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Shikdar remanded for 32 days

Five counts of murder charges

KHULNA, Oct 6: Top terrorist Ershad Shikdar was taken on 32 days police remand in five murder cases today, reports UNB.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate P R Chakrabarty granted 28 days remand in four cases—Shahjahan, Akimul, Jahangir and Siraj murders—seven days each, and four days in Kalu murder case.

The CMM court also permitted Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) to remand Shikders' bodyguard, Noor Alam, for 18 days.

Neither of the two was, however, produced before the CMM court during their remand orders.

A senior official said a high-level police team would interrogate Ershad Shikdar at Sonadanga thana during the remand. KMP took him to Sonadanga police custody from jail this afternoon after court appearance.

"A 28-member squad, including two Directors of NSI and DGP, 10 Police Superes and 10 Inspectors, has already been formed to interrogate Shikdar and his bodyguard," he said.

Earlier, police escorted him from Jessore into the district court here today for hearings in two of the murder cases filed against him.

In one case he was indicted today (Wednesday) by the court as thousands of people thronged the court premises.

Shikdar, who had been detained in Jessore Jail since his arrest on August 11, was brought here by road amidst tight security.

Police officials said a prison van took him from the jail gate at about 8:20 am and brought in Khulna Jail at 11:38 am.

From Khulna Jail he was taken to the District and Sessions Court at around 12 noon.

Shikdar looked exhausted as he came out of the prison van and bullet-proof jacket-wearing policemen escorted him to the dock in the court of Judge Hasan Imam to stand trial in Jainul murder case.

Assistant Public Prosecutor (APP) Advocate Rajab Ali who appeared in the court for the state, coming out of the court, told waiting journalists that Ershad Shikdar was an FIR-listed accused in the murder case.

There were five names on the FIR of Jainul murder. On request from police, the court incorporated five other names in the case.

The court ordered the police to arrest the absconding accused—Nasir Khan, Jainal and Liakat—in the case and confiscate their property.

It also asked police to produce another accused, the ringleader's bodyguard, Noor Alam, before the court at the next hearing on October 19.

Advocate Manjurul Alam and Yasmin Ara defended him in this case.

Later, he was produced before the court of Samshul Arefin, a judge of Sub Judge Court number 3, in Panna murder case of 1997.

The court framed formal charges against Shikdar and three others in this murder case. The other accused are Idris, Jallil and Matiar.

Court sources said responding to charge from the court, Shikdar pleaded "not guilty" and also wanted trial of the killing.

The court fixed November 21, 22 and 23 for the next hearings of the case.

APP Advocate Qumrul Hasan represented the state in the case while Advocate Mostafa Yunus and Sarwar Yunus were in defence.

Benapole gets ready for freight trains

By Mizan Ali

Bangladesh Railway expects to earn about Tk 15 crore revenue annually once the Benapole railway station is opened for trade between Bangladesh and India, according to official sources.

"We are now technically ready to allow freight trains through the Benapole track," said a top official of the Railway. A trade protocol between the two countries has to be signed for allowing Indian freight trains up to the border on the track, he said.

The 36-km Jessore-Benapole rail track was recently restored at a cost of Tk 25 crore to connect Bangladesh and Indian railways at the border point for movement of trains.

The Railway now earns about Tk 30 crore revenue annually from export and import of goods between the two countries through Darshana, Rohanpur and Birol railway stations, the sources said.

The Railway authorities are expecting to connect Dhaka with any Indian railway station by the year 2001, they said. The link will be set up through the Bangabandhu Jamuna Bridge after laying the track between Bangabandhu East Station at Tangail and Dhaka by June 2001.

Rail communication between India and Bangladesh through Benapole is closed since 1974. The link was restored in 1972 after independence but was stopped 1974 as volume of trade and number of passengers decreased.

3 girl students get DU stick

By DU Correspondent

Three students were expelled from the Shamsunnahar Hall of Dhaka University and five others warned yesterday for indulging in "clandestine activities" at the hall.

The action was decided at a meeting of the hall authorities yesterday with Provost Prof Sultana Shah in the chair, according to a press release.

"Action against the students was taken after scrutinising the recovered documents of Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) at the hall on September 23 and taking opinion of the students and student leaders," the release added.

