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Tipu Sultan, the Feni correspondent of UNB who was severely beaten up by the musclemen of ruling party lawmaker Joyal Hazari on January 25 this year, lies in hospital bed at the National Orthopaedic Hospital with his left hand plastered.

Pangu Hospital asks Tipu to pack up & go home

Physicians at the Pangu hospital have asked Tipu Sultan to pack up and go home as there was nothing else they could do for his treatment in the country.

Hospital sources said Joyal Hazari's men have been pressuring the hospital authorities to discharge Tipu immediately.

A medical board recently recommended that Tipu be sent abroad as his injuries were too grave to be treated here. He stood better chances of being able to use his damaged parts should he be treated abroad, but at the moment he can not afford it.

A UNB reporter based in Feni, Tipu was abducted by local godfather and ruling party MP Joyal Hazari and his armed men on January 25 and roughed up. Done, the assailants abandoned Tipu for dead.

His arms, fingers, ribs and legs broken, Tipu is now passing uncertain days at the National Orthopaedic Hospital (Pangu Hospital).

Despite assurance from the prime minister there was no development until yesterday to send Tipu overseas for further treatment, which he so desperately needs.

Doctors fear that the young journalist might never be able to resume his profession.

Meanwhile, Feni police have failed to arrest or question anyone about the grievous assault. They said they were 'sure' that the prime accused were safely implicated in the case.

Mustak Ahmed, Officer-in-Charge of Feni Sadar thana, told The Daily Star that there was no scope for implicating the MP in the case.

Mustak is widely known to be the 'Chief of Staff' of Hazari's armed cadres.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

BTTB will incur heavy loss for non-collection of bills

Deadlock over bill preparation drags on

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

The Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) would incur heavy financial losses due to non-collection of monthly subscriber bills over the next few months, if it fails to resolve the deadlock over bill preparation soon.

BTTB's contract with the private company, which prepared monthly bills for telephone and telex subscribers since 1998, expired on January 31. So far, there has been virtually no progress in either striking a fresh deal or renewing the previous contract.

It is highly unlikely that the BTTB would be able to send telephone bills for January, February and March to its subscribers in the next few months.

Due to the deadlock over bill preparation, the BTTB looks set to incur heavy revenue loss, as it would be deprived of bank interest, sources said. Also, it would create bigger avenue for corruption such as non- and under-billing, they added.

On an average, the BTTB collects Tk 85 to 100 crore on every month from about 5.5 lakh telephone and 2000 telex subscribers, sources in the BTTB said.

The BTTB makes a net profit of over Tk 600 crore from an annual turnover of Tk 1200 crore.

Typically, the clients of BTTB deposit the telephone bills with commercial banks, and the board earns crores in bank interest. However, no bill has been deposited for the last three months, as the board is not issuing any bill.

Non-collection of bills would also worsen BTTB's business relations with foreign countries, independent satellite operators and local private mobile phone operators. At present, the BTTB is unable to either realise bills from or pay to its overseas counterparts.

The BTTB also risks incurring huge losses due to corruption. Board officials said unscrupulous telephone subscribers can now make numerous phone calls, especially NWD and ISD for months on end and abandon the numbers when the board would finally be able to issue bills and disconnect their numbers due to non-payment.

"Normally, a subscriber needs to pay monthly bill or faces disconnection after three months of non-payment," said an official. "But in current situation, he or she has an unlimited time to make overseas calls. By the time, BTTB issues bills, he or she can make enough calls to abandon the line and still be benefited."



Armed men stormed into the site office of the Japan Garden City Limited at Tajmahal Road in the city's Mohammadpur area in the early hours yesterday and looted valuables worth nearly two crore taka.

Gayeswar, 8 others sued under PSA

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Police filed a case under Public Safety Act (PSA) with Motijheel thana on Monday against 9 people including BNP central leader Gayeswar Chandra Roy on charge of creating disturbance in the city during hartal hours on Monday.

