

Blast kills 3 German peacekeepers, three others in Kabul

AFP, Kabul

Six people including three German soldiers were killed and 11 injured in the Afghan capital yesterday when a powerful explosion hit a bus carrying troops from an international peacekeeping force, officials said.

"Six people were killed and 11 wounded in the explosion," deputy commander of Kabul garrison Afzal Aman said, amending an earlier toll of 16 injured.

Aman, who was at the scene, said all the dead were members of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) on their way to Kabul's airport to depart after completing their tour of duty in Afghanistan.

He said it appeared to have been a suicide bombing, citing witnesses who saw a taxi alongside the bus just before the explosion Saturday morning.

"There is a strong possibility of a

suicide car bombing," he said, adding that it was the work of "the enemies of Afghanistan."

In Potsdam, a spokesman for the German ISAF contingent said three German soldiers had been killed in the blast.

The ISAF bus was completely destroyed in the blast which took place on the road to the principal eastern city of Jalalabad, near a base housing German ISAF troops, around five kilometres (three miles) east of the city centre.

Witnesses said bodies were left strewn by the blast, which threw the bus off the road.

British ISAF contingent spokeswoman Major Sarah Wood in Kabul said it was too early to give precise figures or say how many civilians or military had been caught in the explosion.

"We don't know precise numbers yet," she said. "It's difficult to say what caused the explosion at this

point.

"Our first priority is dealing with the injured and then we can start to look into the cause of the explosion."

The Jalalabad road is the main artery linking Kabul and the Pakistani border and is regularly patrolled by ISAF troops.

British, Dutch, French and German ISAF troops blocked off the road to traffic shortly after the blast as dozens of Afghan police and emergency vehicles arrived. A German ISAF helicopter was also at the scene.

"British ISAF troops are on the ground to try and see what happened," Wood said.

Some 2,300 German troops serve with ISAF, which is currently under joint German-Dutch command.

Four of a family get lifeterm for murder in Munshiganj

BSS, Munshiganj

A court here yesterday sentenced four members of a family to life term imprisonment for killing a woman.

The court fined Tk 5000 each, in default, they have to suffer three more months in jail.

The convicts are Mahfuz Mia, Ahaj Mia, Alauddin Mia alias Alai and Sanwara Begum, wife of Mahfuz Mia of Ajlia village under Gazaria upazila of Munshiganj district.

Additional District and Sessions Judge Mohammad Nababur Rahman gave the verdict.

According to the prosecution, Jahangir, 10, youngest son of Dulal Mia, pelted stones at a mango tree of Mahfuz Mia of the same village on April 30, 2000. Mahfuz beat Jahangir for the act. As Dulal's wife Afia protested it, the convicts beat her mercilessly.

Afia succumbed to her injuries at Sadar hospital on May 17, 2000. Her husband Dulal Mia filed a case with the Gazaria police station.

Advocate Nazrul Islam Badal defended the convicts while APP advocate Abdul Mannan appeared for the state.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia addresses the third convocation at Bangladesh Open University yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Quality education must for democracy: PM

UNB, Gazipur

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said her government attaches great importance to improving the standard of education in order to make independence and democracy meaningful.

"There should be fun in learning. It should be spontaneous and able to inspire independent thoughts and consciousness," she said while addressing the 3rd Convocation 2003 of Bangladesh Open University (BOU) here yesterday.

The prime minister and chancellor of the Open University conferred degrees and certificates to nearly 650 students who included 16 MBAs, 391 Bachelors in Education, 56 Bachelors in English Language Teaching and 174 Bachelors in Agricultural Education.

Minister for Education Dr Osman Farooq, State Minister Ehsanul Huq Milon and Vice Chancellor Prof M

Ershadul Bari also addressed the function.

Assistant Director General for Communication and Information of UNESCO and former VC of Indira Gandhi Open University Prof Abdul Waheed Khan delivered the Convocation speech.

Khaleda Zia, whose first government had set up the Open University in October 1992, said this seat of learning was designed to turn the backward population into human resource and change the lot of the neglected section of the society, particularly women.

She lauded the role of the Open University in expanding education for women and hoped that the institution would play a more powerful role in this regard in the days ahead.

The prime minister said she was happy that the university was going to launch graduation programme in nursing which she said would help

remove the crisis of trained nurses and also create a scope for sending them abroad for employment.

She also expressed her satisfaction at the university's plan to provide higher secondary certificates in science and commerce from next July.

Khaleda Zia called upon the university authorities to carry out a survey to see how its programmes have benefited its students in real life.

The Open University, through its six schools and departments, offers 21 formal and 19 informal academic programmes.

The BOU has 12 regional centres, 80 local and 863 tutorial centres for conduction four courses of Masters, six of Bachelors, eight of certificates and three of diplomas.

