

# Attack on cloth store Three PBCP cadres held in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna thana police arrested three activists of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) on Friday night.

The arrested were identified as Golam Dhali, 30, Nasim, 28, and Hasan, 30. They were arrested on charge of hurling bomb at a cloth shop at 'Akhter Chamber' few days back failing to get Tk one lakh as toll. They threatened to kill the proprietor when he refused to pay toll, police

# Mystery shrouds death of BBA student at Narayanganj

UNB, N'ganj

Mystery shrouds the death of a BBA student in Narayanganj town on Friday night.

Police said body of Manjurul Ahsan Bipu, 22, son of advocate Abdul Malek of Jamtala in the town, was brought to a private clinic at Bangabandhu road at about 11 pm.

They arrested his three friends Biplob, 25, Habib, 22, and Romel, 24 who fled away leaving the body at Medistar Clinic. They also seized the car the three used in carrying the body to the clinic.

Friends told police Bipu suddenly fell sick when they were gossiping at a rickshaw garage near Masdair Gudaraghat and they rushed him to the clinic where doctors declared him dead.

Dipu was studying BBA at Bangalore in India.

# Two murders

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released from jail 16 days ago, said the officer.

Fazlu's enmity with his rivals over control of the area might have led to his death, sources said.

Mia, the elder brother of Fazlu, is in jail now. He is an accused in as many as 18 cases, including murder, mugging and robbery. His younger brother is also a criminal now detained in jail. He is also accused in several cases, said the sources.

A murder case was filed with Khligaan thana.

In another incident, Nawab Mia, 37, a bus driver and son of Hashem Mia, was shot dead at Bashuganj Lane under Sutrapur thana at 11 p.m. on Friday night.

His body was sent to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

Babul Mia, brother of the victim, filed a case with Sutrapur police.

Police arrested one Mukter from Lalmoan Shah Street in connection with the killing.

# Journalists must unite

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way out but to unite the journalist community to ensure their security," he said stressing the need for a concerted movement against any attack on journalists anywhere in the country.

He asked why any step to punish the culprits is not taken when a democratic government is in power.

Nor in the past were journalists spared, said Dr Shakhawat Ali Khan of Dhaka University, but it has taken a serious turn in recent times, which cannot be accepted in a civil society.

Refuting the division of journalists into many parts, he said, "We can easily tackle such situation, if we unite."

Poet Shamsur Rahman said journalists are very honest, but regretted that a section of them wins 'illegal favour' from various quarters, which might have led to this vulnerable state.

"A real journalist can never be tempted by any quarter, but what is very disappointing is that some

# Vajpayee-Musharraf talks

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Chairman Mirwaiz Omar Farooq yesterday urged Gen Musharraf to accept India's invitation for talks on Kashmir, saying the move could be seen as a beginning towards the settlement of the long-standing Kashmir problem.

"Gen Musharraf should accept Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's invitation and start the dialogue process," Farooq told the news agency.

However, the Kashmiri separatist leader said that for a permanent settlement of the Kashmir imbroglio, the third and the most important party the people of Jammu and Kashmir have to be involved in the negotiations.

"Sincere efforts by all the three parties India, Pakistan and the people of the state could help restore peace in the troubled-state," he added.

He said that if Gen Musharraf came to India, the APHC would try its best to impress upon both countries the need to pursue the path of friendship and peace. "We would

said.

Police got the mobile phone number the BPCP men used and asked them to receive the money from a certain place near Azam Khan Commerce College on Friday night.

The three BPCP armed cadres were caught red handed when they went there to receive the money from O.C. Kamrul Islam and Sis Abdur Rashid and Shahabuddin Ahmed who were waiting there in the guise of employees of Bismillah Cloth Store.

They confessed to police that they were involved in hurling bomb at the cloth store failing to realise the toll.

Police prayed for seven days' remand for them when they were produced before the CMM's court for interrogation.

Golam Dhali, Nasim and Hasan are activists of Rashid group of PBCP based at Rupsha and Terokheda upazilas.

They joined BNP in 1997 with a special mission assigned by PBCP's Rupsha unit leader Rashid.

The mission was to murder some district, city and thana level leaders of BNP taking full advantage of intra-party rivalry. But they did not get the opportunity as private guards of the BNP leaders remained alert, a KMP official said.

