

Outlaws murder 6 BNP workers in Naogaon

ANWAR ALI from Atrai, Naogaon

Armed assailants murdered six BNP workers at Naidigha village in Atrai upazila in the early hours of yesterday. The incident took place hardly 150 yards off a police outpost in the area. The victims were identified as Shukbor Ali Shah, 35, a member of Moniary union parishad, his brother Abdul Jabbar, 32, Mozzammel Haque, 40, and his brother Iqbal Hossain Biddut, 35, Shahjahan Ali, 30 and Jahangir Hossain, 28. Some 100 masked outlaws swooped on four houses at a time by breaking open the doors and windows of the houses at around 3.30am, police said. They slaughtered the six men after

dragging them out. They also fired gunshots to frighten the local people. They closed the doors of the victims' neighbours so that nobody could come to their rescue. The attackers left the scene chanting slogans in favour of the Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) and left leaflets on the village roads. Police suspended the in-charge of Digirpar outpost, sub inspector Rezaul Islam, for negligence of duty and arrested two persons. The incident occurred as a sequel to the long standing dispute over nine government water reservoirs and khas land in the village, police and the victims' family members said. But local people told a group of visiting journalists that the victims had

been harassing many of the landless villagers since the BNP came to power. The villagers also said that there was regular police patrol in the village, following the murders of Goalm Nabi, UP member Abdul Latif, and UP chairman Abdus Sattar and his brother Abdus Subhan in recent years. "But for some mysterious reasons, they were not on duty on that night." Sources in police and in the village said that a group led by Yusuf, a leader of the outlaws, was responsible for the six murders. "It is our failure that we could not win people's confidence in the areas where outlaws are active so that we could get vital information from the local people about the outlaws," said the DIG of Rajshahi range, Anwar

Hossain, while talking to The Daily Star. He also said that a special joint drive had been launched in Natore, Naogaon, Bogra and Rajshahi regions since the attack took place and the culprits would be arrested soon. Inspector General of Police (IGP) Shahudul Haq told BBC radio last night that police camps would be strengthened in those areas to contain the activities of the outlawed parties. Replying to a query on special drive, the new IGP said police had conducted drives against the extremist groups in the past, but could not curb their activities totally. He believes that the outlawed parties could be crushed only if their hideouts were identified.

Tareq Aziz gives in

REUTERS, Washington/As Sayliya Camp, Qatar

Tareq Aziz, Iraq's former deputy prime minister and one of the best-known figures in Saddam Hussein's old guard, surrendered to US forces on Thursday and is in custody. US Central Command in Qatar and officials in Washington said that Aziz, No 43 on the US military's list of the 55 most wanted members of Saddam's former ruling elite, gave himself up to US troops in Baghdad and was "under coalition control." They gave no other details.

"He turned himself in," a US official said on condition of anonymity. "He was a major regime figure for a long, long time. He was the public face of the regime for a long time. He was close to Saddam for many years." Aziz, the eight of spades in the Pentagon's deck of cards representing the most-wanted former Iraqi officials sought by Washington, is the best known to the American public. He was an articulate spokesman for Saddam's regime before the US invasion of Iraq began on March 20 and played a starring diplomatic role

during the 1991 Gulf War when he was foreign minister. He was also knowledgeable about policy decisions made by Saddam's government. "He may not know precisely where the WMD (weapons of mass destruction) is hidden, but he probably knows generally about their WMD programme," said the US official. "We have him," a US defence official confirmed. "He's pretty easy to identify." Word of Aziz's capture came shortly before President George W

Bush returned to the White House from a trip to Ohio. On his return, Bush responded to shouted questions about Aziz's fate with a smile and a thumbs up sign. Aziz was the latest in a group of former Iraqi officials being held by US forces. On Wednesday, defence officials announced four key members of Saddam's toppled government, including head of military intelligence Farouk Hijazi and the chief of Iraq's air defences, have been taken

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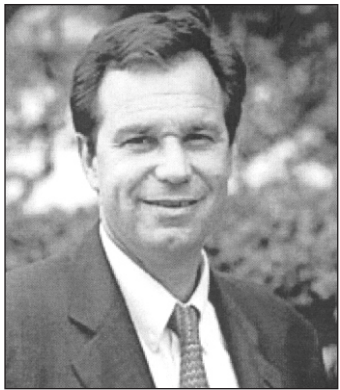
Iraq occupation may last two years: Bush

