



From left, Sheikh Hasina's Political Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury desperately looks for a transport to send a wounded opposition activist to a hospital; a policeman aims at some opposition men who attacked the house of BNP lawmaker Harun Ur Rashid Khan Monno in Dhanmondi Road 27; the attackers hurl bricks at Monno's house; a 14-party procession breaks through a police barricade at Bangla Motors; and a microbus of a private TV channel burning at the same place during the 14-party-police clashes yesterday.

Outlaw killed in 'crossfire'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, KUSHIA

A top cadre of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-Janajuddho) was killed during a "shootout" between members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and his accomplices at Chandmair in Gangni upazila of Meherpur early yesterday.

The outlaw was identified as Johirul Islam alias Tipu, 32, son of Monirul Islam of Bamanagar under Alamdanga upazila of Chuadanga district.

Acting on a tip-off, members of the Rab-6 arrested Tipu at Minapara village in Gangni Tuesday evening and took him to their office for quizzing.

On his statement, the elite force along with Tipu set out for Minapara to arrest his cohorts and recover hidden firearms.

When they reached near Chandmair field at about 3:30am, Tipu's accomplices opened fire, forcing the Rab men to retaliate.

Rab sources said Tipu received bullets during the shootout and died instantly.

They retrieved one rifle and three bullets from the scene.

Police said Tipu was accused in six cases including three for murder.

Britons warned over China's 'harvested' organ transplants

AFP, London

Potential transplant patients in Britain were urged yesterday to think twice about going to China for their operation due to a real risk that they may be getting the harvested organ of a freshly executed convict.

In a statement, the British Transplantation Society said there was "an accumulating body of evidence" to suggest that organs from executed Chinese prisoners were being removed -- without consent -- for transplantation.

"This process of organ procurement and the subsequent transplants are known to involve payment of money and may implicate transplant centres, patients and the authorities and judiciary responsible for the prisoners," it said.

While the exact number of such transplants is not known, "the figure is thought to be in the thousands," it said.

It branded the practice "unethical ... an unacceptable practice (and) a breach of human rights".

It added that, given "worldwide shortages of ethically acceptable organs, any act that risks calling the practice of transplantation into disrepute is to be regretted".

Concern that China -- first in the world in capital punishment, with at least 3,400 executions last year alone, according to Amnesty International -- is using the dead convicts as organ donors goes back many years.

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SAFTA COE MEET

Developing countries to cut 40pc import tariff in 2006

MD HASAN

Safta's committee of experts (CoE) adopted a timeframe for the member countries regarding reduction of import tariffs.

The developing countries will have to reduce 40 percent import tariff by December 31, 2006.

According to Safta agreement the developing countries of Safta (South Asian Free Trade Area)

India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka will have to reduce their import tariffs within zero to five percent in the next three years.

The CoE decided that the developing countries have to reduce their import tariffs by 10 percent by July 31 this year and the rest of the 30 percent by December 31 of this year.

The decisions came yesterday on the second day of the first meet-

ing of Safta's committee of experts held at Sonargaon hotel in Dhaka. Experts from Safta countries -- Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka took part in the meeting.

According to the agreement in the first phase from January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2007, tariffs are to be reduced in two equal annual instalments to 20 percent in India,

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SC Bar protests draft contempt of court law

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) yesterday protested the draft contempt of court act.

SCBA President Barrister M Amir-Ul Islam said the proposed law regarding the contempt of court will damage the constitutional rights of the people to freedom of speech and expression.

"There is no definition of contempt of court in the proposed amendment of the law. The government did not discuss the issue with the professional bodies, civil society members, lawyers, journalists, Law Commission and even in parliament on the amendment," he told BDNEWS.

"This law cannot be helpful for

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Dhaka to start talks with Islamabad for FTA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka has decided to launch a formal negotiation with Pakistan to sign a bilateral free trade agreement (FTA), the first ever in the country's history.

A committee of experts (CoE) was formed yesterday with the leadership of Ministry of Commerce Joint Secretary Elias Ahmed of Bangladesh and his Pakistani counterpart Shahid Bashir.

The decision made yesterday at a bilateral meeting with the Minister for Commerce Altaf Hossain Chowdhury and his Pakistani counterpart Humayun Akhtar Khan in the city.

"We never initiated formal talks with any country to sign a free trade

agreement. It is a historical day for our nation," Altaf Hossain Chowdhury said in a joint press statement after the meeting.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the first South Asian Free Trade Area (Safta) Ministerial Council meeting comprising commerce ministers of the seven South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) nations which begins today in the capital.

