

Cell at PMO soon to monitor law & order, review dev activities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to set up a cell at the Prime Minister's Office to monitor law and order and review progress of development activities and implementation of various programmes undertaken by the government.

Sources said Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has approved opening of the cell styled "Development and Coordination Cell". Officials are working out modality of operation of the cell to be set up soon.

The Ministry of Establishment is taking steps to create some posts like Director General, Directors etc for the planned cell.

Political Secretary to the Prime Minister Haris Chowdhury will supervise its activities.

Officials said the cell will give special attention to development programmes being implemented at the instruction of the Prime Minister and review progress of various programmes of different ministries.

It will monitor law and order, review reports regularly sent by intelligence agencies and recommend necessary steps.

The cell will be empowered to appoint experts from outside the government for taking up short and long-term development programmes as per instruction of the Prime Minister.

Sources said the government intends to appoint renowned economists, environmentalists, academics and experts for taking their suggestions in initiating development programmes in different sectors.

The Prime Minister has already talked with many of them.

SAARC Summit Two conventions on women & children likely to be signed

UNB, Kathmandu

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Summit that begins here today is likely to sign two regional conventions.

The conventions to be signed on the last day of the summit, are one on combating trafficking in woman and child prostitution, and the other on regional cooperation to promote child welfare in South Asia.

Terrorism is also expected to figure in the discussions. During the Third Summit in 1987, SAARC had adopted a convention on combating terrorism.

In the run-up to the summit, the 22nd session of the SAARC Council of Ministers endorsed the Standing Committee report with some changes.

The members countries agreed to finalise the South Asia Free Trade Area (SAFTA) treaty and speed up the process of establishing the proposed South Asia Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAFTA). However, no time frame was given for SAFTA.

PBCP cadre shot dead in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Abdul Mannan, 30, an armed cadre of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) gunned down by his rivals at Shahpur bazar under Dumuria thana of Khulna district yesterday.

According to witnesses, a group of eight attacked Mannan at the bazar and shot him point blank. He died on the spot.

The killers belong to Shailen group of Biplabi Communist Party.

Local people said Mannan joined PBCP from BCP in January last year.

The killers left the place, firing several shots and exploding bombs.

Obituary

Shamsunnahar Rashid, wife of late Commodore A Rashid, died at 10:30 pm at Cardiohelp Clinic at Gulshan in the city yesterday.

She left behind two sons, Alam Rashid and Rafi Rashid, and two daughters, Mrs. Nasrin Sobhan and Charmane Ahmed.

The namaj-e-janaza for Shamsunnahar Rashid will be held at the Main Gulshan Mosque after Zohr prayers today. She will be buried at the Naval Graveyard in Banani at 3pm.

Shamsunnahar Rashid was the author of 18 books and a Bangla Academy gold medalist.

Outer anchorage of Ctg port 'smugglers' haven'

Contraband items flood city markets

NURUL ALAM, Chittagong

The outer anchorage of Chittagong port has turned into a "smugglers' haven" due to laxity in the anti-smuggling drive by the authorities, sources said.

Huge quantities of smuggled contraband goods including drug, gold, foreign cigarettes, liquor and electronic goods are reportedly being unloaded there from foreign cargo vessels.

Cargo vessels mostly operating in the Chittagong Singapore route carry the smuggled goods and drop those at the outer anchorage. Those are then carried to the shore by high powered engine boats for "clients", sources said.

The "clients" then sell the smuggled goods to different markets inside the country through some syndicates operating here. It is alleged that the syndicates have clandestine links with high-ups in the administration and law enforcing agencies. Unabated influx of contraband goods has flooded the city markets.

Witnesses say trafficking of contraband goods to the city markets from Patenga sea beach, Muralighat,

Chandga, Sitakunda and Cox's Bazar by showing 'token' to the law enforcers is a common phenomenon.

Smugglers involved with international rackets are reportedly using Chittagong seaport as a transit point for drug and gold smuggling, sources informed.

Talking to this correspondent Commissioner of Chittagong Customs House Rashidul Ahsan Chowdhury said efforts are on to seize smuggled goods brought by foreign vessels. He said there is shortage of logistics to launch a massive crackdown.

The anti-smuggling team of Chittagong Customs House seized smuggled goods worth over taka sixty lakh in the last one month, the commissioner said.

It is difficult to launch anti-smuggling drive at the outer anchorage as the two patrol boats are almost inoperative. "We are trying to procure two speedy boats to intensify the drive", he said.

"Moreover, members of the anti-smuggling team are not well equipped with arms" he added.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

One killed, 10 hurt in gunfight between police, terrorists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One person was shot dead and ten others including three policemen were injured in a gunfight between police and terrorists at Rabindra Goswami Road under Shyampur thana in the city on Thursday night.

