

PM assures gas supply to Bogra town this year

UNB Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia during an extensive tour of her Bogra constituency yesterday assured people of her government's continued efforts for a balanced development in all parts of the country. During a daylong drive through the villages of Shekerkhola, Leharipara, Sakharria, Rajapur, Sagram and Madla unions of Sadar upazila, she inquired the well-being of farmers working in the fields along the dusty roads. She made brief stopovers at places and asked the farmers whether they were getting due price for their harvest. The farmers said they were getting good prices and that the vegetable yield this season had been bountiful. The prime minister also asked women standing on the roadside whether they were sending their children to school. She assured the people that natural gas supply up to Bogra town would be provided within this year.

In course of the mass contact, people at Panchbaria, Noadi and Khamarkandi villages demanded new roads, bridges and rural electrification while at Puthigari they demanded launching of canal re-excavation programme following in the footsteps of President Ziaur Rahman. Earlier upon her arrival in Bogra in the morning, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia laid the foundation stone of a four-story extension building of the district judge's court, to be completed by October 2004 at a cost of Tk 2.85 crore. Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed, State Minister for Religious Affairs Barrister Shahjahan Omar, Whip Rezaul Bari Dina, Mayor of Rajshahi City Corporation Mizanur Rahman Minu, local MPs, Prime Minister's political secretaries Haris Chowdhury and Mosaddek Ali accompanied the PM during her tour of Bogra.

Acid attack on housewife, 2 children in Muradnagar

UNB, Comilla

A housewife along with her two children sustained severe burn injuries when her husband and his two other wives threw acid on them at Rahimpur village in Muradnagar upazila on Monday night. Police said Korban Ali along with his first and second wives Renu Begum and Hasna Begum threw acid on his third wife Anwara Begum, 30, and her two children Mohsin, 9, and Swapna, 8, when they were sleeping in the house. The victims were first admitted to the upazila health complex and then shifted to Comilla Medical College Hospital. Korban married Anwara, a member of Kamalla Union Parishad, six years ago. He verbally divorced Anwara several days back when she refused to pay him dowry. Then Anwara informed the local UP chairman about the matter seeking arbitration. A case was filed with Muradnagar thana against Korban Ali, Renu Begum and Hasna Begum who went into hiding after the incident.



Distinguished persons attend the opening of the National Policy Review Forum 2003 organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue, The Daily Star and Prothom Alo at a city hotel. (Story on front page)

PHOTO: STAR

Garos and Kochs protest

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The decision to set up the park in the forest is a violation of the constitution, UN Charter of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and ILO Convention on Indigenous/Indigenous Population, indigenous leaders observed. Those who spoke included Sanjeeb Drong, Ajoy Amri and Benedict Mansha. Artist Mamunur Rashid and political leader Pankaj Bhattacharya also joined the public meeting. "We have been living here for generations but suddenly they (authorities) are erecting walls to control our movement. I do not know why they are doing this," said an elderly man from Koch tribe. Rakein, a 95-year-old Garo said, "My feeling is that the government does not want us to stay in the forest any more. It is better to die here than leaving the forest." Meanwhile, hundreds of Garo and Koch families have already shifted to other areas over the years as the edge of the forest has been stripped of thousands of trees. The denuded land and traces of mud-houses testify to the fact, some indigenous people said. It had been found that trees were felled and hundreds of acres of forestland cleared for banana and rubber plantation. But the initiative was not that successful. Assistant Conservator of Forest Zahurul Haq said the boundary wall would not harm the existence of the indigenous people in Madhupur. "The boundary wall is intended to protect bio-diversity of the forest and to stop pilferage of forest timbers to a great extent. We have

evidences that many of the inhabitants have been engaged in timber theft. The area we are demarcating is rich in costly timber. In the absence of any protection, these timbers are vanishing every year," he said. The final statement paper was a continuation of the effort the G-8 leaders launched on Sunday when the summit began to put the bitter divisions over Iraq behind them and show the world they are prepared to work together not only on reconstructing Iraq but a host of other problems. The leaders sought to reassure worried financial markets that they were ready to work cooperatively to give a boost to the sluggish global economy. The statement talked about the need for countries to pursue structural reforms and improved productivity to boost growth. "Our economies face many challenges. However, major downside risks have receded and the conditions for a recovery are in place," the final statement declared. "We are confident in the growth potential of our economies."