The first meeting of the newly formed CoE will be held in May this year in Dhaka to finalize the modalities and examine technical aspects of the FTA.

Altaf Hossain said the CoE would finalise the process of the FTA as well as the guidelines for the signing.

During the meeting Dhaka sought duty free access of 73 products in Pakistan in order to reduce the existing trade deficit between the two countries. Both sides discussed about how the countries can remove tariff and non-tariff barriers.

Bangladesh has expressed its concern about the existing trade imbalance and requested to launch a direct shipping link between the countries. Pakistan emphasised on the need for the FTA and proposed to set up bonded warehouses in Dhaka and Karachi.

Pakistani commerce minister said Pakistan has signed an FTA with Sri Lanka and got tremendous

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A man escorts his two school-going daughters for safety during yesterday's clash between the opposition activists and police near Bangla Motor in the capital.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Inter-ministerial meet discusses 5-yr hajj policy

UNB, Dhaka

An inter-ministerial meeting yesterday discussed the draft 5-year Hajj Policy envisaging identical airfare for the pilgrims.

The policy set the target of 65,000 pilgrims for performing the next hajj in December. The Ministry for Religious Affairs may however reconsider the target.

A press release issued after the meeting said the intending ballotee hajj pilgrims should deposit money to the bank by August 26 and the non-ballotees by September 10.

State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharef Hossain Shahjahan who presided over the meeting warned against submission of fake or forged health certificate by the pilgrims.

He urged the Bangladesh Biman authority to fix a reasonable fare for the pilgrims. He also urged the private hajj agencies to ensure necessary services to them.

Jamaat men attack indigenous people

12 injured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, SATKHIRA

At least 12 people of the indigenous Munda community were injured when a group of people led by a local Jamaat-e-Islami leader

attacked them at Kashipur village in Shyamnagar upazila yesterday.

The Mundas came under attack as they tried to resist the miscreants led by Monzur Rahi, the son-in-law of local Jamaat MP Gazi Nazrul Islam and Kamruzzaman who

launched an attack in a bid to evict the Mundas from their ancestral lands, police said referring to the victims and eyewitnesses.

Monzur Rahi and his brother Kamruzzaman have been conspiring to occupy their lands for long,

said Ashwini Munda. He demanded that the government take action against those who are trying to evict them.

Monzur Rahi, however, said he purchased three bigha of land from Hamid Sardar and Mohammad Sardar of the area in 1997 but the Mundas are demanding the lands as their own.

"I am not responsible for the attack. The clash took place between the two groups when some people were digging a hole in the disputed land," he said.

Ramprasad Munda, 18, Kalidas Munda, 20, Tarak Munda, 18, Kajal Munda, 18, Joyanta Munda, 22, Akli Munda, 60, Fulen Bala Munda, 22,

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Curfew in Kathmandu as death toll climbs

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal clamped a curfew on the capital after four protesters were shot dead and many more were wounded yesterday, witnesses said, in the worst violence of a campaign to end the king's absolute rule.

In a bid to thwart a mass rally planned for Thursday, the authorities declared a curfew on Kathmandu and issued orders to shoot violators on sight.

"The curfew has been imposed from 2:00 am until 8:00 pm due to security reasons," said Kathmandu's chief administrator Shushil Ghimire. "Anyone found violating curfew orders will be shot on sight."

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McClellan to leave White House

AP, Washington

White House Deputy Chief of Staff Karl Rove gave up some of his responsibilities and White House press secretary Scott McClellan announced his resignation yesterday, continuing a shakeup in President Bush's administration that has already yielded a new chief of staff.

Rove is giving up oversight of policy development to focus more on politics with the approach of the fall midterm elections, said a senior administration official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the president had not yet made the announcement.

Just over a year ago, Rove was promoted to deputy chief of staff in charge of most White House policy coordination. That new portfolio came on top of his title as senior adviser and role of chief policy aide to Bush.

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Prayer Timing		
April 20		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-25	5-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-27	6-31
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Iran crisis deepens

AFP, Moscow

The West and Russia sought yesterday to present a united front over how to deal with Iran despite signs of division over how toughly to act in forcing Tehran to halt its nuclear activity.

The crisis overshadowed talks between officials from the powerful Group of Eight (G8) -- Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy,

Japan, Russia and the United States -- meeting in Moscow to discuss a summit planned this July.

Amid signs of an East-West split, French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy warned that the only way to pressure Iran was if China and Russia stand with the West.

"If the international community is not united it makes it easy for the Iranians to continue" to defy

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