

## Abducted Chittagong businessman freed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Businessman Bakhtiaruddin Chowdhury was released on Thursday night, about 26 hours after his abduction on Wednesday.

The kidnappers left Bakhtiar blindfolded in a three-wheeler at Steel Mills Bazar, some 12 km from his Agrabad residence, at around 11:00pm.

He then returned home in another three-wheeler.

Bakhtiar was unable to talk to the police and newsmen as he fell sick due to torture on him in captivity, family sources said.

They also said no ransom was paid to secure his release and expressed reluctance to file any case.

Some eight armed people picked up Bakhtiar from his scrap metal shop at Sagarika Road under Pahartoli Police Station at about 9:00pm on Wednesday.

The kidnappers telephoned his family and first demanded Tk 20 lakh in ransom and then reduced the amount to Tk 10 lakh.

Bakhtiar's youngest son Fayezi said yesterday, "My father was released without any ransom. We

don't want to go for any legal fight as he is back."

Some sources however said the victim's family members denied payment of ransom and is unwilling to file any case apprehending trouble.

Family members said they did not know the motive behind the abduction of Bakhtiar. He was so tortured in captivity that he was not in a position to know the identity of the abductors, they added.

Rafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge (OC) of Pahartoli Police Station said they were yet to know the identity of the abductors and their motive.

"We met the businessman after his release but he was not in a position to talk. We will talk to him tonight (Friday night)," he said.

Meanwhile, three general diaries (GDs) - one by the victim's wife Momtaz Begum and two by police, were filed earlier.

Police nabbed three persons - Rezaul Haq, Sumon and Mahim - as suspects in the abduction. Rezaul is an employee of Bakhtiar.

The two others are alleged criminals and accomplices of one Zahir-who demanded toll from Bakhtiar a few days back.

## Hasina urges editors to launch pages for children

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon the affluent section of the society including businesspersons to patronise ideal organisations for children to groom them as ideal citizens.

"An ideal-based children's organisation enables the children to grow up with dignity and learn to differentiate between what is just and what is unjust," she said.

Hasina at a discussion meeting and cultural function marking the Victory Day urged the newspaper editors to launch pages for children to help flourish their talent and morals.

The programme was organised by Ghasful Khelaghar Asar in front of Bangabandhu Bhaban at Dhanmondi in the evening.

"The true history of the country's liberation war had been distorted, undermining the image of 'father of the nation' Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman," she said.

"The new generation will one day reject the present government for distorting the history," she added.

She urged the people to "resist the anti-independence forces and enemies of democracy to put an end to the anxiety and panic they are living under."

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, and lawmaker Colonel (ret'd) Shawkat Ali, Editor of the fortnightly Ananya Tasmima Hossain and Sammilito Sangskritik Jote General Secretary Golam Kuddus were present.

## 77 missing

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Kanchan, Noli, Maer Mukh, Ananda and Katadia. Most of their owners belong to Barguna and Patuakhali districts.

Patharghata police said they were helpless in tracing the missing boats and fishermen. Sources, however, said the Navy and the Coast Guard are yet to take any steps to recover the trawlers and the missing persons.

## Savings instrument

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months of this fiscal year, compared to the same period of last fiscal year.

Ten percent of this fiscal year's revenue budget has been earmarked for debt service repayment on savings instruments.

The Bangladesh Bank is also planning to formulate a guideline on purchase of savings instruments. The guideline aimed at curbing money laundering and will require a buyer to disclose their identification number and source of funds.

## Mohsin dead

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Mohsin set up a degree college in Shyamnagar upazila in Satkhira and donated 22 bighas of land to Underprivileged Children Education Fund (UCEF) technical school in Khulna.

He also made contributions to increasing the number of beds in Khulna Eye Hospital and to different schools and madrassahs in Khulna.

Mohsin was buried at Uttara graveyard after namaj-e-janaza at Uttara mosque yesterday.

Qulqhosque of Mohsin will be held tomorrow after Maghrib prayers at his Lalmatia residence No 3/5, Block-D.

## Line of fire

FROM PAGE 1

Each of the 30,000 workers earned Tk 100-300 a day working for the industry that pulled 50,000 to 60,000 CFT of stones from the river and generated Tk 6 to 8 lakh a day.

More than 100 hotels and 150 trucks that satisfied the industry's needs are also facing hard times.

