

13 Bangladeshis killed in Saudi road accident

AFP, Riyadh

Twenty-six Asians were killed and 19 injured when a bus transporting them to the Saudi holy city of Medina swerved off a bridge, a Saudi daily said Saturday without specifying their nationalities.

The accident took place early Friday on a bridge east of the Red Sea city of Jeddah, the Al-Riyadh newspaper said.

The bus fell as much as 10 metres (more than 30 feet), the paper added.

In February, 13 Bangladeshi construction workers were killed and 17 injured when their bus hit the sidewalk of an underpass near Riyadh.

Lawyer killed by muggers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A lawyer was killed allegedly by muggers in the capital on Friday night.

Emdadul Huq Talukder Kanchan, 45, an income tax lawyer and a resident of Hatirpool area was missing since 8:30pm Friday, when he went out of his house to go to his Sonargaon Road chamber to see an eye specialist.

His brother Harun-or-Rashid, former joint secretary of establishment ministry, got a phone call from police at around 2:00am and came to know that an unidentified body was found in front of the emergency unit of Suhrawardy Hospital along with a phonebook containing this number.

Emdad's relatives identified his body at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morgue yesterday morning.

Suhrawardy Hospital sources said some unknown people brought the body to the hospital at around 10:15pm on Friday. The victim was strangled with a napkin

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14-party to observe 'Electricity Day' today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL)-led 14-party opposition line-up will observe 'Electricity Day' today demanding uninterrupted power supply across the country.

The opposition combine will stage demonstration at Muktangan in the capital.

Meanwhile, the city unit of 14-party held a preparatory meeting at

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BID TO KILL HASINA

Extra charge sheet placed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A supplementary charge sheet in the case filed for planting bombs at Kotalipara in 2000 in a bid to assassinate the then prime minister Sheikh Hasina was submitted to a Gopalganj court yesterday.

ASP Munshi Atiqur Rahman of CID, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet under Explosive Substances Act accusing Abul Hossain alias Khokon, a close aide of Harkatul Jihad (HuJI) Bangladesh chief Mufti Abdul Hannan.

In the charge sheet, the IO said that Khokon was involved in planting two powerful bombs at separate places in the meeting venue of the AL chief on July 19 in 2000.

CID police arrested Abul Hossain on January 31 this year in Dhaka.

The main charge sheet was submitted earlier accusing 15 people, including Hannan and HuJI second-in-command Mohammad Anis Munshi.

Hannan and his accomplices planted two bombs at the Awami League chief's Kotalipara meeting venue, each weighing about 76 kg.

Prayer Timing		
April 30		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-20	4-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-29	6-34
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Nepal parliament set to decide future of monarchy

REUTERS, Kathmandu

Nepali political parties discussed the fate of the once-revered monarchy and proposals to set up a constituent assembly yesterday, just days after the king ceded power in the face of mass protests.

Other weighty issues on the agenda, a day before they debate a proposal for a special assembly to write a new constitution, included an expected decision to match a ceasefire announced by Maoist rebels.

Bowing to weeks of often bloody protests, King Gyanendra restored parliament this week and handed power to the prime minister named by seven political parties that led this month's pro-democracy demonstrations, in which at least 13 people died and thousands were wounded.

Prime Minister designate Girija Prasad Koirala, in a notice to parliament which convened for the first time in four years on Friday, proposed elections for the assembly to draw up a new constitution, hold talks with Maoist rebels and declare a ceasefire.

The second sitting on the

parliament is due to convene at 4 p.m. (1015 hours GMT) on Sunday to discuss the plan.

Party officials said they were giving final shape to their positions.

"All seven political parties are committed to the constituent assembly and the prime minister's proposal will be passed without any problem," said Subhash Nemwang, a top leader of the Communist Party of Nepal (UML), the second biggest political party.

"After the house approves the proposal the constituent assembly will become a national commitment."

The parliament is expected to give directives to the new government announced by the rebels earlier in the week and start talks with the guerrillas.