Rain brings more woes for shanty fire victims

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid incessant rain, more than 1,000 people, rendered shelterless by the devastating fire at a slum at Babupura, Nilkhet on Friday, spent the night under open sky yesterday.

"My children and I stayed on the debris on Friday and will have to sleep on the muddy, soggy ground tonight," said Begum yesterday afternoon.

The poor fire victims were found preparing makeshift shelters with polythene and placing tins on the ground to prepare their bed for the night.

Neither government officials nor NGO representatives have visited the place, the victims said.

The victims were provided with food by the Khadem (caretaker) of Majibhandari Darga Sharif at Nilkhet yesterday noon.

When asked many responded that they would have Muri and Chira (puffed and flattened rice) at night.

Local youths also distributed some old cloths.

A number of victims also alleged that vested quarters were out to grab the land on which the shanties were erected. They appealed to the government to take measures to resist the move.

Aleya Begum, wife of a cancer patient Jamir Ali, said she was the bread earner of her four-member household. The expenses for her husband's treatment came from the rent of 12 shanties, which she owned in the slum.

5 killed in Bogra road mishap

UNB, Bogra

Four people were killed and four others injured in a road accident on the Dhaka-Bogra Highway in Sherpur upazila yesterday.

The dead were identified as Promad, 40, of Aminpur village, Jamal, 22, and Hossain Ali, 55, of Chandipur village, and Saiful Islam, 18, of Chhanka in the upazila.

Witnesses said the mishap occurred near Chhanka Bazaar at noon when a Kurigram-bound coach from Dhaka collided with a truck, leaving the four killed and four others injured.

Babri Mosque

FROM PAGE 12 "I think in the court also till date no witness has said that they did anything at the asking of Uma Bharati or Advani or Joshi," he said.

One of the accused RN Das was the priest of the sanctum-sanctorum of the temple inside the then Babri Masjid where offerings and prayers continued for years following opening of the locks on court order.

The five accused expressed resentment at "being discriminated against those enjoying power" and on whose instigation they had demolished the disputed structure on December six, 1992.

Hill cutting

FROM PAGE 12 legally and illegally for construction of new buildings and the setting up of brick kilns.

More than 200 hills have been levelled over the past two decades, according to official estimates.

Mosharraf Hossain, the government's chief environment officer for Chittagong, said they were doing everything possible to stop illegal hill cutting.

"Whenever we are tipped off about illegal hill cutting we take immediate action," he said.



PHOTO: STAR

Awami League top leaders yesterday place a wreath at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Bangabandhu Museum at Dhanmondi on the occasion of historic June 7.

Power deal

FROM PAGE 12 certain bidder.

Previous tender bids brought offers ranging from \$31 million dollars by the Malaysian company, TNB, to \$45.5 million by a Korean company, LG Engineering.

As the PDB move was slowed down by business interest groups with political backing, the Malaysian company withdrew from the bid.

Later, the caretaker government suspended the project along with four other power projects.

Robbers

FROM PAGE 12 immediately fled the spot in their car.

Severely injured Shajahan was first rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), but was shifted to the Chest Diseases Hospital as his condition deteriorated.

Confirming the incident, Joydevpur police said no case was filed with them and none was arrested till writing of this report at 6:30pm last evening.

Power tariff

FROM PAGE 1 channel last night that the tariff 'adjustment' was intended to restore parity between rural and urban electricity consumers.

He said rural consumers under the REB pay much higher tariff than the urban consumers do and this should be addressed.

However, sources at the PDB said such tariff adjustment would not benefit the power board, as the authorities are yet to decide on the PDB's bulk power selling tariff for the REB.

JS bodies

FROM PAGE 12 dropped from the two committees -- the Public Accounts Committee and the Public Establishments Committee -- during the budget session.

Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid told The Daily Star that the AL would field its lawmakers for the standing committees once all the 50 bodies are formed.

He also criticised the government for not giving any post of chairman to the opposition and proposed amendment to the rules of procedure so that the opposition gets the posts of chairmen and members in the standing committees according to their strength in the House.

Small trader shot dead in Motijheel

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminals gunned down a small trader in the bustling Motijheel area yesterday afternoon.

Aftab Hossain, 25, an aluminum trader, came under attack while he was taking tea at a wayside stall near the Dhaka Stock Exchange building at around 5:15pm.

A friend of the victim alleged that Mona, a local criminal, and three others killed Aftab.

With three bullets in his abdomen and knee, Aftab was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he was declared dead at about 6:30pm.

Shazneen case

FROM PAGE 12

During the cross-examination, Shamsul Haq said he had interrogated Latifur Rahman (Shazneen's father) and domestic help Hawa Bibi on April 24, 1998.

