

WAITING DANGER ON THE WAY



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

(Top, from left) A rickshaw carrying a woman trips over; a passenger struggles free of a rickshaw; (bottom, from left) people try to push a school-van back on the road, with a child trapped inside; and a rickshawpuller falls off his seat onto a water-filled, pothole-strewn road from the Sayedabad bus stand to the children's park yesterday. A WASA pipeline burst open Friday night, overflowing the thoroughfare to cause the accidents.

Death of army man near JS

Tejgaon OC charged with murder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The arrested Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Tejgaon Police Station, Saud Islam, has been charged with murder following the death of army sergeant Mohammad Azimul Awal who was severely beaten up at Sangsad Bhaban area on April 9.

Saud was earlier charged with attempted murder after the incident which left the army person clinically dead for four days before his demise.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka issued an order to turn the attempted murder case into a murder case following a petition submitted by the investigation officer (IO) of the

incident yesterday.

In his petition, IO Assistant Superintendent of Police of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Khalequzzaman said the army sergeant succumbed to his injuries after fighting for life at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) for four days.

So, the case should be turned into a murder case. After hearing the petition, Magistrate Kamrunnahar issued the order.

Police said Awal was picked up from Sangsad Bhaban area on the night of April 9 on charge of anti-social activities. He sustained severe head injuries when he jumped off the police van and was admitted to the CMH, Tejgaon police

claimed.

A clinically dead Awal was declared dead on Wednesday.

Army refused to accept the police claim and alleged that the OC along with some other policemen picked up the army officer when he was returning to an army camp from patrol duty.

They tried to kill Awal to settle scores over harassment of some policemen during the Operation Clean Heart, army said.

After the incident, the OC was closed and interrogated by top police officials. He was later taken on a one-day remand on April 12. Later, he was sent to the Dhaka Central Jail.

Saddam's former finance minister, 2 others arrested

AGENCIES, Qatar/Baghdad

Officers from Iraq's newly revived police force arrested Saddam Hussein's former finance minister -- one of the 55 ex-leaders on the US most-wanted list -- and turned him over to the marines, the US Central Command said yesterday.

Hikmat Mizban Ibrahim al-Azzawi, who also served as a deputy prime minister, was apprehended Friday in Baghdad, the command said.

He was captured the same day that one of Saddam's top scientists -- depicted as the mastermind of Iraq's nerve agent programme -- turned himself in to the Americans. The apprehension of Emad Husayn Abdullah al-Ani raised hopes of a breakthrough in the as-yet-fruitless search for banned chemical and biological weapons in Iraq.

But Abdullah al-Ani denied that Iraq



Ibrahim al-Azzawi

was developing weapons of mass destruction, a US official said.

Other figures from the most-wanted list captured previously include Saddam's top science



SHAZNEEN CASE

Hearing adjourned till Apr 29

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Hearing of the Shazneen case has been adjourned till April 29.

Kazi Rahamat Ullah, Judge of the Second Special Tribunal for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka, yesterday adjourned the hearing following a time petition by the prosecution lawyers.

Earlier, victim's father Latifur Rahman and 10 other prosecution witnesses were cross-examined.

All the six accused -- Hasan, Shahid, Badal, Shaniram, Minu and Parvin -- were produced before the court during the hearing.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, the youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, Chairman of Transcom, was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998.

Latifur Rahman filed a murder case with Gulshan police station accusing Shahidul Islam alias Shahid, a domestic help at his house, the following day.

US set to reduce Indo-Pak tension

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

With the tough talking from Islamabad and New Delhi on the rise recently, the United States has once again taken initiative to diffuse tension between the two perennially bitter countries.

US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage is set to visit India and Pakistan next month in a bid to reduce the hostility between the nuclear-powered South Asian neighbours. Dates of his visit are yet to be finalised.

Armitage's visit will take place hot on the heels of a trip to Washington by Brajesh Mishra, a top aide of Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and National Security Advisor, early next month. US Assistant Secretary of State Christina Rocca is also likely to travel to India and Pakistan soon after Armitage's visit.

In June, Indian Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani is going to Washington to round up a series of high level political contacts between the two countries.