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Green Road near Panthapath crossing was cut accidentally during a road repair, Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTB) officials said. Divisional Engineer of the exchange Mir Kasir Uddin Iqbal told The Daily Star that the primary cable department of the BTB could not start the restoration work as it is yet to obtain the permission for road digging from the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC). An application has been submitted with the department concerned of the DCC in this regard, he said. "We will start restoration work as soon as the permission is available and hope to restore the lines within the shortest possible time," Iqbal added. "It is too bad that telephones are dead for over a week," said one angry subscriber. The BTB is paying little attention to its subscribers, he complained. Some subscribers said they had contacted the telephone complaint office of the area but failed to get cooperation from the officials in restoring their telephone connections. Even Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is annoyed with the dilly-dallying of BTB officials. She directed the BTB officials concerned last week to restore the telephone connections as soon as possible.

Telecom glitch Developer

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Movement of traffic came to a standstill for nearly two hours at the busy city intersection. Transport workers, traders and local people put up barricades on the road, soon after the news of the abduction of Mohammad Alamgir, 40, president of Jubo Dal ward- 4 in Chandgaon thana, reached them. They withdrew the barricades at around 2.00pm after he was released. Witnesses said 14 to 15 armed men, riding a microbus and a motor-bike, stormed into Alamgir's Anika restaurant cum phone-fax shop at around 11.30am, fired two blank shots, picked up the victim and left the place. Sources said Jasim, one of the leaders of the 'Five Star Group,' had been demanding of Alamgir Tk 5 lakh since last month. However, Deputy Commissioner (north) of the CMP Meah Luffar Rahman Chowdhury gave a different version of the incident. "Alamgir was not the target," he said. "The kidnappers might have been looking for another businessman. They might also have given him (Alamgir) a warning by their action yesterday," he said.

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spot and recovered the bodies. The bus was still in the pond and rescue operation going on till the filling of this report. The critically injured 12 were rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) while others are receiving treatment at the Pulpur Upazila Health Complex and other local clinics. The driver fled the scene immediately after the incident. The deceased were identified as Shefali, 40, wife of Abdul of Abdul Halim Khan, Hemi, 3, daughter of Abdul Halim Khan, Jhumon Karmaker, 30, wife of Shyamol Karmakar, Parul Karmakar, 40, daughter of Haripad Karmakar, Pipasha Karmakar, 18, daughter of late Parimal Karmakar, Sarola Karmakar, 70, wife of late Mohananda Karmakar, Bachhu Miah, 35, son of Joban Ali, Newaz Ali Fakir, son of Kenu Fakir, Abdur Rashid, 45, son of Hazi Mohammed Ali, Azimuddin, 38, and Nazrul Islam, 38. Bodies will be handed over to their relatives later this afternoon, Pulpur upazila administration sources said. Those undergoing treatment at the MMCH are Billal Hossain, 27, Nur Islam, 30, Parvez, 19, Anwar, 18, Helal, 22, Ali Hossain, 27, Billal, 28, Nelufa, 17, Rabeya, 35, Fatema, 40, Momena, 45, and an unidentified young man aged about 30.

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Saddam is moving around inside Iraq and he's got a lot of support," another US government official said. He added: "A lot of what is being reported in the press as 'looting' is in fact sabotage by Baath party stay-behind groups." The underground Baath resistance is made up of former party officials who are funded with money looted from the Iraqi treasury, this source said. "There is credible evidence that Saddam is still alive and being sheltered," said former CIA chief Vince Cannistraro. A CIA spokesman did not respond to requests for comment. Angelo Codevilla, former senior member of the Senate intelligence committee and now a Middle East expert at Boston University, said that the millions in \$100 bills looted just before the start of the war "indicated that Saddam had long planned to simply go underground. It was not a hasty decision." Administration officials said US forces in Iraq are conducting searches for Saddam in greater Baghdad and in "a small town" just north of the city. According to US intelligence officials, Saddam and his entourage simply move in with a private family. Members of the family, including children, are taken as hostages so that no other family member will be tempted to inform on Saddam's whereabouts.

