

40 held, arms recovered in Chittagong

BSS, Ctg

Chittagong Metropolitan Police arrested 40 persons and seized one revolver with five bullets from the city during the last 24 hours ending at 6 pm yesterday.

Doublemooring thana police arrested one Motahar Hossain Raihan from a Basurhat-bound passenger bus at Alanker Cinema square with one revolver and five bullets, a CMP press release said.

Raihan, a hotel boy, boarded the bus from Kadamtali bus stand. A case was filed with Pahartali police in this connection.

CMP arrested 39 others from different parts of the city, the press release added.

20 'extremists' held with arms in Kushtia

UNB, Kushtia

In a joint raid yesterday, police arrested 20 alleged extremists and recovered two double-barrel guns and 25 bullets from some villages in Sadar and Islami University thanas.

Police sources said the combined forces of five thanas of the district conducted a 3-hour raid in the afternoon after surrounding Bhabanipur and Ratulpara in Sadar thana, and Raitupi and Dudhachara in Islami University thana. These villages were known to be dominated by the extremists.

The miscreants along with the arms tried to escape when the combined police forces led by Islami University thana OC Badsha Mia encircled the houses of Nahid and Mujibur near Bhabanipur Bazaar at about 3.30 pm.

Police recovered two foreign-

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Husband gets life term for murder

UNB, Kishoreganj

A local court here on Wednesday sentenced a man to life imprisonment for killing his wife.

The convict, identified as Liakat Ali of village Shibpur in Bhairab upazila, was also fined Tk 5,000, in default, to suffer one month more RI.

According to prosecution, Ali strangled his wife, Manowara Khatun on May 31, 1997 following a family feud.

Police after investigation, submitted charge sheet against the killer.

After examining the records and witnesses, Additional District and Sessions Judge (In-charge) S M Helaluddin pronounced the judgement.

Road accidents kill 2 in Gazipur

UNB, Gazipur

Two people were killed in separate road accidents in Sadar and Tongi upazilas in the district yesterday and the day before.

Police said an identified 50-year-old rickshawpuller was killed when a Tongi-bound truck hit his vehicle from behind at Majukhan area in Sadar upazila on Tongi-Kaliganj road at about 2.30 pm yesterday.

The truck was seized, but its driver managed to escape.

In another accident, garments worker Monir Hossain, 28, was run over by a Dhaka-bound pickup in front of Asia Filling Station near Tongi Bastuhara road on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway at 8.30 pm on Thursday.

Islami Shasantantra Andolan calls hartal on June 14

UNB, Dhaka

Islami Shasantantra Andolan yesterday called a dawn-to-dusk hartal across the country on June 14 demanding release of Shaikhul Hadith Moulana Azizul Huq, Amini and other leaders.

It will also stage demonstrations at upazila and district headquarters on June 1 to press the same demand.

The hartal programme was announced at a rally at the south-gate of Baitul Mukarram Mosque yesterday afternoon with Maulana Noor Hossain Kashemi presiding.

The rally also threatened to launch a non-stop shutdown if the leaders were not set free.

Filling stations defy ban, still sell lubricating oil without additives



An auto-rickshaw driver pours engine oil into the petrol tank at a filling station in the city. When combusted, admixture of engine oil and petrol results in black smoke and causes severe air pollution.

SHEHAB AHMED

Despite a ban on production, blending, import and marketing of lubricating oil without proper additives since January 1, its use continues particularly by auto-rickshaw drivers, causing air pollution.

Some chemical reagents are added to crude lubricating oil during blending and refining to make it smoke-free.

Some 65,000 auto-rickshaw drivers in the city mix crude lubricating oil with petrol for use in their vehicles, which emits smoke causing air pollution.

Auto-rickshaw drivers are seen buying lubricating oil in unsealed containers from petrol pumps though its sale in unsealed containers is strictly prohibited.

Recycled engine oil is also available. It is being used by auto-rickshaw driver, and by farmers and boat owners in the countryside.

Use of such poor quality engine

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Indian locomotives bought at 'much higher price' arrive

STAR REPORT

Five of the 10 Indian locomotives, purchased for at least Tk 35 crore more than the actual price, have arrived in the country a couple of weeks back.

These locomotives, now being tested and equipped at the Parbatipur rail workshop, would hit the tracks by the end of this month, sources said. The other five would be brought in within a few months.

