

Accused in Ramna blast case now SI at Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

An accused of the Ramna Batomul bomb blast case has been appointed sub-inspector (SI) at the Patuakhali Sadar Police station.

Mizanur Rahman Swadhin, who was arrested by police in connection with the bomb attack on the Pahela Baishakh celebration programme in 2001 and later released on bail granted by the High Court, joined the post in the first week of this month.

A former Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) cadre, Mizanur received departmental training at the Sardah Police Training Academy from February 22.

Ten people were killed and over 100 injured in the bomb blast incident at the Ramna Batomul in Dhaka.

Police arrested Mizanur at a house in Matuail area in the capital. The law enforcers also arrested his cousin Motur Rahman, imam of the Matuail mosque whom they identified as a skilled bomb maker.

Jasim, another cousin of

Shibir cadres at RU beat up 3 JCD activists

RU CORRESPONDENT

Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) cadres beat up three Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists of Rajshahi University (RU) Bangabandhu hall yesterday.

ICS cadres assaulted JCD worker Ratu allegedly for destroying the fruits of a lichee tree on the hall compound at around 2:00pm yesterday, sources said, adding that the ICS-led 'hall lichee protection committee' yesterday evening held a meeting at the hall provost room to find a solution.

During the meeting, hall ICS cadre Siddiq got locked in an altercation with JCD hall activists and beat up Shamim and Russel with iron rods and bamboo sticks in the presence of hall Provost Prof Sheikh Jaman and Proctor of the university Prof Enamul Haque.

ICS cadres also drove the JCD activists out of the hall. The injured JCD men were rushed to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

After the incident assistant proctor of the university Prof Asraf, a pro-Jamaat teacher, tried to settle the matter but JCD activists physically assaulted him.

Manik, a hall JCD leader, said ICS hall unit general secretary earlier damaged JCD's hall billboard and they created yesterday's situation to divert the issue.

High tension is prevailing while many ICS outsiders came to the campus in motorbikes.

RU JCD leaders met RU Vice-Chancellor Prof Altaf Hossain at his house in the evening and demanded exemplary punishment to the ICS cadres.

Police have been deployed in front of the Bangabandhu Hall.

Indigenous man injured in attack dies in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

An indigenous day labourer succumbed to his injuries at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital yesterday afternoon 18 days after a criminal attack him to evict him from his house at Senapara of Godagari upazila in Rajshahi.

The victim Rabinranath Sardar, 40, was having treatment since April 3 when he was hacked mercilessly by the criminals.

His wife Bala Sundari in a case filed with a court five days ago claimed two BNP leaders, Kakonhat Municipality Commissioner Ziaul Haque and Kakonhat Krishak Dal President Abdul Malek, masterminded the attack.

"They hired the criminals to evict us from our land. As my husband protested they attacked him," she said in the complaint against 16 people including the two BNP leaders.

She alleged she filed the case with the magistrate's court as police refused to accept her complaint. Officer-in-charge (OC) of Godagari Police Station Nurul Amin said he was investigating the case following a court order.

WB links reforms to its 4-year loan plan

\$3b includes assistance for Padma Bridge, poverty reduction

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The World Bank (WB) under its four-year term loan plan intends to lend Bangladesh \$2.94 billion of which \$1 billion for the construction of the Padma Bridge and in poverty reduction assistance.

The lending will depend on the next government's willingness to steer ahead with various reform programmes and the WB is going to prepare a policy note chalking out the reforms it wants the next government to implement, said a WB country assistance strategy (CAS)

report. The WB is also going to bring up its country offices as well as bring in changes in its lending method.

In the new CAS, the WB proposes to lend \$488 million in FY06 for five programmes, \$660 million in FY07 for six programmes, \$880 million in FY08 for seven programmes and \$910 million in FY09 for six programmes.

Besides, the WB may consider providing an additional \$844 million for twelve projects during FY06-FY09.

The WB under its Development

Support Credit (DSC) lent \$700 million in three tranches as direct budgetary support. In the new lending programme, it may lend \$150 million as DSC-4 for the next fiscal year.

There will be no support credit after that and instead the WB lending will come in the form of poverty reduction support credit (PRSC). The WB will lend \$600 million as PRSC, \$300 million each in FY08 and FY09.

Although the amount will come as budgetary support, the govern

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Govt dilly-dally over reforms leading nation to conflicts

14-party vows to realise demands

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL)-led 14-party opposition combine yesterday reaffirmed its resolve to realise its demands for reforms in the caretaker government and electoral systems through movement.

The combine accused the four-party coalition government of lacking interest in meeting the demands. Leaders of the 14-party at a meeting at the AL central office on Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital blamed the government for what they said pushing the nation into a state of confrontation through dilly-dally over implementation of the reform proposals.

The meeting reviewed prepara-

tions for making the opposition-called countrywide down-to-dusk hartal tomorrow a success.

