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Biggest arms haul in city

4 AK-47s, grenades, explosives seized after gunfight in Badda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered four AK-47 assault rifles, two revolvers, 20 hand grenades, four time bombs, a huge number of AK-47 bullets and explosives after a gunfight with a criminal outfit at Kuril Badda yesterday.

During the biggest ever arms cache recovery in the city, two policemen -- Sub-inspector (SI) Saidur Rahman, 45, and constable Neyamat Ali, 35, of Badda Police Station -- and one of the criminals were bullet-hit. They are now being treated at Combined Military Hospital (CMH).

Following the recovery, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia directed the home ministry to conduct an

intensive investigation into the arms haul to identify the network and nab the masterminds.

A four-member Badda police patrol team led by SI Saidur went to Kuril bus stand area after hearing a gunshot at around 3:45 in the night. The policemen saw lights burning inside a tin-shed one-storey sign-board shop, Tulir Parash, on Pragati Sharani.

The light burning at such a dead of night made the policemen suspicious and they peeped inside to find four youths loading the magazine of an AK-47.

"As soon as the policemen knocked at the door, the criminals tried to run away through the door," said Deputy Commissioner of police (North zone) Golam Rasul

in a press release. "SI Saidur grabbed two of them and constable Neyamat jumped to his help. The two criminals opened fire on them to free themselves."

Saidur received two bullets in the left abdomen, two in the right thigh and one in the palm. Neyamat was hit in the lower abdomen.

As they fell on the ground, the two criminals ran away. Constable Mosharrif and Neyamat opened fire on another criminal trying to come out of the shop.

On information, other mobile teams rushed to the spot and rescued Saidur and Neyamat. They found a 25-year-old man lying inside the shop with three bullet

wounds in the waist. They were taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Policemen searched the shop and found some taped big packets and sacks.

They took the packets to a nearby field and opened them to find four AK-47 rifles, 990 rounds of bullets, two foreign-made revolvers, seven revolver bullets, 20 hand grenades, two 2-kg plastic explosive bombs, four time bombs, half a kilogram of gunpowder, six electric detonators, four-and-a-half yard detonation wire, two firing devices with charger, two time devices and a walkie-talkie.

The arms and explosives were deposited at Badda Police Station

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Decision on TUs in EPZs on Dec 4

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An inter-ministerial committee will finalise a set of recommendations Thursday on allowing trade unionism in the export processing zones (EPZs).

The recommendations also include some alternatives to trade unionism to ensure a peaceful atmosphere in the exclusive industrial zones, committee sources said yesterday.

The committee held its sixth meeting yesterday, chaired by State Minister for Labour and Manpower Amanullah Aman, to finalise the recommendations but deferred the decision for further review of sensitive points in its report.

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2 Japan diplomats, 2 US troops killed

Iraq mission sparks new debate

AGENCIES, Tikrit

Two Japanese diplomats were killed and two US soldiers died in an ambush in Iraq Saturday, sparking a fresh debate in countries allied to the US on the risks of joining the Iraq mission.

Two other foreigners were also badly injured in a separate attack yesterday and a Colombian contractor was killed in an ambush Saturday.

The Japanese diplomats were shot dead as they stopped at a food stall en route to Tikrit, Saddam Hussein's birthplace, where an aid conference was taking place, a US military spokesman said yesterday.

"Two Japanese were killed as they stopped at a roadside food stall, four km south of Mukayshifa on the afternoon of November 29," said Colonel Bill MacDonald, spokesman for the US 4th Infantry Division, which patrols the troubled region.

"A Lebanese national was wounded in the same incident.

"The three persons had stopped for food and drink when attackers fired small-calibre weapons at them.

"The three were taken to a Tikrit hospital. The condition of the wounded individual is unknown," said MacDonald, speaking shortly before the opening of the aid conference at the fortified 4th Infantry Division's headquarters compound in Tikrit, 180km north of Baghdad.

The US Army said the two American soldiers were killed Saturday when guerrillas attacked their convoy with small arms and rocket-propelled grenades west of Baghdad. The attack brought to 187 the number of US soldiers killed in Iraq since Washington declared major combat over on May 1.

In Spain, where public opinion

was generally against the war, Saturday's killing of the seven agents south of Baghdad reignited longstanding doubts about the role of around 1,300 Spanish troops helping to control south-central Iraq.

"Spain pays a high price," the left-leaning newspaper El Pais said in an editorial. The El Mundo daily described the killings as: "Deaths which require explanations and reflection."

Political analysts have said Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi risks a serious blow to his popularity if troops are sent to Iraq and deaths occur, an especially unwelcome prospect with an election for parliament's Upper House set for next July.

