

Criminal killed, 3 cops hurt in shootout

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A suspected criminal was killed and three policemen were wounded at Baruihati in Bagmara upazila early yesterday in a shootout between the terrorists and members of the law enforcement agencies in Bagmara of the district.

The dead was identified as Zahangir Alam, 30, son of Abdul Matin Chowdhury of Bargachha in Natore.

The police in Rajshahi said Zahangir might have links with the outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) while Natore police said, he had robbery and mugging records.

Among the injured, constable Abdul Karim was admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital with serious head injuries and constables Abdur Rahman and Susan Chakma were given first aid.

Rajshahi Range Deputy Inspector General Nayeem Ahmed told The Daily Star that the special drive was part of the ongoing operations that had begun on August 12 after Chowbaria police murders.

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NCBs fail to catch top 20 loan defaulters

3.62pc target achieved in six months

REJJAUL KARIM BYRON

The nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) in the first half of the year have attained only 3.62 percent of the target they set for recovering loans from the top 20 defaulters.

The rate was 3.90 in cash recovery from the other defaulters.

The information came up at a meeting between Bangladesh Bank (BB) and the NCBs to review the latter's performance in the last six months in achieving the targets they set in their memorandum of understanding (MoU).

Earlier this year, four NCBs--Sonali, Janata, Agrani and Rupali Bank--had committed themselves to recovering Tk 232 crore from their top 20 defaulters in the first half of the year while they have managed to recover only Tk 8.40 crore.

The central bank Governor Salehuddin Ahmed, who presided

over yesterday's meeting, expressed discontent over the poor performance of the NCBs, said meeting sources.

Officials of the NCBs, on the other hand, spoke about their helplessness in the face of the defaulters' persistent non-compliance with the bank instructions.

BB officials suggested that the NCBs take the opportunity in the build-up to the upcoming general election when the defaulters must reschedule their loans if they are to contest the polls.

The banks should step up their efforts to recover default loans before the election slated for January 2007, they observed.

The central bank officials also instructed the NCBs to strictly oversee the rescheduling of loan payments so that no defaulter could gain undue interest waivers.

NCB officials, however, were

somewhat downbeat as they noted that the number of prospective candidates is very low among the defaulters of their banks.

They argued that they have already had a huge sum of money owed to the state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and the amount is only rising.

Sonali Bank officials said that half of their loans are with the state-owned Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC).

NCB officials urged the BB to take measures to stem the trends.

Sonali Bank had a recovery target of Tk 154 crore, whereas it recovered only Tk 30 lakh.

Janata Bank recovered only Tk 10 lakh against a target of Tk 25 crore, Agrani Bank Tk 5 crore against Tk

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BDB won't take part in polls without reforms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) will not participate in the next general election unless 'minimum reforms' in the Election Commission (EC) are carried out, its President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury said yesterday.

"The chief election commissioner and two election commissioners (EC) are controversial. And the newly appointed EC is also controversial since he came from the defence ministry and hails from Gabtoli of Bogra district," he said without explaining this. "So, these people need to be removed."

Badruddoza was speaking as chief guest at a discussion on 'Role of political leaders in protecting the country's mineral resources, and in industrialisation,' organised by Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI) at its office in the capital.

The BDB president said his party is in favour of reviewing all the controversial deals in energy sector, including that with Asian Energy, to protect the interest of the country.

The deal with Asia Energy was

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PHOTO: STAR

Mehendiganj Jubo Samaj holds a rally at Muktangan in the capital yesterday demanding immediate stoppage of Jatka (young hilsa) fishing.



PHOTO: STAR

Autorickshaws and CNG-driven vehicles wait in long queues at a filling station in the capital yesterday as frequent power cuts delay refilling of vehicles.

ADULTERATED DRUGS IO summoned to explain final report

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday directed an investigation officer (IO) of a criminal case to appear in person before it on September 19 to explain why and how he submitted a final report against three people arrested for their alleged involvement in preparing adulterated medicines.

The three people -- Shahjahan, proprietor of Anirban Medical Industry, Saiful Islam, its chemist and accounts officer Majful Islam -- were arrested during the Anti-Adulteration Drive while they were making adulterated medicines in unhygienic and dirty conditions.

Judge Mohammad Momin Ullah of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court issued the order on the IO Saiful Rahman following an oral plea of an assistant public prosecutor (APP) for further investigation into the matter.

