

## Masud's arrest to solve Rita murder mystery, police hopes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Investigators said motives for the killing of housewife Rita Begum at Lake Circus Kalabagh in Dhanmondi will be revealed once they nab one Masud who visited Rita's residence regularly.

Masud was a regular visitor to Rita's house and called her 'Rita Apa', police said. He could help find out the killer, police hoped.

He along with an unidentified young man and two young women took the victim's body to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) soon after the killing on Saturday. Keeping the body at the DMCH, all of them went into hiding.

Raiding different parts of the city yesterday, police failed to arrest Masud or the six women whose photographs were seized from Rita's residence.

Dr Kamrunnahar, the owner of Rita's rented flat and wife of director general of Press Institute of Bangladesh Rezawan Hossain Siddique, filed a case with Dhanmondi Police Station yesterday.

In the first information report (FIR), Kamrunnahar said people told her that Rita was shot dead and two young men and two women took away the body.

Meanwhile, Rita's brother Uzzal Kumar Chakraborty received the body from the DMCH morgue yesterday. She was buried at Azimpur graveyard.

Rita married a Muslim few years back and converted to Islam, police said.

Meanwhile, police failed to arrest anybody or recover looted valuables in the robbery incident that left one dead at Noorpur in South Dania till last night.

A young man was shot dead and three others of the family were injured as retreating robbers opened fire after looting cash and jewellery from the house early Saturday.

Abdul Wadud, the victim's father, filed a case with the Shyampur Police Station Saturday night.

Robbers numbering 10 to 12 looted 50 tolas of gold ornaments and Tk 30,000, Abdul Wadud said in the FIR. They shot indiscriminately as Zahirul Qaiyum Titu, the victim, held one of the robbers feeling with the booty. Titu was killed in the shooting and his brother Abdul Qaiyum suffered bullet wounds.

## 'JCD activists' beat

**FROM PAGE 12**  
The BCL girls were attacked when college Principal KM Aurangzeb was chairing a meeting of the Teachers' Council to discuss the situation arising out of a threatened strike on the campus by the city unit of BCL that has demanded an impartial inquiry into the portrait incident.

During a hurriedly called press conference yesterday noon, City BCL President Faruque Hasan Hitlu alleged that JCD activists, led by City JCD President Masud Parvez Babu, stormed into the campus yesterday and attacked the BCL girls without any provocation.

Khulna City unit of BCL has called an indefinite strike in Boyra Govt Girls' College demanding immediate arrest of the attackers including the City JCD President Masud Parvez Babu.

Refuting the allegation of his party's involvement in the portrait damage incident, Babu counter-

charged saying that some BCL activists destroyed the portraits of President Ziaur Rahman and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on August 18 at the teachers' common room.

Principal KM Aurangzeb said the two rival student groups have been at loggerheads over recruiting new entrants to the university and that yesterday's brawl was a sequel to that dispute.

The principal acknowledged that portraits of Bangabandhu and Hasina were indeed broken but said he didn't know the identity of the vandals.

Police Commissioner A B M Bazlur Rahman gave assurances of impartially looking into the matter of police's inaction during yesterday's incident.

Meanwhile, the Teachers' Council has banned all on-campus political activities until further notice.

## Crime trend belies

**FROM PAGE 1**  
A member of an extremist group were killed on Saturday in separate incidents in Pabna district.

On August 21, armed robbers looted houses and raped three women in Piljanga and Shyambagat villages under Fakirhat thana in Bagerhat district.

And on August 19, a young man splashed acid on a schoolgirl and three others of her family argued after failing to marry her cousin in Banti village under Arahazur upazila in Narayanganj district.

A mob lynched three alleged criminals and critically wounded five others in Chandanais upazila in Chittagong district on August 18.

A businessman died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) August 17, after he was shot by extortionists.

Operatives of an outlawed Islamist group looted three shotguns and 60 rounds of ammunition after a fierce firefight that left six policemen injured in Joypurhat August 14.

A student of Chittagong University was killed by stray

## Cries go unheard

**FROM PAGE 12**  
and daughter, also appeared at the DRU office.

Maksuda, Farid, Jhama and Fatema represent only four of the 402 families left devastated by the launch mishap at the Meghna, Dakatia and Jamuna confluence at Chandpur on July 8.