The visit by Armitage is being seen

here with considerable importance, as he was the man who had travelled to New Delhi and Islamabad in June last year and talked the two countries out of a possible war. Both India and Pakistan were then perilously close to a war with huge military build-up across the border.

In Islamabad, Armitage got the assurance from Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf to halt cross-border 'terrorism' in India and dismantle the alleged 'terrorist infrastructure on Pakistani territory'.

Although the de-escalation of Indo-Pak tensions and review of Indo-US tie will top the agenda during Armitage's visit but India is not happy with the soft stand of America on this issue.

There is a disappointment in New Delhi about Washington's inability to force Musharraf to stop 'cross-border terrorism which has been going on in Jammu and Kashmir'.

India does not see any prospect of improvement in their relationship with Pakistan as long as Islamabad continues to sponsor 'cross-border terrorism.'

Accused in Rumi suicide case surrenders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Hasan, one of the three FIR-named accused in Farzana Afrin Rumi suicide case, surrendered to the CMM's Court here at 2-45 pm yesterday.

He was taken on a three-day remanded. Two other accused in the case -- Rony and Mizan -- are still at large.

"I have surrendered to save my innocent mother from being harassed by police", Hasan told his lawyers in the court.

His mother, Rahima Khatoun, was arrested on Tuesday, a day after Rumi's suicide. She was also taken on a two-day remand. On expiry of her remand, the court sent her to the district jail.

College student Farzana Afrin Rumi, 19, committed suicide in her bedroom after being sexually abused by the accused on Monday.

Relatives of Rumi and her father Abdul Bari have alleged that Rony has threatened them to withdraw the case or face dire consequence.

"I am helpless and feeling insecure due to threats," said Abdul Bari.

Meanwhile, there is no headway in the investigation of Bina Rani Mondol suicide case recorded with Paikgacha thana of Khulna district.

The prime accused Sanjoy Sana is yet to be arrested. But his mother Kabita Rani Sana, one of the three accused in the case, was taken into custody on Thursday midnight.

24th BCS exams PSC still sits on the fence

SHAMEEM MAHMUD

The Public Service Commission (PSC) is still undecided about a fresh date of the 24th Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) preliminary test cancelled more than one and a half months ago for reported leakage of questions.

Besides, the inquiry committee formed by the PSC to investigate the matter is also not sure how long it would take to complete the job.

This has thrown more than one lakh candidates who sat for the February 28 test in a state of extreme uncertainty.

Chairman of the PSC Prof. ZN Tahmida Begum told The Daily Star, "We are working hard to hold the test as early as possible. But we cannot specify a fresh date right now".

She said the inquiry committee is still to give its report. And there is another factor, delaying the holding of a fresh test. The commission is now busy with the viva voce of the 22nd BCS examination that will end on May 5.

Explaining the delay, Tahmida also said the PSC has to contact schools and colleges in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna and authorities in London for holding the test. Many of these educational institutions would be busy holding various examinations till the third week of July. "Besides, we have to arrange printing of questions at the Bangladesh Government Press," she added.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Foreign tourists turn back on Cox's Bazar

ABUL KALAM AZAD, back from Cox's Bazar

Over the last couple of years, the world's longest sea beach at Cox's Bazar has seen a drastically reduced number of foreign tourists.

In addition to various other factors, this reduction of foreign visitors have mainly been attributed to the unfavourable atmosphere of insecurity that exists in and around the beach.

According to local people, a large number of foreigners were seen in the area even two years back.

But the numbers started declining when untoward incidents occurred in which some foreign tourists were harassed.

Sources said several such incidents took place in the beach area over the last few years including the harassment of

an Iranian lady. A group of youths allegedly teased her when she went to a money exchange shop.

Many, however, believe the war on Iraq is holding back visitors. "Precious few people came here during the last five months and the number is decreasing daily," said a seashore shopkeeper.

On the flip side, atmosphere in and around the beach area has improved a lot over the past few months following steps taken by the local administration.

The district administration has intensified security measures in the beach. Measures were also taken to keep the beach area clean.

"There is now round-the-clock security to avert any untoward incident," said an official of an intelligence agency in Cox's Bazar.

Talking to this correspondent,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7