During the hearing on the final report, APP Farid Halder told the court that the three people were arrested red-handed while preparing adulterated medicines in the medicine manufacturing plant and the IO could not have submitted the final report praying for discharge of the accused if he had investigated the case properly.

This is why the APP prayed for issuance of a show cause notice upon the IO for his negligence in conducting the probe.

The IO submitted the final

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Iraq extends state of emergency for a month

Insurgents kill 3 GIs, 20 Iraqis in attacks

AP, AFP, Baghdad

Parliament voted yesterday to extend a state of emergency for a month, and Britain's foreign secretary emphasised the importance of transferring control of security from the US-led coalition to the Iraqi government.

The state of emergency has been in place for almost two years and covers every region except the autonomous Kurdish region in the

north. It grants security forces greater powers such as implementing curfews and making arrests without warrants.

British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett, on her first trip to Iraq since taking her post in May, met with Deputy Prime Minister Barham Saleh and discussed the transfer of security control from the US-led coalition to Iraqi authorities.

"There has been responsibility that has been transferred already

and we hope and believe that that is a process that will continue," Beckett said. It is "absolutely key that we see that responsibility being able to be exercised by the representatives of the elected government of Iraq."

British forces handed over control of the southern Muthana province to their Iraqi counterparts in July, and Prime Minister Nouri

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Lebanon blockade to end in 48-hr: Annan

Hezbollah, Israel accept UN mediation on prisoners

AFP, Alexandria/Jeddah

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said yesterday in Egypt that he expected Israel's blockade of Lebanon to be lifted within 48 hours.

Annan was asked by reporters after meeting Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Foreign Minister Ahmed Abul Gheit in the city of Alexandria if he expected

Israel to lift its air and sea blockade of Lebanon.

"Yes, within 48 hours," he answered. "Because we are all working very hard and with a bit of goodwill and reasonableness, we should be able to resolve it within the next 48 hours."

Israel imposed its air and sea

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Man held with 2.5kg gold

UNB, Munshiganj

Police yesterday arrested a man with five gold bars weighing 2.5 kg on a Dhaka bound bus from Chittagong at Gazaria of the district.

Acting on a tip-off, the law enforcers intercepted the bus and challenged its passenger Narayan Karmakar, 40. They searched Narayan's body and found the gold bars tied to his waist.

Police said Narayan, son of Niranjan Karmakar of Anwara, Chittagong, is involved in gold smuggling.

Slave traders dump them in China

SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN, back from China, with PORIMOL PALMA

Cheated by modern "slave traders", a few hundred Bangladeshis have been languishing and leading inhuman life in secret cells and jails in different states of China.

Recently, about 200

Bangladeshis were seen living in such condition in Kun Ming and Guan Zhu provinces and along the China-Laos borders.

These victims, lured by the slave traders' promises of high-salary jobs in countries like Sudan, Libya and China, had paid money ranging from Tk 1.8 lakh to Tk 2 lakh, selling land or other valuable properties.

Once in China, the cheats escaped leaving them behind in an utterly helpless situation.

The once-fortune-seekers now desperately want to return to their motherland, but the process is complex as there are no Bangladeshi consular offices in those states.

Kawsar Hossain of Gazipur

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PHOTO: STAR

The five Bangladeshis cheated by unscrupulous manpower agencies are now leading inhuman life in Kun Ming, China.

Indian agencies warn PM of terror attacks

REUTERS, New Delhi

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said yesterday that intelligence agencies had warned more terrorist attacks were likely, possibly on economic and religious targets as well as on nuclear installations.

Singh's comments came nearly two months after a series of bombs on commuter trains in Mumbai, India's financial hub, killed 186 people. The attack was blamed on Islamist militant groups with links across the border in Pakistan.

India has since been on a heightened security alert, with fears of more attacks across the country, particularly in New Delhi and Mumbai, and at airports after British police last month said they foiled a plot to bomb trans-Atlantic flights.

"Concern about the increasing activities of externally inspired and directed terrorist outfits in the country is justified," Singh told an internal security meeting.

"Intelligence agencies warn of a

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Correction

In our yesterday's report headlined "Bol chief again takes a swipe at 5 eminent citizens" it was inadvertently mentioned that foreign currency reserve is \$3.6 billion instead of \$3.6 billion. We regret the mistake.

Prayer Timing		
September 6		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-35	5-10
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-20	6-25
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation