

Violence, accidents

FROM PAGE 1
the situation under control.

Additional police was deployed at both villages.

In another incident yesterday, 25 people were injured during a clash between activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League and Jubo Dal. Two of the seriously injured Abdul Alim, 28 and Rezaul Karim, 27 of Jubo Dal were sent to Dhaka for treatment.

Sources said the clash erupted over beating of two Jubo Dal activists at Bahirkhola at about 10am.

Our Pabna Correspondent reports: At least 40 people were injured in a gunfight between rival groups of BNP at Charkatra village under Sadar upazila on Tuesday.

The clash ensued over plying of auto-tempos on a local brickfield.

Our Gopalganj Correspondent adds: At least 80 people were injured in a clash between rival groups over auction of goods belonging to a local mosque on Eid day at Bedgram village under Sadar upazila.

The clash erupted after disputes over bidding for trees being auctioned by the managing committee Bedgram Northpara mosque.

Twenty-five injured were admitted to Gopalganj Sadar Hospital.

Our Natore Correspondent reports: At least two people were killed and 35 others injured when a bus carrying a bridal party collided head on a goods-laden truck at Kalikapur under Badagram upazila.

Police said Tajul Islam, 35, the bus driver and Moqbul Hossain, 50, a member of the bridal party died on the spot.

Our Kushtia Correspondent adds: Two people were killed in a road accident on Tuesday. The accident occurred when a motorcycle ramed into a bus coming from opposite direction at Daulatpur upazila.

UNB report from Gazipur says: Two extortionists, Rana alais Munna, 20, and Shahjahan, 22, were killed by a mob when they went to collect toll at Dattapara in Tongi on Tuesday.

In another incident, road pirates stabbed Monju Fakir, 35, driver of a rent-a-car vehicle, and looted valuables from its passenger in bridge area on Tongi-Pubail road on Monday.

Monju, hailed from Ulpur village of Gopalganj district, died on way to hospital.

In Narayanganj, Jahangir, 17, a tempo driver was killed and three people were injured when a truck ramed into a tempo at Madanpur in Bandar upazila on Dhaka-Chittagong highway on Tuesday.

In another incident over toll collection, 20 people were injured, six by bullets, at Masdair in Fatullah the same day.

The bullet-wounded Jamal, 45,

Nannu, 40, Nasir, 40, Suman, 24, and Shahin, 26, were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

On Tuesday, dacoits looted valuables worth Tk 26,000 from the house of Abdul Malek of Dakkhinpara in Arahazar Upazila injuring seven people. The injured are Abdul Malek, Shahida, Fatema, Al-Amin, Mahmuda, Maksudah and Mehedi.

The body of Rubel, 25, a garment worker, was recovered from a ditch in Tolla area at Fatullah on Sunday.

On the same day, several clashes between the supporters of Jubo Dal and police at Chashara and Missionpara in Sadar left 15 people injured.

In Jessore, private car driver Jamaluddin, 35, died on the spot and two others were injured when their Jessore-bound car collided with a bus at Hashimpur Bazaar on the Jessore-Magura road on Tuesday.

In Chittagong, three passengers of a microbus were killed when a Dhaka-bound bus ramed into a microbus at Bashbaria in Sitakunda upazila on Dhaka-Chittagong highway on Sunday.

Report from Bagerhat adds: A youth, Ferdous, was beaten to death while another injured in a lynch-mob attack when they went for toll collection to Kandapara village in Sadar upazila on Sunday.

Some 40 people were injured in a clash between two groups of transport workers at Rupatali bus terminal in Barisal town on Sunday.

In Manikganj, a 35-year-old man was killed and 23 other passengers were injured when a Jessore-bound coach fell into roadside ditch at Zoka on the Dhaka-Archa highway in Ghorupur on Saturday.

In another incident, one Sabur was killed and three other passengers were injured when a tempo they were onboard dashed into a tree along the same highway in Khrola area.

In Laxmipur, terrorists hacked an Awami League leader, Siraj Ullah, 35, to death and injured a leader of Jubo League, Jahangir Alam Hiru, 28, by gouging his eyes out in Sadar upazila on Sunday and Monday.

In Bogra, Shah Alam, 30, was killed in a road accident at Silimpur on the outskirts of the town on Saturday.

A tribal youth was killed and dumped into the Kaptai Lake near the old bus station in Rangamati hill district headquarters. His body was recovered from the lake on Sunday.

In Sherpur, Farida Begum, a housewife, was beaten to death allegedly by her husband as her parents didn't send any Eid gift for him at Char Sherpur in sadar upazila on Sunday.