Ujjal, owner of a stone extraction enterprise, said: "Since we had long been operating in the industry, its collapse spelled doom to us. It's difficult for us to find an alternative source of income."

Echoing the same despondency, Ashraf, another businessman, said people's baser impulses found expression in the wake of widespread job cuts.

"Smuggling, extortion and other crimes have thrived in the area as unemployment among the youth runs unbelievably high."

Locals do not see an end to the crisis soon, as border talks between the BDR and BSF have changed little over the years.

They say the BSF has been harassing them by abducting locals and threatening them with gunshots if they went to the river to extract stones.

Besides, the construction of a barrage on the Indian side of the Mahananda has dried up the flow of stones in monsoon.

Helpless locals desperate for a solution to the crisis have recently submitted an application to the local legislator, Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar, seeking his move to erase their woes.



Professor Abdullah Abu Sayeed exchanges pleasantries with guests at a programme to celebrate the silver jubilee of Biswa Sahitya Kendra on its premises yesterday.

## Black money undermines

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as a human-rights violation and a direct threat to the rule of law that provides a necessary basis for democracy.

"Impunity means lack of accountability for human-rights violations, committed or condoned by different agencies of the state," he said.

The constitution of Bangladesh guarantees right to life, property, equality before law, food and security as fundamental rights. Human rights are also vested in individuals, he said.

"In spite of these, brutality or frequency of criminal activity and impunity have not abated. Our law provides protection but these (legal provisions) are flouted and misused," Justice Hasan added.

"The transitional nature of political and economic development of Bangladesh can be ascribed as one of the reasons of lapses in observance of constitutional and human rights," he said.

"When systematic corruption grips the country, it creates a complementary chain perpetuating a vicious circle of malpractice."

Justice Hasan underscored the higher standards of judiciary and their more exposure to other systems, more education in human rights and more training and more awareness and motivation.

The participants from South Asian countries such as Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka said the pattern of human-rights violations by law enforcers is nearly the same in the region.

Speakers emphasised the reform of police department as urgent agenda for human-rights protection, improvement in quality of police education with social science orientation and training in human rights.

Odhikar Director Masood Alam Ragib Ahsan mentioned in his keynote paper that 73 people died

from torture in police custody from January to November this year.

"People are harassed when seeking justice due to misuse of Section 54 of CrPC (Criminal Procedure Code) by police who do not comply with constitutional provisions in many cases," Masood said.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed, attending the discussion as special guest, said the government was trying to reform the police department to ensure "check-and-balance implementation" of Section 54 to avoid human-rights violations.

Dr Tasneem Siddiqui, president of Odhikar, chaired the discussion, where WR Sanjeeva from Sri Lanka, Gopal Sivakoti Chintan from Nepal, Zia Ahmed Awan from Pakistan, Professor Buddhadeb Chowdhury from India and Khaleida Khatun from Bangladesh, among others, spoke.

## River raiders and polluters

FROM PAGE 12

The industries, mainly textiles and garments-cum-dyeing factories, mushroomed in this area without setting up waste treatment units during the past decade. A portion of the river has reportedly become septic with incessant flow of chemicals and dyes and its water has assumed the colour of dark red wine, completely wiping out aquatic life, including fish over a large area. It has even affected those who use the river water for tending their fields in the area.

The Department of Environment (DoE) has, over the years, identified as polluters some 1,176 units having no waste treatment systems. While most of the DoE notices went unheeded, some of the factory owners promised to install effluent treatment system, or at least discharge them within their factory compounds in lagoons.

The law provides for the DoE to take stern actions including closure of the factories, cut off their supply of utilities and other facilities. But DoE reportedly does not have the manpower or authority to enforce the law. The government decision to set up environmental courts has not been implemented so far, making it much too difficult to prosecute the violators, who take advantage of the legal lacunas and remain outside the dragnet. The same sad situation afflicts the Turag river.

Encroachers have reportedly overrun a vast stretch of the river

near the Mirpur bridge since they took lease of the south bank from the Dhaka City Corporation to handle construction materials arriving by boat. Their activities are said to be changing the course of the Turag, which connects the Buriganga and the Balu river along the city's northern outskirts, hampering its flow and seriously threatening the bridge.

