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Extortion, terrorism rampant in old city, traders allege

By Shahriar Karim

Increasing incidents of extortion and terrorist activities are taking a hefty toll on businesses in the old part of the city.

Sales at different wholesale markets there have fallen by 10 to 15 per cent, traders said.

A large number of traders at Nawabpur, Islampur, Mitford, Nayabazar and Imamganj said they are fed up with the prevailing situation.

However, traders at Moulavibazar and Chawkbazar, which fall under the jurisdiction of Lalbagh thana, said incidents of extortion and toll collection are very few in those areas. But they have to pay toll when they bring imported goods in trucks from places outside the areas.

Traders in those areas usually bring goods in trucks and unload those at Chankharpool where a group of people, backed by police, collect Tk 100 from each truck, they said.

"We don't know who are they, but we have to pay toll to unload our goods," said, Al Haj Abdus Salam, President of Bangladesh Paints, Dyes and Chemical Merchants Association. Salam said he along with representatives of other trade associations in the area will sit with the Home Secretary in the first week of the next month and then with the Home Minister to address the problem.

The law and order situation in two other thanas — Kotwali and Sutrapur-- is getting worse everyday. Even retailers from different city areas and districts are scared to enter the wholesale markets in Old Dhaka, they said.

A few days back, a retailer from Rajshahi came to Nawabpur to buy goods. He spent the night at a local hotel. When he came out of the hotel next morning with Tk 40,000, a gang of hooligans snatched his money, they said.

"Such incidents have become regular in Old Dhaka," said Abdul Mannan, a businessman at Nawabpur.

The traders alleged that such incidents take place in front of police but they do not do anything. The criminals pay a portion of their illegally-earned money to police stations concerned, they alleged.

A popular belief in Kotwali Thana area is that police officers spend Tk 20 to 25 lakh for posting at Kotwali police station, as it offers them ample scope to earn more.

"If a police officer spends that amount for posting at Kotwali thana, how can you expect any action from him?. He will obviously favour the criminals to get back his investment," said a trader preferring anonymity.

Cargo handling still suspended at Ctg port

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 25: Cargo handling at Chittagong port remained suspended following a wildcat strike by dock workers at Chittagong port.

The dock workers declined to take gang-booking from 8 pm last night following a row with the stevedores over payment of tips or extra money, port sources said.

The dispute arose on Friday when the gang workers demanded tips against unloading of imported vehicles from a ship at Chittagong port jetty 4.

The dock workers opposed the unloading of imported vehicles as the stevedores refused to pay them tips on Friday.

The dock workers went on strike at 8 pm last night, halting the cargo handling activities.

Meanwhile, Chittagong port authority held an emergency meeting with the leaders of dock workers and stevedores at port office for four hours from 11 am today.

Talking to this correspondent Chittagong port chairman commodore Golam Rabbani said the meeting decided to suspend 25 dock workers for opposing the unloading work in the ship that carried imported vehicles.

They were also asked to explain in this regard, he added.

He said 20 per cent of the to-

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Houses have been built on hill side cutting soil at Lalkhan Bazar in Chittagong. Rain causes hill collapse damaging houses, killing and injuring people. — Star photo

Frozen shrimps

Exporters asked not to keep containers in port yard

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, June 25: Mongla Port Authority has asked exporters not to keep containers in the container yard from now on due to severe power crisis.

The restriction has put shrimp exporters in a fresh trouble.

According to a source in the MPA, there are 162 plug points of electricity in yards No. 2 and 3. But MPA issued an official order on Friday last not to keep containers with frozen shrimps there because of power shortage.

It is not possible to supply power for more than 124 containers with frozen shrimps he said adding, maximum electricity is being consumed by the jetties and residential areas of the port authority.

Besides, one of the two 400 KV generators in the container yards is not functioning, the source said.

The exporters said they are using the yard to save the frozen shrimps from being damaged. Non-availability of feeder vessels at Mongla port which is delaying the shipment, they said.