Police arrested seven people in connection with the incident.

Of them Mahub and Alamgir were admitted to Razarbagh Police Hospital for treatment as they were injured seriously. Rest were produced before the CMM's court, Dhaka, at about 6 pm yesterday.

The arrested along with about 250 people set fire to vehicles at about 3.30 pm on April 2 during hartal called by the BNP-led opposition alliance demanding immediate resignation of the government.

Army tackles chaotic situation at ZIA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The army was called in to tackle the chaotic situation created when a large number of passengers from different destinations poured in at the Zia International Airport yesterday.

As many as 23 international, regional and domestic flights landed and took off, and more than 2000 passengers arrived at the airport on the third day of the 60-hour hartal.

Seven flights of the Biman Bangladesh Airlines, another seven of other airlines, six domestic flights and three flights of the GMG landed yesterday, sources at the airport said.

When the available law-enforcers became helpless against the crowds, army came forward with 5 military buses.

And police arranged 40 buses and minibuses to take the passengers to Syedabad, Gabtali, Mahakhali bus terminals, Sadar Ghat launch terminal, and Kamalapur rail station.

A press release of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) said Minister for Home, Post and Telecommunication Mohammad Nasim along with DMP commissioner took initiatives to send the hajjis from the airport to their homes.

Newspaper holidays Apr 5, 14

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Sangbadpatra Parishad (BSP) sub-committee on newspaper holidays, Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) and Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) at a meeting yesterday decided to observe newspaper holidays on April 5 on the occasion of holy Ashura and on April 14 in celebration of Pahela Baishakh (Bangla New Year).

The meeting also decided to finalise a list of newspaper holidays through further discussion between the BSP sub-committee and Journalists' unions by this month.

Japan Garden City Ltd office stormed, looted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The employees of the office alleged that Abu Sayeed Bepari had earlier demanded Tk 2 crore as toll. He talked to the company officials at Baridhara office over phone on Monday evening and asked them to pay toll or leave the site, they said.

The Garden City Limited is a Japan-Bangladesh joint venture company and engaged in construction of high-rise buildings.

The company developed a land in the area for construction work after taking non-objection certificates from Dhaka City Corporation, DESA, WAPDA, Civil Aviation Authority, Titas Gas, House Building Finance Corporation and Rajuk, company officials said.

Local people said they have seen some close associates of the local MP with the attackers.

News Analysis

BJP, Congress change allies in Assam, West Bengal

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

West Bengal and Assam, two of the five Indian states where fresh assembly elections are to be held next month, are witnessing realignment of political forces, with the Congress and the BJP set to tie up with new allies.

After weeks of hard bargaining, the Congress finally sewed up a seat-sharing accord with Trinamool Congress in West Bengal on Monday. The day before, an opinion poll, conducted by a leading market research group for "The Times of India," put the combination of the two parties as favourites to dislodge the ruling Left Front in West Bengal. The alliance came about a month after Trinamool pulled out of the ruling National Democratic Alliance, led by the BJP.

Political observers say the alliance will benefit both. The Congress, they believe, will piggy-back Trinamool in a bid to regain the political space it has lost over the years as the main opposition party in West Bengal. On the other hand, Mamata Banerjee's party is likely to use the Congress' company to win the votes of minorities, alienated to some extent because of its earlier association with the BJP.

One of the major reasons for Congress' dwindling fortune in the state is that it has not been able to project itself to be a force firmly opposed to the Left Front, largely due to the party high command's warning up to the left parties at the national level.

Congress leaders feel the company of Mamata, who has emerged as the main anti-Left symbol in West Bengal since quitting Sonia Gandhi's party in 1997, will help the party.

While Congress-Trinamool alliance was predictable, really dramatic was the effort by the BJP and the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), the ruling party of Assam led by Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, to firm up an alliance in the coming assembly polls in the north-eastern state.