An engineer of the Water Development Board was quoted as saying, "The bridge might be affected since a change in the river's course would increase the depth." The City Corporation is said to have leased part of the south bank to traders unloading construction materials such as stone bricks, boulders, gravel, sand, chips and wood, extracted illegally from the Sundarbans; what started as a landing bay has slowly expanded at the expense of Turag, as complained by some local people.

As winter sets in, the encroachers have expanded their operation, building structures that extend further into the river. Encroachers are also reportedly gobbling up land on the north-western bank of the river, endangering the bridge.

Brick-makers, earth dealers are also said to be encroaching on the banks further west, reducing the width of the Buriganga.

The City Corporation was reported to have taken up investigation into the alleged encroach-

ments. If the reported encroachments are found to be true, it behoves the City Corporation to take appropriate measures to clear such encroachments, so that there may be no cause for legal action as in the case of encroachments on Buriganga river in case of which the High Court has already issued a rule.

The river raiders and polluters should be checked with a firm hand to ensure a satisfactory environmental situation in respect of these rivers.

## Health programmes

FROM PAGE 1

Association (IDA) on November 30 signed an agreement of credit extension for the HPSP till December 31 next year.

The development partners have committed \$74 million for the extension, which has been termed Health, Population Programme Project (HPPP). The government's contribution is yet to be known.

The HNPSP was supposed to be launched in July this year but lack of funds and failure to prepare the Project Implementation Paper (PIP) delayed the launch.

"We have a long way to go. I am not happy with the health sector's performance. It is in disarray and needs further shaping up," the health secretary said.

## Anti-Ahmadiyyas' ultimatum to govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anti-Ahmadiyya religious bigots yesterday threatened to paralyse the country if the government does not 'evict' the Ahmadiyyas from Nakhhalpara mosque by January 3.

"We will go there on January 9 and this time we will not return until we have driven the kaffirs (non-Muslims) out of the area," vowed Mahmudul Hasan Mamtazi, Amir of Hizafate Khatme Nabuwat Andolon Coordination Committee, an anti-Ahmadiyya alliance.

"And swear upon God, there will be Qayamat (doomsday) if anyone comes to prevent us," he warned.

Mamtazi urged the 'real Muslims' to wage a jihad against the Ahmadiyyas who, according to him, are stigmatising Islam by calling themselves Muslims and their places of worship mosques.

Mamtazi was addressing a demonstration at Tongi Muktiyoddha Chatter after Jama prayers, jointly organised by Khatme Nabuwat Andolon and Aamra Dhakabasi, a socio-cultural group, with the Andolon Nayebe Amir Abdul Alim Nazami in the chair.

Some fifteen hundred members of a raft of Islamist outfits took part in the demonstration, blocking the east side of the busy Dhaka-Mymensingh road for about two hours.

"Pass a law in parliament to declare the Ahmadiyyas non-Muslims constitutionally before we take it in our hands to meet the demand of the Muslims of the country," Mamtazi demanded of the government.

Nabuwat leader Ruhul Amin Khan warned, "If the government does not declare them kaffir by January 23, we will brand them so and go for an out-governments movement."

"As we have no complaint against Christians, Hindus or Buddhists, we will not have any against the Ahmadiyyas only if they call themselves 'Qadiyani Commune' or anything other than Muslims and

## AL's mass contact programme from Dec 23

UNB, Dhaka

Central leaders of the Awami League will kick off a mass contact programme across the country on December 23 to garner support for the party's anti-government movement.

During the tour, the AL leaders will hold rallies, workers' meetings and take part in mass contact.

The Awami League has been demanding an end to repression on women, torture on minority, political persecution and harassment of opposition leaders and activists.

The plan for the mass contact was taken at a meeting of party's central working committee meeting on December 11.

The Awami League has also planned to hold a grand rally on January 10 at Paltan Maidan in the city from where it will declare a fresh anti-government agitation programme.

It will also observe a "demand day" across the country on January 3, a party spokesmansaid.

## Mild cold wave

FROM PAGE 1

Samerandira Karmakar, deputy director of the Met Office. "The cloudy weather has been persisting unusually long. The clouds were supposed to move eastward but it was moving slowly," he added.

Meanwhile, winter rain and cloudy sky yesterday troubled people of most of the places in the country. The mist and clouds curtailed the sun almost all day long.