"I also tried to interrogate the victim's mother, sisters and brothers-in-law the same day but failed as they were in a state of shock. I collected a list of 15 invitees to the party at the house (of Latifur Rahman) but I could not interrogate them at that time," the witness said.

"On April 25, 1998, I arrested five persons from the house -- Humayun, Hemayet, Shafiq, Yeasin and Faruk. The following day, we took them on a seven-day remand. Later, we also took carpenter Shaniram, his brother Dayal and 10 others in custody and released them after interrogation," he told the court.

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

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.

Special public prosecutors (PPs) ABM Sharfuddin Khan Mukul, Mahbub Ahmed and Arfan Uddin Khan represented the state. Advocates Mosharraf Hossain Kajal and Mizanur Rahman defended the accused.

Hasina blames BNP for Natore MP killing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina said the former Awami League (AL) lawmaker Montaz Hossain was killed by armed cadres of the ruling party under the directions of a 'minister'.

She, however, did not disclose the name of the minister.

Expressing her shock, Hasina yesterday said the murder was part of an "ethnic cleansing drive" planned by the alliance government to eliminate AL.

She demanded arrest and exemplary punishment of the killers of Montaz Hossain, vice president of Natore district unit AL.

Acting AL President Zillur Rahman and General Secretary Abdul Jalil also demanded punishment of the culprits.

Meanwhile, Abdul Jalil, AL presidium member Tofail Ahmed, and Organising Secretary Sabur Hossain Chowdhury went to Natore yesterday to pay respects to the slain AL leader.

SI Kabir murder

Accused Ainul confesses his involvement

BSS, Dhaka

A metropolitan magistrate's court yesterday recorded confessional statements of Sayed Ainul Haque, an accused in sub-inspector (SI) Mohammad Humayun Kabir murder case.

Police produced Ainul before metropolitan magistrate Kamrun Nahar in the afternoon.

The magistrate recorded his statements under Section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).

Ainul confessed his involvement in the killing along with some listed criminals. But the investigation officer of the murder case declined to disclose the names of the criminals for the sake of investigation.

The court also recorded statements of Sheikh Piar Ali, a prosecution witness of the murder case.

Police sub-inspector Humayun Kabir was killed in a gunfight with a gang of criminals in the city's Agargaon area at about 11 pm on June 3.

Sony murder

FROM PAGE 1 anniversary of Sony, her parents arranged a 'kangalee Bhoj' (feeding poor people) yesterday morning at a mosque near their Uttara residence.

A 'miad' will be held at the same venue after Asr prayers today.

Meanwhile, the BUET Students Against Violence will form a 'human chain' today in front of the Sony Memorial on the campus to press their demands for immediate arrest of the absconding accused and naming of the BUET female hall after Sony. Her parents will also join it.

The 15 accused in the case are: Mokammel Hayat Khan Muki, Mushiquddin Tagar, Nurul Islam Sagar alias Tapa Nuru, Mokul Hossain Mukul, Sirajul Islam alias Wasim, Zakir Hossain Patwari alias Munna, SM Masum Billah, Sheikh Solaiman alias Babul, Dulal, Rafiq alias Rafiq Chacha, Mohammad Masum, Sujon, Ayub, Yar Mohammad and Mohiuddin.

Of them, five including Tagar are in jail custody and four are on bail. On January 26 this year, the tribunal-1 framed charges against them and trial began on January 30. Of the 47 prosecution witnesses, 20 have so far given their statements in the tribunal.

Projonmer Chetona, a social organisation, yesterday alleged that the accused at large were threatening the witnesses, a press release said.

Argument in Bushra murder case begins today

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Argument in the sensational Bushra murder case begins today.

The prosecution will start argument seeking exemplary punishment to the accused. Judge Sarker Abdul Mansur Ahmad will hear the argument on behalf of the prosecution.

The case is now pending with the third special tribunal for prevention of women and children repression, Dhaka.

Seventeen out of 40 prosecution witnesses were cross-examined during the trial of the case that began on August 4 last year.

The court framed charges against six accused.

Rushdhania Bushra Islam alias Phool, 18, a college student and daughter of a retired police officer, was raped and murdered at their Hazipara residence in the city's

Rampura area on the night of July 1, 2000.

Later, victim's mother Laila Islam filed a murder case with Ramna thana on September 5, 2000 accusing MA Kader an Awami League leader, his wife Runu Kader and four others.

The investigation officer of the case submitted a charge sheet on December 29, 2000 against five people. He dropped the name of Runu Kader from the charge sheet.

Following a 'naraji', petition filed by Laila Islam on January 3, 2001. The court took the name of Runu Kader as an accused into cognizance on April 7, 2002.