Dramatic because it was only last about a week ago, both the BJP and the AGP declared that each of them had decided to go it alone in the polls. But with an opinion poll favouring the Congress to regain power in Assam, the two have decided to explore possibilities of a tie-up in a bid to checkmate Congress.

The BJP central leadership has summoned its Assam unit leaders to Delhi to persuade them to accept the alliance with the AGP and Mahanta, on the other hand, was authorised by his party's highest decision-making forum to seek a tie-up with the saffron party. A preliminary discussion on the proposed tie-up took place last week between senior BJP leader and Indian Home Minister LK Advani and Mahanta.

The Assam unit of the BJP was, till the other day, strongly opposed to an alliance with the AGP because of the strong anti-incumbency factor working against the latter. The BJP state leadership is also understood to have argued with the party's central leadership that a triangular fight could help the Congress only in 21 of the total of 126 assembly seats in Assam and there was, therefore, no reason to worry about a division in anti-ruling party votes.

To press its contention against a tie-up with the AGP, the BJP leaders in Assam even cited the example of the party's disastrous electoral performance in the southern state of Karnataka in the 1999 assembly polls. It had aligned with the state's then ruling party, going against BJP Karnataka unit's warning that such a move would invite strong anti-incumbency factor. The election also saw the defeat of the ruling party in Karnataka.

But the reading of BJP central leadership, according to party sources, is that the party's image has received a knock in the wake of the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6



A man tries to clip off the live electric wire that left a rag collector and her child unconscious yesterday in a roadside ditch at North Muggdapara in the city. Both sustained tremendous shock when they came in contact with the wire believed to have been snapped by squally wind the night before. Fortunately, the mother and the child survived due to timely intervention from local residents.

Pro-Ershad JP expels 4 more leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party (JP) faction loyal to jailed HM Ershad expelled four more leaders, including its city unit president Saifur Rahman and General Secretary Tayabur Rahman for alleged involvement in anti-organisational activities yesterday.

Two other leaders are: Golam Parvej Didar, general secretary of the party's front organisation Jatiya Juba Sanghati, JP joint secretary and Joint Secretary of the Jatiya Juba Sanghati Kamrul Islam Sajal, according to a JP press release.

All of them were removed from the party's primary membership

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Belgrade likely to try Milosevic

AP, Belgrade

Yugoslav authorities raised the possibility yesterday that former President Slobodan Milosevic could be charged with offenses that carry the death penalty, such as ordering the murders of political rivals during his 13 years in power.

Serbia's interior minister joked that Milosevic may even volunteer to go to the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague, which is not empowered to order executions.

Milosevic, however, remained defiant, denouncing his arrest Sunday as "politically staged." In a written statement Monday, he admitted for the first time that he financed Serb rebellions that bloodied Bosnia and Croatia in the 1990s.

Milosevic has been jailed at Belgrade's central prison for at least 30 days as authorities try to build a case of alleged corruption and abuse of power against him. He was also charged with inciting his bodyguards to shoot at police sent to arrest him last weekend.

In Vienna, Serbia's interior minister, Dusan Mihajlovic, said Monday that the investigation against Milosevic is being widened to include much more serious charges.

"There are, meanwhile, indications that Slobodan Milosevic was involved in severe criminal acts for which the death penalty is provided," Mihajlovic told reporters. He did not elaborate.

Serbia's Prime minister, Zoran Djindjic, told The Boston Globe in an interview that Milosevic will be charged within two months with ordering the murders of personal and political enemies. Djindjic also said that he expected that Milosevic's wife, Mirjana, a key political figure during his tenure in office, also will be accused of murder.

An investigative judge summoned three former Milosevic aides yesterday for questioning. Two of them, Nikola Sainovic and Jovan Zebic, refused to testify, citing immunity as members of parliament, sources said on condition of anonymity.