The Met Office forecast said it may drizzle today at some places in Dhaka, Chittagong, Barisal and Sylhet divisions. Night temperature may fall one to two degrees Celsius especially in the northwest.

The lowest temperature yesterday recorded in the country was 14.6 degrees Celsius in Dinajpur, while Dhaka Met Office measured 19.3 degrees Celsius.

their so-called mosques places of worship," Aamra Dhakabashi president, Shamsul Haq, said.

Secretary General of Nabuwat Andolon Tafazzul Haq Aziz said no non-Muslim can live in this country identifying himself as a Muslim.

Aamra Dhakabashi and Khatme Nabuwat Andolon will hold similar demonstrations at Jatrabari on December 26, Mirpur on January 2 and Paltan on January 23.

Nazmul Haq, Nur Hossain Nurani, Latifur Rahman Hamid, Abdul Qaiyum, Nur Hossain, Keramat Ullah, Shabbir Ahmad and Qudrat Ullah, among others, addressed the demonstration.

Hundreds of anti-Ahmadiyyas later brought out a procession.

## French lawyer

FROM PAGE 12

Asked if he was also ready to defend the former Iraqi leader, who was captured Saturday night by US troops in northern Iraq, Verges said: "If other people seek my counsel I would have no reason to refuse."

But he insisted that "all Western heads of state", from the time of the 1980-1989 Iraq-Iran war to the latest Iraq conflict, should take the stand when the imprisoned former Iraqi officials go on trial.

"At the Nuremberg trial, the four allies accused the Nazi leaders of certain war crimes and crimes against humanity," Verges said, in reference to the trials of leading Nazi party officials after the defeat of Germany in World War II.

"Right now the former Iraqi regime is being blamed for certain events that took place at a time when its members were treated as allies or friends by countries that had embassies in Baghdad and ambassadors not all of whom were blind (to Iraqi crimes)," he said.

"Today, this indignation appears to me contrived," he added.

"When we reprove the use of certain weapons (we need to know) who sold these weapons," he said about Iraq's past purchase of arms from France, Britain, the United States and Russia.

"When we disapprove of the war against Iran (we need to know) who encouraged it," Verges added. The United States maintained ties with the Saddam regime in the 1980s and tacitly approved the war on its nemesis, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, in Tehran.

Verges also slammed the UN embargo that was slapped on Iraq after it invaded Kuwait in 1990 and criticised the US administration's backing of the sanctions, which he said caused the death of an estimated half-a-million people.

"Mrs. (Madeleine) Albright once said that this is the price to pay for democracy," he said of the secretary of state under former US president Bill Clinton.

## FFs urged

FROM PAGE 12

the war was to translate aspirations and dreams of the millions into reality. But those are yet to come true," he added.

Reading out a declaration, MSP Presidium Member Serajul Haque said

Muktijoddha Mancho was organised with the aim to infuse unity among the political, socio-cultural and professional bodies of the country imbued with the spirit of liberation war. The programme will feature retrospective on liberation war by organisers and leaders of the freedom fighters and cultural shows.

The AL general secretary also said it was an irony that the anti-liberation forces now enjoyed the state power, defied the traditions of the liberation war, and even contrived to distort its history.

They are able to do so only by "taking advantage of the existing disunity among the freedom fighters," the veteran Awami Leagueur said.

The other speakers were MSP Chairman Abir Ahmad, Secretary General Shahjahan Kabir, Babul Akhtar who was a newscaster of the Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra, Krishak League leader MA Karim and Sammilita Sangskritik Jote General Secretary Golam Kuddus.

## Beagle 2 parts

FROM PAGE 1

Visual confirmation of the release was just captured by a camera on Mars Express.

The delay between the separation and the sending of the signal was due to the mothership, Mars Express, having to adjust its orientation before contacting ESOC. The signal took 8.5 minutes lag to reach Earth.

There was an early indication that the 70-kilogram lander had separated at 10:42 GMT, with the news that an electronic "umbilical cord" connecting Beagle 2 to Mars Express had gone dead. "It's like a heart machine, but in our case it's a good thing when the signal comes to an end," said Colin Pillinger, lead scientist for Beagle 2.

Final confirmation was indicated about half an hour later by a drop in temperature on Mars Express in the spot where Beagle 2 had sat and the slight recoil the mothership felt after the release of the lander.

