

4 dacoits beaten to death in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, Feb 26: Four dacoits were beaten to death after they had committed dacoity in a Chittagong-bound bus at Shantirhat on the Kharnaphuli Road under Patiya thana here today, reports BSS.

According to district police, when the bus Purabi Express from Bandarban reached Shantirhat, a group of dacoits under the guise of passengers stopped the bus at gun point and decamped with cash and other valuable goods from the passengers.

On hearing the shouting of the passengers, people caught red-handed four of the dacoits and started beating them indiscriminately.

As a result they died on the

spot. The dacoits also used daggers and opened fire several rounds of shots. About fifteen passengers were injured. The driver was also stabbed by the dacoits.

One pipe gun and two big daggers were recovered from the possession of the dacoits.

A squad of the police from Kalarpool outpost rushed to the spot.

Two of the dead were identified as Mohammad Akhbar Hossain, 40, and Mohammad Mujib, 30.

The rest could not be identified immediately.

A case was filed with Patiya police.

— Star photo.

Pakistan cancels passports issued to Afghans

ISLAMABAD, Feb 26: The Pakistan government has cancelled all passports issued to Afghan nationals, foreign Minister Sardar Assef Ali said here Friday after a series of anti-Pakistani incidents, reports AFP.

Ali told a news conference the Afghans, mainly refugees, will now have to follow the normal administrative procedure if they want their Pakistani passports renewed.

On Thursday, Afghans attacked the Khyber Pass border checkpoint. On Wednesday, they stormed the Pakistani embassy in Kabul, the Afghan capital.

Earlier in the week, three Afghans held Pakistani schools

Khasbulatov, Rutskoi freed

MOSCOW, Feb 26: President Boris Yeltsin's bitterest political foe, former parliament Chairman Ruslan Khasbulatov, walked free from Moscow's Lefortovo Jail on Saturday, Interfax news agency reported, reports Reuter.

Yeltsin's chief political enemy, former vice-president Alexander Rutskoi, was also freed from Moscow's Lefortovo Jail today under parliamentary amnesty, witnesses said.

2 held with lethal weapons

By Staff Correspondent

Police in separate raids foiled two attempts of hijackings and arrested two people with lethal weapons in their possession.

Early yesterday morning, Lalbagh police, acting on a tip, went to the Azimpur Graveyard and took a gang of hijackers by surprise while they were preparing for hijacking.

The alleged hijackers, except one, Mahfuz, however, managed to flee hurling cocktails at the police. Police found a crude explosive in Mahfuz's possession.

Later, after a cat-and-mouse chase police seized an autorickshaw and detained one Ibrahim, 20, who was reportedly planning a mugging at the Maghbazar crossing Friday afternoon.

Mayors to take oath

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due to malpractices, would be announced only after the EC receives a copy of the judgement of a High Court Division Bench that justified the repolling in the three centres under Ward No. 57.

The EC failed to hold elections in these centres following an injunction by the HC bench. The court's order was issued as the BNP-backed commissioner candidate of the Ward filed a writ petition challenging the cancellation of the results of the three centres on the Dhaka University campus.

The Division Bench, after a three-day hearing, discharged the petition and also vacated the stay order it had issued on February 8 on the repolling.

According to sources in the court, it will take at least a week for the EC to get a copy of the judgement delivered last Tuesday.

The EC officials, on the other hand, said they were waiting for the court's verdict for announcing the schedule of the repolling. On receipt of the copy of the verdict they pointed out one more week would be required to complete the repolling consolidate the total results of the DCC and publish the same in an official gazette. The issue of oath-taking of the DCC mayor and commissioners would be decided after the official publication of the results.

The BNP commissioner

candidate, Abul Ahsan Talukdar, who lost the writ petition, is planning to appeal in the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court against the High Court judgement. If the Appellate Division accepts the appeal and also issues a stay order on the repolling, senior lawyers say the announcement of the DCC results would be further delayed.

Meanwhile, it is still undecided as to who would administer the oaths to the mayors and commissioners elect.

A source said a proposal of the LGRD Ministry for the Prime Minister to administer the oaths was being considered by the policy-planners.

Previously, the President had conducted the oaths giving the mayor of Dhaka the rank and status of a cabinet minister and the mayors of three other cities the status of deputy ministers. But the government is yet to decide the status of the mayors, elected through direct voting for the first time.

Meanwhile, there is a demand from the opposition that the previous practice of giving the DCC mayor the rank and status of a cabinet minister and the three other mayors the deputy ministerial rank should continue.

A rule is also being drafted to provide for reserved seats for women commissioners. The women representatives are likely to be chosen by the elected mayors and commissioners.