Saifur: Policy Forum

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more than 200 experts, business leaders and civil society representatives, took part in the regional consultations in Chittagong, Sylhet, Khulna, Mymensingh, Barisal, Narayanganj, Rajshahi and Dhaka. Politicians, lawmakers, chamber leaders and bureaucrats attended the event, chaired by CPD Chairman Professor Rehman Sobhan. Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid, Editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam, Editor of the Prothom Alo Motiur Rahman and CPD Executive Director Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya addressed the session. As special guest, the deputy leader of the opposition said democracy lies only with the constitution, not in practice. Countrymen are frustrated by the roles of both ruling and opposition parties, he said. "Opposition members of parliament have often been deprived of the floor. They have been left out of the development work in their constituencies," said Hamid. Hamid said he could not serve the country better because of the present political culture. Without combined efforts of ruling and opposition parties, people cannot tap into the opportunities yielded by freedom, he said. Mahfuz Anam said the people are not happy with development and political outcome over the last 30 years, as the political culture, parliamentary practice and the relations between the ruling and opposition parties remained the same. "Success in development has been far from adequate."

way short of expectations, and Bangladesh will fail to catch up with the global pace unless it produces high-standard human resources. Motiur Rahman said that it is difficult to do any good to common people without involving them. Professor Rehman Sobhan urged the finance minister to form a special parliamentary committee on the upcoming budget, which will be headed by an opposition lawmaker. The government should form such a committee as a goodwill gesture, he said. Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya said the efforts of the civil society in achieving economic objectives would hit snags without a strong political will.

One shot dead by BSF in Chuadanga

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Border Security Force of India shot one Bangladeshi dead at Shingnagar, Chuadanga in the early morning yesterday. The victim was identified as Rafiq, son of Abu Taleb. Confirming the news, the commanding officer of 18th battalion of Bangladesh Rifles said the BSF men did not yet hand over the body yet despite repeated request. Tension is running high at the border zone with both forces beefing up patrol.

Abducted leader

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dacoit was beaten to death at Satkania in the district here in the early hours of yesterday. Some eight robbers looted valuables including cash and gold ornaments from two houses of Omar Ali and Hazi Nazu Mia at Daxmin Kanchna under Satkania at around 2:00am, police said. Local people managed to get hold of one of the robbers, identified as Omar Faruk, 30, and beat him up. Police rescued the robber in critical condition and rushed him to the local health complex where the on-duty doctors declared him dead at around 6:00am.

Donors

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said the law and order has to be improved for any budget to have its full impact. He said pervasive extortion has put businesses in a difficult situation and if the government failed to provide safety to the people, there is no reason why they should pay tax. Muzaffar Ahmed, professor of the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) at Dhaka University, proposed review of the salary structure of the government staff to reduce corruption and improve efficiency. Professor Abu Ahmed of Dhaka University said tax holiday should be eliminated because of its misuse.

Bank robbery

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from a trader who went to the bank to deposit the money and Tk 70,000 from Monirul Islam, a customer, waiting at the counter. The robbers pinned other customers down and scared them silent. "The robbers snapped telephone lines and threatened me with death before they confined me to the bathroom," said Manager Kazi Sirajul Islam. "One of them hit me in the neck with his rifle, when I tried to stand up to see what was going on," said Senior Officer Mohammad Shahjahan. "I sneaked into the storeroom at the back of the bank and asked vendors outside to call police," said Joyнал Abedin, a cash assistant. Police went to the bank 15 minutes after the robbers got off with the loot. Law enforcers believe the robbers are local residents and the bank officials have links with them. Police picked up 10 people from the area. But the bankers could not identify any of them. Police were also questioning three bank officials for information. "I had asked the bank authorities to tighten security with guards, but they were not serious enough," said Officer-in-Charge of Khlgaon Police Station Mohammad Entezar. "The gang did not touch the vault where Tk 22 lakh was kept," he said. Mohammad Ashraf Huda, commissioner of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, visited the spot and ordered the police station to take necessary action. Officials of different agencies, including the Detective Branch of Police and the Criminal Investigation Department, also went to the spot.