A third, former customs chief Mihajl Kertes, was charged in December with embezzlement and abuse of authority. Kertes was believed responsible for arming rebel Serbs during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia.

In his statement Monday, Milosevic defended himself against allegations of corruption by admitting that missing funds went to purchase "weapons, ammunition and other needs" for the Bosnian Serb and Croatian Serb armies.

3 PBCP cadres among 6 arrested in Satkhira

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Six people including three leaders of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) were arrested in the early hours of Monday from Tala and Shyamnagar thana of Satkhira.

Police recovered three firearms along with 16 rounds of live cartridges from their possession.

The arrested were identified as Lavlu, 24, Alauddin, 25, Abdur Rab, 22, Abdur Razzak, 30, Jobed Ali, 28, and Amjad Hossain, 32.

PBCP armed cadre Lavlu is one of the accused in eight murder and two arms act cases filed last year with different police stations of Khulna.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

'Tokai' Sagar arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday arrested Tokai Sagar, a notorious criminal of the city, from Zia International Airport (ZIA) area.

Sgar is the ring leader of "Seven Star" group, an underground gang comprising some city criminals. He is the main accused in Murgi Milon Murder Case.

Involved in various criminal activities, including arms trading and drug smuggling through ZIA, Sagar has been absconding since the murder of Milon on the court premises several months ago.

Special Branch (SB) of police arrested him while he was returning from Sylhet at about 7:45 pm.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Possession of illegal arms BNP MP to face legal action, Nasim tells JS

UNB, Dhaka

Home Minister Mohammad Nasim told Parliament yesterday that legal action would be taken against Prof Shahidul Islam MP of BNP for possessing illegal arms as well as the terrorists for violent acts in the name of hartal.

"An MP should be called honourable. But I'm ashamed of calling Shahidul Islam MP honourable as five illegal arms were recovered from under his bed at his village home," he said showing a video cassette documenting the scene of recovery of arms by police.

He quoted Ziaul Haq, arrested in connection with possessing illegal arms, as admitting to police under Section 164 that they kept the arms at the "direction and order of Shahidul Islam" now hiding abroad and his younger brother, who is also a BNP leader.

An MP cannot be spared from legal action only because of his identity, he added.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Opposition hopes to win five out of six seats in Khulna

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

Four-party alliance candidates will win in at least five out of six constituencies in Khulna district if the next general election is held in a free and fair manner, local leaders of the alliance claim.

They do not hope to win in Khulna-1 (Dakop-Bariaghata) constituency, a minority-dominated area and a vote bank of Awami League, they said talking to this correspondent.

AL won this seat both in 1991 and 1996 parliamentary elections. Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina polled 62, 247 votes against her nearest rival's 33,521 in 1996 elections in the constituency.

BNP own the Khulna-2 (Sadar-Sanadanga) seat in 1991 and 1996 elections. BNP hopes to win this seat again as the people there are now united against "repression" by the Awami League government, they say.

BNP also hopes to win the Khulna-3 (Daulatpur-Khalishpur) seat in the next election. BNP candidate Ashraf Hossain won the seat in 1991 elections but lost to AL candidate Kazi Sikandar Ali Dalim in 1996 with a small margin of 15,52 votes.

AL won the Khulna-4 (Rupsha-Terokhed-Digholia) seat both in 1991 and 1996 parliamentary elections. AL candidate Mostafa Rashid Shuja polled 59,566 votes.

while his nearest rival Khulna city BNP President M Nurul Islam got 57,221 votes in 1996 election.

BNP says it will get the seat in the next elections because voters are now fed up with AL's "repression and retaliation", intra-party rivalry and murders of AL's opponents by hired killers. The sitting MP's alleged patronisation of terrorists will be one among many factors for their debacle in the next election, the alliance leaders say.

Late Salahuddin Yusuf of Awami League had won the Khulna-5 (Dumuria-Phultala) seat in 1991 and 1996 elections due to minority community votes and unity among

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6