Experts warn

FROM PAGE 1
"The need of the hour is to strictly follow the national building code. The government must act quickly to enact necessary legislature and to ensure its enforcement", he added.

He also stressed the need for developing a proper disaster management service to meet the aftermath of any quake and accelerating construction of seismic observatories in Dhaka, Sylhet and Rangpur to properly monitor quakes.

The epicentre of a quake cannot be measured by one observatory. It needs at least three, he said talking to The Daily Star.

Chowdhury also called for renovating buildings on the earth quake zones. He said a brick-built building above three storeys cannot stand jolts. Those can be reinforced with concrete pillars or putting iron rods between the bricks, Chowdhury, an engineer, suggested.

Bangladesh can be divided into three categories of quake zones. The severe zone or Zone A stretches from Sylhet to Rangpur and covers parts of Dinajpur. The moderate

zone or Zone B covers Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi and most other areas of central Bangladesh, where 50 percent of country's population live.

The low risk zone covers the southern and southwestern regions of Jessore, Khulna and Barisal.

On the situation in Dhaka, Chowdhury said the western part of the city where the Central Jail is located suffered a major damage during the quake of 1897 that killed thousands in Assam and in north-eastern Bangladesh including Sylhet.

If a quake of a magnitude like that of 1897 which changed the course of Brahmaputra river occurs within 100 km of Dhaka, the city will feel the impact, he added. Anything like that happening in Srimangal or Tripura will affect the capital.

The geologist said Dhaka city sits on top of alluvial soil that cushions it from tremors. But rapid withdrawal of underground water has "unsettled the balanced underground" and made it vulnerable to quakes.

College girl killed

FROM PAGE 1
Nazmul Hossain, who works in Saudi Arabia, said that one of Ratna's friends Fatema Akhtar Shikha, who lived in the same building, called her at around 12-45 pm to visit Ruma, a mutual friend. Ruma whose parents lived on the third floor of the same building had come to visit her parents with her child.

Both girls then went to Ruma's house, where the alleged assailant, Razib, was apparently waiting.

Loud music was being played on the cassette player in the house and Ruma's mother was cooking in the kitchen of the crammed staff quarter apartment. According to neighbours and relatives, Ratna was sitting in one of the rooms of the apartment when the alleged killer, Razib fired a single bullet into her head from a locally made firearm. Shikha and Ruma were in the balcony at the time.

Ratna was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where the attending doctor declared her dead.

Neighbours said Razib was seen even ten minutes after incident with Shufal and Kamrul, two of his friends, before he fled.

Relatives said that a day before the Eid-ul-Fitr, Ratna told her mother that 'someone' she knew was telling her 'things that was almost impossible to believe'. They added that Ratna did not like Razib because he was junior to her and also was the younger brother of her

friend, Ruma. Tejgaon police detained Shikha and Ruma for interrogation but was yet to arrest Razib till writing of this report yesterday. Shikha and Ruma were released yesterday after they gave judicial statements to a magistrate at the CMM's Court. The two girls told the magistrate that Razib was playing with the gun when a shot was fired accidentally, a police source said. Ratna's family was found in deep shock yesterday. The chairs of the building are still stained with blood. Neighbours and relatives said that Ratna was known as a fine girl who was determined to continue higher studies. A neighbour said after Ratna failed to obtain first division in the SSC examinations by only 2 points two years ago, she took the exams again last year and obtained first division.

"Her father is very ill now and is in Bancharampur of Brahmanbaria district, which is their village home," a neighbour said.

Ratna's body was taken to her village home for burial yesterday afternoon after postmortem at the DMCH.

15 killed

FROM PAGE 12
The tribal zones are dangerous and difficult to get to. Known as agencies, the zones function under their own laws and traditions. The Pakistan government has very limited authority over the regions.

Gas: Minister's remarks

FROM PAGE 12
impression that the gas has become more a national burden than a lifeblood for the country's development, the sector's history shows that the state willfully chose costly IOC gas. It was because the country was faced with tremendous gas supply shortfall and lack of investment. In early nineties, it was more important to add new gas supplies for the sake of development, even at a price that inflicted loss on the nation.

The government last year incurred a loss of Tk 375 crore by purchasing gas from foreign oil companies at a higher rate and selling the same at much less than half that price in the local market. This loss is directly linked to international oil price hike -- with which the government had contractually linked the gas price of the international oil companies (IOCs) -- and drastic taka devaluation against US dollar.