"The prime minister is repeatedly rejecting the reform proposals but is also staging a drama on those," AL acting General Secretary Obaidul Quader told The Daily Star after the meeting.

The government bid for a dialogue with the opposition on reforms is aimed to create a 'smokescreen' to hide its intention, he said. "The prime minister's repeated rejection of our reform proposals have given rise to doubts about sincerity of the government in implementing those."

Meanwhile, the AL presidium meets today at the party's Dhanmondi office with party chief

Sheikh Hasina in the chair to discuss the political situation in the country. Sources said Hasina would give directives on the next course of anti-government agitation programmes at the meeting.

The programmes will however be announced at a 14-party meeting at the AL's Bangabandhu Avenue office following a demonstration by the combine at Mukhtang this evening.

The demonstration is being staged to protest police atrocities on opposition leaders and workers during Thursday's sit-in programme in front of the Prime

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BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan waves at the audience of a city BNP rally at Mukhtang in the capital yesterday.

US starts crackdown on undocumented workers

1,187 illegals, 6 bosses rounded up

AFP, Washington

A nationwide crackdown has netted 1,187 undocumented workers, two weeks after Congress fumbled immigration reform and immigrants choked US streets demanding amnesty, officials said Thursday. Immigration officials raided 40 locations of Houston-based pallet-making company IFCO in 26 states on Wednesday, arresting six former and current IFCO managers who were charged with knowingly hiring undocumented workers. They could face up to 10 years in prison if found guilty, officials said.

Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, who now oversees immigration enforcement, told reporters at a press conference that the surprise raids against IFCO had occurred on Wednesday.

"Employers and workers alike should be on notice that the status quo has changed," Chertoff said. "This department has no patience for employers who tolerate or perpetuate a shadow economy," he said.

The company hired a government informant, and then sent him to recruit other undocumented workers and obtain for them falsified work documents, according to officials.

Of IFCO's 5,800 workers, more than half carried invalid work papers, immigration officials said.

An estimated 12 million undocumented foreigners live in the United States, and recent bids by Congress to define a policy triggered widespread protests by pro-immigrant and Hispanic groups.

Millions of undocumented work-

ers marched earlier this month in US cities nationwide to pressure Congress for favourable reforms.

However, Congress could not agree on a path to follow. President George W. Bush promoted a guest-worker program that would have given even those who had entered illegally a chance at eventual citizenship.

However, even members of his own Republican Party could not agree. Many sought to impose criminal penalties for unapproved entries and a wall along much of Mexico's 3,000 kilometer (2,000 mile) US border, measures that were approved in the House of Representatives.

In the end, Senate action was

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Section 144 as AL, Jubo Dal call rallies at same venue

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Section 144 of Criminal Procedure court (CrPC) has been imposed at Dhanbari of Madhupur upazila in Tangail as Awami League (AL), Dhanbari unit, and Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal, Musuddi union unit, called public meetings for today on the same venue.

Tension prevails in the area as AL said it would hold the meeting ignoring the ban. Local AL leaders said they had called for a meeting at Pankata Islamia High School ground in Musuddi union and they have been publicising the meeting for the last ten days obtaining permission from the administration.

AL leader Abdul Latif Siddique, lawmaker Abdur Razzak, former state minister for religion Maulana Nurul Islam, and former student

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FM off to Europe

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, prior to his departure for Europe yesterday, said he will request the European leaders to expand bilateral cooperation and try to remove misperception, if any, about Bangladesh.

Morshed Khan will visit France, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Belgium, and talk to his counterparts in those countries.

"EU has already granted duty-free access of all Bangladeshi products under 'Everything But Arms' (EBA) scheme... I will seek further cooperation in diversification of our trade and capacity building," Khan told reporters at the Zia International Airport.

Apart from readymade garments, Bangladesh also wants to export new products like processed food and pharmaceuticals to the EU countries, he said.

Asked about the EU parliament's two separate resolutions that had expressed concern about governance in Bangladesh, the foreign minister said the resolutions were adopted on wrong information, as that situation had never existed in the country.

"I want to clear the picture about Bangladesh... I want to discuss everything with an open mind," he said, adding that the EU parliament's resolution has no binding on the European Commission, the executive body of

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Rival BNP men clash in Muladi, 20 injured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

At least 20 people were injured in clashes between two rival groups of the ruling BNP in Muladi upazila under the district yesterday morning.

Supporters of central BNP Law Affairs Secretary advocate Zainul Abedin were announcing a meeting scheduled to be held today afternoon at AKader School in Gachua union of Muladi, witnesses and police said.

Incensed at the announcement of former upazila BNP president Shukkur Khan's name as the meeting president, cadres of local lawmaker Mosharrif Hossain Mongu, who is also Barisal (North) district BNP president, attacked the Zainul group activists and dismantled their loud-speaker and posters near the Muladi municipality at about 11:00am.