Japan has passed a special law to enable it to send troops to Iraq, but in line with the nation's pacifist constitution, they can only be sent

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PHOTO: STAR

Policemen guard the explosives devices, left, kept in the open after a team of law enforcers seized an arms and ammunition haul at Badda in Dhaka yesterday. Another policeman, right, displays the remainder of the haul at the Office of Deputy Commissioner of Police in Banani.

PM hopeful of Japanese dev assistance on easier terms

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday hoped Japan would ease the terms and conditions of its development assistance in various sectors considering the economy of Bangladesh.

During a meeting with Japan-Bangladesh Parliamentary League (JBPL) President Shin Sakurai, the prime minister also hoped that Japan, the single largest development partner of Bangladesh, would come forward in a bigger way for construction of Padma Bridge like it did for Jamuna Bridge.

Sakurai was making a courtesy call on the prime minister at her office in the afternoon.

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UP chairman, 13 others get life for killing cop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A Rajshahi divisional tribunal yesterday handed down life term to 14 underground operatives including a UP chairman for killing a police sub-inspector in Bera upazila in Pabna on September 11, 2000.

Members of the outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party killed SI Hedayatul Islam in a gun battle with police at Bangalpara Char, some 30 kms off the upazila headquarters.

Of the convicts, Korban Ali, 45, chairman of Dhalar Char Union Parishad of Bera upazila, Abdul Wahab Bepari, 42, Salim, 35, Ketab Ali, 35, and Jalal Uddin, 36, are now in jail custody.

The rest nine who are absconding

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'Govt probing third force links to arms cache recovery'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury yesterday said the government is probing whether the so-called third force has any links with the arms cache recovered from Kuril Badda, according to the UNB.

"We are investigating whether there is any link with the so-called third force or any design to destabilise the country," the news agency quoted the home minister as saying at the office of the deputy commissioner of police (North Zone).

Altaf visited the spot where the arms were recovered after seeing two policemen injured in a gunfight with criminals in a pre-dawn raid yesterday.

Later the home minister said at

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FDI figure mismatch

BoI estimate does not tally with BB statistics

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Board of Investment (BoI) has once again come up with controversial figures on the foreign direct investment (FDI) in stark contrast to Bangladesh Bank estimates.

According to a BoI survey, Bangladesh received foreign direct investment worth \$287.67 million during January to June period of 2003, showing a 71 percent growth.

BoI Executive Chairman Mahmudur Rahman made a presentation based on their latest survey on FDI at a press briefing at Sheraton Hotel in Dhaka yesterday.

Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), an independent think-tank, said the BoI

move to put up its own estimate on the actual FDI flow is a welcome step as FDI data is very important. "There is a lot of confusion about statistics on the FDI flow, which is underreported in the national statistics."

However, he added that the released figures will give rise to controversy about the balance of payment (BoP) statement prepared by the central bank.

"If the BoI data is true, the central bank's FDI estimate during the first half of 2003 is 55 percent underreported and Bangladesh Export Processing Zone's 33 percent underreported."

According to the BoP statement, the capital and financial account, which reflect the direct capital flow, should include direct invest-

ment, both equity and invested earnings, Dr Debapriya noted. He said it is possible that reinvested earnings often being in local currency is not included in the BoP.

"On the other hand, intra-company loans, the third component of the FDI that is supposed to be reflected under trade credit in the capital and finance account of the BoP, does not probably mean total transactions during the period."

At the same time, the BoI survey is inadequate as it shows only inflow data, not outflow, and the net figures are not available, the CPD executive director added. Besides, there is no clarity in the data on capital machinery brought in as the equity

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Extra strike forces to stay till next Eid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A home ministry meeting on law and order yesterday decided to maintain till Eid-ul-Azha the additional forces deployed during Ramadan to check crime.

Chaired by Home Minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury, the meeting was informed that mobile courts filed 8,201 cases and fined Tk 52.28 lakh for various infractions during

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CHT braces for disquiet

Alliance, PCJSS men at odds over hartal, road blockade on 7th anniversary of peace deal

NURUL ALAM, Ctg; MONIRUL ISLAM, Bandarban; JUGLUL HASAN, Khagrachhari

A fresh stand-off between the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) and the ruling four-party alliance supporters seems imminent in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) as the seventh year of the peace treaty ends tomorrow.

The political body of the indigenous people in the CHT, the PCJSS, as part of its agitation programme, has called for a road blockade on December 2 and a dawn-to-dusk hartal on December 8, which the ruling coalition supporters have

vowed to resist, sources said.

PCJSS, which fought two-decade-long bush war against the government for its rights, announced the agitation programmes demanding complete implementation of the peace accord signed six years ago and resignation of ruling party MP of Khagrachhari Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan from the post of chairman of Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB).