But at the same time, Petrobangla owes Tk 1200 crore to different organisations including its own affiliates. The state body is unable to pay Tk 350 crore to Shell and Unocal for purchase of Sangu and Jalalabad gas due to liquidity crisis. So far no pragmatic step has been taken to clear the arrears.

As per Gas Purchase Sales Agreement (GPSA), the gas of

Sangu and Jalalabad follows a formula linked with the price of high sulphur fuel oil at Singapore market. Under such a formula, Petrobangla pays a minimum of around US 1.2 dollars per one thousand cubic feet of gas when the global oil price is low or even lowest and around US 2.9 dollars when the oil price is high or the highest.

When the government framed these GPSAs in late '96 and in '98, it chose the formula knowing fully well their implications. The PSCs, signed between March 94 and July 95, were designed in such a way that IOC operations would be costlier than Petrobangla's own operations. The PSC operators were given a large package of financial incentives including tax exemption because at that time no oil company was much interested to invest in Bangladesh.

In addition, there was a huge gas supply shortfall in '95-'96. The Sangu field was developed by Shell Oil on an urgent basis in a record time of less than two years in view of government's request. Country's power generation continued to face problem due to gas supply shortfall till '99.

The government had argued that gas can replace fuel oil, saving Tk 500 crore a year. Imported oil is used for power generation in the

country's southern region.

While the state minister says there is no gas market in the country, the Power System Master Plan (PSMP) of energy ministry finalised in November '95 says the demand for power will be 9357 MW in 2015 (calculated on the basis of annual power consumption growth at that time). At least five tcf of gas should be reserved for power generation, it said.

The power sector consumes around 43 percent of the total gas production now.

The projection in the PSMP has so far been close to the reality. The demand for power in '95 was 1925 MW and it would jump to 3205 MW in 2000 and to 4342 MW in 2005, it said.

To meet the growing demand for power, the country will need to increase gas production by another 500 mmcf (million cubic feet per day) in 2005. But so far, there is no long-term plan to meet the domestic demand for power.

The demand growth of gas is directly related to the overall economic activities in the country. According to projections in all the six five years plans, the economy has been targeted to grow and not to remain stagnant.

Security in Kathmandu

FROM PAGE 12
"Our Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat and Agriculture Minister Mohesh Acharya already visited all the SAARC member-countries and formally handed over the invitation letter to the head of the government of each country on behalf of our Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba," the official said requesting anonymity.

About the prevailing state of emergency in Nepal, he said it would have no effect on the smooth functioning of the summit. "Our government machinery is fully capable of handling the situation."

"This is a different type of emergency as the parliament was not dissolved and none of people's rights was curtailed," he claimed. "Besides, there is a national consensus among all political parties about the emergency issue," he added.

Meanwhile, Rita Manchanda, of the Kathmandu-based South Asia Forum for Human Rights while inaugurating a reporters' workshop in Kathmandu last week alleged that the freedom of the press was curtailed under the state of emergency in Nepal.

"Journalists cannot ask about the ongoing battle with Maoist

rebels, and people do not know in which direction the battle is going," she said, terming the alleged restrictions as a serious violation of human rights.

DD Khatiwada, Director General of Information of the Nepalese government, denied the allegation.

"All parliamentary activities are going on and even opposition political parties have not opposed the emergency," he said, adding that press freedom remained unhindered.

"The press is fully free provided that it does not print anything that may put national security in jeopardy, Khatiwada said.

In support of his claim, the DG invited a group of Bangladeshi journalists to visit any place in Nepal to observe the situation. "You are free to go anywhere and talk to anybody about the prevailing situation in Nepal."

Khatiwada, however, hinted that a resolution on terrorism might be adopted at the 11th SAARC Summit as all the member countries were affected by terrorism in one way or the other. Convention Centre (BICC) at Baneshwar in Kathmandu.

Tremor shakes city:100 hurt

FROM PAGE 1
from coming out of the overcrowded three-storey building comprising six units, said a jail guard. On an average, 600 prisoners are housed in each unit, he added.

Stopped on the way by the guards, some 1200 inmates gathered at the staircase and at one stage the railing gave in, said a jail official.

With a capacity to accommodate 2632 inmates, nearly 9,000 inmates are housed in the central jail, according to the official.

Immediately after the incident, fire fighters, members of the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society and other rescuers rushed to the spot to help the injured. Some 40 wounded inmates were sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) while the rest were being treated at the jail hospital. Most of the injured were sent back to the jail after first aid.

Home Minister Altaf Hossain

Chowdhury, who went to the scene after immediately the incident, told reporters at the jail gate that about 100 inmates of the jail were injured when a railing of a staircase of a ward collapsed.