Bangladesh Railway purchased these broad-gauge locomotives for Tk 102 crore from Rites, an Indian company, through an unsolicited bidding held last year under a loan agreement of Tk 170 crore with India.

The remaining Tk 68 crore would be spent to procure rail infrastructures including concrete sleepers to be laid from Jaidevpur to Dhaka, linking another ongoing rail-line project that goes up to the Bangabandhu bridge.

At the initial stage when the Indian government agreed to give Bangladesh a Tk 200 crore loan for rail and road sectors, Rites pushed the idea of selling 22 locomotives, using the whole loan allocated for railway-related purchase.

The rail authorities, however, planned to purchase only six locomotives and spend rest of the loan for developing the much-needed rail infrastructure from Bangabandhu Bridge to Dhaka. The Indian company finally persuaded the government to purchase 10 locomotives at Tk 102 crore.

Railway tender committee argued that the price should be reduced, as they were much higher than that of the previous Indian locomotives purchased by the country. However, the project went ahead without further negotiation over price.

Sources said that while Indian locomotives were cheap compared to those made in the western countries, these could have been much cheaper had there been an open tender or proper negotiation by the government.

Hinting at foul play in the unsolicited negotiation process, an industry insider said, "If there had been an open tender, Bangladesh Railway could have had purchased these same locomotives at Tk 60 to 65 crore."

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3



A sequence of a dance by BAFA artistes at the National Museum auditorium in the city yesterday, marking the 102nd birth anniversary of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam.

GF protests move to enact new law

UNB, Dhaka

Gono Forum yesterday protested the proposed new law for providing lifetime security to Bangabandhu's heirs, former presidents and prime ministers, reserving state facilities for the outgoing premier during caretaker government.

A meeting of the central committee of the party in a resolution said if necessity arises to ensure security of the heirs to Bangabandhu, former presidents and prime ministers, the government and the state would ensure that through executive orders. "There is no need to go for a new law."

The meeting with party president and eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain in the chair observed that enactment of such law would be contrary to the spirit of the caretaker government and called for the authorities to refrain from making such a law.

Gono Forum called upon the government to take immediate remedial measures against the rising crime that has rendered public life insecure.

It also asked the government to take necessary steps to protect journalists from harassment, assault and killing.

Wedding turns tragic as hall collapse kills 30 in Jerusalem

AP, Jerusalem

Brick by brick, rescue workers dug for survivors yesterday from a wedding that turned tragic when the top floor of their banquet hall collapsed, killing at least 30 people and injuring more than 300. Video footage showed hundreds of merry-makers suddenly disappear in a cloud of dust and orange sparks.

Assi and Keren Srur had just become husband and wife at the Versailles wedding hall late Thursday and hundreds of guests had streamed on the dance floor. Suddenly, without warning, the floor caved and the dancers fell into an abyss.

Screaming guests on the edges of the dance floor peered down into the crater in disbelief. The footage,

broadcast on Israeli TV stations, showed one man scooping up a little girl in the mayhem. One elderly man walked right up to the large hole, and was resolutely escorted away by a woman.

Survivor Tamar Revivo, 26, said she fell into the abyss with the others. "We were on people those poor people," said Revivo from her hospital bed Friday, where she was being treated for a fractured right ankle. "I'd see a hand. I'd see a person. They tried to get me out and I had to walk on them."

Sara Pinhas, a relative of the groom, said dancers had just lifted the father of the groom on a chair, a traditional part of the Jewish wedding celebration, when suddenly he fell, "and then we felt the whole building collapse, everything fell

down."

"We managed to climb down the side of the building," she said. Jerusalem police ruled out the possibility of a terror attack, saying the building collapsed due to structural failure. According to first reports, the building appeared not to be up to current construction codes. Several supporting columns in the halls had also been removed to enlarge the reception area and the floor tiles had recently been replaced, the reports said.

Prime minister Ariel Sharon, visiting the scene Friday, said he would convene a Cabinet meeting Tuesday to consider the possibility of launching an official commission of inquiry.

"This was a shocking incident,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

BCL, Jubo League trade fire at Sitakunda: 5 hurt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

At least five persons were shot as Jubo League and BCL activists exchanged fire at Sitakunda in the district yesterday afternoon.

Both groups locked in the gunfight over collection of tolls from Maxi service from Sitakunda to Chittagong city at around 5 pm and traded over 100 rounds of shots.

Movement of vehicles on Dhaka-Chittagong highway remained suspended for an hour due to the gunfight.