Although the government is to pay Tk 1 lakh in compensation to the victims' families as per existing rules, it has not yet done so for those of MV Nasrin.

None of them have received any financial help from the government.

The victims had come to the city with the Nirapad Noupath Bastabayan Jote (Coalition for Implementation of Safe Riverway - CISR), an alliance of non-government organisations working in 19 coastal upazila and campaigning for safe, accident-free riverways since its inception on August 1.

CISR has demanded compensation and rehabilitation for affected families, life insurance for launch passengers and recognising river capsizes as incidents of disaster.

The government is collecting Tk 1 from each passenger to form a Passenger Welfare Fund for assist-

ing families affected in launch mishaps.

Addressing the press conference, CISR member Aminur Rasul Babul demanded the formation of a board to monitor the Fund at the Sadarghat Launch Terminal.

CISR will soon submit a memorandum to the prime minister and minister for disaster management and relief, a member said.

## US envoy

**FROM PAGE 1**  
"We have not shifted from the government's stand on gas export," Saifur told reporters. "If additional gas reserves remain after meeting domestic demand, then what is wrong with export?" asked the minister.

The energy ministry is looking into the issue and the cabinet will take the final decision, he added.

"Bangladesh has good relations with the US. It helps us as an important member of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. We want to make the relations closer," the finance minister said.

The ambassador also proposed an assistance programme to train police, Saifur told the press.

## Another kidnap

**FROM PAGE 12**  
they have not heard of the incident, nor have they received any allegations as yet.

Meanwhile, police could not trace Ibrahim Miah Simon and his friend even four days after they went missing in Chittagong, while an unknown caller reduced the ransom to Tk 7 lakh from Tk 10 lakh on Saturday afternoon for their release.

Seventeen-year-old Simon and his friend Sanjoy Kumar Dev went out to attend a wedding ceremony on Wednesday afternoon but did not get back home until yesterday afternoon.

A general diary was filed with Double Mooring Police Station, but both Simon's family and police declined to call it an abduction.

Family sources told The Daily Star yesterday that an unidentified caller demanded by cellphone at around 5:30pm Thursday a Tk 10 lakh ransom for the release of the two.

In another call on Saturday afternoon, the caller reduced the ransom to Tk 7 lakh, while the victim's family expressed inability to pay more than Tk 1 lakh, sources said.

Although Simon's family did not file an abduction case, some police officials yesterday described the incident as abduction in an unconventional style.

Rather than picking up the victims forcibly or at gunpoint, the abductors took Simon and Sanjoy with an invitation to a band musical programme at the wedding ceremony, the officials said.

Police believe the two have links to the gang of abductors who happened to be college students.

Sub-Inspector Monir Hossain dealing with the case said that there was a high possibility of the incident being an abduction.

Repeated abductions triggered resentment among the people already reeling under a sense of insecurity.

## AL ponders

**FROM PAGE 12**  
"The CPA is a no-partisan body, all the lawmakers are its members. There is no scope to organise the conference unilaterally," Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Unfortunately, the ruling party is trying to do everything itself, denying our rights. If the government does not change its attitude to the opposition, the AL will boycott the upcoming conference."

Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday called Abdus Shahid in a debriefing session on the government move to stage the conference.

Shahid informed Hasina that the ruling party was taking all preparations to host the conference without any discussion with the main opposition party.

The speaker, chairman of the steering committee of the conference, nominated two members from the AL without even informing them.

Besides, two non-parliamentarians -- MA Harris Chowdhury and Md Mosaddak Ali have been included in the committee, he told Hasina.

Both Harris and Mosaddak are political secretaries to the prime minister.

The AL is not participating in any activities preparatory to the conference. Its representatives did not attend two steering committee and three coordination committee meetings held so far and did not nominate its deputies for several subcommittees.

## Move to list cops

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tion will be enlisted.

"We have kept a keen eye on bus terminals to observe the situation," the home minister said.

