

Ethnic villagers

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saw the arson wiped all the indigenous homes out of existence in five of the ravaged villages.

"Most people fled their homes after the violence and some of them are camping out while the rest have taken refuge in forests around the villages," said a local, requesting anonymity.

They are passing their days in utter misery, without bare necessities and medicines, villagers at Pahartali and Sawmill Para said. The indigenous people claim that Bangalees, both Hindu and Muslim, torched and looted about 350 homes in the villages under Mahalchhari Police Station on August 26, killing two, including an eight-month-old child, and raping at least 10 women.

The attackers also set Buddhist temples on fire and took away four statues of Buddha, they claimed.

The abduction of a Bangalee youth, Rupan Mahajan, allegedly by a gang of indigenous people on August 24 was in the heart of the violence. His family said the hostage-takers demanded Tk 5 lakh in ransom.

The hills people alleged that army and police stood by when the marauding gangs ransacked the villages, a claim dismissed by law enforcement agencies.

Local authorities, both civil and military, said their personnel were closer to the flashpoints during the violence, but could not rein in the raging mobs.

"We are yet to prepare full lists of burnt houses and property losses. Two magistrates have been assigned to the task. So far we have got a list of 177 burnt houses in three villages -- Lemuchhara, Babupara and Pahartali," said Humayun Kabir Khan, deputy commissioner of Khagrachhari district.

"We have provided each affected family with five kilograms of rice, matchboxes and candles," he said.

The headman at Lemuchhara said Bangalee settlers of

Changrachhari cluster village torched 63 of 85 houses in the village, forcing the indigenous people to flee to the forest.

"At around 3:00pm, they came with arms and jerrycansful of kerosene and petrol," he said. Proggajyoti Chakma of Lemuchhara village said some hills people rushed to the police camp, just 100 metres off the village, to inform them of the 'mindless raids', but the law-enforcers never responded to their cries for help.

"We had no other way but to flee to the jungles," he said. The Babupara village still stands in ruins, where at least 80 burnt-out houses testify to the grisly attack.

A 35-year-old woman at the village told this correspondent that she was gang-raped by seven men.

"Seven thugs raped me one after another. Some other women at Keranginal and Durpajanal were also raped. We don't know how to go to a doctor and file a case," said the woman, a mother of five children.

But the DC dismissed the allegation, saying, "I also heard of the allegation and asked Mahalchhari Officer-in-Charge (OC) Hafizur Rahman to look into it. The OC said no such incident took place."

At Pahartali and Sawmill Para, the hills people said they were living under a spectre of fear and violence. "We have no food, medicine and shelter to support ourselves," said a villager, breaking down in tears.

"It is the most heinous attack by Bangalees on our villages after independence. Abduction is now a regular feature in Bangladesh, but no such attack takes place on the common man anywhere for revenge basing on mere suspicion," said Bipul Bikash Khisa, a local UP member.

"This planned violence is aimed to bankrupting us," he said. Hafizur said 45 Bangalee and seven indigenous people were arrested in connection with two cases filed after the incidents.

Last straw for rescue

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the rescue of Jamal, political sources said. "The process has been initiated," said a police source in Chittagong. But Nizam denied such an instruction.

On August 21, Jamal's family with the help of police negotiated the release of the businessman on a ransom of Tk 15 lakh with representatives of abductors, said a source who was involved in the negotiations.

On August 23, the family gave the money to two police officials who went to the Mandakini Hills in Fatikhkhari. The officials returned and told the family that the money was transferred and Jamal would be released shortly.

Inspector General of Police Shahudul Haq told a Jatiya Sangsad standing committee on August 23 that Jamal would be rescued within 48 hours. On

August 24, Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury told the press that the government came to know about the whereabouts of Jamal and he would be rescued soon.

But the businessman was not rescued until late yesterday evening.

All communications between the abductors and police or Jamal's family remained snapped since August 23, wrapping the entire episode in mystery.

The government punished Chittagong police and over a dozen officers had been transferred. Everything seems to start anew.

"We have decided not to hint anything of the rescue bid unless we actually find him," said a high police official in Chittagong.

Baby killed in Ctg house collapse

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A baby was killed and two others were injured yesterday when a building collapsed over a tin-shed house near the Oxygen crossing in the city.