Statues worth Tk 2.5 cr recovered

UNB, Dhaka

Police yesterday recovered four precious images of Hindu God and Goddess worth about Tk 2.5 crore from a printing press in old part of the city.

Acting on a tip-off, Sutrapur police arrested Abul Kalam, 35, of Char Kusakati in Dohar upazila, Dhaka, from the press at 9, Chandramohan Boshak Lane and seized the statues from his possession.

The items recovered include an 18 kg white stone image worth about Tk one crore, a touchstone image of Gopal (Krishna) and two statues of Radha and Krishna.

Kalam, suspected to be a member of an international smuggling syndicate, was sent to thana custody. A case was filed.

DOWN TO EARTH

'Silent zones' in city areas

ASM NURUNNABI

Intolerable noise pollution has engulfed the city, leaving virtually no area where the cacophony of blaring horns and harsh rattle of running engines can not be heard.

Even in a few city areas where it is expressly forbidden to honk and it is required by law to hold the sound level under a certain decibel, it is found that the orders are blatantly ignored and laws unenforced.

There are two big hospitals -- BSMMUH and BIRDEM -- standing on the fringes of the stretch of the road running from Sonargaon Hotel area to the Shahbag intersection. Anyone who stayed at these two hospitals can understand the mayhem in which these two hospitals operate.

Although honking is totally prohibited in the area as indicated in conspicuous signboards, such restrictions

are on papers only as no one ever heeds them. As a result, the patients in these two hospitals suffer greatly as they have to go through the terrible ordeal of putting up with the noise from honking vehicles in their frenzied rush to get out of the traffic jam in the area.

The level of noise rises even further at night as trucks come out in their hordes. The earsplitting sound of horns and screeching brakes often makes it impossible for the patients to sleep. This is the painful experience that the patients in these hospitals have to go through daily.

The traffic authorities can easily stop this mounting scourge of menacing sound pollution if they want to. Enforcement of noise pollution at this designated noise-free zone is extremely important for the welfare of patients in these two hospitals.

Cyclone may hit Gujarat coast this evening

REUTERS, Ahmedabad

India's Gujarat state, still picking up the pieces after January's devastating earthquake, evacuated thousands of people from its coastline as a severe cyclone swirled in the Arabian Sea.

Weather officials said the cyclone that has hovered off India's west coast for two days was currently 500 km south of the port town of Veraval and could hit the southern coastal areas of Gujarat on this evening.

Officials had earlier expected it to reach land this morning.

A US Navy weather website, www.npmoc.navy.mil, showed the cyclone had moved in a northwesterly direction and plotted a trajectory for the coming days that bypassed Gujarat.

That suggested Pakistan could lie in the path of the storm, prompting authorities there to warn fishermen they should return to port.

"We have issued instructions to immediately stop all fishing activities as a precautionary step," Ghazanfar Ali of the Fishermen's Cooperative Society said in Karachi.

Pakistan's two main ports, located in the southern city of Karachi, were not planning to suspend operations but issued safety warnings.

The Indian Meteorological Department said the storm had intensified, with winds of up to 200 kph.

Shamsur Rahman murder Special team to arrest Hirok and Litu

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

Khulna thana police seized the private jeep of terrorist Moshfiqur Rahman Hirok, one of the 16 chargesheeted accused in Shamsur Rahman Murder Case.

The jeep (Bandarban-Ka-03) was recovered from the house of businessman Amir Hossain, 114, Nirala Residential Area, at midnight Thursday night.

Amir Hossain is one of the close associates of Litu and Hirok, police said.

"I was forced to keep the jeep in my custody two months after the murder of journalist Shamsur Rahman," Amir Hossain told police.

Amir Hossain's house is adjacent to the residence of Hirok where murder of Shamsur Rahman was planned, said a source in CID.

Meanwhile, a four-member special team was formed on Thursday by the police commissioner Mohammad Shaheb Ali for arresting Litu and Hirok.

The team is being headed by DC (North) Mazharul Islam who also played a vital role in arresting Ershad Shikder and preparing all case dockets.

According to a reliable source, Khulna city and district Awami League are now divided over 'Litu issue'.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Will journalist Tipu remain disabled?



The Daily Star- প্রথম আলো

Tipu Treatment Fund

Donate generously to this Fund
Save Tipu from Disability

Send donations to: Savings Account No. 25002111
Dhaka Bank Ltd, Karwan Bazar Branch, Dhaka