Meanwhile, the sub-committee, headed by Communications Secretary Syed Rezaul Hayat, was supposed to submit a report to the meeting yesterday to compensate the workers association and the lessee, as the government has decided to cancel the lease of all terminals. But they extended time to submit it.

## Sugar import

**FROM PAGE 1**  
import of sugar without any ceiling.

Bangladesh Bank data shows that some 6.26 lakh tons of sugar was imported between July 2002 and June 2003, entirely in the private sector.

Country's 15 sugar mills added 1.77 lakh tons, while official estimates put the annual domestic consumption at 5 lakh tons.

In previous years, the annual government import of sugar through the Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation (BSFIC) and the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) averaged 2 lakh tons.

In spite of the huge import at the private level, sugar prices remained stuck at around Tk 30 per kg, until last week when it shot up to Tk 36 per kg, which market sources put down to an 'artificial crisis' created by hoarders.

The Cabinet committee on economic affairs, with Finance Minister Saifur Rahman in the chair, decided on August 9 to lift the embargo on sugar import.

Earlier on July 24, an inter-ministerial meeting agreed that the country would need to import 1.5 lakh tons of sugar to meet local demand until the crushing of sugarcane starts in local mills by the year-end.

The government in July last year had liberalised sugar import, ending the state monopoly on sugar production and trade, and hoping to bring the sugar price down to Tk 25 per kg at consumer level, but the price never came down to the desired level.

## Dhaka rejects Cancun draft

**FROM PAGE 1**  
-- one from Europe, one from Asia which will be represented by Bangladesh and one from the rest of the world.

"Bangladesh will not sign any agreement at the meeting if it does not protect the interest of the LDCs, including Bangladesh," said Khosru, who is also the coordinator of the LDCs.

"Instead of signing a bad agreement, it is better not to have a deal," he quipped at a meeting on the 'WTO and the Cancun Ministerial Meet' with the members of the Economic Reporters' Forum (ERF) at the National Press Club in Dhaka.

The developed countries have to show that they want an equitable world order. The position of the LDCs, including the LDC leader Bangladesh, is a fair one, he observed.

"Bangladesh has received a draft, but is expecting a revised text of the meeting. The LDCs have to be very careful to maintain unity," he said.

Referring to the Dhaka Declaration of the LDCs in June, Khosru admitted that there were differences among the LDCs. "But after a long debate, we were able to reach a consensus. We have compromised with some countries on the cotton issue in which we had no

## 16 abducted

**FROM PAGE 12**  
their kidnappers. "We haven't yet got details of the incident from the Naniarchar Police," he said while talking to The Daily Star correspondent at 3:00pm yesterday.

The UNB, quoting eyewitnesses, reported Saturday that the kidnappers are proponents of the CHT peace treaty while the abducted villagers are opposed to the treaty.

Army was dispatched to the area, reported the news agency.

The BSS added: Three of the 16 villagers abducted were released at Ram Krishnamachhari village yesterday.

Sources said security forces are conducting search and rescue operations to free the remaining 13 kidnap victims.

Police could not confirm whether the abducted villagers are affiliated with the anti-peace treaty United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), or the pro-peace treaty Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS).

Normalcy prevailed in the remote village with security forces patrolling the area, sources added.

## 'Dhalywood' strike

**FROM PAGE 12**  
Popy, among others, joined the sit-in as part of their anti-obscenity agitation that began on Saturday.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Film Producers and Distributors Association (BFPDA), a rival group, vowed that no shooting and dubbing would be held until the government took action, cancelling the membership of Chashi Nazrul Islam and Ahmed Sharif from the Censor Board.

They also resolved not to submit any film to the board if the government did not declare director Sohanur Rahman Sohan and actor Monwar Hossain Dipjal "unwanted" in seven days.

On the other hand, the BFF submitted a list of actors, actresses and directors to the government to take action against them, accusing them of making obscene films.

The BFPDA will hold a meeting with its members tomorrow on a plan of action, while the BFF that submitted a memorandum to the prime minister on Saturday continues their work abstention until their demands are met.

Security was tightened in and around the FDC to avert any untoward incident.