The expelled students are Farida Yasmin Tanu of Zoology department, Shawkat Ara Khanam, Camney of Management department and Nilufar Yasmin of Islamic Studies department.

Those warned are Jesmin Nahar, MA final year student of Islamic Studies, Fatema Shirin, third year student of Sociology, Happy, first year student of Economics, Ambiya, first year student of Islamic Studies and Farida Akter, second year student of Law.

The penalised students admitted to the hall authorities that they used to influence the innocent students of the hall to engage themselves in organisational activities by using religious sentiment," the release added.

The ICS activists collected fund for their organisation in the name of hall, which also tarnished the image of the university, it said, warning, "If any student is found involved in such illegal and unauthorised activities, she would be expelled from the hall."

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Incessant rain throughout the day yesterday forced students, guardians and pedestrians alike to do some acrobatic walk on the bricks, balancing sometimes on one leg on the road near the entrance of Willes Little Flower School.

Myanmar considers gas export to India

Dhaka-Yangon deal to better border infrastructure

By M Anwarul Haq

Diplomatic observers feel progress could be made on the repatriation of some 21,000 stranded Rohingya refugees by inviting Senior General Than Shwe who is the strongman of the Myanmar government and the Party Secretary Number One of the State Peace and Development Council of Myanmar.

Even the foreign minister of Myanmar during his July trip to Dhaka could not give any assurance of the return of the Rohingyas and said he will convey Bangladesh's concern "to the officials concerned" upon his return.

The Myanmar commerce minister also said his country would be able to establish better communication links with Bangladesh, once the 500-mile Yangon-Sittoung road is opened to traffic. Construction of the road, he informed, is now complete and it would be formally opened in November.

The minister assured his country will take more steps to increase infrastructure facilities. "Both of our countries have entered into general and border trade agreements," he said.

The minister said he will look into the proposal on setting up of a "Special Economic Zone" at Teknaf. The proposal was made by Syed Mahmudul Huq, one of the architects of Bangladesh-Myanmar border trade and vice-chairman of Bangladesh-Myanmar Business Promotion Council.

The idea of establishing a Special Economic Zone at Teknaf has been mooted to offer opportunities for joint venture manufacturing based on raw materials from Myanmar, especially from Rakhine and Chin states. The emphasis would be on exports to third countries.

During the five-day visit of the Myanmar commerce minister to Bangladesh, the two governments have also agreed to set up a coastal shipping service. Besides, Dhaka has expressed its intention to construct a jetty and a display-commerce centre of Bangladesh products at Teknaf.

Myanmar has also agreed to import pharmaceutical products from Bangladesh.

Kyau Than also emphasised that both countries should increase trade and business links further as "two countries are important members of BIMSTEC".

The Bangladesh-Myanmar Business Promotion Council (BMBPC) was formed in Dhaka last July during the first ever visit by a private sector delegation from Myanmar, led by Aik Htun.

Dacoity at a city house

By Staff Correspondent

Dacoits took away money, gold ornaments and other valuables from a flat in the city's West Agargaon area in the early hours of yesterday.

According to police, a gang of about seven dacoits got inside the first floor flat of Nur-E-Alam, an engineer of PWD, by cutting an iron grill of a window at about 2:30 am.

The dacoits, aged between 20 to 30, ransacked the house and took away about 25 tolas of gold ornaments, Tk 22 thousand in cash, five wrist watches and other valuables, police added.

Golden boys come home

From page 1

Youth and Sports Jaimal Abedin Hazari, Secretary of the Ministry of Youth and Sports A S M Shahjahan, former State Minister for Youth and Sports BNP Sadeque Hossain, MP, Whip of Jatiya Party in Parliament Fazle Rabbi, BFF General Secretary Harunur Rashid, MP, officials of the National Sports Council and BFF, and sports organisers were present at Zia International Airport to receive the football heroes.

Hanif, Hossain Quader and Sadeul Quader received the team first with bouquets. They were followed by the other leaders and officials.

Hundreds of football fans, some of them with band-party, showered rose petals on the footballers and chanted victory slogans.

The footballers waved from their open-truck on their way to the Prime Minister's official residence, Ganabhaban, to meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Today's grand reception, organised by the National Sports Council, will be held at 3:30 pm.