A vice president of Chhatra Dal's district committee, Golam Dhali, was a chief bodyguard of a top city BNP leader. PBCP assigned him to murder the city BNP leader, city BNP sources said.

# Delhi tightens

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week "in the interest of national security."

It requires hotels, guest houses, families and individuals hosting foreign visitors to report their presence to police within 24 hours of arrival.

The Times pointed to possible anomalies being thrown up by the new order, and asked whether President KR Narayanan would have to alert local police every time his daughter an American citizen comes visiting.

The newspaper suggested that National Security Advisor Brajesh Mishra, whose daughter is married to an Italian, could face five years in jail if he fails to report a visit from his son-in-law.

It also questioned whether the order would apply to visiting heads of state and other dignitaries.

# UNFPA official due today

UNFPA Director for Asia and the Pacific Division Md Nizamuddin arrives in the city today on an official mission, says a press release.

Nizamuddin during the mission is expected to meet officials of ministries for health and family welfare, youth and sports, women and children affairs and religious affairs. During these meeting he will discuss current and future UNFPA assistance to Bangladesh. Bangladesh is one of the highest recipient of UNFPA assistance.

Nizamuddin will also attend the wrap-up meeting of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the UNFPA Fifth Country Programme. The meeting will be held tomorrow.

Nizamuddin will also meet newsmen on May 29 at 11 am at the 17th floor of IDB Bhaban in the city's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar.

# Jubo League

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Talukdar Khaleque to his residence under tight security.

The situation was brought under control by police. They asked both leaders to quit party office immediately. Security measures have been stepped up in and around the AL office.

Leaders of both factions filed general diary separately with Khulna thana in this connection.

# 3 Rakhain youths

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organised arms smuggling group and they brought the bullets here from Myanmar, police said.

Police said the arrested had admitted their involvement in bullet smuggling.

The Rakhain youths told newsmen that they had been involved in ammunition smuggling for an arms trader of Nila Rakhain Para in Teknaf.

They said they got Tk 2,000 each daily for carrying ammunition from Teknaf border to the town.

The arrested were produced before a first class magistrate who granted them a five-day police remand. An arms case was filed against them.

BDR on March 4 arrested a smuggler, Nurussafa, from village Nila in Teknaf, allegedly for smuggling in 125 rounds of bullet from Myanmar.

# Peace a chance

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There are speculations here about the nature of possible revival of Indo-Pak dialogue at the Foreign Secretary level which has remained stalled for more than two and half years. The Composite Dialogue Process worked out by the two countries after several rounds of talks at the official and political levels since Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif came to power in 1998 includes eight outstanding issues, including Kashmir.

Vajpayee's letter to Musharraf spoke of the composite dialogue but analysts here keeping their fingers crossed on the possible stand of the Pakistani military strongman who has never been enthusiastic about it and would like the focus of the talks to be on Kashmir.

However, officials here are prone to feel that Musharraf is unlikely to make a fuss about composite dialogue worked after considerable diplomatic negotiations and may not like to be seen as one putting a spoke in the wheel right at the start.

# Mixed reaction

**FROM PAGE 12**  
of view of price compared to the product from Thailand and Vietnam, imports from India was still cheaper because of geographical proximity between India and Bangladesh and lower freight charge.

Exporters here say ordinary variety of Indian rice is outpriced by 20 US dollars vis-à-vis the commodity from Thailand and Vietnam. This, they say, would have an impact on every tonne of rice exported to Bangladesh or to any other country.

With the quality of rice being almost the same in the two neighbouring countries, India had been eyeing Bangladesh to reach its target of exporting three million tonnes. Bangladesh's share in 500,000 tons of basmati rice from India every year is very low, exporters point out.

# UN peacekeepers

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Asst. Secretary General said. Asked if the UN would set up a regional peacekeeping centre in Dhaka and not elsewhere in the region since Bangladesh was the biggest peacekeeper, Hedi Annabi said, "It was not unlikely." He however added that the matter will be decided at "a higher level."

Earlier, speaking at the inaugural programme for the Asian journalists, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan appreciated the role of Bangladesh and its leadership in the decision-making process on various peacekeeping missions by the United Nations.