The BFF launched the move-

ment after the BFPDA 'boycotted' actress Popy for allegedly not returning her signing money (Tk 1 lakh) to a producer after she refused to act in an obscene film.

BFF Joint Convenor Chashi Nazrul Islam told The Daily Star, "The incident involving Popy is one of our issues. Our strong demand is action against obscenity in films and video piracy."

Asked about the solution to the deadlock, Nazrul said, "The problem would be resolved when producers come back to make decent films."

BFPDA General Secretary Ashraf Uddin Ahmed Uzzal said, "We want an immediate solution to the unstable situation. It can be by the intervention of the government as it is our business."

"A vested quarter is unsettling the situation," he alleged.

The agitating BFF members posted posters on walls to publicise their demands and the BFPDA office was closed yesterday.

FDC Managing Director Washimul Bari Rajib, who was not in office for the last two days, was not available for comments yesterday.

When Justice Ali demanded an explanation, the NDC admitted said he had been informed about the visit of the Supreme Court judge before that of the joint secretary's.

The contempt charges stated that the allocation of the VVIP room to the joint secretary in preference to and superseding that of a judge of the Supreme Court is a blatant act of contempt for the higher judiciary as a whole.

## PMO staff

**FROM PAGE 12**  
chief justice to refer it to the relevant court for trial.

A bench comprising Justice Mohammad Iman Ali passed the order.

According to the contempt charge, the deputy registrar (1) of the Supreme Court had informed the deputy commissioner's office in Sylhet through the Sylhet district judge about a visit of Justice Mohammad Iman Ali of the Supreme Court on August 7.

But on reaching Sylhet Circuit House, Justice Ali found that the VVIP room there (room number 1) instead of room number 2 designated a VIP room had already been occupied by Joint Secretary Latifur Rahman of the PMO.

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to compete with others, he hoped. Citing the example of wheat, Khosru said: "Our farmers cannot compete with the price at which the US sells its product now."

About expanding Bangladesh's export market, he said those who are now getting appointments as commercial conciliators in the missions abroad are being selected properly.

"Now we are not selecting our relatives to work as commercial conciliators. They have to be qualified and perform better."

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## Cricket

**FROM PAGE 1**  
by Rafique, having reached 50.

Rafique was the only Bangladesh bowler to give the Pakistanis any trouble on the final day.

When Hameed departed, Pakistan were left needing just another 47 runs and veterans Inzamamul Haque and Yousuf Youhana played with ease on the surprisingly flat wicket to reach the target.

Inzamam, who made a duck in the first innings, was undefeated on 35 hitting five boundaries, while Youhana was not out on 15.

It was no surprise when Hameed was adjudged man-of-the-match.

The Pakistan Cricket Board awarded five lakh rupees to the youngster for his scintillating achievement while the sponsors Super Star Asia rewarded him with 10,000 rupees.

Hamid later said he only came to know about Rowe's record when he returned to the dressing room at close on the fourth day.

"Afterwards, I was quite confident of emulating Rowe and with the guidance of my mentor and coach Javed Miandad, I finally made it," said Hameed.

Both teams will leave Karachi for Peshawar on Monday where the second Test is due to start from August 27.

## The tragic tale

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found in her neck.

Her father Latifur Rahman, in an FIR lodged with Gulshan police, said he had last talked to his daughter in her ground floor bedroom at about 8:00pm on April 23, 1998. Then he went to the first floor of the house where a party was arranged for some of his friends. Shazneen stayed back in her room.

At about 10:15pm, Latifur Rahman came downstairs after hearing the scream of his old servant Moslem Hawlader and found Shazneen lying on the floor in front of the bathroom, attached to her bedroom. The victim's father examined her pulse and found her dead.

As Latifur Rahman raised an alarm, the guests and other people in the house rushed to the spot. On inquiry, it was found that one of the servants, Shahidul alias Shahid, son of Siddiq Mollah of village Danga Durgapur, Gopalganj district, was missing. One of the four kitchen knives was also missing, Latifur Rahman said in the FIR.

On the preliminary evidence, it appeared that Shahid fled the house after raping and killing Shazneen between 8:00pm and 10:15pm. Latifur Rahman also suspected that some others might have been involved in it.

