



Khosru freed but mystery remains

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

After the release of Sitakunda Press Club president Atahar Siddiqui Khosru, the situation has become rather unclear with the police claiming that it was an "arranged drama".

But the members of Khosru's family and fellow journalists have dismissed the police version of the story as baseless.

Police are reportedly trying to prove that the journalist remained hiding at a hotel in Dhaka. The owner of the hotel reportedly recognised Khosru from his photograph published in different dailies on May 22 and informed the Investigation Officer (IO) of the case over his cellular phone.

A team of Double Mooring police led by IO Mahmud went to Dhaka on Thursday and procured a bag containing some belongings including a diary and mobile phone set of Khosru from the hotel.

They also arrested the manager of the hotel, Harunur Rashid, r o o m -

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Free treatment for AIDS patients

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A hospital has taken the initiative, for the first time, to manage, treat and offer counselling to the people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA).

Gonoshasthya Kendra in co-operation with CARE-Bangladesh has established the facilities at the Gonoshasthya Nagar hospitals at Dhaka and Savar. The PLWHA would get treatment facilities, including surgery and delivery free of cost, in those hospitals.

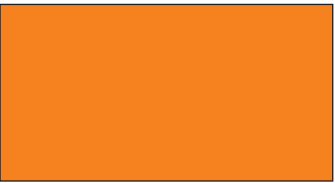
"We are very happy to announce this and we wish to uphold human dignity and rights of people, no matter what disease a person may be suffering from," said Dr Morshed Choudhury, one of the directors of the Gonoshasthya Kendra (GK).

He added, "To the best of my knowledge, no hospital, not even the government-run institutions, offers treatment facilities to the PLWHA. Suffering from HIV/AIDS does not mean that the patients have no right to seek treatment. In fact, many PLWHA seek treatment secretly. That is very unfortunate."

He also said that in the last 20 days the GK has treated seven PLWHA.

Most of the PLWHA are referred by CARE-Bangladesh, but Ashar Alo, an NGO for the PLWHA, has also sent a few patients for regular check-ups.

All costs of treatment of the PLWHA will be borne by CARE-Bangladesh, a press release said.



Dialogue in Barisal today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A consultative meeting on good governance, corruption, the judiciary, democracy, elections and parliamentary system will be held in Barisal today under the aegis of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), The Daily Star and the Prothom Alo.

The discussion, split into two working sessions, will begin at 2:00pm at BDS Hall in Barisal.

Today's programme is part of a series of regional consultations under National Policy Review Forum 2003.

A taskforce had earlier identified priorities and recommended suggestions on policy issues in the run-up to the last general elections. Under the ongoing consultations at six divisional headquarters, the

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Talks with Pakistan not imminent: Fernandes

AFP, New Delhi

Talks between India and Pakistan are still far off as the two countries concentrate on confidence-building measures, Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes was quoted as saying yesterday.

"When we reach the time for talks (they) will be held, but it (the time) is not very close," Fernandes told a Coast Guard ceremony in the southern city of Madras, as quoted by the Press Trust of India.

The news agency said Fernandes stressed India was concentrating on confidence-building measures with Pakistan.

He said Pakistan has taken some action against Islamic rebels fighting Indian rule in Kashmir, a condition long put forward by India.

"Pakistan has taken some decisions and asked some terrorist leaders and groups not to venture into certain areas. To an extent it should be welcomed," Fernandes said.

Pakistan has banned a prominent Islamic extremist, Masood Azhar, from entering its zone of Kashmir. On Wednesday, Pakistani police said they had charged two

members of the largest Kashmir rebel group, Hizbul Mujahedin, for carrying guns.

However, Pakistan has denied a series of Indian media reports that it has banned Hizbul Mujahedin.

Meanwhile, PTI from Islamabad adds: Pakistan has said that it would take counter measures if India acquired sophisticated weapons, including airborne radar systems, and proposed a six-point structured dialogue between the two countries to address the security and political issues.

As the US confirmed that it has endorsed the sale of Israeli airborne radars to India, Pakistan foreign secretary Riaz A Khokar in his address to the UN Conference on Disarmament in Vienna on Thursday said the transfer of such weapons system would upset conventional military balance in South Asia.

Pakistan would view this with "utmost seriousness" and would be obliged to take counter measures, official media here on Friday quoted Khokar as saying.

"Nuclear realities in our region impose certain obligations and responsibilities on our two coun-

tries. It is, therefore, important for both India and Pakistan to engage in serious discussions for nuclear and strategic stability in our region," the foreign secretary said.

Suggesting a "new architecture of security" in South Asia, he proposed a six-point agenda for a structured dialogue on security issues in the region that included "fores-wearance" of use or the threat of use of force in settling disputes and respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states of the region.

The other points Khokar suggested include a permanent mechanism for bilateral dialogue and consultations for dispute settlement, initiation of result-oriented talks for devising mutually acceptable confidence building measures in the nuclear field, stabilisation of conventional forces at levels consonant with the legitimate security needs of all states of the region and renewed commitment to jointly combat poverty, hunger, illiteracy and disease.

Observing that the fresh Indo-Pak peace initiatives brought an air of anticipation in the region, he

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No headway in probe into 3 murders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detectives have made little headway in the investigations into the three sensational murders taking place over the last ten days.

The cases in connection with the murders were filed with the police stations concerned, but were later shifted to the Detective Branch of police (DB).

The alleged mastermind behind the killing of two DB officials at a city hotel on May 14 is still at large.

Five persons were arrested in this connection but police are yet to arrest the gang leader, Jishan Ahmed Shikder alias Jishan. The investigators have said they are working hard to arrest him.