Bangladesh's support for the reform of the UN Department of Peacekeeping operations in the Security Council and the General Assembly as well as the UN Special Committee on Peace Keeping Operations has also been appreciated by all UN officials concerned here.



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Hindi-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad brought out a procession in the city yesterday to mark the beginning of their 2-day long national conference.

# Mamata wants to get back into NDA?

BSS, Kolkata

In small but significant steps towards a possible reunion, Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee has started to send feelers to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to get back into the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government fold, informed sources said.

Beleaguered in the wake of the election debacle, Mamata is now determined to snap her ties with the Congress, who she feels "have stabbed in the back of Trinamool" during the polls.

In a climb-down from her earlier position "never to go back to NDA," Mamata and Sudheendra Kulkarni, Vajpayee's trouble-shooter in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), have conducted preliminary negotiations at least half a dozen times over phone in the past one week.

She has sought a meeting with President KR Narayanan, who has not yet been informed officially by Trinamool of its separation from the NDA, sources added.

Kulkarni has kept Vajpayee abreast of the exercise, but the script does not yet call for the prime minister's entry into the picture. However, it is believed that Vajpayee created space for Kulkarni

to work during his visit to Malaysia last week.

Mamata is also keeping her "go alone" option open because she knows that the BJP is still a divided house regarding her return to NDA as is evident from the Advani camp's strong reservations about Mamata. One of key aides also confirmed that

# Extortion BCL leader held under PSA at Sirajganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Police arrested a BCL leader from Sirajganj town yesterday on charge of extortion.

Ariful Islam, Shipon, Assistant General Secretary of Sirajganj University College Students Union, demanded Tk 500 as toll from Abu Sayed Akand, assistant professor of the same college on May 13.

As Akand obliged to do so, the BCL leader threatened to kill him.

Akand filed a case with Sirajganj sadar thana under the Public Safety Act. Police sent the BCL leader to jail hajat with one month's detention.

# Devaluation: Will it work?

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"At the same time, the government should arrange a BOP stand-by facility from either IMF or other development partners," said Dr Bhattacharya. "This is something vital because if the next government embarks on some reform measures, it would need a forex cushion."

As the country moved away from commodity aid because of an earlier improved trade balance, there is hardly any scope to get balance of payment support from this. Policy-based lending, another support programme when forex is low, is also now absent giving little hope for immediate relief.

But more to worry about is the impact of this devaluation on internal balance, which is now characterised by low inflation, good agricultural output, more than targeted revenue collection and strong real sector performance. One of the target of the devaluation is to control 'unnecessary' imports.

"But tariff rates on such luxury items are the highest now and when such imports will be curtailed, the government will lose revenue from import duty," said Dr Bhattacharya. "On the other hand, escalation of raw material prices will affect competitiveness of domestic industries and domestic revenue collection may also be hit."

And with the government's borrowing now creeping up, the

revenue slide could only mean more fiscal deficit and more borrowing. On the other hand, the government's other dilemma will be incurring higher costs for import fuel while keeping the administered price fixed, at least until the elections, which will result in higher subsidy component in revenue expenditure. Besides, at least 100 million dollar payment for Sangu gas and MIG are knocking at the door, which will also have to be paid in hard currency.

Under the current expansionary monetary policy, the devaluation is likely to have little contractionary impact as the government aims at a higher ADP expenditure and rigid revenue expenditure structure. Devaluation coupled with high public expenditure may also push inflation but as inflation continues to remain low, it is the only saving grace for the economy, said Dr Bhattacharya.

Latifur Rahman, President of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), also believes that the devaluation will have a negative impact on import substitute industries as opposed to what the BB governor feels.

"Ours is an import dependent country and raw materials and intermediate goods will be similarly affected as finished products, the ultimate effect of which will be on the consumers" said Rahman. "I

the current talks cannot be construed as "smooth" and a sure sign of a grand reunion.

"We have just started to touch and feel each other's sentiments. But it is difficult to say at this point how things would finally work out, for ground realities are shifting every day for both of us," says a Trinamool legislator, back in Mamata's good books after the polls debacle.

