

**BREATHING PROBLEM
Saifur taken
to hospital in
Hyderabad**

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Bangladesh Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, who is in India to attend the annual ADB meet in New Delhi, was hospitalised in Hyderabad yesterday following complaints of breathlessness.

Rahman has a urinary tract infection and he is now in a semi-conscious state, Dr Raghu, one of the physicians attending the minister, said.

Doctors attending on the visiting dignitary said that they suspected signs of septicaemia (infection of the blood) while the minister has a medical history of urinary tract infection, reports Press Trust of India.

"We are conducting a battery of tests," he said.

BSF kills 1

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) gunned down a Bangladeshi fisherman and injured another at frontier Goolgochh village under Tentulia upazila of the district yesterday morning.

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and local sources said the Indian border guards opened fire on Komirul Islam, 40, and Ismail, 30, of Narayan Joth Guabari village under Banglabandha Union of Tentulia upazila while they were fishing in the river.

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ARMY MEDICAL CORPS

Present job benefits fail to woo doctors

Half of recruitment demand remains unmet each year

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Army Medical Corps (AMC) is facing a crisis of officers as over half of its demand for recruitment of doctors remains unmet each year.

The authorities initiated a move to recruit 326 officers in 12 batches in the last six years since 2000 but only 154 were qualified and commissioned into AMC, sources said.

Moreover, a significant number of senior officers and specialists on various subjects are scheduled to retire in the next five years.

Amid the prevailing situation, many fear that for the first time in its 35 years AMC will face an acute crisis of doctors in five years if the present situation is not improved.

Sources said doctors are not interested to join the service due to 'poor financial benefits' comparing to the benefits in the civil service or even in other wings of the army.

At present there is a total of 872 officers in AMC against a requirement of 1,075 posts, sources said adding that 208 of the officers including 109 specialists are scheduled to retire in the next five years.

"Most of the officers are scheduled to retire between 2008 and 2010 and some will retire this year," said a source.

Considering the crisis of doctors, Armed Forces Medical College was established under the defence ministry and under direct supervision of the Armed Forces Division in 1999, but AMC has yet to get expected result from it.

Discussing the matter at a meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on defence ministry last year, Director General of Medical Services (DGMS), Major General MA Moyeed Siddiqui expressed his concern over the prevailing situation in AMC.

"Only 14 doctors were qualified in the ISSB (Inter Services Selection Board) test against the requirement of 50 doctors in 2004. Of the 14 doctors, four has left. We need to take the possible crisis into cognisance which might occur in five or seven years if the present situation continues," the committee report placed in the parliament this year quoted the DGMS as saying in the meeting.

Echoing the same view, a senior officer said the situation has not improved in the last one year.

"Doctors are not interested to join the service as benefits in the army medical corps cannot attract them. Besides, scopes for higher education for the officers have

apparently been halted," a senior officer in AMC told The Daily Star wishing anonymity.

"Amid such a situation, the demand for doctors in the medical corps is increasing day by day, but no significant measure has so far been taken," he said.

Delays in promotions for the officers in AMC compared to other corps in the army have also created frustration among the officers, a senior officer said.

"The officers in the medical corps, who are getting late promotions, are also missing the scope to join the UN peacekeeping mission," he said.

Sources said among the 109 officers including three major generals and specialists, who are scheduled to retire by 2011, are 19 specialists on medicine, 2 specialists on radiology, 14 specialists on gynaecology, 9 specialists on pathology, 8 specialists on anaesthesia, 3 specialists on orthopaedics, 7 specialists on army health, 7 specialists on child care, 5 specialists on skin care, 4 specialists on

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**Hasina blasts
govt over crises
in utility service**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina said yesterday an 'anarchic situation' is prevailing in the country due to acute crises of electricity, water, fertiliser, oil and gas arising out of the four-party alliance government's misrule and corruption.

"The people are faced with such crises whenever BNP is in power. This situation cannot be allowed to continue and there has to be an end to it," said Hasina, also Awami League (AL) president.

She was addressing the inaugural session of the 11th Annual District Convention, organised by International Association of Lions Clubs International Districts-315 A1 Bangladesh, held at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the capital. Lions Clubs' District Governor ABM Labibur Rahman was in the chair.

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**1 killed in
Ctg cylinder
explosion**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A man was killed when the cylinder of an air-compressor machine went off near Bandar Police Station in the port city yesterday.

The victim was identified as Tofael Ahmad, 20, son of Din Ahmad, proprietor of Bangladesh Tyre House.

Police and witnesses said Tofael was pumping air into a tyre in Bangladesh Tyre House at Nimtala when the cylinder of the machine exploded around 3:00pm.

Tofael was blown off several yards in the explosion and he died on the spot, sources said.

**3 US soldiers
killed in Iraq
blast**

REUTERS, AFP, Baghdad/Washington

Three US soldiers were killed yesterday when their vehicle was blasted by a roadside bomb south of Baghdad, the US military said in a statement.

The incident happened in Babil province, just south of the capital, the military said. It gave no further details.

An Iraqi police spokesman in the provincial capital Hilla said the explosion destroyed a Humvee patrol vehicle near the town of Mahaweeel, 80km south of Baghdad.

Earlier the US Senate on Thursday approved a bill to provide funding primarily for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, which lawmakers have inflated so much that the bill risks being vetoed by President George W. Bush. Totalling 109 billion dollars, instead of the 92 billion sought by the administration, the bill includes funding for several local projects, much to the dismay of some lawmakers.

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Bangladesh Paribesh Andolan (Bapa) forms a human chain in the city's Panthapath area yesterday as a child holds a placard urging the Dhaka City Corporation mayor to reopen Panthakunja, a park near Saarc Fountain, to public.