"Once we hold talks and arrive at a consensus with the Maoists, we'll fix the date for the election to the constituent assembly," Nemwang told Reuters.

Life in Nepal's temple-studded capital, the flashpoint in this month's anti-king protests, has largely returned to normal after Gyanendra's announcement on

Monday evening he was reviving parliament and surrendering power to the seven parties.

On Friday, thousands protested outside the parliament gate reminding legislators that they should not back down from curbing the king's power, a key demand of the Maoists to end their decade-old conflict in which more than 13,000 people have died.

Also on Friday, the rebels kept up pressure for the abolition of monarchy when the leader of their student wing addressed a public rally in the capital, barely less than 500 metres from the king's palace despite an arrest warrant against him.

"Our hands are not only used for making a fist," Lekha Nath Neupane said in Nepali. "We are engaged in a revolution for peace but if necessary we can pick up guns and bombs again."

In an accident unconnected to the violence, eight soldiers were killed in an explosion at an army barracks at Gulmi, 400 km west of Kathmandu, an officer said.

He did not elaborate.



PHOTO: STAR

Fourteen-party opposition camp holds a meeting at AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil's Gulshan home yesterday. The meeting decided to reject the dialogue team nominated by the ruling alliance on electoral reforms.

Tata team may place revised proposals today

UNB, Dhaka

Bringing some significant changes in their original investment proposal, Indian industrial giant Tata Group is set to place its revised offer to the government today.

A six-member delegation, headed by Alan Rosling, executive director of Tata Sons, will submit the revised offer.

The negotiations between Tata and the government on the proposed \$ 2.5 billion investment in Bangladesh ended inconclusively in early February when both sides failed to agree on different issues, including gas price, gas supply security, power tariff and coal mining.

Tata officials then said they would submit a revised offer in a

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Traffic sergeant closed on charge of extortion

CU CORRESPONDENT

A traffic sergeant of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) was closed yesterday on charges of taking money from a truck driver with the help of a collector at the port city's Barik Building intersection.

Sergeant Nirmal Debnath and his toll collector Mohammed Oliullah were caught and handed over to the Bandar Police Station yesterday.

Magistrate of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) Mohammad Munir Chowdhury captured Oliullah as he was taking toll from a truck on the spot around 11:30am yesterday, sources said.

Oliullah confessed to the magistrate that he was appointed by Sergeant Nirmal to collect money from the truckers and was taking Tk 50 from each truck.

The sergeant also confessed to the magistrate about his involvement and handed over Tk 880 that he had collected since morning.

The magistrate informed the CMP officials of the matter they rushed to the spot and closed Sergeant Nirmal Debnath.

Criminals kill Pabna Jamaat leader

UNB, Pabna

A Jamaat leader was killed in an attack by armed criminals at Hatbaria Bowalmari Bazar in Santhia upazila yesterday.

Witnesses said a gang of eight swooped on Abdur Rashid, 45, general secretary of Nandanpur unit of Jamaat, while he was returning to his medical store after saying Maghrib prayers.

They stabbed Rashid in his abdomen and fled the scene

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PHOTO: STAR

Prof Jatin Sarkar speaks at the first regional dialogue on national election policy and the civil society initiative for fair candidates at a Mymensingh hotel yesterday.

Western powers push for tough UN action

Iran vows 'never' to give up nuke plan

AFP, Tehran

Hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad vowed yesterday to never give up Iran's disputed nuclear drive as Western powers pushed for tough Security Council action against the Islamic republic.

In a further show of defiance, a top Iranian nuclear official declared the country's scientists were working on extremely advanced centrifuge designs to enrich uranium -- work that is at the centre of fears the clerical regime may acquire the bomb. "The Islamic republic will not

negotiate with anyone on its absolute right to use peaceful nuclear technology. This is our red line, and we will never give it up," the president said in a statement.

"Iran's decision to master nuclear technology and the production of nuclear fuel is irreversible," Ahmadinejad said.