"The Congress has betrayed us in the elections and it is now clear that the Congress is a spent force here. Most of their supporters have either changed loyalties to the Trinamool or the BJP in West Bengal," he told BSS.

The pro-Mamata faction in the BJP finds its job a bit easier now that the Samata Party, the biggest stumbling block to her return, is coming round to the idea. Samata leaders like Nitish Kumar have indicated to Vajpayee that they would not mind Mamata's return to the coalition government if it did not mean giving up the Railway Ministry.

If things go right, Trinamool will offer support to the NDA from outside for a few months, after which the issue of joining the ministry will be addressed.

believe that protection to local industries should be a matter of fiscal policy, not devaluation which will rather have a negative impact. Most import substitute industries like textiles depend on imported raw materials and devaluation will make their inputs costlier."

He went on, "What we need now is addressing the fundamental weaknesses of the economy and the structural problems to prop up exports and investment."

Rahman also said the reasoning of discouraging 'unnecessary' imports is confusing. "The words necessary and unnecessary goods are of command economy. In free market economy, what is unnecessary to one person may be necessary to another."

Dr Bhattacharya said, "What we need now is a systematic analysis of imports and take ad hoc tariff measures for luxury items. We must check whether our exports are re-exported to India given the exchange rate misalliance. At the same time, aid utilisation has to be speeded up and structural bottleneck addressed to prop up investment."

These are some of the measures that the government could take much earlier when the warnings were given about the balance of payment situation.

# Support to Palestinian struggle

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Palestinians and for that matter the Arabs, he said.

Azad arrived in Doha on Friday to take part in the ICFM extraordinary session. It was convened by the Emir of Qatar and Chairman of OIC Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani in the Qatari capital to emphasise on the paramount importance of unity and solidarity of the Islamic Ummah in support of the Palestinian people.

Azad, calling for a total commitment of the Islamic Ummah to the defence of Palestinian people and the holy places in Palestine and the occupied territories spelt out several suggestions as priorities for a lasting peace in the Middle East.

They are: cessation of aggression and hostile activities by Israel, restarting the peace process picking up from where it broke off, ensuring

institutionalised arrangements for international supervision of the safety and security of Palestinians in the occupied territories and provisions of the relevant Geneva Convention which should be applied appropriately.

To achieve these priority targets, the Bangladesh foreign minister stressed the need for intensifying the Islamic Ummah's efforts at different levels and international forums as well as through individual and bilateral contacts with the influential players in the global arena.

In this context, Azad deeply appreciated the initiatives of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Arab League and the Non-Aligned Movement and said Bangladesh as a member of the OIC, NAM and the UN Security Council was actively

pursuing the cause of peace and restoration of inalienable rights of the Arab and Palestinian brothers.

He proposed constitution of a three to five member OIC ministerial delegation to visit the capitals of some selected influential countries and the UN headquarters where they would exert their efforts to mobilise world opinion for compelling Israel to discard the path of violence and negotiate of just and lasting peace in the Middle East on the basis of existing agreements and relevant UN resolutions.

"Agreements already reached between the Palestinians and Israel must be fully implemented and the relevant UN resolutions and the international legality must form the basis of a lasting peace in Palestine," he said.

# Cyclone heading toward Gujarat may fizzle out

AP, Ahmedabad

Thousands of people were evacuated from India's western coast even as a cyclone churning in the Arabian Sea for more than 36 hours weakened yesterday, officials said.

"The storm has been practically stationary ... It is moving very slowly and there is a possibility of its fizzling out," said SR Kalsi, deputy director of New Delhi's Meteorology Department.

Kalsi warned, however, that it could still bring heavy rain and winds of speeds up to 140-150 kph.

Meteorologists said the cyclone was expected to reach the coastal areas on tonight.

RK Kankane, director of the Gujarat meteorological office, said there is a chance that it could land on the coastline of Pakistan or Iran.

In Pakistan, the government had evacuated nearly 50,000 people living near the border with India and advised fishermen not to venture out to sea.

Kankane said the cyclone may swing wide of the western Indian state, which was devastated by a 7.7 magnitude earthquake that killed more than 20,000 people and destroyed hundreds of thousands of homes in January.

But authorities were taking no chances.