On April 27, 1998, the prime accused in the Shazneen case, Shahid, surrendered to the Kotwali police in Chittagong. Police brought him to Dhaka for interrogation on the same day.

Shahid later gave a confessional statement to a metropolitan magistrate.

## Altaf: Govt knows

**FROM PAGE 1**  
reached Chittagong police even 24 hours after the IGP's assurance.

The assurance came at the first meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on home ministry held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

Commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police Shahidullah Khan told The Daily Star that he did not know of any such assurance and timeframe to rescue Jamal.

"I talk with the IGP every day, but he did not tell me anything in that line," the commissioner said. He however said that they were 'moving ahead with new strategies'.

Sources said police were yet to gear up the rescue operation.

Superintendent of Police Matiur Rahman said criminals' hideouts were raided just on assumption.

## AL flays Altaf

**FROM PAGE 12**  
conspiracy of militant and terrorist groups against the country and its people," the meeting observed.

"They (Islamic militants) are not capable of terrorist activities as they do not have huge arms and weapons," the home minister told a parliamentary standing committee meeting on Saturday.

Altaf said, "A few people are involved in these incidents and they have no connection with the mainstream Islamic political parties."

Dismissing his claims, the AL said the statement proved that he was not only providing shelter to the militants but also trying to cover up the militants' conspiracy.

The government was playing down the arrest of militants and seizure of foreign-made arms and ammunition in Mymensingh, Dinajpur, Rajshahi and Joypurhat, it said.

The meeting urged people to unite against militant activities.

"The government has failed to curb the Islamic militants. Instead of taking action against the criminal groups, the government has been shifting blames onto the main opposition for tarnishing the image of the country abroad," the AL said.

## Shazneen case

**FROM PAGE 1**  
the following day accusing Shahidul alias Shahid, a domestic help at the house.

Mojibur Rahman, an assistant superintendent of CID police filed a rape case with the Gulshan PS on September 4, 1998 accusing Shahid, Hasan, Badal, Shaniram, Humayun (now deceased), Minu and Parvin.

Mojibur, who was also the investigation officer of the rape case, submitted a charge sheet against Shahid and five others on December 12, 1998, showing 74 people as prosecution witnesses.

The tribunal framed charges against Shahid and five others on April 13, 1999.

After the charges were framed, the defence lawyers filed a criminal appeal with the High Court (HC) seeking stay on charge framing.

After hearing, the HC stayed the proceedings of the case on August 25, 1999. Later, the HC vacated the stay order on November 1, 1999 and directed the tribunal to frame charges against the accused.

The tribunal framed charges against the accused again on May 28, 2000.

The HC also stayed the proceedings of the Shazneen murder case, pending with the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka, till disposal of the Shazneen rape case.

The death of Shazneen created a sensation across the country and people were eagerly waiting to see

## Mars encounter

**FROM PAGE 12**  
last 60,000 years.

At its closest, mars will be 25 seconds of arc in diameter, the size of a tennis ball at a distance of 528 metres.

However, on the scale of the tennis ball, this approach is only 18 centimetres closer than in 1924, although 110 metres closer than in 2001.

Throughout August and September mars will be easy to see with the naked eye. Each night it will rise earlier, until by late August it will be just above the horizon, south of east, soon after sunset.

Once risen, it will be the brightest object in the sky, appearing orange red. From the latitude of the UK, it will never rise higher than 22 degrees and you will need an unobstructed view to the south to see it.

Mars will appear at its very best from the Southern Hemisphere, where by the middle of the night it will be high in the sky and its brightness and colour will make it very obvious.

To see any surface detail requires a good quality telescope with a lens or mirror diameter of about 10 cm, on a stable mount. If you don't have one - and few people do - try to visit a public observatory or your local astronomical society.

In the UK, National Astronomy Week will mark the close encounter, and many local astronomical societies will organise public star parties.

Mars, the Roman god of war, has always had a special fascination for us. Indeed, there is even a slight

"But the exact hideout where Jamal has been held hostage could not be spotted as yet," he said, adding, "We are not aware of the IGP's assurance at all".