Witnesses said the old building had developed cracks due to the tremors that jolted the port city in recent times.

The building collapsed at about 1:00pm yesterday on the tin-shed house adjacent to it, police sources said. The mishap left Zahida Nasrin, 27, her one-month old baby and another family member injured.

Fire brigade personnel rushed to the spot and rescued the injured victims from under the debris. They were rushed to a local clinic, but the baby succumbed to his injuries, police said.

Panic spread in the locality after the collapse of the old building owned by Jainal Abedin.

Shibir-JCD

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by locals and taken to the National Hospital.

In retaliation, Shibir activists picked up three JCD cadres after Tuesday midnight and beat them black and blue. Police rescued them from the hilly areas behind the polytechnic institute hostel yesterday morning. They were admitted to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

Both groups brought out processions yesterday noon vilifying each other. At about 1:00pm, they also traded gunfire from their positions along the small hills. None was reported hurt.

In the afternoon, three Shibir activists -- Mizan, Masud and Tushar -- were badly beaten up by JCD activists near the Technical Training Centre. Patrol police rescued them. They were undergoing treatment at a clinic.

Tension was prevailing in the area.

Bhorer Kagoj publisher gets bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Chittagong Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court yesterday granted bail to publisher of the Bhorer Kagoj Saber Hossain Chowdhury and Sadeq Hossain Chowdhury, editorial council president of the daily, in a case filed for carrying 'false' news in the daily on February 7, 2001.

Wahidul Islam Khan granted the bail after Sadeq and Saber, also organising secretary of the Awami League, appeared before the court.

Estate officer of Al Jamiya-al-Islamia Madrassah in Patiya Mohammad Reza lodged the case following publication of a news item titled '30 students are being trained of Talibani revolution at six Chittagong Madrassahs'.

Besides Saber and Sadeq, Acting Editor Benazir Ahmed, Chief Reporter Shyamal Dutta, Faruk Iqbal, senior reporter and Samoresh Baidya, staff reporter, were implicated in the case.

Transport strike in Sylhet today

UNB, Sylhet

Transport owners and workers will observe a day-long strike in Sylhet today to press home their six-point demand.

The programme was announced at a joint meeting of the transport owners and workers in the city on Tuesday with president of the District Road Transport Owners Group (DRTOG) Azizur Rahman Ambia in the chair.

The meeting was addressed, among others, by DRTOG Secretary General Khondoker Fazlur Rahman, President of the District Truck Owners Group Saleh Ahmed Khosru and President of the District Truck and Tank Lorry Workers' Union Israil Khan.

Bol FDI flow

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intra-company borrowing.

Bol sources said it calculates the flow of FDI according to the Unctad definition. But the BB calculates it by the traditional balance of payment method, which caused the difference in figures.

The SoE and NCB Reforms Project Mission of the World Bank and the IMF recently commented; "While Bangladesh has been attracting some FDI, there had been lack of credible data on actual FDI inflow. Information on FDI inflow did not get recorded in a credible manner. The focus, in the past, had been on the number of investors registering with Bol during a particular period."

"The expected figure of FDI expressed during that registration was used to portray FDI inflow figures. These figures, however, were quite inflated and had little relevance because actual investment were nowhere near those numbers."

Giant asteroid

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The asteroid, known as 2003 QQ47, was first spotted on August 24, and NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL), making a preliminary estimate of its orbit, said there was a tiny chance -- one in only 909,000 -- that it would collide with Earth.

Around 1.2 kilometers across, and hurtling through space at 120,000 kilometers per hour, 2003 QQ47 would unleash energy equivalent to 350,000 megatonnes of TNT, or eight million times the power of the Hiroshima bomb.

2003 QQ47 was initially graded the lowest step on the Torino scale, which rates the chances of newly discovered asteroids and comets hitting the Earth.

This grading means the asteroid is not a significant risk but 'merits special monitoring.'

But asteroid experts, in a circular distributed among their community yesterday and received by AFP, have now downgraded that risk and accused the media of hyping the scare.

NASA specialist Ron Baalke said that the agency's Lincoln Near Asteroid Research (LINEAR) telescope in New Mexico was tasked on Tuesday to make further observations of 2003 QQ47.

"We've just computed a new orbit solution, and 2003 QQ47 has dropped to Torino zero," Baalke announced. "The 2014 potential impact has been eliminated."

