

One shot, two abducted by armed Indians in Chuadanga

CHUADANGA, Jan 5: In an armed attack, a gang of terrorists from across the border shot one person and kidnapped two others from a frontier village in Damurhuda upazila on Thursday night, reports UNB.

Villagers said some 20-25 Indians attacked the house of one Farid at village Baghadanga at night and beat up all inmates at gunpoint.

The intruders kidnapped Farid and his neighbour Madan. "When villagers chased them, they fired gunshots indiscriminately," said an eyewitness.

The abductors also opened fire on Habib, brother-in-law of Farid, who tried to resist them. Critically injured Habib was later sent to Khulna Hospital for treatment.

The villagers recovered an Indian shutter gun left by the attackers and handed over it to police. They alleged that police at nearby Karpashdanga outpost did not come to the aid of the victims.

Book Fair Applications for stalls to be received from Jan 14

By Staff Correspondent

Bangla Academy will receive applications from book publishers from January 14 to 21 for setting up of bookstalls at the Ekushey Book Fair on its premises.

The fair begins on February one.

This year the Academy has taken up a special programme to distribute in other countries VCD cassettes with photographs on the Language Movement to highlight the background of the historic event.

"A large number of cassettes will be made available in both Bangla and English so that people across the world can understand our Language Movement," Director General of the Academy, Dr. Syed Anwar Hossain told this correspondent.

The cassettes will be completed by this month and will be also be available at the book fair, he said.

A web site will be opened to give details about books on the Internet. A huge digital screen will keep visitors abreast of events at the fair, he said.

Like in previous years, there will be special discussion session on Bangla literature and culture every day. Eminent persons will take part in those.

Special measures will be taken to maintain discipline, law and order and sanctity of the fair.

No stall for food or cassette will be allowed at the fair as those create noise and chaos by using loud speakers to woo customers, said an official. Noise pollution will be controlled strictly.

Mobile food shops will however be allowed beside the Suhrawrdy Park opposite the Academy.

The road in front of the Academy will be kept free of traffic. No stall will be allowed there.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to inaugurate the fair as chief guest.

The Ekushey Book Fair has become a unique national event since it was first organised in 1972. The fair got official petronisation in 1978. Since then the Bangla Academy has been organising the fair on its premises every year.

Ekushey programmes commemorate the supreme sacrifice of some valiant sons of this soil on February 21 in 1952 to establish Bangla as one of the state languages of the then Pkiastan, as it was the language of the majority people.

Syndicate bank

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They alleged that the committee earlier recovered a big amount of money from Ratna, one of the former agents of Kajol, and distributed the money among close relatives of the committee members.

Earlier, the home ministry asked the local administration to release Kajol on parole. On the other hand, the local administration requested the home ministry to provide 100 policemen to ensure his security.

According to sources, Kajol earlier told the administration that he could return the depositors' money if he was released for one year. He admitted that the depositors had deposited Tk 100 crore with his syndicate bank.

When contacted, the Deputy Commissioner of Jhenidah said it would be very risky to release Kajol.

According to sources in the administration, Kajol has property worth around Tk one crore only. Releasing Kajol may deteriorate a law and order situation.

The sources however said the administration could release Kajol on parole for "fixed periods on several occasions ", but not for one year at a time.



Al-Shariar, the Dhaka Metropolis Test cap, watches the path of the ball after executing a sweep against Bangladesh Biman at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday. Al-Shariar smashed a hundred in the Green Delta National Cricket League fixture. (Story on page 13) -- Star photo

PM on filing of case against Morshed Khan They term action against big shots as 'abuse of power'

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has called for establishing a society free from terrorism and corruption and bringing about a qualitative change in politics, reports UNB.

She expressed surprise over a situation now prevailing in society where obstruction comes if law is applied against wealthy and influential people involved in terrorism and corruption.

"It's the demand of the people and society that law would take its own course whoever the offender is," the Prime Minister said while opening the Millennium Get-together of Dhaka Medical College at Dr Milan Auditorium in the morning yesterday.

In an oblique reference to the protest against the filing of a case against BNP leader and business tycoon Morshed Khan MP and his son in Chittagong, Hasina

said some quarters start a clamour of "abuse of power" when legal actions are taken against the big shots in society.

She said the nation could not be put on the track of progress if terrorism and corruption are not stamped out.

Referring to the current controversy over the new JCD leadership, she said that those who have expertise in terrorism are being put at the helm of student politics.

She suggested that genuine and meritorious students should be allowed to take up the leadership to improve the quality of student politics. Hasina said the opposition parties and all concerned should take care of it.

