

Printing press owner shot dead in city

By Staff Correspondent

A printing press owner was shot dead by unidentified assailants near his residence in the city's Pallabi area on Friday night.

Police and hospital sources identified the dead as Mahbubul Alam, 30, of Block-G under Section No-2 in Pallabi.

The motive behind the killing could not be known immediately.

Pallabi thana police arrested one person, identified as Kazi Miraj, suspecting his involvement in the killing.

Alam's wife Amena filed an FIR with Pallabi Police Station.

According to sources, Alam came under attack by a gang of three while he was crossing a road at Block C near his residence at about 7 pm.

He was shot in the chest and throat and taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where he died late Friday night.

The body was handed over to Alam's family after autopsy.

3 of a family stabbed in Jhalakati

JHALAKATI, Jan 6: Three people, including a local Awami League leader, were stabbed by some miscreants at village Putiakhal in Razapur upazila on Friday night, reports UNB.

Police said the miscreants indiscriminately stabbed Nazmul Hasan Khasru, 56, ex-chairman of Galua union parishad, while he was returning home from a bazar.

The attackers also stabbed Nazmul's daughter Sabina Yasmin, 21, and sister-in law Jharna Begum, 35, who came out of their house to resist the attackers.

The attackers fled the scene when villagers rushed to the spot. All the injured were admitted to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital.

Dumuria thana OC suspended, closed

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Jan 6: The officer-in-charge of Dumuria thana was suspended and closed to police lines today for negligence of duty.

Shahadat Hossain has been replaced by Zakir Hossain, OC of Kushtia Sadar thana.

In another incident on Friday night, Abdul Hadi, an Awami League leader and chairman of Raganathpur Union Parishad, escaped an attempt on his life by unidentified armed miscreants near thana AL office.

Police said the alleged killers of Kabirul Islam fired shots at Abdul Hadi, but he narrowly escaped.

Hadi came under attack while he was addressing a rally soon after Kabir was gunned down, police said.



Ablution in unclean water... every year millions gather on the bank of the river Turag on the outskirts of the capital for what is believed to be the second largest congregation for Muslims after Haj. Tents are there to house the devout Muslims all right; but no facility to supply safe water for their use. While the already-polluted Turag only gets more polluted with millions using its water for different purpose, the users expose themselves to different waterborne diseases. -- Star photo by Enamul Haq

Tens of thousands join Ijtema at Tongi

One dies, 18 hospitalised on first day

By Staff Correspondent

The three-day Biswa Ijtema, billed as the second largest Muslim congregation after the holy Hajj, began yesterday on the eastern bank of Turag river at Tongi.

The congregation opened with religious sermons by prominent Islamic scholars from around the world.

Tens of thousands of devotees from home and abroad are streaming into the congregation

venue, making the river bank a floating sea of humanity. Some 3, 230 foreign pilgrims from 65 countries are attending this congregation and many more are expected to arrive in the next two days, said official sources.

The discussion that started since Fajr prayers continued until midnight.

Abdul Wahab from Pakistan delivered discourse on Tahrir-e-Iman and Iman-e-Andolon (movement of faith) after Fajr prayers

while Dr. Shaikh Jahab from Sudan participated in the discussion after Zohr prayers. Moulana Jobar Hasan from Bangladesh and Moulana Saad from India also took part after Asr and Maghrib prayers respectively.

They delivered religious sermons describing the significance of acquiring Islamic knowledge. They also focused on six major points of Tablig Jamaat, including prayer, calling of Allah, See page 11 col 3

Thousands protest murders by militants in Assam

GAUHATI (India) Jan 6: Thousands of people took to the streets in the capital of north-eastern Assam state today, protesting the spurt in killings by suspected militants and former guerillas whom they described as "secret killers," reports AP.

At least 150 people have died in separate attacks in the past three months. Most of them were migrant Hindi-speaking business people, who have been living in Assam state for decades now.

Assam state is home to several rebel groups that accuse the government of exploiting the region's rich oil and mineral

resources and neglecting the local economy.

Unidentified gunmen also have been killing relatives of leaders of the outlawed United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), which is fighting government forces for the creation of a separate state outside India. The ULFA is blaming these attacks on their former colleagues who have given up arms and joined the national mainstream.