The asteroid is around one-tenth of the size of the rock that is believed to have wiped out dinosaurs on Earth 65 million years ago.

Asteroids such as 2003 QQ47 are chunks of rock left over from the formation of the Solar System 4.5 billion years ago.

Most are kept at a safe distance from Earth in the asteroid belt between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter.

But the gravitational influence of giant planets such as Jupiter can nudge asteroids out of these safe orbits and send them plunging into the Earth's neighbourhood.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia browses through an exhibition after opening the new archives of Bangladesh Television at the BTV Bhaban in Rampura yesterday.

Diploma engineers

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owned enterprises including Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC), Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) and Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC).

Their four-point demand includes a stop to squeezing the sizes of state-owned power sector, the BADC, BJMC, BCIC, Railway, Roads and Highways and BTB, eliminating wages discrimination, and saving technical education.

The diploma engineers urged the government to meet their demands by October 8.

Md Kabir Hossain, member-secretary of the Coordination Council, read out a statement, which expressed deep frustration at long-living vacancies to the posts of principals in 18 out of 20 polytechnic institutes in the country.

He criticised the restructuring policy being pursued in the BADC, noting that the government is shedding staff at field levels, keeping a top-heavy staff-structure in the head office in the capital.

Diploma engineers criticised selling out of jute mills rendering

thousands of workers jobless, while new jute mills are being set up in neighbouring India. When 25 ministers would suffice to run the government in Bangladesh, a jumbo-size cabinet is in to the waste of public money, they alleged.

The country now meets the demands of certain chemicals through import from India, as eight industries under the BCIC were closed down, they said.

The diploma engineers announced a series of programmes starting from today to realise their demands. Their demonstrations will end on October 8 through a human-chain from 11:00am to midday in the city.

Their other programmes include holding exchange of views with the trade union bodies, federating body of workers, SKOP, submission of memorandum to the prime minister, lawmakers and deputy commissioners and formation of human chains in the districts.

IDEB General Secretary A K M A Hamid and the Coordination Council's Convenor Khandakar Nur-e Alam were, among others, present at the press conference.

4 US soldiers hurt in bomb attack in Iraq

AFP, Baghdad

Four US soldiers were wounded when their convoy struck an improvised explosive device (IED) near Saddam Hussein's home town of Tikrit, an army spokeswoman said yesterday.

She added that the four injured were in stable condition and that two army Humvee vehicles were damaged in the attack that occurred Tuesday afternoon near Tikrit, some 175 km north of Baghdad.

The soldiers were from the US army's 4th Infantry Division, which is based in Tikrit.

Former Iraqi gen arrested

AFP, Baquba

A former general in Iraq's army under Saddam Hussein was arrested by US troops overnight, said on Wednesday residents in Baquba, a frontline in the war between US troops and guerrilla-style fighters.

"They arrested an armoured division general, Nassaf Jassem al-Samarrai, and his son Luay, shortly before midnight," said neighbour Mohammad Ali Abdul Kareem.

Three humvees pulled up to their house and took them away. US troops carry out daily raids in the Sunni Triangle, the belt north and west of Baghdad, home to supporters of Saddam who hail from the same Sunni Muslim community as the fallen dictator.

Embargo on university teacher recruitment to go

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The chairman of the University Grants Commission (UGC) yesterday said the government will withdraw the embargo on recruitment of teachers in the public universities.

UGC Chairman Prof Asaduzzaman told this at a meeting with a delegation of the Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers' Association (FBUTA).

The meeting also decided that identical guidelines, which have been formulated by the UGC, will be implemented through discussion between the university authorities and the FBUTA for recruitment and promotion of the teachers.

The government slapped a temporary embargo on recruitment of teachers in the public universities a few months back.

Robbers shoot two to escape capture

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two sustained bullet injuries yesterday as retreating robbers fired random shots on a mob to avoid capture at Nazimuddin Road in Old Dhaka.

Walur Mian Wali, a plastic factory worker, and Mofiz, a driver, received bullet injuries during the shooting.

A gang of robbers entered Haji Mohammad Nayajari's residence at about 2:45pm. Confining the family members inside a room at gunpoint, they allegedly looted 60 tola of gold ornaments and Tk 61,000.

As the robbers came down the stairs, the inmates raised an alarm. The gang fired indiscriminately as locals chased them.