PCJSS chief Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma alias Shantu Larma announced the programmes in the workers rally of his party at Bagaihat of Rangamati

for November 14 to 16.

Larma, who was also the chief of the indigenous rebels, threatened to cripple CHT by intensifying the movement if the security camps were not withdrawn from the hills before December 31.

Tension mounted in the hill districts following the announcement of the agitation plan prompting the authorities to tighten security ahead of the programmes, sources said.

"We have taken measures to deploy additional police force at all important points of the hills to foil any attempt to break peace during

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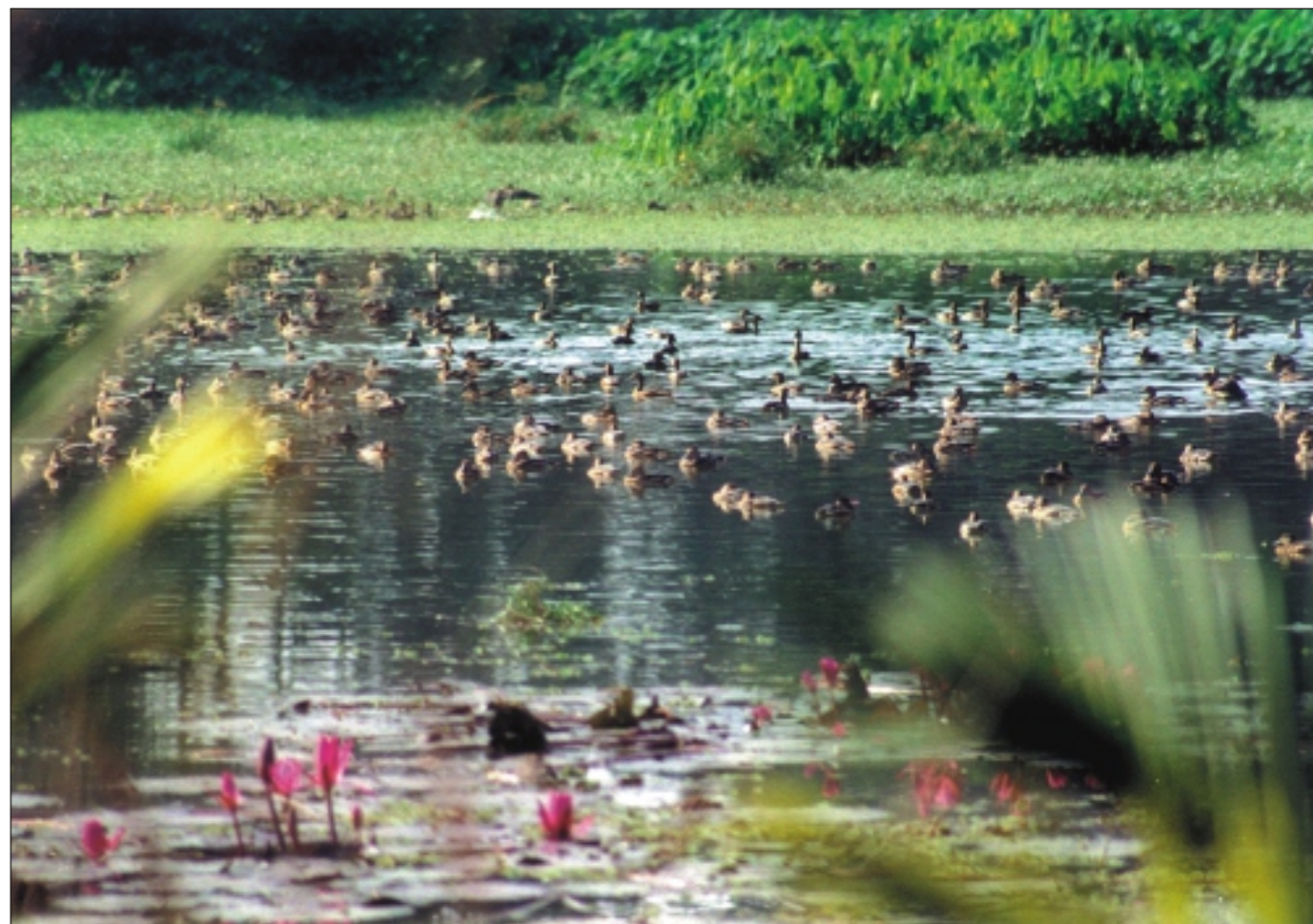


PHOTO: STAR

A lake on the Jahangirnagar University campus plays host to hundreds of migratory birds seeking winter refuge in Bangladesh. But they are not all safe as hunters are always on the prowl to kill them for meat.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Today's edition includes a 4-colour supplement on DBBL Industrial Bond on pages 6 and 7.