Mahfuz laid to rest

Valiant freedom fighter and former Chairman of the Bangladesh Mukti Joddha Central Command Council Sheikh Mahfuzur Rahman was laid to rest at the Mukti Joddha Graveyard at Mirpur yesterday, reports BSS.

His namaz-e-janaza was held at the National Eidgah Maidan where ministers, freedom fighters, particularly from the Sector Two of the Liberation War, were present.

The quirkhawni of Mahfuz will be held tomorrow after Asr prayers at the Mukti Joddha Sangsad office. All concerned have been requested to attend.

PM pays last respect

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday went to the Mukti Joddha Sangsad central office at Eskaton to see the body of freedom fighter Sheikh Mahfuzur Rahman, reports UNB.

Mahfuzur Rahman died of cerebral haemorrhage on Friday at the Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

The Prime Minister stood silent beside the body of the former chairman of the Mukti Joddha Sangsad Central Command Council for some time. She later talked to the relatives and friends of the valiant freedom fighter.

Begum Zia also signed the condolence book opened at the Sangsad office.

State honour demanded

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solid unity of the pro-liberation forces to uphold the spirit of the Liberation War.

Chaired by Noor-e-Alam Siddiqi, the meeting was also addressed by Abdur Razzak, MP, Tofael Ahmed, MP, Sheikh Fazul Karim Selim, MP and former DUCSU VP Aktheruzzaman of the Awami League, State Minister for Relief Haroon-ur-Rashid of the BNP, ASM Abdur Rab of the JSD, Shahjahan Siraj, MP of Gano Forum, ex-GS of the DUCSU Enayetullah, Kazi Aref Ahmed of the JSD, Ahad Choudhury of the Mukti Joddha Sangsad, Munirul Haq Choudhury, MP of the Jatiya Party, Prof Abdul Mannan Choudhury of Dhaka University and others.

In his presidential speech, Noor-e-Alam Siddiqi, who had been distancing himself from politics for the last 13 years, called on all concerned to sink petty political differences while dealing with national issues like the War of Independence. He also said the architect of independent Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, should be kept above all controversies and the names of great personalities should not be used for partisan politics. "Bangabandhu belongs to the nation, not to any particular party or quarter," he observed.

Regarding the demand for burial of the freedom fighters with state honour, Siddiqi said that to get the demand fulfilled the freedom fighters must give

up their partisan attitude.

Abdur Razzak confessed that the freedom fighters were themselves responsible for the ill treatment they were receiving from the governments. "We must apologise to the nation for our failures in maintaining our unity and upholding the spirit of the Liberation War."

Due respect to the valiant freedom fighters like Makhann could only be shown by implementing the ideals of the Liberation War, he added.

Tofael Ahmed said, Makhann's name will shine in the national history for his glorious role during the independence movement.

The defeated forces in the Liberation War could not stage a comeback in the national politics if the war-time unity of the freedom fighters continued during the post-liberation period, he said.

ASM Abdur Rab said, Makhann's death without medical treatment was a shame for the whole nation and regretted his burial without state honour.

"We must take lessons from Makhann's death otherwise our deaths would be marked by more disgraceful events", he warned the freedom fighters. Makhann will remain as an integral part of the national history for his contributions, Rab said.

The JSD leader regretted that the people's hopes and aspirations which led them to the war of independence were yet to be fulfilled.

Shahjahan Siraj said the nation failed to show due respect to the national hero Makhann.

Namaz-e-janaza of Mahfuzur Rahman, a valiant freedom fighter was held at the National Edgah in the city yesterday.

26 Rohingyas rescued

PABNA, Feb 26: BDR rescued 26 Rohingya refugees from traffickers at Kashinpur checkpost in Bera thana Friday night, reports UNB.

The Rohingyas, including six children and 11 women, were rescued from a bus "S R Paribahan" at about 2:30 am officials here said today.

They told BDR men that they were being taken to Dinajpur on way to Pakistan through India.

Traffickers were not in the bus and its driver managed to flee away, the sources said.

The Rohingyas were handed over to Bera thana.

26 abducted

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They fired 11 shots and took away the fishermen and their boats.

Owners of the four boats—Azizullah, Nurul Hakim, Nurul Alam and Nur Amin of Shahparin Dip in Teknaf—lodged complaints with the BDR 39 Battalion guarding the Teknaf border areas.

The abduction took place a day ahead of the 16th Bangladesh-Myanmar official level meeting on the Rohingya refugee issue. The three-day talks began at Akyab in Myanmar today.