Referring to actions being taken against hoodlums in her own party, the Prime Minister said measures have already been taken against those who resort

to terrorism in the name of her party.

She called for maintaining a sound academic environment in educational institutions. She, however, said that session jams in universities are now cleared following stern steps taken by the government against campus vandalism.

Chaired by Alumni Trust president Dr Waliullah, the function was also addressed by Health Minister Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Principal of Dhaka Medical College Dr K M D Shahidul Islam, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Dr Khalilur Rahman, Dr Kazi Mesbahuddin Iqbal and Dr Kazi Shahidul Islam.

About her government's policy and steps to reach medical facilities to the common people, the

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Brand invasion: Two shops bearing names of leading international fashion houses in the city's Elephant Road area.

Rift in Khulna BNP widens New dist body yet to be recognised by Khaleda

From Quazi Amanullah

KHULNA, Jan 5: Khaleda Zia's political image as Leader of the Opposition in Parliament is now being used by both the rival factions of BNP, keeping her in the dark about the real situation of the party in the district.

Both the factions are keeping her in good humour without ending the rift, said some party insiders who have been keeping quiet since formation of a new 101-member district committee.

The committee is yet to be recognised by the BNP chairperson.

Efforts by the Khulna City Corporation (KCC) Mayor to bridge the rift produced no result so far as both the factions are flexing their muscles against each other and calling meetings and counter-meetings in the name of Eid reunion.

The situation took an alarm-

ing turn on Wednesday.

The controversial 101-member new district committee called a meeting cum Eid reunion at the party office on Wednesday where all the speakers gave direct threats to the rival group led by former Whip Ashraf Hossain. Supporters of Ashraf group were asked to prove their strength.

At the meeting, leaders of the 101-member new district committee headed by Advocate Gazi Abdul Bari as its president were in belligerent mood against their opponents in the party, terming them agents of Awami League.

Speeches delivered by all the speakers at the meeting were "highly provocative", said the insiders who are maintaining neutrality, hoping a united BNP again in Khulna.

Reposing full confidence in the

leadership of Khaleda Zia, leaders of Gazi group once again disowned the leadership of Ashraf Hossain, terming him an "outsider" in Khulna. Hossain hails from Comilla.

They also termed City BNP Secretary Nazrul Islam Manju as a "BNP activist with Awami League connection".

Terming AshrafManju group as an anti-BNP force, leaders of Gazi group expressed their firm determination to "face the challenge from their opponents at any cost".

Security forces were deployed around BNP office on Wednesday.

On the other hand, Ashraf Hossain, Convenor of the 61-member District Convening Committee, called another

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Local RMG threatened as leading int'l brand names on increase

By Mustak Hossain

Local readymade garments industry is facing stiff competition from some of the leading international labels that have opened franchise in Dhaka and Chittagong.

"Now you can have Adidas, Calvin Klein, Marks & Spencer, Nike, Levi's, Reebok and what not in this country," said a shop-owner at Mansoor Bhaban in the city, which attracts particularly the young shoppers. "These were rarely available in our market before."

In the face of such a "brand" invasion, local fashion houses like Cat's Eye, Seal, Monsoon Rain, etc are now under tremendous pressure.

"Our designers are capable of producing quality fashion-wear, since quality fabrics and accessories are very much available here," said a market observer. "But, brand names have extra attraction for the young people."

The demand for brand items is on the rise with the affordability of the consumers. Fascinating commercials on satellite television channels have also stirred public interest in the international designer shirts, trousers, blazers, etc.

Indian fashion houses have also made their mark in the local market. Parx, Park Avenue, Peter England, Raymond's, Zodiac, Reid and Taylor, etc have become household names and their products are easily available.

Banga Bazaar Hawkers Market, a favourite amongst the Dhaka dwellers for low-price shopping, also has its own brand of brand items on offer.

"You can have famous labels like Dockers, Wrangler, Logg or Bugle Boy trousers, and Polo or Calvin Klein shirts within the range of Tk 150 to Tk 300," said a shop-owner there. "The same clothes cost you over Tk 1,000 at big malls."

They can sell at this price

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Anxious parents waiting outside as their wards appear at the admission test at Motijheel Ideal School in the city yesterday.

-- Star photo

Stray violence marks strike in West Bengal 80 including Mamata Banerjee injured

CALCUTTA, Jan 5: Stray violence and mass arrests marked an opposition strike in the Marxist-ruled Indian state of West Bengal today, called to denounce political clashes that injured more than 80 people, reports AFP.