The insurgency that erupted in Assam state in early 1980s has killed more than 10,000 people in the past decade.

"It is not our job to find out who is killing whom. All we want is an end to the string of violent killings which have shocked the people of Assam," Samujjal Bhatt-acharyya, a spokesman for the powerful All Assam Students Union (AASU), said.

"The ruling Asom Gana Parishad government has miserably failed to protect the lives of innocent civilians," he said.

Almost everyday, groups of men, women, and children in thousands have been holding protest marches in Gauhati, the capital of Assam state, shouting anti-militant and anti-government slogans. The protesters also oppose the killings of

the relatives of suspected guerillas.

More than 3,000 ULFA militants have surrendered to the state government in Assam since 1997. After laying down their arms, they have set up farms with government money as part of a rehabilitation programme.

"In the light of the escalating violence and conflicting claims about who has carried out the killings, the government must exercise some control over this dire situation," Amnesty International, the London-based human rights group, said in a statement on Friday.

"The government must initiate impartial and independent investigations to reveal the perpetrators and bring them to justice," the group said.

The killings were continuing despite a unified command of the army, police and the paramilitary soldiers fighting the insurgency.

Khaleda to exchange views with editors today

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia will hold a meeting with Editors of the national dailies and news agencies at Sheraton Hotel at 4 pm today.

Party sources said she would exchange views with the Editors on the latest political situation. They said the Editors have been invited prior to BNP's planned movement to press for repealing of the Public Safety Act.

Sources said Khaleda Zia would seek support from the editors in her party's movement against the PSA.

Senior BNP leaders will also remain present at the meeting to be held at the Sheraton Ball-room (North), party sources said.

Militants kill 9 Indian troops in Kashmir

MUZAFFARABAD, Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, Jan 6 : Nine Indian soldiers were killed in Kashmir in a joint attack by three militant groups overnight, the Hizbul Mujahideen guerrilla outfit said today, reports AFP.

Fighters from Hizbul Mujahideen, Lashkar-i-Taiba and Harkatul Jihad Islami carried out the operation in Suran Kot area of Poonch district on the Indian side in the divided Himalayan state, it said.

"The fighters used rockets and machine guns during the attack, killing nine Indian soldiers and injuring 13 others," Hizbul spokesman Salim Hashmi said.

Hashmi said the attack was mounted to avenge the death of Hizbul Mujahideen divisional commander Haider Ali, who was killed by Indian soldiers in the same area two weeks ago.

Muslim militant groups have rejected a unilateral ceasefire by India, although the peace gesture has been responded to by Pakistan with a partial withdrawal of troops from the tense unofficial border.

Khaleda tells get-together of physicians Criminals go scot-free for their link with a party

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia yesterday said incidents of terrorism and anarchy have broken all records, reports UNB.

She said criminals committing heinous crimes are going scot-free because of their link with a particular party or relationship with its leaders.

"Interference in freedom of the judiciary is being done openly. This situation cannot and should not be continued. It is the responsibility of all of us to save the nation from this situation," Khaleda said.

Addressing as chief guest the closing ceremony of Millennium get-together of physicians in the afternoon, the BNP chairperson said the government hospitals are being turned into expensive clinics. The poor who are going to hospitals for treatment free of cost are compelled to buy medicines from outside.

Dhaka Medical College Alumni Trust organised the get-together at Shaheed Dr Milon Auditorium

on the campus.

Deputy leader of the opposition Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, Dr Khalilur Rahman, Dr Mohammad Saiful Islam, Dr Kazi Mezbabuddin Iqbal and Dr Kazi Shahidul Alam also spoke at the closing session chaired by Dr Waliullah.

The opposition leader said people are not feeling secure socially and mentally. "Frustration looms large everywhere because of rising terrorism and anarchy."

She aid prices of essentials continue to rise due to bad economic policy. Secret killings are taking place everyday. Dacoity, snatching, mugging, violation of women and children are rampant. Unemployed youths are getting addicted to drugs.

She said, "We have taken initiative to organise mass resistance to such incidents. I call upon you (Physicians) to join the Kafela of crusade," she added.