MOMENT OF TRUTH

Lord Sainsbury, the UK science minister, claimed the release of the UK-built Beagle 2 as a triumph for British science and engineering. In particular, he praised the designers of the Spin Up and Ejection Mechanism (SUEM), which was responsible for jettisoning the lander. "This was their moment of truth," he said.

Barrie Kirk, the former project manager for Beagle 2, said: "I'm obviously pleased, but it was no surprise. The SUEM had been extensively tested in all sorts of

environments."

Failure to separate would obviously have been a disaster for Beagle 2, but it would have also posed a serious problem for Mars Express. The extra mass would have required the use of significantly more fuel as Mars Express manoeuvres into orbit around the red planet, potentially meaning it would not reach its optimum position.

"Today we're happy to be released, but I'm sure Mars Express is also very happy to get rid of us," Kirk told New Scientist.

## Bremer escapes attack in Iraq

AFP, Baghdad

The top US civil administrator in Iraq, Paul Bremer, said yesterday he had survived an attack against him, but an aide said he did not seem to have been specifically targeted.

"That's correct," Bremer told reporters in the southern city of Basra when asked whether there had been an attack against him earlier in December. Bremer laughed off the incident and gave no further details, but at a later press conference in Baghdad it was revealed that the attack happened on December 6 near Baghdad airport.

Bremer spokesman Dan Senor said the administrator and his party was returning from an impromptu, unscheduled meeting when the attack happened, and no one was harmed.

## Saddam's trial

FROM PAGE 12

Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis died in the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, a conflict in which Britain, France and the United States as well as a number of key Arab states backed Iraq when it invaded its neighbour.

Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah said Wednesday that Kuwait must take part in the trial of Saddam Hussein, the official KUNA news agency reported.

"Kuwait must be a part in trying Saddam Hussein for the aggressions and crimes" he committed against the emirate from 1990 to 1991, Sheikh Sabah said.

Israeli Justice and Defense Ministers Yossef Lapid and Shaul Mofaz said that Saddam had to answer for launching Scud missiles that killed two people in the Tel Aviv area in 1991, and for his support of Palestinian "terrorist" operations.

The United States on Thursday said that international judges could try Saddam when he is finally brought to a new court set up in Iraq to handle cases against his former regime.

But John Negroponte, the US ambassador to the United Nations, said while non-Iraqi judges could be involved in the case against Saddam, "this is an Iraqi court," and the final decisions about what to do with him would be left up to the Iraqi people.

Governing Council member Nasseer al-Shadershi for his part said that "all states, countries, and individuals have a right to lodge a complaint before the court."

The Governing Council announced on December 10, three days before Saddam was caught by US troops after more than eight months on the run, that it was setting up a court to deal with the alleged crimes against humanity committed by his regime.

The court will be headquartered in Saddam's former personal museum, where he exhibited the presents that he received

from foreign dignitaries.

Wooden benches for the judges and a dock for the accused have already been installed in the building, erected in central Baghdad's al-Harthiya neighbourhood after the 1991 Gulf War.

Reuters adds: Saddam Hussein's eldest daughter called on Thursday for an internationally supervised trial for her father, saying he would not receive a fair trial under the US appointed Iraqi Governing Council.

Raghad Hussein, 35, spoke to CNN in an exclusive interview conducted in Jordan, where she and her younger sister and their children were granted asylum after the US-led invasion of Iraq in April.

"Of course I don't think he would receive a fair trial" under the current regime, she said. "The interim government is not recognised by anyone in the Arab world."

"I want a fair trial under international supervision... This is a legitimate right of any human being," she said.

Asked about video images of a dazed and haggard-looking Saddam released after he was flushed from a hole beneath a shack on a farm near his home town of Tikrit on Saturday, Raghad said she was convinced her father was drugged.

"Anyone with insight could tell from the first that my father was not fully conscious," she said, according to an unofficial translation of her remarks, made in Arabic.

## 500 rebels

FROM PAGE 12

Kamatapur Liberation Organisation from the Indian state of West Bengal had set up bases in southern Bhutan.

The groups are fighting for separate homelands and have been carrying out guerrilla strikes on Indian soldiers from Bhutan for several years.



Bangladesh Theatre brings out a colourful procession in Dhaka yesterday, marking the 17th founding anniversary of the drama group.