As the cadres of Zainul group attacked their rivals in Muladi College field in retaliation, clashes, chasing and counter chasing spread panic in the town.

At least 20 people from both the groups were injured in the hour-long clashes when both Mongu and Zainul were present in Muladi.

Six of the injured were admitted to hospitals. A fax-shop of a Mongu supporter was looted and three gunshots were fired during the clashes.

A tense situation is prevailing in the area. Police have been deployed.

| Prayer Timing | | |
|---------------|-------|--------|
| April 22 | | |
| | 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



Noted singer of Nazrul songs Firoza Begum being honoured at a reception by CitiBank NA at a city hotel yesterday. Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Saleh Uddin Ahmed, left, and CitiBank CEO Mamun Rashid are seen in the picture.

Ctg port keeps off container ships

Blames lack of berthing, storage facilities for the unusual damper

RAFIQ HASAN

In complete contrast to the global trend, the country's premier seaport would rather not have any rise in the number of container ships calling at it.

In a recent circular, which a shipping ministry high official finds "damaging to the port's image abroad," the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) asked the shipping agents to refrain from bringing more container ships in, citing a dearth of berthing and container-storage

facilities. If more container vessels call at the port it would result in a corresponding inflation of the already-too-long waiting and turn-around time at the outer anchorage, argued the circular signed by CPA Transport Director Ahsanul Kabir.

In recent times, while the number of feeder ships has risen from 28 to 47, the container ship berthing capacity of the port has inched up by only one -- from six ships to seven, mentions the circular. As a result, it says, the turn-around and waiting

time of the ships has been on the rise.

Besides, the number of export containers has not increased at a pace matching the rate of hike in feeder ships' number, forcing the latter to wait for long at the port. "It may create problem for maintaining connection with mother vessels at transhipment ports," the circular remarked.

Expressing surprise at the circular, the shipping ministry official wondered, "How come the port

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GRISLY 'SACRIFICE' AT PALLABI Locals attack house, Anwara remanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hundreds of people thronged to the Pallabi house where seven-year-old Sumon was slaughtered allegedly following the housewife's dream that offering the blood of a child would prevent her six-storey under-construction building from collapsing.

The crowd gathered at the house of Sumon, son of a rickshaw-puller Ismail Hossain and garment factory employee Ambia Begum, and the nearby spot where he was murdered.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court yesterday placed Anwara Begum, the housewife who had the dreaded dream, on a one-day remand. Pallabi police had been quizzing her but she said she is a victim of blackmailing.

Locals became agitated and held

a demonstration and shattered window glasses of the house.

Anwara's family claimed Ratan, who told police that Anwara hired him at Tk 50,000 for the murder, blackmailed her for the money after the murder saying he would implicate her in the killing.

Locals said Anwara had a good relation with Ratan, an employee of Khan Engineering Works that worked for Anwara's house. "She often used to call him at her flat even after his work at the house was finished last month," said Lovely Khan, the proprietor of Khan Engineering Works.

Ratan worked in Khan Engineering Works for two years but recently he refused to work there claiming to be sick.

Locals believe Anwara might have brainwashed Ratan, known to

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40 hurt as rival BNP men clash over control of gambling

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kusthia

At least 40 people were injured when two rival groups of the ruling BNP clashed over control of a gambling event they arranged at Ghoreshah Baba's shrine in Brittipara of Bheramara upazila yesterday.

According to sources, the two groups, led by Selim and Jahangir, had rivalry since gambling became a weekly event in the shrine during Urs mahfils (an Islamic programme). They said the two groups took turns in controlling the event but Jahangir's men attacked and chased Selim's men out of the shrine in the early hours yesterday.

Both groups locked in an hour-long fight which left 40, including a number of followers of the religious guru, injured. At least 20 hand-

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Russia rules out use of force against Iran

Tehran ready for 'full' cooperation with IAEA

AFP, Moscow

Russia is categorically opposed to the use of force to resolve the standoff over Iran's nuclear ambitions, foreign ministry spokesman Sergei Kislyak was quoted as saying Friday by Interfax news agency.

"We are categorically against use of force on this question and all our work will be based on this," Kislyak was quoted as saying. "We consider a military conflict inadmissible and no military measures can resolve the non-proliferation problems of Iran."

The United States has repeatedly raised the possibility of using military means to pressure Iran into giving up its nuclear activity, which Western capitals claim consists of a secret bomb-making project hidden behind a civilian power programme.

On April 28 the UN Security

Council will examine whether Iran has met a deadline for it to halt uranium enrichment work and to fully cooperate with inspectors from the Vienna-based IAEA.

Russia is Iran's chief partner in

the civilian nuclear sphere and is building the Islamic republic's first nuclear power plant at Bushehr. Moscow this week also rejected

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