Police identified the dead as Azam, 38, of Pargandaria village under Keraniganj thana.

The condition of policemen Nazrul Islam is critical at Dhaka Medical College Hospital as one bullet hit his head and another hit his face. Two other policemen -- Zakir Hossain and Abdul Razzak-- were released after treatment, hospital sources said.

Azam, a friend of Jasim, went to Sutrapur thana at about 11:30 pm on Thursday and told police that some miscreants allegedly led by one Alamgir cut off the fingers of Jasim and were preparing for a dacoity in Alamganj area.

A police team from Sutrapur thana led by Sub-Inspector Shahid went to the spot. Sensing presence of police, the armed miscreants started firing gunshots. Police also opened fire.

At least 50 bullets were exchanged during the half-an-hour encounter, the sources said.

Azam who accompanied the police team, was caught in the crossfire and was fatally injured. Doctors declared Azam dead when he was taken to DMCH.

Police said some gang members were also injured but they fled the spot.

Sutrapur police picked up two persons - Selim and Sohail - from the spot and handed them over to the Shyampur police.

Shyampur police said the youths were not shown arrested and kept in thana custody.

A murder case has been filed with Shyampur thana.

Withdraw false cases against Mockbul, Kamal & Shahiar: AL

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League yesterday strongly condemned the filing of 'false' cases against former MPs Alhaj Mockbul Hossain and Kamal Majumder, and writer Shahriar Kabir.

Party's acting president Abdus Samad Azad and general secretary Zillur Rahman in a joint statement protested the harassment on them.

They alleged that the government did not give division to the two former lawmakers and noted writer-journalist in jail ignoring court order.

About the case of Kamal Majumder, the AL leaders said the "fascist government" filed the false case in a motive to tarnish his image.

They accused the government of unleashing torture on jailed writer, journalist and leader of Ekattuer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee, Shahriar Kabir.

The AL leaders called upon the government to release the leaders immediately withdrawing the false cases.

BNP warns partymen against involvement in terrorism

Letters issued reminding govt's tough stance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP has warned party leaders and activists at all levels against involvement in terrorist activities and patronising terrorists, while reminding them that the government has taken a tough stance on terrorism and is determined to eliminate all sorts of crimes.

Instructed by BNP Chairperson and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, party Secretary General and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday issued letters containing the warning.

Letters were sent to members of the party Standing Committee, office bearers and members of the National Executive Committee, ministers, state ministers, deputy ministers, chief whip and whips, presidents and general secretaries

of district and city units of the party and presidents and general secretaries of the party's front organisations.

Bhuiyan in his letter asked them to make it clear to party leaders and activists that none would be spared if found involved in terrorism or patronising terrorists.

"We are determined to put an end to terrorism, inherited from the past. You have already known that party Chairperson and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has taken a tough stance on terrorism and has issued instructions for arrest of all terrorists irrespective of their party affiliation," he stated.

Seeking all cooperation from the party men, Mannan Bhuiyan said, "We have to remain very much alert so that none of our activists could engage in illegal occupation of

property, toll extortion, killing and other crimes."

Side by side, he said, vigilance should be maintained so that none could misuse the banners of BNP and its front organisations to damage their image. He advised the party men to see that none could resort to terrorism, create anarchy and disrupt peace and order in the society.

The letter mentioned that certain vested quarters are out to destroy communal harmony in the country and urged the party men to resist this. "We all should stand by the minority communities at the time of their joy and sorrow," it said.

The BNP secretary general urged all to extend support to the government in its efforts to eliminate terrorism and build a peaceful and prosperous country.

A S M NURUNNABI

In normal civic life, management of city's wastes has always been a challenging task. As it is, this task isn't normally done well with the result that sliphod management practices sometimes create public health hazards. Management of hospital wastes is an important issue requiring priority consideration in the interest of public health requirement.

There are many forms of wastes that can harm people's health. Experts say that exposure to toxic elements like lead, cadmium, mercury, DDT, PCB, and certain chemicals can pose serious health problems. In developed countries, most of these risks have already been identified and brought under control, but not so in the developing world where many of such risks remain beyond the ken of expert knowledge.

Even where any such risks are readily identified, it is not an easy task to impose controls. There are harmful implications; as climate changes and global warming have increased the planet's heat-related diseases, they also change the

DOWN TO EARTH Menace of deadly hospital waste

pattern of distribution of infection and vector-borne diseases entailing heavy tolls.

This makes it more important to do something about hospital wastes, much of which can be highly toxic and life threatening.

With the growing urbanisation involving proliferation of health clinics and hospitals in the private sector in many parts of the city besides government hospitals, the hazards from careless disposal of hospital wastes have increased ominously. The presence of used needles, syringes, blood-stained gauzes in the garbage dumps in the vicinity of such establishments is a common sight. The greater danger

is that these hospital wastes are sometimes used by the society's evil elements to earn money putting public health in great danger.