A preparatory meeting for the grand reception was held at NSC conference yesterday with State Minister for Youth and Sports and NSC chairman Obaidul Quader in the chair.

Obaidul Quader has urged all political parties and socio-cultural organisations to participate in the reception.

BFF sources said cultural function would follow the reception. "With the soccer heroes, the BFF officials and

BDR, BSF trade fire in Kurigram

KURIGRAM, Oct 6: BDR and BSF traded fire in a four-hour skirmish today on Pakhuria frontier over kidnapping of a Bangladeshi national by Indian border guards, reports UNB.

Local BDR sources said some Indian Border Security Force personnel trespassed into Bangladesh territory near pillar no 1040k and picked up one Abdul Awal, 28, of Narayanpur union in Nageswari thana at about 9 am.

Half an hour later, BDR men arrested an Indian Tota Mia, near pillar no 1039. BSF men then opened fire on Bangladesh Rifles personnel who fired back.

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Fuel transport workers threaten strike from Oct 24

CHITTAGONG, Oct 6: Workers of public sector fuel transports, including truck, tank lorry and water vessel, have threatened to go for an indefinite strike from October 24 if their sacked leader is not reinstated by October 23, reports UNB.

Sramik League, a component of Chittagong city SKOP, announced the programme at a press conference here today.

They also demanded withdrawal of the showcause notices served on 16 leaders by Bangladesh petroleum Corporation.

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NDI workshop ends with AL singing its own song

By Staff Correspondent

A three-day workshop on the practice of parliamentary democracy in the country ended in the city yesterday with the ruling Awami League highlighting various steps it has taken in strengthening the parliament and other democratic institutions.

Opposition BNP, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami attended the workshop on the first two days and blamed the ruling party for making the parliament ineffective.

Washington-based National Democratic Institute organised the workshop titled "Parliamentary democracy: Role of the Speaker, the parliamentary committees and the civil society", at Hotel Sheraton.

Fifteen lawmakers from BNP attended the workshop on the opening day while eight MPs from two factions of the Jatiya Party and one from Jamaat took part on the second day.

Besides Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury, seven other ruling party lawmakers attended the workshop on its concluding day. They are: Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Abdul Matin Khashru, PM's Adviser on Parliamentary Affairs Suranjit Sengupta, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Choudhury, Whip Khaled Khanam, Akhtaruzzaman, CM (retd) Faruk Khan and Dr. SM Akbar.

The ruling party legislators highlighted various steps taken in the past 39 months rule of the present government towards strengthening democracy, the parliament in particular.

They said appointment of non-minister MPs as head of the parliamentary standing committees has helped such bodies to function much more effectively than ever before.

Under the new arrangement, they added, transparency of the government has been ensured as the committees are scrutinising functions of different ministries and making the civil servants accountable to the public representatives.

Despite boycotting the parliamentary proceedings, the opposition members are attending the committee meetings and discussing various issues relating to governance and public interests.

For the first time in the country, the state-owned TV and radio are broadcasting live the proceedings of the parliament, besides covering the committee meetings, the Awami League lawmakers stated.

The AL lawmakers further said introduction of the "prime minister's question hour" in the House has been a big step towards ensuring government's accountability to the parliament.

The present parliament has discussed many issues of national interests, many of which were demanded by the opposition, the ruling party said, adding members of the Opposition Bench have been given more time than their colleagues in the Treasury Bench during such discussions.

The AL legislators also told the workshop that they have chosen for President a person who is acceptable to all.

They claimed to have forced the previous government to constitutionalise the idea of holding general elections under a non-party caretaker government. The idea has been widely acclaimed as a great step towards institutionalising democracy.

All these steps, they viewed, have strengthened parliamentary democracy, restored in 1991, in a country that did not enjoy democracy in the last two decades.

Business itself gets divided

By M Shamsur Rahman

The business community of the country appears to be divided over an FBCCI proposed action plan.

The division became apparent as only three business leaders among nine invitees turned up at a meeting, convened by the FBCCI President, to discuss the action plan yesterday. The meeting finally did not take place.

But in another incident outside the FBCCI building, two bombs exploded, damaging three cars of FBCCI directors and creating panic in the busy streets of Motijheel as well as inside the Federation building, the venue for the planned meeting.

Later, police were deployed at the scene to avoid any further trouble.