**Blair dumps ministers
after local polls rout**

Fires Foreign minister Jack Straw, interior minister Charles Clarke

REUTERS, London

British Prime Minister Tony Blair sacrificed two top ministers in a major cabinet shakeup yesterday after his Labour Party recorded one of its worst defeats in a local election since coming to power in 1997.

Foreign minister Jack Straw and interior minister Charles Clarke lost their high-profile jobs while John Prescott, who is Blair's deputy and has been embroiled in a sex scandal, lost his ministry. Environment minister Margaret Beckett takes over from Straw at the Foreign



Jack Straw

Office. The reshuffle comes after accusations of government incompetence and sleaze over the past few weeks as well as the poor local election results, which have put huge pressure on Blair to give his government new impetus or step aside.

"This is clearly a major reshuffle," said Mori pollster Ben Page. "It looks as though he is going for a radical change."

Clarke will leave government while Straw becomes leader of the

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**2 'snatchers' killed
in Rab firing**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) shot dead two alleged snatchers at Mohammadpur in the capital yesterday.

Rab also arrested a taxicab driver who was injured during the incident.

The deceased were identified as Mohammad Maksud, 25, son of Bilal Hossain, hailing from Kamrangir Char and Abdul Jalil Sheikh, 22, son of late Moslem Sheikh, hailing from Jafraabad of Mohammadpur.

Mohammad Ali Sheikh, relative of both the victims, said Maksud, who runs a makeshift tea stall in Kamrangir Char left the house after altercation with his family and went to his relative Abdul Jalil Sheikh in Jafraabad.

Jalil along with Maksud went for Chawkbazar at around 9:30am to buy some raw materials for his

newly opened candle factory, he added.

Family members said a rickshaw puller informed them at around 12:00noon that bullet-hit Jalil was lying on Iqbal road.

They identified the bodies at Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue at noon.

Mohammadpur police said a gang of four including the two dead, who were riding a yellow cab, snatched valuables from rickshaw passengers on Iqbal road when a patrol vehicle of Rab-2 reached the spot and chased the cab.

As both the parties exchanged fire, Maksud and Jalil received bullets, police said.

Police arrested the cab driver Akmal, 28, who is now detained at Mohammadpur Police Station.

Family members said the dead were not snatchers and there was no case against them with any police station.

**2 shot over
toll refusal**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of unidentified criminals shot and injured two security guards at a recruiting agency for overseas jobs in Banani in the capital on Thursday night allegedly after being refused toll money.

The injured are Belayet Hossain, 35, and Mujibur Rahman, 35. Belayet Hossain received bullet in his left leg while Mujibur Rahman in his right hand.

The criminals allegedly had demanded Tk 5 crore from the agency and launched the attack as they failed to get the money, sources in the Orbit Consultant Agency said.

Deputy General Manager (DGM) of Orbit Consultant Agency Noor Mohammad told The Daily Star yesterday the extortionists had been demanding money for over a month and he was the target of their attack.

He said a group of six or seven

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Police and locals demanding uninterrupted water supply clash on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway in Demra in the capital yesterday disrupting vehicular movements for 13 hours.

**Pirates throw
18 fishermen
into Meghna**

UNB, Bhola

Armed pirates swooped on two fishing trawlers and looted valuables, throwing 18 fishermen into the Meghna in Monpura area on Thursday night.

Narrating the incident, the fishermen, who came back yesterday, said a group of pirates swooped on their trawlers, beat them up severely and threw them into the river before looting their valuables. They also took away their trawlers.

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**Merry ride ends
up in tragedy**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven-year-old Meemusa at last made it to her village home. But cold on the shoulder of her father who had just seen her being mowed down by a killer truck.

Ferdous Alam Chowdhury and his family set off for their Raipura house in Narsinghdi yesterday morning. Besides his wife and mother-in-law, travelling with him were his two daughters bubbling with the excitement of going to the countryside.

They took two rickshaws to go to Demra Bus Stand.

Meantime, the stretch of Dhaka-Chittagong Highway between Shanir Akhra and Matuail was already a scene of chaos and disorder. Hundreds of locals demonstrating on the road for uninterrupted supply of water and electricity got into a pitched battle with the police at around 10:30am.

At one point of the melee, as the

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Ferdous mourns holding the feet of his daughter killed by a speeding truck.

**UN anti-torture
body scrutinises
US record**

AFP, Geneva

The UN's top anti-torture body opened its first public examination yesterday of the US government's record on torture since the United States began its "war on terror" following the September 11 attacks.

Some 30 officials from the US State Department, the Pentagon and Department of Homeland Security were expected to take part in the public hearings Friday and Monday.

Human rights groups allege that abuse and ill-treatment are being used in secret, in contravention of the International Convention Against Torture which bans torture and cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment.

"This is going to be the very first time that the United States is going to be held internationally accountable for its record since the fight against terror began in 2001," Jennifer Daskal, an advocacy director for Human Rights Watch, told journalists.

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**16,000 species
face extinction**

AP, Geneva

Polar bears and hippos are among more than 16,000 species of animals and plants threatened with global extinction, the World Conservation Union said on May 2.

According to the Swiss-based conservation group, known by its acronym IUCN, the number of species classified as being in serious danger of extinction rose from about 15,500 in its previous "Red List" report, published in 2004.

The list includes one in three amphibians, a quarter of the world's mammals and coniferous trees, and one in eight birds, according to a preview of the 2006 Red List. The full report is published later this week.

"Biodiversity loss is increasing, not slowing down," said Achim Steiner, the conservation group's director general. "The implications of this trend for the productivity and resilience of ecosystems and the

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A polar bear rests with her cubs in northern Alaska as the late arrivals of winter and early arrivals of summer threaten the availability of their source of food.

PHOTO: AP