Ctg port

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government decision to amend the ordinance. He said, "The day the government will change the ordinance will be marked as a black day for the nation." The shipping business will then go under full control of a few foreign companies, he added. Sayeed pointed out that in the past, foreign feeder vessel operators had been charging higher freight and imposing congestion and bunker surcharge on Bangladesh-bound cargo on flimsy grounds. The association has been demanding full implementation of the ordinance for, what it said, growth of local shipping business. He blamed the shipping ministry for its 'failure' to implement the ordinance. In November 2001, the government had granted a general waiver to all foreign vessel operators, triggering a legal battle between the local and foreign vessel operators. The HRC, a member of the ship owners' association, had filed a case with the High Court against the general waiver and got a verdict in its favour. But its victory in legal battle would bear no significance as the government is changing the ordinance, sources pointed out.

Hazari's men

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the Feni district unit of the Awami League on Saturday last. Central party leaders including General Secretary Abdul Jalil and Organising Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury had to return to Dhaka abandoning the meeting. Earlier, the decision to rid the party of leaders having a 'godfather' image was taken at a meeting of the AL secretariat on March 28. That meeting discussed in detail how the 'godfather' image of people like Joyнал Hazari of Feni, Shamim Osman of Narayanganj, Abu Taher of Laxmipur and Abul Hasnat Abdullah of Barisal had contributed to the party's poor showing in the October 2001 polls. Within four days of that meeting the party high command removed Joyнал Hazari from the post of general secretary of Feni district AL. Hazari has reportedly been out of the country for the last 20 months.

Shazneen case

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those documents. So they prayed for adjournment of the hearing. Meanwhile, Sub-inspector Mohammad Shamsul Haq, the 15th prosecution witness in the case, appeared in the court to face cross-examination by the defence lawyers. Earlier, 14 prosecution witnesses including the victim's father Latifur Rahman were cross-examined. Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, the youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, Chairman of Transcom Ltd., was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998.

Acid victims

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at Shankharibazaar, had one of his employees and paramour do the job on the night of May 26. According to Asha, for past three years she and her husband Durganath Dutt have been running a makeshift hotel at their house at Shankharibazaar. Some of Gour's employees used to eat there and gossip about a variety of Gour's private matters. Gour had allegedly threatened Asha that if she continued serving his employees, he would throw acid on her. On May 26, in the absence of Durganath, Asha was beaten up and acid poured on her and Eka. Neighbours took the two to a local clinic. They were then shifted to Mitford Hospital later and released after five days. Asha filed a case with the Kotwali Police Station on May 27. "Gour's people are now threatening us to withdraw the case," Asha told the press conference. Gour himself has fled to India, she alleged. On May 31, following the threat, she filed a general diary with the Kotwali Police Station.

Ripon murder case Six get life imprisonment

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal  
A court here yesterday sentenced six people to life imprisonment in the sensational Ripon murder case. Additional District Judge SM Kuddus Zaman also fined the convicts Tk 5,000 each in default of which they are to serve six more months of rigorous imprisonment. The six convicts are Muzahar Howladar, Shahjahan Howladar, Panna Howladar, Shoraf Talukdar, Badal Talukdar and Munsef Talukdar. Panna Howladar and Shoraf Talukdar have been absconding since the murder on July 7, 1997. According to the prosecution, Abdur Rof alias Ripon of village Laksmankathi under Gouranadi Upazila was called out from his house and then murdered by the assailants. His body was later recovered from a canal in the neighbouring Uzirpur upazila. Victim's mother Farida Begum filed a case against 12 people. After examining 19 witnesses, the court found six of the accused guilty and acquitted six others.