The failure to arrest the killers has already created a sense of insecurity among the DB men. Professional criminals can kill us and still escape arrest," a DB officer said yesterday.

On May 18, Constable Jahid Noor of the Kotwali Police Station was gunned down in Sutrapur area.

Seven members of a gang have been arrested in this connection and they are now on a three-day remand. But the alleged gang leader, Minto, is yet to be nabbed.

The DB has also failed to make any progress in the investigation into the murder of Sultana Khan Panni, wife of former deputy speaker Humayun Khan Panni, at her Dhanmondi residence on May 19.

Dhanmondi police arrested four persons including three domestic helps in this connection. The case was later shifted to the DB.

The detectives are interrogating Alauddin Munshi, Mohammad Mizan, Mohammad Rony and his wife Ruby to resolve the mystery behind the crime.



PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Two boys frisk in the contaminated water of a fountain well in front of the Sadharan Bima Bhavan in Motijheel yesterday. The fountain fell into ruin because of neglect by the authorities.

Businessman shot dead by outlaws in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A businessman was shot dead by outlawed partymen at village Natoria in Kumarkhali upazila on Thursday night.

The victim was identified as Abul Kalam Azad, 32, son of Harunur Rashid of the village.

Police said an armed gang belonging to outlawed New Biplobi Communist Party (NBPC) picked up Azad at gunpoint from his house at about 7:30pm, took him to Natoria Bazar and shot him point blank.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Kushtia General Hospital for autopsy.

Victim's father Harunur Rashid filed a case with Kumarkhali police station accusing 12 people.

Police arrested Golam Mustafa, a cadre of NBPC, yesterday in connection with the murder.

Uday mulling surrender to US forces?

AFP, Washington

Uday Hussein, the feared elder son of deposed Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, is considering surrendering to US forces but is hesitant because of the way US officials are handling negotiations, The Wall Street Journal reported yesterday.

The daily, citing a "third party" familiar with the talks, said Uday was hiding out in a suburb of Baghdad and, before turning himself in, wanted to know the specific accusations he faces, as well as the conditions under which he would be held and interrogated.

The negotiations were being conducted through intermediaries, according to the Journal.

US authorities do not appear particularly eager to strike a deal, because they believe Uday will be captured sooner or later, the source told the Journal.

The source added that a relative of Saddam's told him that the former Iraqi leader was also in Baghdad's suburbs but was in "questionable mental health."

Uday fears that Iraqis will kill him

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Transport strike in south-western region called off

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

South-western zone unit of the Road Transport Owners' and Workers' Association has called off 48-hour strike.

The decision was taken at midnight on Thursday following an assurance given by city Mayor

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Dhaka, Delhi keen to sink differences, boost economic cooperation

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India and Bangladesh appear to have agreed not to let their differences to come in the way of boosting economic cooperation.

This was the single most important message sent by the high-level political contacts Bangladesh's Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman had with the Indian leadership during his just-concluded four-day visit to New Delhi.

The message came as a change of heart after months of bitter acrimony between the two countries following India's allegation of the presence of 'Indian Al Qaeda elements in Bangladesh' and 'large-scale illegal immigration from that country' and Bangladesh's persistent denial.

But during Rahman's talks with the Indian leaders, including Prime

Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, Finance Minister Jaswant Singh, External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha, both sides were understood to have shown the willingness to move forward with trade and economic cooperation and not allow their ties to be stuck in differences.

The differences on illegal immigration did figure in Rahman's

NEWS ANALYSIS

This does not mean the contentious bilateral issues were swept under the carpet, said highly placed sources. Both sides, however, recognised that they can move ahead in areas where there is convergence of views.

The differences on illegal immigration did figure in Rahman's

talks with Indian leaders, but it was in a "passing reference", said the sources.

The keenness to turn around bilateral ties was reflected as much in Rahman's declaration that Bangladesh was willing to consider India's suggestion for a free trade agreement to help overcome trade deficit as was in New Delhi's decision to extend the validity of a credit line of Rs200 crore.

The proposal for free trade accord is a key component of India's regional trade diplomacy to overcome hassles of negotiations for tariff and non-tariff concessions on products and the consequent bitterness that creep into bilateral ties from these, the sources said.

The two countries also agreed on some other measures to help

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Safe drinking water project hits snag DPHE fails to provide key staff to start operation

NAIMUL HAQ

A Tk 132 crore water supply and sanitation project for nine municipalities in the coastal region is yet to start operation more than two years after completion of over 90 per cent of its physical works.

The impasse arose due to the government's failure in providing required personnel for operation of the project, funded by the Danish International Development Assistance (Danida).

Chief adviser of the project, Peter Harsom, said, "We are in no man's land now and it posed such a big problem that the local government ministry had to send special request to the Prime Minister's

Office (PMO) to resolve the crisis."

The nine municipalities are Noakhali, Feni and Patuakhali, Raipur and Ramganj in Laxmipur; Galachipa and Kalapara in Patuakhali; and Pathorghata in Barguna.

Construction of overhead tanks and pipeline networks to supply safe drinking water under the project and drainage system was almost completed in December 2001. The rest of the physical works was supposed to start once the key personnel take over their responsibilities and float tender afresh.

A Danida-Bangladesh review team recently said contracts for Dniada funds for institutional

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PHOTO: STAR

An overhead water tank built in Noakhali Pourashava in 2001 under a DPHE-Danida project is yet to start operation.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
May 24		6-38 pm
May 25	5-12 am	
Prayer Timings		
May 24		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-15	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-44	6-48
Esha	8-15	8-45
Source: Islamic Foundation		