With the army standing by, the Indian government deployed 20,000 relief workers to help with the evacuation of nearly 118,000 people in Gujarat.

Thousands of people, who have been living in tents and tin sheds since the January temblor destroyed their homes, were the most vulnerable to strong winds.

Authorities have been broadcasting radio warnings to more than 950 fishermen who had sailed from the port city of Jamnagar. Government relief helicopters have joined in the effort to locate and lead them to safety, said Rohit Pathak, a district administrator.

# Arms looted from police in Ctg not yet recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police could not recover the arms looted from a patrol team by a gang of dacoits at Chandgaon in the city even after eight days of the incident.

A gang of dacoits attacked a police patrol team at Chandgaon on the night of May 18, shot dead a police constable, injured two others and snatched away three rifles.

The incident occurred when the patrol team challenged the dacoits while they returning after committing a dacoity at a house of one Habibur Rahman in Chandgaon area.

The case was handed over to detective branch of Chittagong

Metropolitan Police (CMP).

Police arrested 25 person suspecting their involvement in the incident.

Police sources said they have got some information after questioning one of the suspects identified as Bahadur.

On the basis of information DB police raided different places in Raozan, Hathazari and Fatikchhari upazilas and vulnerable places in the port city. But they could not recover the looted arms or arrest any of the culprits.

Meanwhile, CMP has declared a reward of Tk 3000 for information about each looted arms and whereabouts of each dacoits.

# Both individuals

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and the district administration also took part at the seminar.

Expressing concern over the existing degree of corruption in the society, Prof. Murshid said, "There is no easy way to overcome this situation unless we are honest and prepared to sacrifice." He stressed the need for concerted movement to curb corruption.

Prof. Jatin Sarkar in his paper said, "We have not been able to be free from the disgrace and corruption of colonial reign. " We can not expect a sound and corruption-free society unless our politics is sound and corruption-free," he observed.

Referring to different studies conducted by the TIB, Prof. Muzafer Ahmad said lack of accountability in the weak administration system, absence of encouragement to lead honest life and politically influenced administration are responsible for the rise in corruption.

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Reviewing his career of 25 years as a government servant, the former C & AG Hafizuddin Khan said corruption is gradually increasing and said, " The society still has some good people who are yet to give in to corruption. Otherwise, it would have been destroyed."

There was a discussion panel of five at the seminar, comprising Prof. Khandakar Mujahidul Haq and Prof. Sumita Naha, both from Anandamohon College, Prof. M Asrafuzzaman Selim of Agriculture University, Taleya Rahman of

# Drive to arrest

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different cases.

According to police, there are some 512 warrants in four police stations in the Rajshahi city, but the "criminals were not arrested for reasons unknown."

The new Rajshahi Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Mokhesur Rahman, directed the OCs of the police stations to arrest the accused involved in terrorist acts.

# The rice that never reached

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(12,000 metric tonnes each) in 1998.

In reality, some 12,000 MT of rotten rice were imported from India while another consignment of 12,000 MT was never imported although it was falsely showed in papers that a cargo ship -- MV Hafina-- carried the consignment.

When contacted, Mirza Azam said their findings showed that the consignment of 12,000 MT of rice never reached Bangladesh and there was no registered ship named MV Hafina in the world.

After months of persuasion and pressure exerted by the probe committee, the Food Ministry at last blacklisted two Indian rice exporters M/S Ramesh Kumar and Company Ltd and M/S R Pearial International Co Ltd on January 24 this year.

But the probe body members consider the action taken by the Food Ministry as too late and too little in view of the magnitude of the

scam.

Talking to this correspondent recently, Deputy Minister for Food Dharendra Debnath Shambhu said that the ministry would definitely take punitive actions against officials concerned, if found guilty.

He, however, declined to comment on the long delay in placing the probe report before the parliament.

Meanwhile, the principal office of Agrani Bank, where letter of credit (LC) was opened, filed a case with District Judge's Court, Dhaka against the L/C negotiating bank, Bijoya Bank of Calcutta, to get back the money it had paid against the fictitious rice import.

The Food Ministry recently sought the Finance Ministry's opinion on initiating a case against M/S Ramesh Kumar and Company Ltd and Agrani Bank to get back the transacted money, official sources said.