Safiur takes oath as election commissioner

Newly appointed Election Commissioner Safiur Rahman took oath at a simple ceremony yesterday, reports UNB.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed appointed the former Home Secretary as Election Commissioner on Thursday.

Justice Bimalendu Bikash Roy, the acting Chief Justice, administered the oath, said an Election Commission press release.

Euro 2000

Kluivert kills off Yugoslavia

ROTTERDAM, Netherlands, June 25: Co-hosts the Netherlands will play Italy in the semifinals of Euro 2000 in Amsterdam on Thursday, reports AFP.

The Dutch qualified with a crushing 6-1 win over Yugoslavia in the quarterfinals Sunday, with four goals for Barcelona striker Patrick Kluivert and double strike from Marc Overmars.

Italy made it through with a 2-0 win Saturday over Romania.

The other semifinal on Wednesday will oppose Portugal and the winners of the France-Spain match later Sunday.

Connoisseurs appreciate some mangoes at a fair on the Nari Grantha Prabartana office premises in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Beware! Delicious mangoes may also be harmful

By Staff Correspondent

A mango fair began in the city yesterday offering connoisseurs a wide variety of the delicious fruit free of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and harmful preservatives.

Organisers put as many as 33 homegrown varieties on display, giving the people of Dhaka a rare opportunity to savour the rich "mango diversity."

Ubinig, Narigrantha Prabartana and Nayakrishi Andolon, all NGOs, organised the three-day show at the Mohammadpur premises of Prabartana.

The fair began in the morning with participants expressing deep concern at the loss of mango varieties due to the 'invasion' of Indian hybrid mangoes, which they said are injurious to health.

"The mangoes you see in local markets come from India which contain harmful preservatives and organic hormones. Consuming these simply means consuming poison," cautioned Farhad Mazhar, managing director of Ubinig and a renowned campaigner for bio-diversity preservation.

Prof. Emajuddin Ahmed, former vice chancellor of Dhaka University, said "If we can't save our rich bio-diversity the varieties will be lost and, in the process, we'll lose our sovereignty."

Ahmed who hails from Chapainawabganj, the mango hub of Bangladesh, said due to use of fertilizer and pesticides during cultivation mangoes these days have lost their taste.

Shamsul Haq, a mango researcher, presented results of his extensive research on mango in two districts, Chapainawabganj and Meherpur. He identified as many as 331 different varieties of the sweet juicy fruit but repented that "we're fast losing these varieties due to overemphasis on the so-called hybrid varieties like

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PM hands over cheques to 151 FFs to set up nurseries

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon the freedom fighters to thwart conspiracy of the defeated forces who have united to take revenge of their defeat, reports BSS.

She said the defeated forces of 1971, 1990 and 1996 have joined hands to foil the current pace of development initiated by her government.

The prime minister was addressing a function at the International Conference Centre (ICC) here in the afternoon. The function was arranged to hand over cheques to a select group of freedom fighters to set up nurseries under a project to help rehabilitate unemployed freedom fighters in the rural areas and protect the environment through regeneration of forests.

She handed over cheques to 151 freedom fighters at the function. She talked to them and enquired about their present condition.

Order to probe irregularities in Tongibari SSC exams centre

The Education Minister yesterday ordered urgent inquiry into the reported irregularities in this year's SSC examinations that resulted in failure of many students in Munshiganj district, reports UNB.

A government handout said ASHK Sadique asked the Chairman of Dhaka Education Board to take immediate steps regarding the examinees who could not pass in Islamic Studies due to supply of wrong set of question papers on the subject.

"Identify the persons responsible for the irregularities and take stern action against them," the minister said.

He asked the Board to immediately check all the documents, including the official directives on question papers, receipt of drawing question papers from the treasury.

More than 1000 examinees of Tongibari in Munshiganj could not pass that particular subject as the examination was reportedly taken at the centre with "Ka" set of the questions instead of "Kha" series.

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Cadetship exam

Showcause on Biman management, Secy of Civil Aviation Ministry

By Staff Correspondent

A High Court Division Bench yesterday asked the Bangladesh Biman management and the Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism to show cause within two weeks why the results of ten candidates for Cadetship Examination held on June 14, any appointment and all steps taken in this connection shall not be declared unlawful.