Salman F Rahman, a former FBCCI president, and FICCI president AKM Shamsuddin came to attend the meeting while other invited business leaders, including the chiefs of DCCI, MCCCI, ICC, BCI, BGMEA and Yussuf Abdullah Harun, former FBCCI president, did not turn up.

FBCCI President Abdul Awal Minto said AKM Shamsuddin came to the meeting but left the place soon.

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) recently took a move to prepare the action plan for all concerned to end the politics of hartal to figure a way out of the politics of confrontation.

Talking to The Daily Star, Minto said that he had invited the business leaders to exchange views about the next steps for preparing the plan.

Replying to a question Minto said that he had previously talked to some of the business leaders regarding the meeting over telephone and later sent a faxed invitation which many probably did not receive.

He said that ICC, Bangladesh president could not attend the meeting as he was out of the country and DCCI president was in hospital to visit his mother.

Minto also said a series of meetings were needed to draw up an action plan and that he would meet other business leaders in the next phase on this issue.

He also said that the name of the 'Action plan' was changed to 'Action plan for peace and development'.

He said that the name was changed because the earlier name created confusion in the mind of general public and politicians which was reflected in a pre-hartal statement by

Unicef unveils its priority plans for Bangladesh

By staff correspondent

The United Nations Childrens Fund (UNICEF) is to focus on child development, survival and protection rights as priority in its country programme in Bangladesh from year 2001.

Under these broad categories, in the area of survival rights UNICEF would focus on health nutrition, safe motherhood, reproductive health, with special stress on deadly disease HIV/AIDS.

Safe water, hygiene, sanitation, with special emphasis on arsenic mitigation would also come under survival rights.

The area of child rights include, early child mental, ensuring family environment, which includes children's, social attitude, access to quality of basic primary education.

Under protection rights, every child's birth would be registered, special scheme would be taken up to give protection against discrimination of violence against girls and women and promote participation of adolescent girls and women.

"As part of our strategy we are aiming to build national capacity and network to enable the government to implement the programmes," said Jun Kukita, Senior Programme Officer of UNICEF Bangladesh.

He also said, "We would also take up social mobilization to create awareness in connection with the programmes."

The visiting Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF Karin Sham Poo while briefing

Attempt on poet Charges framed against three Harkat-uz Jihad members

By Court Correspondent

Charges were framed yesterday in a Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court against three alleged members of Harkat-uz Jihad on charge of attempt on poet Shamsur Rahman's life at his Shaymoli residence on January 18 this year.

CID submitted the chargesheet in the case accusing Tarique Aziz, Fazle Ilah Hasan and Mahtab Uddin on April 20 this year. Tarique Aziz is now on bail while the rest two have been detained at the Dhaka Central Jail.

The judge Munira Mahfuza fixed January 11 for cross-examination of the witnesses.

Young man shot dead

By Staff Correspondent

A young man was shot dead by a gang of assassins in the city's West Nakhalpara area yesterday afternoon.

The dead was identified as Anisur Rahman alias Anis, 25, son of Solaiman Mia, a resident of West Nakhalpara.

Tejgaon police suspected that Anis was murdered as a sequel to previous rivalry with Liton group of the same area. He was wanted in a number of cases, including extortion and clash. Tejgaon police said.

Hospital sources said the killers numbering about five, dragged Anis near the rail line in front of Bara Jame Masjid at about 1:30 pm and shot in his head and abdomen point blank.

The body was lying on the spot for about three hours. Police recovered the body at about 4:30 pm and sent it to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

7 killed in Sirajganj bus plunge

SIRAJGANJ, Oct 6: Seven people were killed and some 42 injured, nine critically, when a bus plunged into a ditch after skidding off the western link-road to Bangabandhu Memorial Bridge today, reports UNB.

Police said the Dhaka-bound coach of Riki Paribahan from Bogra met with the tragic accident at about 2:30 pm after the driver of the bus lost control over the steering.

Four of the victims were identified as Abdul Jalil, 40, Shamsur Ali, 55, Jahurul Islam, 35, of Aul village in Sirajganj, Natore, Mantazur Rahman, 38, of Baropukuria in Panchabibi thana of Joypurhat district.

Of the injured, 19 were admitted to Sirajganj Sadar Hospital.

High police officials visited the spot. A case was filed with West BJMB thana.