. A signboard at the site claims that according to a Supreme Court order upon a writ petition (No 5917/2001) nobody can interfere with the 'development work' at the site.

An authorised officer of Rajuk said he was not aware of any such land-filling in Gulshan. Rajuk's Chairman Engineer Iqbaluddin

Choudhury also expressed his ignorance but promised to look into the matter.

A Rajuk engineer in charge of the lake area told The Daily Star that the lake-filler had violated the low-land protection law. He also filed a general diary with the Gulshan police immediately after he had learnt about the land-filling.

"We are going to build the wall again and stop the illegal filling," he said.

Last year the prime minister asked Rajuk to take steps to demarcate the lake and protect it from further encroachment. Rajuk has so far taken up a project to build walkways along selected stretches of the lake but the demarcation job is yet to be done. Residents allege that a number of Rajuk officials are involved in the lake encroachment activities.

## 2 hurt in city shootout

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two persons sustained bullet wounds during a gunfight between two criminal gangs at Shahjahanpur in the city yesterday afternoon.

Roni, 20, a criminal of one of the gangs and Kabir Hossain, 18, a rickshaw-puller were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). Roni was hit by a bullet in his right leg while Kabir was hit in his right thigh.

Sub-Inspector Nazrul Islam of Motijheel Police Station was also injured while chasing the criminals. He was given first aid.

Police arrested Swapan, a local criminal, from the spot for his involvement in the incident. Police also recovered a pistol and nine bullets from Roni's possession.

Roni however denied the allegation and claimed to be a hawker. He said he was hit while passing through the area. After treatment at the DMCH, Roni was taken to the police station for interrogation.

Witnesses said the two gangs, one led by Sharif and another by

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## Disquiet in hills UPDF gears up for violent actions

NURUL ALAM, Chittagong and MONIRUL ALAM, Rangamati

Fresh disturbance is feared in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) area, as a tribal party gears up for violent confrontation for regional autonomy, according to local leaders and intelligence sources.

Concern about the activities of the United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF) came to a head earlier this month when the group's fighters clashed with the army at Naniarchar in Rangamati.

One UPDF member was killed, and eight were captured and charged with possessing firearms. Three of the captured men admitted they were new recruits.

The UPDF, which opposed the 1997 peace treaty with the then Awami League government, reportedly recruited the first 50 youths to its 'cub wing' in January 2002. After training in insurgency strategy, they began carrying out clandestine operations, with back-up from old members of the outfit.

Six other groups of recruits have

## Om Prakash, 5 others sued in criminal cases

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Bureau of Anti-corruption (BAC) yesterday filed seven criminal cases against businessman Om Prakash Chowdhury (Agarwal) and five others with the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka.

The cases were filed against them for taking loans from different banks against export orders from a Hong Kong based company to ship apparels.

The five others are Hare Krishna Saha, director of HB Apparels Ltd, Radha Krishna Sharma, foreign buyer, Uttam Kumar, managing director of East-West Commodities Pvt. Ltd, Sanjay Kumar Bhataria, managing director of Quality Knit Garments Pvt. Ltd and Chandan Chakraborty, managing director of Euro-Asia Fashion Wear Ltd.

BAC officer Akhteruzzaman filed the cases under the Foreign Currency Control Act 1947.

After hearing, Judge Motiur Rahman took the cases into cognizance but did not pass any order on the issue.

The accused took loans from different banks in the name of the said companies and enterprises.

## Govt gets ADP wise 248 projects dropped, 100 to be completed

INAM AHMED

The government aims to drop 248 projects from this year's annual development programme (ADP) and complete at least 100 more to keep next year's project portfolio slim.

The planning commission has already identified the projects on the drop-list, most of which are either slow-moving or of low priority.

At the same time, the revised ADP would be cut to Tk 18,000 crore from the original Tk 19,200 crore, planning commission sources said.

The cut will be from foreign financing as availability of aid has shrunk by about Tk 1,200 crore, sources said.

The funds saved will then be channelled towards fast-moving projects. Some projects on the slash list are in the power sector and cost hundreds of crore taka but have been allocated only a few lakh taka.

The planning commission feels that if 400-500 projects of the 1,289 of this year's ADP could be taken out

through pruning and completion, the next year's project list would fall to around 700-800. This would mean that each project would be sufficiently funded, eliminating the current practice of spreading money thinly over too many projects.

Meantime, the planning commission will include only 20 new projects in the revised ADP this year eight in industry sector, seven in physical infrastructure and five in agriculture.