"Our united efforts can save the nation from this anarchic

situation," she said.

The former Prime Minister said the system of health care in the country is in a morass.

"An anarchic situation is prevailing in the health sector."

She said IPGM &R, a dignified institution of physicians, has been rendered virtually an expensive clinics in the name of medical university. "It is very difficult to get treatment for poor people there," she said.

"The scope for higher studies of government physicians is now almost closed. Whereas we had taken up project of Tk 400 crore to make the institution a Centre of excellence with the objective of making it an international standard referral hospital," she said.

The opposition leader said if returned to power she would set up a self-sufficient medical university in accordance with the report of the University Grants

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BAI upgraded to university Work for food security, PM urges agro-scientists

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday announced conversion of Bangladesh Agricultural Institute (BAI) as Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University urging the agro-scientists to devote in research and innovation for ensuring food security of the people, reports UNB.

"We've limited lands and a huge population that is increasing day by day. So, we'll have to raise food production and bring down the population growth," she said while addressing the diamond Jubilee celebration of the Institute here in the morning.

Hasina said by adopting mod-

ern technologies the agricultural scientists would be able to play their due role in facing the challenges of future for ensuring food security of the people.

The government has made special allocation for research and laid emphasis on science and technology, she said adding there is no alternative to agriculture for attaining economic emancipation in the new century.

She said scientists and researchers would have to adopt plans and programmes so that optimum production could be possible in the limited lands of

the country. "We'll have to take all plans considering the small lands."

The economy of the country basically depends on agricultural production and the government is working hard to continue its success in agriculture in a bid to march towards a prosperous future, she said.

Hasina said the country has achieved self-sufficiency in food following four consecutive bumper harvests. This was possible for the pragmatic steps taken by the government.

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Thai ruling party concedes defeat

BANGKOK, Jan 6: Thailand's ruling Democrats conceded defeat in general elections today after exit polls showed a political party led by a scandal-tainted tycoon was sailing to an easy victory, reports AP.

"We are ready to be the opposition party," said Abhisit Vejjajiva, deputy leader of the Democrat Party, which is headed by Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai.

Polls by three television stations showed the Thai Rak Thai, or Thai Love Tahi, party leading by wide margins in the contest for 500 parliamentary seats. The poll results 209-118, 230-107 and 241-133 were based on information gathered by reporters, pollsters and non-government organisations.

But the watchdog Election Commission said it had received a flood of complains about alleged polling fraud that could lead to disqualification or revotes for some 100 winners.

"It is too early to count on the exit polls. The commission has a lot of cases of hopeful winners to review," commissioner Sawat Chotipanit told reporters.

Polls closed at 3 pm local time (0800 GMT) after a voter turnout which early reports estimated at 60 per cent. Final unofficial election results were not expected until Sunday.

The Thai Rak Thai Party and its leader, Thaksin Shinawatra, had aimed to capture at least 200 seats in the lower House of Parliament. That would position the party to form a coalition government.

After the exit polls were announced, Thaksin said his party might form a coalition with the New Aspiration and the Chart Thai, or Thai Nation, parties.

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42 Pakistanis still missing after shipwreck off Turkey

ISLAMABAD, Jan 6 : Pakistan has been informed by Turkish authorities that 16 Pakistanis have rescued while 42 remain missing after a cargo ship sank on Monday, the foreign ministry here said today, reports AFP.

The ministry issued a list of the missing Pakistanis and the survivors. Most belonged to districts of Gujrat, Jhelum and Kharian in central Punjab province.

The ship split in two when it crashed into a reef off the Turkish resort town of Kemer shortly after its engine failed in a heavy storm.

The vessel, which should have been carrying only a 10-man crew, was also transporting an estimated 80 illegal immigrants, mostly from South Asia, according to accounts from survivors.

Thirty-two people were rescued and a Bangladeshi man was pulled alive from the sea on Tuesday.

On Friday a Turkish court formally arrested the Greek captain and three of the ship's crew.

Turkey is one of the main routes to western Europe used by illegal immigrants from Asia. Turkish police intercept several thousand would-be immigrants each year.