AFP, Washington

US President George W. Bush said Thursday that the US-led occupation of Iraq could last two years, and speculated that Saddam Hussein may have been killed in the surprise air strikes that started the war. "The people will wonder if Saddam Hussein is dead or not. There's some evidence that suggests he might be," said Bush. "We're trying to, of course, verify it before there's any declaration." Bush said that the agent in Baghdad who pinpointed a compound where he believed the Iraqi leader was meeting with top aides "felt like we got Saddam" in the March 19 bombardment using US "stealth" aircraft and cruise missiles. "The person that helped direct the attacks believes that Saddam at very

minimum was severely wounded," the US leader told NBC television in his first exclusive interview since the war began. A month later, with Saddam dead or on the run and US-led forces occupying Iraq, Bush said that the task of putting Iraqis in charge of their country may take two years: "It could. Or less. Who knows?" "But the point we're making is that the foundation for democracy is now being laid," he said, downplaying surging anti-US sentiment at demonstrations in Iraq. "There's nothing wrong with nationalism within Iraq," he said. "People say the United States should leave. And we want to leave, as soon as we've accomplished our mission."

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French minister arrives today

UNB, Dhaka

French Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Renaud Muselier arrives in Dhaka today on a three-day official visit.

Muselier will hold talks with his Bangladesh counterpart Reaz Rahman tomorrow. This is the first political-level visit from France to Bangladesh in more than a decade.

Talking to UNB, French Ambassador in Bangladesh Michel Lummaux said that political, economic and cultural issues of mutual interest would be discussed during the official talks.

"We're ready to discuss all matters of mutual interest," the envoy said.

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CPD-Prothom Alo-The Daily Star discussion at Ctg today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Centre for Policy Dialogue, The Prothom Alo and The Daily Star are jointly organising a discussion on foreign trade, financial sector and transport system today at the auditorium of Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE).

Today's discussion is the beginning of a fresh round of consultations to review the recommendations made by the 16 task forces formed prior to the October 2001 general elections.

The recommendations of the task forces were prepared through six regional consultations and later finalised at a National Forum in October 2001.

A meeting of the chairpersons and member secretaries of the task forces, held on January 14, 2003 at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), with Professor Rehman Sobhan in the chair, decided to

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SAHR meeting begins today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The two-day meeting of the bureau members of the South Asians for Human Rights (SAHR) begins in the city today.

Leading human rights activists from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal including SAHR Chair and former Indian premier, JK Gujral, and SAHR co-chair and UN Rapporteur for Extra Judicial Killings, Asma Jahangir, reached Dhaka yesterday to attend the meeting to be held at Sheraton Hotel. SAHR Bangladesh chapter is hosting the meeting.

The meetings is likely to focus on the implications of the war in Iraq.

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Meghna launch capsizes: Death toll climbs to 52

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Rescuers and fishermen have retrieved 52 bodies so far from the sunken A M Mazlishpur launch that sank in the Meghna during a nor'wester on Monday.

The vessel went down off Parishayari village with more than 80 passengers on board, including a bridal party. Of them, 33 swam ashore.

The rescue team of Bangladesh Water Transport Authorities (BIWTA) pulled eight bodies from the river on

Tuesday and 10 more on Wednesday. Fishermen and locals fished out the rest of the bodies, some of which were drifting in the river.

Most deaths occurred as the passengers got trapped inside the launch, a survivor said. Of the bridal party, only a 10-year-old boy, Ashish Debnath, survived the disaster.

Thirteen bodies could not be identified till yesterday as those were decomposed beyond recognition, rescuers said.

After three days of frantic efforts, rescuers from Bangladesh Water

Transport Authorities (BIWTA) and Bangladesh Navy located the craft on the riverbed on Thursday, but could not salvage it.

They said the launch was stuck in mud on the river floor 60 feet below water which hobbled their rescue attempts.

The rescuers said they could set hooks to the craft, but failed to lift it up.

The launch was heading towards Debidwar upazila from Astagram in Kishoreganj district when it was caught up in the tropical storm.

Jamuna Group chairman arrested, sent to jail

Allegation of grabbing water-body at Savar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The chairman of the Jamuna Group was sent to the Dhaka Central Jail after detectives arrested him at his Gulshan residence in the early hours of yesterday.

The arrest of Nurul Islam Babul came two days after an alleged death threat to the executive chairman of Board of Investment.

The DB officials said the businessman was arrested on charge of grab-

bing a water-body in Savar.

The officer-in-charge of Savar Police Station sought help from detectives in Dhaka on Thursday to arrest Babul, said police sources.

He was taken to the detectives' office at Mintoo Road for interrogation after arrest at 1:45am in a raid led by Assistant Commissioner Aziz.

Babul was produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka at about 1:45pm with a

remand prayer. A bail petition was also placed on behalf of the businessman.

But the court issued an order of sending Babul to jail after hearing both sides. The hearing of the case is likely to resume today.

Meanwhile, Savar police arrested, Javed Mostafa, staff correspondent of The Daily Jugantor, yesterday on allegation of running false and motivated reports in the daily favouring a group of business

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PHOTO: STAR

People scramble to see Chairman of Jamuna Group Nurul Islam Babul in a prison van heading for the Dhaka Central Jail yesterday. Babul was sent to jail after arrest on a land-grab charge.