Altaf dismissed rumours about collapse of a building in the jail, saying none of the buildings was damaged in the earthquake. "Panicky jail inmates were injured as they tried to come out of the building," said the Home Minister.

He later visited the ailing inmates at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). Fisheries and Livestock Minister Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr. Khandaker Mosharrif Hossain, State Minister for Home Affairs Lutuzzaman Babar, Forest and Environment Minister Shajahan Siraj and senior police officials also visited the DMCH.

Dhaka City Mayor Mohammad Hanif also visited the jail immediately after the incident. He provided four ambulances to rescue

the injured inmates.

Police in riot gear was deployed around the central jail and all ways leading to the prison were made off-limits to the people after the incident. Relatives of the jail inmates were waiting on their way to the jail. Several hundred panicked people stood along either side of the narrow Najmuddin Road in the old part of the city, where the jail is located.

No reports of casualty and injury from other parts of the country were received. Chittagong and its adjoining areas experienced minor earthquake shortly before 2 in the afternoon. However, city dwellers could hardly feel the jolt.

Our Narayanganj correspondent reported that a light quake shook the town at 1:55pm. No casualties were reported. In Munshiganj, it was felt at 1:58pm. Local people said the tremor was felt in the area for a second or two, forcing the panicky people to rush out of their homes.

Shahriar

FROM PAGE 1
Khan, the chief defence counsel for the case, could not appear in the court due to unavoidable circumstances. So they prayed for adjournment of hearing. They also prayed for hearing on bail petition with appearance of Shahriar Kabir.

The prosecution side did not oppose the petition.

After hearing both sides, the court granted the petition.

Earlier, Shahriar Kabir was placed on a five-day remand for interrogation in two phases.

Meanwhile, Shahriar Kabir on Saturday gave a judicial statement to the magistrate. After recording his statements, the court ordered sending Shahriar Kabir to Dhaka Central Jail and fixed the date for hearing of the bail petition.

Shahriar Kabir was detained by the Special Branch (SB) of police at immigration desk at Zia International Airport on his return from Kolkata on November 22. Later he was shown arrested under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC). No specific case was filed against him till December 7.

Mohammad Shahadat Hossain, officer-in-charge of airport find a complainant case on sedition charge against Shahriar Kabir with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka on December 8.

Hasan Ahmad

FROM PAGE 12
yesterday.

During his long association with the government, he also worked in a variety of capacities and held, among others, the positions of secretary, East Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation, executive director, Eastern Refinery, executive director, Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company, deputy commissioner of Mymensingh and Chittagong, economic/commercial counselor, Bangladesh Embassy at Bonn and Kuwait, chairman, Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, chairman Bangladesh Oil and Gas Corporation (Petrobangla), and Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, secretary, Ministry of Communications (Railway Division), director general, Bangladesh Railway, secretary, Ministry of Health, chairman, Tariff Commission, secretary, Ministry of Textiles and principal secretary to the Prime Minister.

In his personal life he is married and has two daughters and a son.

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Former Navy chief

FROM PAGE 12
Harun-ar-Rashid, Chief of Naval Staff Rear Admiral Abu Taher, Chief of Air Staff Air Vice Marshall M Rafiqul Islam, political leaders, senior naval officers- both serving and retired- a large number of his relatives, friends and well-wishers.

Ahmed's kulkhwani was held at the Naval Headquarters Complex Mosque after Asr prayers on Tuesday, December 18.

V-Day celebrated

FROM PAGE 12
lighting the significance of the day. The government also arranged special discussion meetings and symposiums on the occasion.

Bangla Academy and Shilpakala Academy arranged cultural programmes. Documentary films were screened for schoolchildren across the country.

Special diet was served in the hospitals, prisons, orphanages and vagrant centers while special prayers held in all mosques, temples, churches and pagodas.

The government accorded reception to freedom fighters and arranged Victory Fair at district and upazila levels.

In Dhaka, bands of the Armed Forces played at different points while Navy ships were kept open for public at different river terminals including Sadarghat.

The central Shishu Park was open for children with no charge for entry.

As part of the Victory Day programme, march past of police, ansar, VDP, scouts, girls guide and BNCC was held in all upazilas and districts in the first hour of December 18.

Dhaka to work

FROM PAGE 1
Rahman is the other delegate.

Foreign Secretary Shamsher Mabin Chowdhury told reporters at a press briefing yesterday that the Bangladesh delegation is expected to reach Kabul before December 22. He expressed the hope that the take over of the new administration in Afghanistan will lead to a beginning of a process of peace and reconstruction in Afghanistan.