Road and rail traffic came to a standstill in the eastern state as the opposition Trinamool Congress Party (TMC) launched a 12-hour strike from 6.00 am (0030 GMT) to protest against alleged violence by the ruling Communists.

An official at Lalbazar, the headquarters of the West Bengal police, said about 300 TMC activists had been arrested in central Calcutta alone, adding that strikers had burnt more than 20 state-run buses.

TMC officials said about 75 of their members were injured in stray clashes during the stoppage.

Trinamool official Kalyan Bandhopadhyay told AFP that

both the state of West Bengal and its capital city, Calcutta, were paralyzed. "Everything has come to a standstill."

Calcutta looks like a ghost town. There are only a few state government-run buses carrying communist cadres. Trains are not running but we are not blocking the tracks.

"It's just that the workers have not turned up." Witnesses said Calcutta's choked streets turned overnight into playgrounds with children and youths playing cricket and soccer. Schools and colleges remained closed.

An official said no international flight took off or landed from Calcutta airport although domestic flights were uninterrupted.

Bandhopadhyay said the West Bengal secretariat at sprawling colonial building built by the British and once the headquarters of the British East India Company also wore a desolate look.

"Only the Communist ministers are walking around that empty building," he said.

TMC members claimed 13 of their activists were burned to death after communist workers torched the home of a Muslim family in the troubled southwestern district of Midnapore.

West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya denied the report.

"We have information that the house of an alleged TMC member was burnt. But there are no bodies and no reports of casualties."

About 12,000 policemen were deployed at government offices, schools, colleges, bus terminals and markets across Calcutta. Security was also beefed up in the trouble-torn region of Keshpur and other areas in Midnapore district where violence began Wednesday evening.

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Arms seized, 4 held in city

By Staff Correspondent

Special Branch of police recovered 14 firearms and ammunition from three different places in the yesterday and arrested four people in this connection.

Following an information that arms traders were waiting in Ramna restaurant in Ramna park to exchange arms, a special SB squad lead by SI Mazharul Islam and Zakaria Hossain raided the restaurant at about 9:15pm on Thursday and arrested Maksud. Police recovered 2 revolvers and 6 pipe guns along with 30 bullets from the restaurant.

According to the confessional statement of Maksud, the team raided the first floor of a house at 92 Sarat Gupta Road in the old part of the city in the early hours of yesterday and arrested Jewel Khan, 33, Apon Chandro Dey, 23, Moran Chand, 22, and recovered 4 foreign made revolvers along with 42 bullets from their possession.

Later police again raided Nehal engineering works as per confessional statements of the arrested. Police also recovered some rifle-making materials from the shop. The owner of the shop went into hiding after the incident. Police seized the shop.

Separate cases were filed with Ramna and Sutrapur polices in these regards.

UP chairman stabbed in Mymensingh

MYMENSINGH, Jan 5: A Union Parishad chairman in Fulbaria Upazila was stabbed by a gang of terrorists on Thursday, reports UNB.

Witnesses and hospital sources said the terrorists attacked chairman Shahajahan Siraj Saju, 45, while he was returning home from a village arbitration in a motorbike.

The chairman was first admitted to Fulbaria Upazila Health Complex and later shifted to the Mymensingh Medical College Hospital as his condition deteriorated.

A case was filed with local police.

Crackdown in Malaysia on employers hiring illegal foreign workers

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 5: Malaysian authorities have launched a crackdown on about 5,000 employers suspected of hiring illegal foreign workers, many whom are being denied salaries and food, the Immigration Department said today, reports AP.

Rosli Malek, the department's spokesman, said authorities arrested more than 1,000 such employers nationwide last year and hoped to double the figure this year.

Most of the workers are from Indonesia, Bangladesh, India and Myanmar, and were

sneaked into the country by groups with international links, he told The Associated Press.

Investigations revealed that many of the workers were given only a meal a day, forcing them to beg for food from their Malaysian neighbors, Rosli said.

He also said some employers also did not pay the illegal workers.

"The problem is serious and we shall take stern action against these errant employers," he said.

A furniture maker on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur was recently find 961,000 ringgit

(dhrs 252,000) for hiring 120 illegal workers.

Rosli said the government would also build two detention centres in the northern state of Kedah and near the Kuala Lumpur International Airport to hold illegal immigrants pending deportation.

Illegal immigration to Malaysia, one of Southeast Asia's wealthiest countries, has been on the rise since the 1997-98 Asian economic crisis, which hurt Malaysia but affected its poorer neighbors even more.