The local fishermen said the Myanmar border guards intensified their activities during the last week and Thai fishermen are often seen fishing to the Bangladesh territory.

The Midnight File

Bosnia peace talks begin in US

WASHINGTON, Feb 26: Feuding factions renewed their quest for a peace settlement in Bosnia on Saturday, but the Clinton administration had only limited expectations of quick progress. The three-way negotiations, involving Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic, Croatian Foreign Minister Mate Granic and Bosnian Croat leader Kresimir Zubak, are being held in Washington under the watchful eye of American diplomats, reports AP.

Plane crash in Peru kills 31

LIMA, Feb 26: At least 31 people were killed when an airliner crashed in the Peruvian jungle in the western Ucayali department that borders Brazil, police reported today. The plane, travelling between Tingo Maria and Lima, went down Friday near Carpis Hill near Tingo Maria, police said. No further details were available, reports AFP.

HBFC borrowers' ultimatum

By Staff Correspondent

The Association of the Borrowers of House Building Finance Corporation has threatened to go for a greater movement after March 25 if its ten-point demand is not fulfilled by then.

Huq demanded raising the ceiling of loans for completion of the under construction houses. He said the authorities should fix various taxes and bills at a reduced rate and introduce rebate for those who are paying the loan instalments regularly.

MA Mohaiman, Chairman, Abdul Rashid, Abdul Wadud and Abdul Baten Khan were present.

One to die for killing mother

From Our Correspondent

NATORE, Feb 26: Natore District and Sessions Judge today awarded one Jamal death sentence for murdering his mother.

Judge A K M Fazlul Karim pronounced the verdict for matricide in a packed court room.

Khaleda, Hasina

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The world community, she said, was now required to be more active and alert so that the Middle West peace process was not jeopardised.

The Prime Minister reiterated solidarity of the people of Bangladesh for the Palestinians.

Sheikh Hasina

Awami League president and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina has expressed deep shock at the Friday's killing of Palestinians at a mosque in Hebron.

"It's a barbaric attack," said Hasina in a statement yesterday.

The opposition leader prayed for peace and salvation of departed soul and expressed sympathy for the members of bereaved families.

Laudable

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This is for the first time that a visiting Foreign Minister or such a high ranking dignitary is calling on the Leader of the Opposition in a programme that has been scheduled officially by the government.

Earlier R Raphael, US Assistant Secretary of State also called on Sheikh Hasina but the programme was reportedly at the Secretary's own initiative and was not on the official agenda.

Reliable sources said that the Awami League approached the Chinese Embassy to arrange a meeting with the visiting Foreign Minister after it was known he would be coming to Bangladesh. However, Chinese Embassy officials did not respond. At this stage, the AL high command approached the Foreign office to arrange a meeting.

The AL request prompted the Foreign Minister to take a personal initiative to fix an official appointment between the visiting dignitary and the Leader of the Opposition. He sought and readily received the approval of the Prime Minister to make arrangements for the meeting. The schedule of the meeting was also incorporated and circulated in the official itinerary of the four-day visit of the Chinese leader.

The initiative of the Foreign Minister is a positive step towards institutionalising parliamentary norms and it will no doubt contribute to a more harmonious relationship between the ruling and the opposition parties, observers feel.

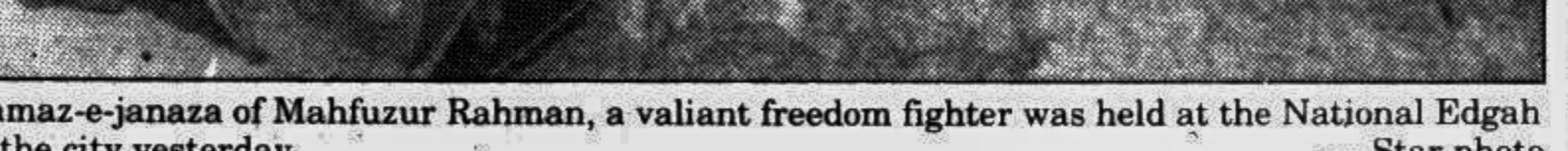
Pay scales

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PROKRICH agitation last month. But shortly after the announcement, lower and mid-level officers of BCS Administration cadre expressed their resentment and demanded upgradation of their scales also.

They formed an action committee and announced agitations and strike to realise their demand.

Several other cadre and non cadre organisations have also demanded upgradation



The Bhasa Sainik-o-Rajbondhi Parishad yesterday honoured 21 personalities for their remarkable contribution during the Language Movement at the Shilpkala Academy in the city yesterday.

— Star photo

— Star photo</