On Friday the International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed Iran had not complied with a UN Security Council demand to freeze enrichment -- which can be used to make fuel for civilian nuclear reac-

tors, but can also serve as the explosive core of atom bombs.

IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei also said there had been little progress since a previous assessment and that "gaps remain in the agency's knowledge with respect to the scope and content of Iran's centrifuge programme."

Iran insists its programme is peaceful.

But the report clears the way for a new phase of diplomacy, with the United States and Europe poised to seek a Security Council resolution

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KIBRIA KILLING

Govt unwilling to probe afresh to protect mastermind: family

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing their deep resentment and frustration, former finance minister SAMS Kibria's family members alleged the government is unwilling to re-investigate Kibria's murder to protect the mastermind.

Asma Kibria, widow of SAMS Kibria, in a press briefing yesterday at her residence said the culprits are with the coalition government so they will not expose them. Termining the investigation "flawed" Asma Kibria said it is not possible to get

justice based on a faulty investigation.

Kibria's son, Reza Kibria, said the investigation is defective for two reasons. First, it could not find the mastermind and second, the supplier or suppliers of the grenades used in the killing could also not be traced. If the supply route of the grenades were traced the identity of the real culprits would become clear.

On January 27 in 2005 lawmaker

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2 killed, 33 hurt in stampede

UNB, Rajbari

Two people were killed and 33 wounded in a stampede at a mosque here yesterday morning as hundreds of people huddled to have a glimpse of a religious leader.

The dead are Shamsul Islam, 35, of Nimitla village, and Fakiruddin, 60, of Gopinathia village in Rajbari Sadar upazila.

Shamsul died on the spot while Fakiruddin succumbed to his head injuries at Faridpur Medical College and Hospital.

The injured, including nine women, were admitted to Sadar Hospital.

Thousands of disciples of Sayed Shah Rashid Ali Al Qadri Al Hasaini Wal Hussaini of Midnapore in West Bengal, India, have been staying here for the last two days to meet him, local sources said.

The religious leader is visiting the area after 18 years and will stay for two more days at Rajbari Anjuman-e-Qadria Mosque, Anjuman sources said.

"As the propitious moment came at 11:00am, the crowds started pushing and shoving to get in through the main gate of the mosque to meet the religious guru," says a spot account of the incident.

US raid rumours spark fear among immigrants

AP, Miami

Thousands of illegal immigrants stayed home this week amid rumours of immigration roundups that federal officials say were unfounded, leaving some industries scrambling for workers.

Len Mills, executive vice president of Associated General Contractors of South Florida, estimated at least 50 percent of workers on construction jobs in the region had not shown up for work.

"This is costing millions of dollars a day, and I don't know who is going to pay for it," he said.

Rumours of random sweeps were rampant from coast to coast Friday, prompting many immigrants to stay home from work, take their children out of school and avoid church. Their absences added to immigrants' fears, as some thought their friends and co-workers had been arrested.

Mills said he believed even some legal workers were afraid.

"Everybody's edgy," said Chris Ruske, owner of a southern New Jersey nursery. "There's an awful lot

of rhetoric, and you wonder what's true. You wonder if the immigration Gestapo are coming to get you."

Construction and agriculture were among the industries most affected.

Katie A. Edwards, executive director of Florida's Dade County Farm Bureau, said nearly a third of farmworkers did not come to the fields this week.

Mari Ramos, a Peruvian nanny whose tourist visa ran out in 2003, listened when friends warned her not to take public transportation or risk arrest.

"That's when I became nervous. I stopped going to my night job," the 36-year-old Miami woman said.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement spokesman Dean Boyd said the agency has received hundreds of calls about immigration raids in recent days. Such rumours are typical after a raid like the one last week in which more than 1,000 employees of pallet manufacturer IFCO were arrested at more than 40 company sites nationwide, he said.

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PHOTO: STAR

As few offices have own parking facilities, vehicles parked in rows in front of office buildings create a gridlock in downtown Dhaka yesterday.