No case was filed with the Lalbagh Police Station till writing of this report at 8:00pm yesterday. However, police seized a bike allegedly to have been used by the robbers.

Extortionists stall Old Dhaka market construction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Construction works of a multi-story market at Badamtali in Old Dhaka has allegedly been halted as the owner of the property refused to pay toll to extortionists.

Babul Begum, owner of the land, at a press conference in the Jatiya Press Club yesterday alleged that extortionists, hired by one Siddique Miah, were demanding Tk 50 lakh for long and they ransacked under-construction Ratan Fruits Garden on August 22 leaving supervisor of the work Rabul Islam Rubel injured.

"I filed a case with Kotwali Police Station but none has been arrested to date and the swindlers have become more aggressive," she said. Previously, showing counterfeit papers, Miah halted the construction work and filed a case against her in which he lost, she alleged.

Following a High Court order, she started construction of the building but the extortionists are trying to harass her in various ways, she said.

When contacted over phone, Kotwali police said they were trying to arrest the criminals.

JCD leader dies

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Sadar Hospital while the others were admitted to Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital.

Barisal City Corporation Mayor and President of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Barisal district Mujibur Rahman Sarwar MP said he asked police to arrest Shuhad. He also denied Shuhad's connection with the BNP or any of its organisations.

Barisal police admitted snatching of Shuhad from their custody.

Tigers toil

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sion of batting first on a wicket that had enough encouragement for the pacers. But Pakistan's weakened bowling line-up in the absence of spearhead Shoaib Akhter, failed to make an early impression. Omar Gul was the only wicket taker in the morning session when he had Hannan Sarkar caught behind for 13.

Pakistan made five changes from the squad that played the second Test in Multan; the most sensational being the last minute pullout of leg-spinner Danish Kaneria due to an injury. Kaneria has been Bangladesh's thorn in the flesh and has 34 wickets from five matches against the Tigers.

Top batsman Yousef Youhana was rested and all-rounder Shoaib Malik was ruled out because of a groin injury. Opener Taufeq Umar was another last moment injury casualty. Veteran batsman Younis Khan and off-spinner Saqlain Mushtaq made their Test returns while young opener Salman Butt, Farhan Adil and medium pacer Yasir Ali were given their debuts.

Bangladesh decided to rest fast bowler Mashrafe Murtaza and dropped fellow quick Alamgir Kabir. Tapash Baishya and Monjurul Islam were inserted to share the new ball.

After Bangladesh had lost their first wicket on 28, one down Bashir shared 74 runs for the second wicket with Javed Omar. The stand was broken 40 minutes into the second session when Javed Omar edged

Gul to Younis at slips after scoring a patient 38 in 157 minutes with seven boundaries.

Talented Mohammad Ashraf made 12 before he was rather unlucky to be adjudged lbw when he offered no shot to a Saqlain delivery that was turning and certainly missing the leg stump.

Bashar cruised to 72, his third half century in the series, and was threatening to dictate terms when Yasir Ali drew him to a nick which a diving Rashid Latif gleefully accepted.

Bashar hit nine fours. He is the leading run-getter in the series with 376 in five innings.

The impressive Gul then sent Kapali's off stump flying as Bangladesh slumped to 179 for five.

Then came the most important partnership of the day between Saleh and former Bangladesh captain Mashud who shared 62 precious runs.

Saleh, the 19-year-old from Sylhet, reached a compact 49 before he got out under the most unfortunate of circumstances. Saleh was at the non-striker's end when Mashud played a firm drive that ricocheted off bowler Yasir Ali and dislodged the balls at Saleh's end with the youngster short of his crease.

Saleh faced 124 balls and smote eight boundaries.

Gul was Pakistan's most successful bowler taking three wickets for 71 runs from 27 overs.

Tax evasion

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The ministry acted following an investigation by the National Security Intelligence (NSI), which alleged that Amadeus has been siphoning off money to India earned through providing services to airlines.

Amadeus, a Madrid-based company, operates as a liaison office for an Indian firm -- National Marketing Company (NMC).

Every time an airline or travel agent books a ticket, using the Amadeus reservation system, the company earns a certain amount of money -- \$3 to \$4 depending on the routes.