Bombs retrieved from DU VC's residence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six small bombs were recovered from the official residence of Dhaka University Vice-Chancellor S M A Faiz yesterday and police believe the explosives were planted to create panic on the campus.

Prof Faiz said an unknown caller tipped him off the bombs more than twice at around 12:15pm. He said he had no idea of the motive.

Meanwhile, unknown assailants opened five rounds of shots on the residence of Shafiqur Rahman, a lecturer of law at the same university.

Four of the bullets whizzed through the windprowns of his Sahidullah Hall residence.

Rahman alleged that some Jatityatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists of the university carried out the attack to kill him.

The teacher is embroiled in a face-off with the JCD activists over his comments on the prime minister.

Ramna police retrieved the bombs at about 1:00pm from the eastern side of the VC's residence adjacent to Rokeya Hall. "We will examine the bombs on Saturday," said Mohammad Mahbubur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Ramna Police Station.

Someone having access to the VC's residence might have planted the bombs to create panic on the campus purposely, he said.

Police recovered several bombs from the house of DU treasurer a few days ago and at least two bombs exploded in front of the VC's house last month.

Meanwhile, DU authorities said they were planning to tighten security on the campus.

They said about 400 security guards of the university would be trained and provided with uniform and other logistic support.

DU Proctor ASM Atiqur Rahman said they would investigate the incident thoroughly.

Son kills former adviser to caretaker government



Abul Khayer Musa



Imran Islam Musa held for patricide

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An adviser to the caretaker government of 1991, Abul Khayer Musa, was stabbed to death by his son at their Gulshan residence in the city on Thursday night.

Khayer was adviser for commerce and industries in the caretaker administration of former president Shahabuddin Ahmed.

The 74-year-old former adviser was watching television in his room. His wife was also there. At about 11:45pm, their only son Imran Islam Musa, 45, went there and shouted at his father for money. He is said to be a drug addict.

As Khayer refused to give money, Imran stabbed him in the abdomen. He (Imran) then went to his room, leaving his father lying in a pool of blood.

Imran's mother Rokeya Begum was also injured as she tried to save his father.

The former adviser was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared him dead. After autopsy, his body was

handed over to his family.

Imran, a former official of Arab-Bangladesh Bank, was taking drugs for long. Family members took him to doctors recently for treatment, relatives and police said.

As per doctors' advice, Imran was not allowed to take drugs for several days. But he was finding it too difficult and he used to pressure family members to give him money for buying drugs.

Family sources however said Imran is a 'mental patient' and has been under treatment for the last six years.

Gulshan police went to the house and arrested him. They also seized a bloodstained knife and some drugs from there.

Imran confessed that he had killed his father after failing to get money, police said.

He was produced before court yesterday. His lawyers prayed for granting him bail but the court did not. It ordered sending him to jail.

Maksudur Rahman, brother-in-law of Khayer, filed a murder case

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BCS jobs up for grabs at Madhu's Canteen!

STAR REPORT

It's about 12:30pm. The Madhu's Canteen at Dhaka University is buzzing with students and student leaders.

A young man with a file in hand enters the canteen and walks straight to a table where some senior Jatityatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leaders are sitting.

Approaching a leader, the young man introduces himself and mentions the name of a JCD leader who has sent

him. "Where is your BCS (Bangladesh Civil Service) admit card?" the leader asks, quickly adding, "Do you have a reference letter from a JCD committee?"

"Yes, Bhai," the boy replies politely and hands over the letter to the leader. The leader then asks a fellow activist sitting beside him to look into the case.

Similar scenes are now taking place on the DU campus every day for over a month as the JCD leaders are desperately lobbying to get their men placed

in the administration.

After confirmation of political identity, JCD leaders try to influence the viva of 22nd BCS examinations in collaboration with 'like-minded' board members in favour of 'their candidates'.

Some mid- and lower-level leaders are assigned to keep a track of their activists, entering their names on a list and submitting it to the BCS viva board members through their top leaders. Examinees, who are involved with

the politics of JCD or did so in the past, are now collecting reference letters from front units and submitting those to top leaders along with photocopies of their admit cards.

Top JCD leaders who are assigned the task of pursuing the cases are now saddled with scores of such cards.

"Please don't give me any more admit cards. I'm tired of dealing with it," a senior leader told his junior in front of Dhaka University Central Students Union (DUCSU) office

recently.

Requests are not only pouring in from individual JCD activists, but also from JCD units, BNP and JCD leaders and teachers associated with the main ruling party.

Sources said similar lobbying was there in the past, but it has now taken an organised shape and has risen to a new height under the present government.

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