Justice KM Hasan and Justice Khademul Islam Chowdhury issuing a *rule nisi* in this regard also passed an interim order restraining the respondents from giving effect to the appointment of the ten candidates and from taking any steps in connection with their appointment until disposal of the rule.

The rule and the order were issued upon a writ petition filed by 35 candidates who appeared at the examination for the posts of Cadet Pilot in Bangladesh Biman.

Senior Advocate Dr M Zahir and Barrister Khaled Hamid Chowdhury moved for the petitioners, says a press release.

Death anniversary of Jahanara Imam today

By DU Correspondent.

Different organisations will observe the 6th death anniversary of Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam today through separate programmes.

Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) will place wreath at her grave at Mirpur Freedom Fighters Graveyard at 8:00 am.

Samajtantrik Chhatra Front (SCF) will hold a discussion meeting at the cafeteria of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) at 4:30 pm, which will be addressed by Khalequzzaman.

Meanwhile, the *Ekattorer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee* (Committee for Elimination of Collaborators of 1971) yesterday announced the names of

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Tk 10.5 lakh of BATC agency looted in N'ganj

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, June 25: An armed gang robbed Tk 10.5 lakh from employees of a cigarette marketing agency at Kadamtali in the town this morning.

Employees of Mamata Agency of British American Tobacco Company were taking the money in a covered van to deposit it to the Sonali Bank at Sonamian Bazar branch, witnesses said.

A gang of six robbers riding two motorbikes stopped the van near the Kadamtali bridge and asked the company manager, Abbasuddin, to hand over the money.

The gang exploded two homemade bombs when the manager refused to oblige them. They broke the lock of the van and took away the money.

Hundreds of people witnessed the robbery but none came to help the victim. The gang fled the area firing shots.

Witnesses said sub-inspector Monirul Islam of Siddirganj thana who was passing through the area also witnessed the incident. Victim cried for help but Islam left the area immediately.

A case was filed with Siddirganj thana. None was arrested till filing of this report last night.

Five shot in city incidents

By Staff Correspondent

Five people including a woman were shot in separate incidents in the city yesterday.

Three transport workers were shot by their rivals at Joykali Mandir in the city's Sutrapur area yesterday morning.

The injured were identified as Sheikh Jahangir Ali, 50, son of Raisuddin, Samsul Huq Khan, 48, son of Saral Khan and Kamal Mirdha, 50, son of Abdul Kader Mirdha.

Their rivals came to their office at Joykali Mandir at about 9 am and fired on them and left the spot immediately.

The bullet hit transport

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Teachers give ultimatum

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Teachers Association (BTA) has given an ultimatum that it will go for a tougher movement if the government does not accept five-point demand of the teachers of non-government secondary schools by July 20.

BTA will formally inform the government about the ultimatum today, its leaders said at a press conference in the city yesterday.

President of BTA Mohammad Kamruzzaman read out a written statement at the press conference at Jatiya Press Club.It was also attended by BTA Secretary Chowdhury Khurshid Alam, Vice President Hena Das and some other leaders.

The teachers' demands include 100 per cent government contribution to their salary, annual increment, house rent and festival allowance like that for teachers and employees of government schools.

BTA leaders said that following 'assurance' from the education minister to a delegation of BTA in October last year, they had postponed their planned 'grand rally' on October 12.But they went for fresh programmes in January this year as the assurance was not implemented and no initiative was taken even to discuss the issue with them, the leaders said.

Minister says

Power situation to improve by June 29

By Staff Correspondent

The power supply situation in the country is likely to improve by June 29 as some plants shut down few months back for maintenance will resume operation.

"By next week, we hope to increase power generation to 2600 MW and make the situation comfortable and tolerable to people," State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources Prof Rafiqul Islam said while talking to a group of newsmen yesterday.