Bank robbery

A detective takes fingerprints at the Pubali Bank branch at Rampura Bazaar after robbers looted Tk 6.5 lakh from it yesterday. (Story on page 1)

Bush gets Arab support

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from the meeting. In a conciliatory gesture to his Arab hosts Bush said before the talks that Israel had to deal with Jewish settlements. "Israel has got responsibilities. Israel must deal with the settlements. Israel must make sure there is a continuous territory that the Palestinians can call home," he said. Freezing settlement is central to the road map drafted by the United States, United Nations, European Union and Russia. US hopes for progress have been buoyed by word Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is to announce plans to uproot some rogue Jewish settler outpost, though it is unclear how many. The international community considers the settlements illegal, although Israel disputes this. "We see the potential for the birth of a new and Palestinian state, we see the potential for a broader peace among the peoples of this region," Bush said after the talks. "Achieving these goals will require courage and moral vision on every side from every leader. America is committed and I am committed to helping all the parties reach the hard and heroic decisions that will lead to peace." Mubarak said Arab states welcomed the road map and added: "We support the Palestinian Authority's insistence on meeting its responsibilities for ending violence." Bush, meeting Abbas for the first time, wants support for the road map, the farthest-reaching peace plan of Bush's 2-1/2 years in office. It outlines reciprocal steps by Palestinians and Israelis leading to a Palestinian state by 2005. The high-level talks have raised hopes for ending 32 months of Israeli-Palestinian violence, but doubts remain over each side's commitment to implementing the plan. In a goodwill gesture, Israel began freeing dozens of Palestinian prisoners yesterday. But in a sign of the obstacles ahead, Israeli troops shot dead a Palestinian security man in the Gaza Strip and wounded stone-throwers in the West Bank. Bush, who arrived in Egypt from the Group of Eight (G8) summit in France, moves on today to hold a landmark summit with Sharon and Abbas in the Jordanian port city of Aqaba. The US president had refused to meet veteran Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, who still wields influence among Palestinians who see him as the father of their struggle. Abbas took office as the Palestinians' first prime minister in late April. He has been an outspoken opponent of the Palestinians' use of violence. Bush comes to the peace process after waging a war against Iraq that inflamed anti-American pas-



PHOTO: STAR

A detective takes fingerprints at the Pubali Bank branch at Rampura Bazaar after robbers looted Tk 6.5 lakh from it yesterday. (Story on page 1)

Agassi sent crashing

AFP, Paris  
Andre Agassi's bid to land a second French Open crown ended in failure on Tuesday when Argentine seventh seed Guillermo Coria beat the 33-year-old American 4-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 to reach the men's semi-finals.

House robbed

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threatened the family not to call police, otherwise they would come back. The night guard of the area was not around during the robbery, family members alleged. Moniruzzaman, a professor of Keraniganj Sohrawardy College, lives on the first floor of the building and rents the ground floor. The on-duty officer at the Demra Police Station last night said they did not receive any complaint regarding the robbery.

Convict dies in police custody: Torture alleged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna  
A convicted criminal died in police custody yesterday after he was arrested from Rupsha Strand Road here on Monday. Family of the victim Mujibar Rahman alias Adarhia, 40, alleged that he was beaten to death in police custody at Khulna thana and later taken to the Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH). Sources said Mujibar was severely tortured during interrogation by sub-inspectors Abdur Rashid and Rokunuddin of DB. Officer-in-charge of Khulna thana however claimed that Mujibar died at the hospital due to injuries he received when he was attacked by an angry mob before his arrest on Monday noon. Both sub-inspectors also denied the allegation of torture against them. Mujibar Rahman Adarhia was wanted in seven including three murder cases. He had also been sentenced to four years of rigorous imprisonment in a rioting case under the Speedy Trial Act. Police said he masterminded the bomb attack on a police patrol van at the local PTI crossing on January 10 that left three constables severely injured.