The foreign secretary said Bangladesh government has sent relief goods worth nearly Tk 5 crore for Afghan refugees.

In response to a question, he said the UNDP headquarters based in New York is coordinating the possible assistance of all NGOs who are interested in helping the Afghan people.

Interested Bangladeshi organisations may contact the UNDP at nick.hartmann@undp.org

Asked if Bangladeshis will be able to obtain visas for Afghanistan, the foreign secretary said "these issues would be discussed".

Bangladesh closed its embassy in Afghanistan in the late eighties while an embassy of former Afghan government headed by President Borhanuddin Rabbani continues to be in place in Dhaka.

New Afghan govt

FROM PAGE 1
hand over Arab guerrillas caught in his country to face international justice.

"The Arabs in Afghanistan who have no criminal record are just citizens ... but the ones who have committed international crimes, crimes against mankind, crimes against our people, they must face international justice," he told a news conference.

He also said he would apply tough Islamic law to common criminals in Afghanistan.

Karzai said he expected an international peacekeeping force to number between 3,000 and 5,000 people and that he would favour allowing them to use force if necessary to keep peace.

"If it takes force to keep peace. Why not? The basic element is to keep peace."

Karzai has been designated head of an interim administration that will take power in Afghanistan today and rule for six months, paving the way for a two-year transitional government.

AFP adds: Osama bin Laden has fled Afghanistan, a spokesman for a top Afghan military commander said yesterday, according to the Afghan Islamic Press.

A spokesman for Haji Mohammad Zaman, military chief for Nangarhar province, which includes the Tora Bora caves where al-Qaida fighters have just been defeated, said: "We are now confident that Osama bin Laden is not in Afghanistan."

The United States Tuesday warned any country that might consider harbouring Laden to learn from Afghanistan, where the US military helped to oust the Taliban government that sheltered him.

"I just think any country in the world that would knowingly harbour bin Laden would be out of their minds," Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz said in answer to a question at a news briefing at the Pentagon.

"I think they've seen what happened to the Taliban and think that's probably a pretty good lesson for people not to do that," Wolfowitz added.

Wolfowitz said the United States did not know where bin Laden was after more than two months of US bombing and ground action and a campaign by the opposition forces,

which overthrew the Taliban government in Kabul.

"We don't know where he is now and he could be on the run," Wolfowitz said.

US officials have taken custody of three al-Qaida fighters, and more than a dozen more prisoners captured by Afghan allies were being handed over to American forces Tuesday, the Pentagon said.

US planes flew over Afghanistan on Tuesday and yesterday but did not drop bombs.

Young man

FROM PAGE 1
him, witnesses said.

Victim's mother Ayesha Khatun, rushed to the spot and urged the men to spare her son. They sent her back saying he would be freed soon, family sources said.

Later Ayesha returned to the spot with her husband Ali but did not find their son. They went to the local BNP office and found Aslam being beaten there. The parents begged for their son's life.

Aslam was finally released after his parents were made to sign a blank sheet of paper. He was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital after his release early on Saturday morning. He died at the hospital the same evening.

Police sources said that the victim uncle Hamid's wife and Khaleq had a rivalry following family disputes two years ago. Hamid's wife filed a case accusing Khaleq and he was arrested.

Right after BNP came to power Hamid was picked up and beaten by Khaleq and his men. They asked him to pay Tk. 2.5 lakh, which Hamid refused. Later when Hamid tried to file a case with the Sutrapur police station regarding the incident they allegedly refused to do so since it was against the locala

The police later agreed to receive the case after the name of the BNP ward president's name was dropped from the list, sources added.

Police and local sources said that Aslam might have killed by the BNP activists for his involvement in the above incidents.

Victim's mother filed a case with Sutrapur police station but none could be arrested till last night, police said.

Eid-ul-Fitr

FROM PAGE 12
people embraced one another in the spirit of equality and fraternity.

In the capital, the main Eid congregation was held at the National Eidgah on the Supreme Court premises at 8.30 am. Four Eid congregations were held at the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque from 7.30 am to 10.15am.

President A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury offered his Eid prayers at the National Eidgah.

Chief Justice Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury, chief adviser of the last caretaker government Latifur Rahman, BNP secretary general and Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Dhaka City Mayor Mohammad Hanif also offered their Eid prayers at the National Eidgah.

In Chittagong, the main Eid congregation was held at M A Aziz Stadium at 9 am under the auspices of Central Eid-Jamaat Committee.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin and senior leaders of the ruling four-party alliance offered prayers there.