Currently, three more companies -- Galileo, Abacas and World Span -- are providing similar reservation services in Bangladesh. But none of them are operating as liaison offices and are paying taxes.

According to a rough estimate by industry sources, the four service providers handled \$25 lakh worth of business during the first six months of the current calendar year. Of this amount, Amadeus alone earned around \$12,600,000.

Talking to The Daily Star, a senior official of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) said liaison office was allowed mainly to boost garment export through buying houses.

He said the buying houses work to supply goods from Bangladesh and are allowed to operate tax-free under the condition that they would operate their bank accounts only to convert foreign exchanges. The liaison offices are restricted from conducting any local transactions or marketing products.

Amadeus was also allowed to open a liaison office under the same conditions.

"This company (Amadeus) appears to be giving IT solutions to

local clients to generate business from Bangladesh. So it is violating the rules," the official said seeking anonymity.

Amadeus liaison office Country Manager Mustafa Kemal admitted that the company is helping the parent company generate business from Bangladesh but said he is not aware of the volume of business.

Karun Budhraja, senior manager, marketing & corporate communications, Indian subcontinent of Amadeus, in an e-mail reply said the company controls more than 50 per cent of the Bangladesh market but declined to give details.

The NMC, for which Amadeus works, said the company did not evade tax.

With the authorities probing Amadeus operation, the company is now planning to turn into a fully-fledged company in Dhaka from its liaison status. Sources said its new name will be Global Technology Distribution (GTD).

Imam murder

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Imam, advocate Bijon Bihari Mondol and rickshawpuller Shahid.

Sub-inspector Zahid, investigating officer of the murder case, said Shukur Gazi, the arrested murder suspect, was a member of a group hired to kill the AL leader, adding that investigation into the case has so far revealed some important clues to the murder.

Police said Shukur had been released on bail from the Bagerhat District Jail on August 12 before his arrest in connection with the triple murder case filed with the Rampal thana. Gazi reportedly confessed to his involvement in the murders at a Bagerhat court.

Move to tap phone calls

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manoeuvre freely to listen to individual telephone calls, read emails and produce those before the court as evidence.

Section 71 of the telecom act describes penalty for eavesdropping on telephonic conversation: "A person commits an offence, if he intentionally listens to a telephone conversation between two other persons, and for such offence, he shall be liable to be sentenced to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to a fine not exceeding 50 thousand taka or both."

Sources said security agencies have been able to persuade the Prime Minister's Office to bring changes to the telecom act, citing the rise of terrorist activities in the country and September 11 terror attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, US.

The agencies also convinced the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MoPT) to bring about some changes in the telecom law. The ministry recently held a series of meetings with the Ministry of Law and Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC).

The BTRC has already prepared a draft outlining changes asked for by the security agencies on instruction of the law ministry.

The agencies want a change in the subsection of Section 30 of the telecom act, which deals with protection of privacy of telecommunication, by incorporating these words: "to ensure protection of the privacy of telecommunication; subject to the national security laws".

"In fact, the telecom ministry and telecom watchdog are under pressure from the security agencies, which are pressing for the changes in the name of state security," a senior government official said on condition of anonymity.

The security agencies have also

asked for an amendment to Section 5. According to them, it should read, "Notwithstanding any contrary provisions of any other law, subject to the provisions of national security law, the provisions of this Act shall have effect", instead of "Notwithstanding any contrary provisions of any other law, the provisions of this act shall have effect."

"Providing such opportunity to intelligence agencies means putting them above law," said Barrister Tanjibul Alam of Dr Kamal Hossain & Associates. Barrister Tanjibul is one of the solicitors to have prepared the act as consultant.

"There will be no privacy of individuals if the law is amended according to the desire of the security agencies," one civil society activist said.

A civil rights activist said if the secret agencies have the amendments they want in place "this will make the country a police state".

The proposed amendments are in violation of the independence to the BTRC, Barrister Tanjibul observed.

Most of the protection of privacy under Section 30 of the telecommunication act will be curtailed in the name of national security, which is a very vague term, said Barrister Tanjibul.

It will also undermine the purpose of the telecom act, which was envisaged to establish an independent commission for development and efficient regulation of telecommunication system and telecommunication services in Bangladesh and for the transfer of the powers and functions of the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications to the commission (BTRC).

The telecom policy was enacted in parliament in 1998 and the act was passed in 2001.