Over a dozen power plants were shut down one after another in recent months. The situation deteriorated further in April when some major power plants including those in Raozan, Ashuganj and Ghorashal were shut down.

"Twelve plants were inoperative few days back, reducing the supply by 987 MW. By June 29, we expect to re-start seven plants, restoring 574 MW power supply," the state minister added.

However, while these plants would come into operation, some other plants would be shut down for maintenance. Therefore, load shedding will continue with a shortfall of 200 MW.

While the present demand for power exceeds 2800 MW, 58 power plants in the country with a total generation capability of 3300 MW actually can never produce more than 2665 MW. "It is because over a dozen power plants always undergo maintenance," said a Power Development Board official.

SM Hall authorities of DU to cut down 'unplanned' trees

By DU Correspondent

Authorities of Salimullah Hall of Dhaka University are going to cut down the 'unplanned' trees of the hall and use those to prepare furniture for the residents of the hall.

According to a decision taken at a Paribesh Parishad meeting of the hall last year, the hall authorities have al-

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Tk 360cr budget for Ctg city corpn

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 25: Mayor of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) today announced the budget of the corporation for fiscal year 2000-2001 showing a revenue receipt of Tk 360.30 crore.

The mayor also placed a revised budget of Tk 128.44 crore for 1999-2000 in presence of ward commissioners, CCC officials and journalists at the corporation auditorium.

No new taxes were imposed in the proposed budget.

In the budget the earning heads includes outstanding tax and lavy of Tk 53 crore, tax and lavy of Tk 23.27 crore other taxes of Tk 5.54 crore, fees of Tk 6.73 crore, rents and earnings of Tk 15.62 crore, miscellaneous income of Tk 3.30 crore, development grant of Tk 215 crore, other earnings of Tk 11 crore and initial balance of Tk 13.73 crore.

The heads of expenditure includes Tk 41 crore against salary, allowance and remuneration, Tk 9.80 crore against repair and maintenance, Tk 70 lakh against rent, tax and lavy, Tk 5.26 crore against electricity, fuel and water, Tk 3.3 crore against welfare, Tk 63.50 lakh against post and telephone, Tk one crore against advertisement and publicity, Tk 88 lakh against printing and stationeries Tk 24 lakh, Tk 1.45 crore against miscellaneous purpose, Tk one crore against relief Tk 140.85 crore against development and Tk 11 crore against other heads.

The mayor said the budget was proposed aiming at ensuring the development of the city.

He said a 50-year development plan has been taken to expedite the development of Chittagong. Some short and long term multipurpose projects will be taken to implement the plan, the mayor said.

Deaf & dumb rape victim released from safe custody after two years

A deaf and dumb rape victim, who was under safe custody in Chittagong Central Jail for more than two years, was released yesterday, reports BSS.

The court asked the authorities concerned to provide her shelter at a 'proper home' as she is unwilling to go back to her family.

A Division Bench of the High Court comprising Justice Rabbani and Justice Nazmun Ara Sultana passed the order to release the rape victim following a petition filed by Advocate M A Salam Talukder and Barrister Tania Amir.

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Editor: Mahfuz Anam
Published by the Editor from Transcraft Ltd, 229, Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka-1208 on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd., 52 Motijheel C.A., Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: 19 Karwan Bazar, Dhaka-1215, Telephone Numbers: 8124944, 8124955, 8124966, Fax: 8125155, GPO Box No: 3257, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA. Internet edition address: http://www.dailystarnews.com and Email address: dstar@bangla.net

CEPZ unrest

3 more workers arrested

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 25: Police arrested three more workers of a towel factory at Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) last night.

Earlier 20 others were arrested from the CEPZ.

Police said all of them were arrested on charge of creating unrest in the CEPZ.

Meanwhile, the agitating workers of US company Qualitex Group today continued their sit-in in front of the factory premises demanding reinstatement of 15 workers.

They are also demanding wages as per 1993 circular which was kept in abeyance by BEPZA.

Production in three towel factories of Qualitex Group remained suspended for the last 15 days.

A large number of police was deployed in and around CEPZ to avoid fresh violence.