Accused MA Kader, his sister-in-law Kaniz Fatema Hena, his brother-in-law Sheikh Shawkat Ahmed Ruhul and maid servant Sufia are now in the custody while Runu Kader and Sheikh Kabir Ahmed still at large.

SQ Chy's nomination

FROM PAGE 12 Star. Besides, the anomalies in import slabs will be over once the exempted items barring a few come under the duty net," he said.

But Bangladesh Textile Mills Association President MA Awai said the government should consider the economic and social benefits from the duty exemption. "The government should not impose duty on all duty-exempt items and should help avert any disastrous situation in the industrial arena," Awai said.

Around 600 items, especially capital machinery, raw materials and lifesaving drugs, are now imported on zero tariffs.

The items include textile spinning machine, weaving machine, power loom, flat knitting machine, cash register, ironing machine, carbon steel strip, fibreglass filter, synthetic fibre, polyester, and photovoltaic generator.

The list also includes nylon chip, plastic coil, raw hide, wood pulp, gypsum, hydrochloride, vessel, warship, bovine animal, parent stock, bovine semen, bulb, potato chip, rye, barley, oat, maize (corn), mineral water, vegetable juice, sulphur, natural graphite, mercury and metal compound. Vegetable seeds, fertiliser and pro-vitamin and vitamin B2 also enjoy zero tariffs.

The items to be brought under the new import duty net may be exempted from advance income tax (AIT) or infrastructure development surcharge (IDSC), said sources in the finance ministry.

Currently, all imported products, except a few, pay 3 per cent AIT and 3.5 per cent IDSC.

military dictator H M Ershad and was a cabinet member of the regime at the time when hundreds of democracy-loving people sacrificed their lives to topple it.

The nomination also ranks with senior BNP leaders who fear that his election to the post will give heart to religious extremists and anti-liberation forces within the party.

The BNP leaders fear that after installation in the high office Chowdhury may easily embarrass the country and the people by his characteristic reckless comments.

Job cuts

FROM PAGE 1 "We are not going to force anyone to resign," Saifur said.

The BSFC has 12,577 staff under nine industrial units and Tk 51.41 crore would be needed to cut 1,696 jobs. The step would however save the corporation Tk 17 crore annually in wages and other benefits.

The BSEC has five industrial units and employs 2,295 people. By cutting 248 staff at a cost of Tk 15.93 crore it would save Tk 2.88 crore annually.

The BCIC has 12,246 staff for its 10 industrial units. By slashing 3,270 jobs at a cost of Tk 40.29 crore, it would annually save Tk 40.29 crore.

Meanwhile, the commerce ministry sent a draft proposal on a new import and export policy to the cabinet committee. The policy suggests allowing commercial imports worth \$25,000 without opening letters of credit. It was however not approved yesterday.

Danger lurks

FROM PAGE 12

Dhaka Transport Coordination Board, Department of Environment, Deputy Commissioner Traffic (South) and Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh.

The documents did not, however, include any approved plan issued by the RAJUK.

"It took us two years to procure these documents from different offices. We did not breach any law," said Zahir.

Police officials said that the crossing is known for traffic jam and water logging. A traffic police official said that he could not discern how such a high-rise building could be allowed on such a busy intersection.

RAJUK sources said that the government plans to build a fly-over at the intersection. Funds for the project have already been procured from Kuwait.

The LGED has already written to the developer to stop construction work. It also noted that the construction of the complex will seriously hamper that of the fly-over at Mouchak intersection, sources said.

Local people said that the land on which the construction is going on belonged to a Hindu Temple.

New duty likely

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Ex-AL MP

FROM PAGE 1

local party activists on the pillion seat, and stabbed him with daggers at about 10:30pm.

The gang also had sawn-off rifles but did not use them.

On hearing the groans of the leader, locals ran to the scene and rushed him to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) where he bled to his death by 12:00pm.

Doctors said his body took three deep gashes one of which passed through his lungs.

Sekandor Hossain, 35, a cousin of the dead and office secretary of Lalpur upazila AL, tried to save his uncle from the goons and suffered serious stab injuries to the chest.

Another companion, Saidur Rahman, escaped from the scene unscathed. He is the president of Chang Dhupol union unit of the party.

Sekandor, who is undergoing treatment at RMCH, told newsmen that the attackers were masked.

He said when Mamtaz begged for his life, one of the thugs said: "Yes, you are the man. We are lying in wait for you."

On hearing the grisly murder, hundreds of people began to pour into Mamtaz's house at midnight and at 4:30pm when his body arrived, the entire village turned into a sea of crowd.

Mamtaz's wife Shefali Begum fainting seeing his husband's body.

The victim's relatives accused a state minister for the killing.

Advocate Abul Kalam Azad, the victim's brother and the organising secretary of the district AL, alleged that BNP's hit men killed his brother at the directives of their high command.