A report by the implementation, monitoring and evaluation division of the planning commission has said 167 projects would be completed this year with the current funding situation. If extra funds are given, 150 more projects could be completed.

On the pruning list are 65 industrial projects, 72 socio-economic infrastructure schemes, 82-85 physical infrastructure projects and 61 in agriculture.

## Three cops get 5 yrs jail in mugging case

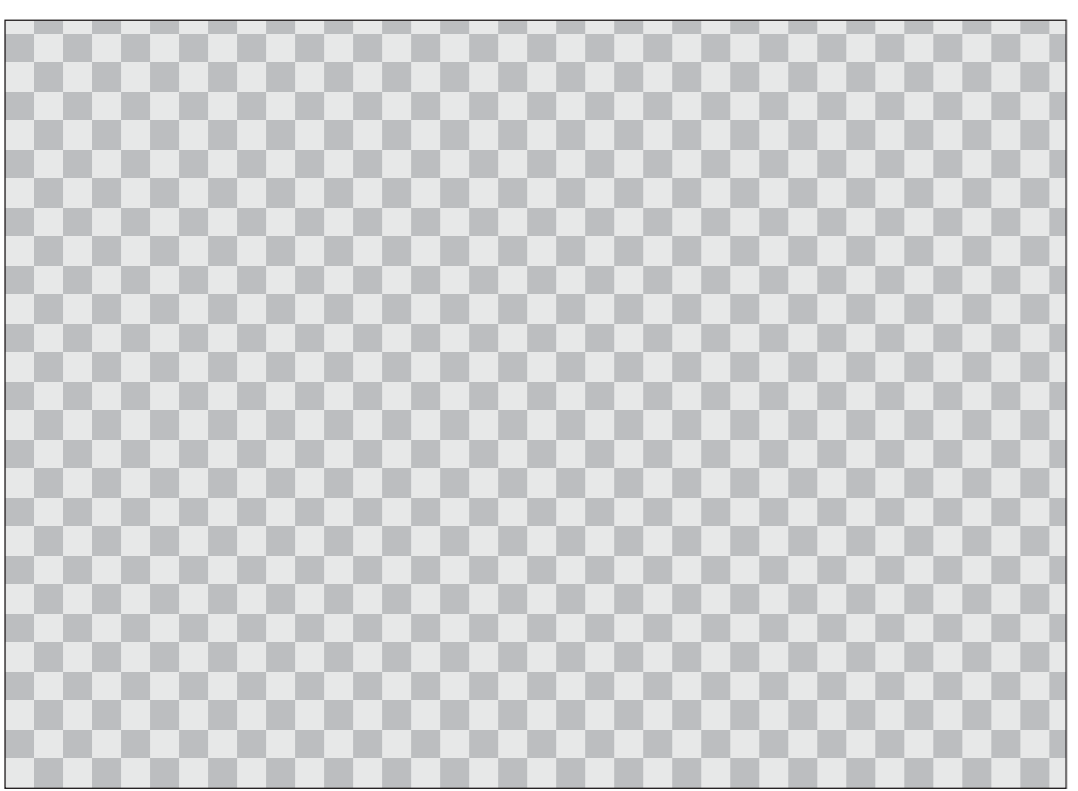
COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Speedy Trial Court, Dhaka, yesterday awarded five years' rigorous imprisonment to three police personnel in a mugging case.

The convicts are constables Abdus Salam, Rezaul Karim and Mojibur Rahman.

According to the prosecution, the accused snatched Tk 2700 from Mohammad Mizanur Rahman, complainant of the case from

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## Sleepless at Pallabi

### Fallan Bahini reprisal feared after criminals' eyes gouged out

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People of Baunia in the city's Pallabi Police Station fear reprisal from a notorious gang known as Fallan Bahini and have urged the authorities to ensure their security.

A mob gouged out the eyes of five alleged members of the gang on Monday.

Male residents of the area maintained vigilance throughout Monday night to ward off possible attacks by the gang members. Helped by police, they drove away some unidentified elements who came to the area at night.

The infamous Fallan Bahini having about members is led by one Faruk alias Fallan and his brother Nazrul alias Naizza. They are nephews of Ismail Hossain

Gazi, organising secretary of local ward committee of the BNP and known in the area as 'chairman,' local people said.

The gang had created panic in the area with criminal activities including rape, toll collection and torture on innocent people. They were absconding during the recent operation by the joint forces.

During a visit to the area yesterday, it was found that local people gathered at different points and with a sense of relief they were discussing Monday's incident in which the eyes of five gang members were gouged out.

Mashiur Rahman who holds charge of Baunia police outpost

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