We may often come across scenes in the vicinity of some hospitals and clinics where shady characters are found engaged in laying used bandages out on the grass for drying or washing used one-time syringes with water with great care for selling them to some equally shady medicine shops. It is not difficult for such shady operatives to make such used articles look like new with the help of easily available machinery to make new plastic labels or packets. These fake products are presented to

customers so ingeniously that they are unable to differentiate between the real and the fake ones.

Then an equally vital issue remains. It is the question of safe disposal of contaminated blood, urine and swab samples when the laboratory tests are done. Health experts are of the opinion that even when these harmful things are poured into covered drains or flushed into sanitary toilets, there is no guarantee that the bacteria or germs will not find their way to the surface water through numerous cracks in the iron or plastic pipes. From the open drains or garbage dumps, the germs and bacteria are

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3



Pakistan off-spinner Saqlain Mushtaq bowls in the nets during practice at the Bangabandhu Stadium yesterday. On the left is Inzamam Haq. Pakistan open their tour with a 3-day match against Bangladesh A at the BKSP from today.

Mirpur double murder: One more held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mirpur police yesterday arrested another person in connection with the sensational murder of two brothers in the city's Mirpur area in November last.

The arrested was identified as Amir Hossain of Shewrapara in the area.

The two brothers Mizanur Rahman, 30, and Ziaul Haq, 25-- were murdered by some local hoodlums on November 2 as they refused to pay toll demanded by the elements.

Two of them Anwar Hossain Dukhu and Amjad Hossain were arrested next day for their alleged involvement in the killings.

Police said Amir Hossain confessed his involvement in the double murder.

He is an accused in seven cases including two murder cases.

Taliban now want to hand over Omar?

AFP, Kabul

Taliban commander Abdul Ahad, also known as Rayes Baghran (chief of Baghran), pledged yesterday to hand Mullah Omar over in exchange for a halt to the bombing, according to Nusratullah Nasrat of the Kandahar provincial intelligence service.

Rayes Baghran's 1,500 followers in Helmand province, east of Kandahar, would also lay down their weapons as part of the deal, he said, adding that the offer was made after a three-day "Shura" -- a meeting of tribal elders -- in Helmand.

Nusratullah said negotiators were working out the final surrender terms for the fighters. "We have received positive response from those tribal chieftains who are sheltering Omar and his associates in Baghran," he told The Associated Press by satellite telephone. "A

breakthrough in this regard is expected soon."

Asked about talks over Omar, Defence Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said in Washington that the United States would not approve of any negotiations "which would result in freeing of people who ought not to be freed," including those involved in terrorism or harbouring terrorists.

"I know that the interim government is right on the same sheet of music with us, with respect to this. They want the Taliban caught," Rumsfeld said.

Afghanistan's interim leader Hamid Karzai said he believes Mullah Mohammad Omar is still on the loose, and he would turn Omar over to the United States if he is captured.

"I don't think he's been captured yet. If he has been captured I would

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

China stands 100pc behind Pakistan, says Islamabad

AFP, Kathmandu

Pakistan said yesterday that China stood 100 per cent behind Islamabad as it faced a "potentially volatile situation" with India.

Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji met with Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf for three hours Thursday in Beijing and assured him of China's "principled and everlasting support" for Islamabad, said a Pakistani official statement.

"China considers Pakistan its very reliable and close friend and will always stand by Pakistan," said the statement, released after Musharraf arrived Friday in Nepal for a South Asian summit also attended by Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

It said Zhu "expressed his apprehension at the potentially volatile situation that has arisen due to the assembling of Indian forces close to the Pakistani border" and "appreciated the restraint exercised by Pakistan."

The Pakistani leader held a day of talks in Beijing before heading to Kathmandu, after India barred Pakistani airplanes from its airspace.

"Pakistan hopes for peace, opposes war, and is willing to work to ease the current tensions through dialogue", Musharraf was quoted by BBC as saying during his talks with the Chinese premier.

But he also told Zhu that the Pakistan government would act according to its sovereign and people's interests.

Zhu said: "It is in the interest of both countries and the expectation of the international community for both Pakistan and India to maintain the utmost restraint, and safeguard the peace and stability of South Asia".

Western diplomats say Pakistan had been hoping for support from China before the Nepal summit, but the Chinese government has gone out of its way to remain neutral since the latest flare-up in tensions between Pakistan and India.

China has made it clear the meeting with Prime Minister Zhu was at Pakistan's request, and Musharraf did not meet President Jiang Zemin.

The BBC's Rupert Wingfield-Hayes in Beijing says China's cautious approach does not mean its alliance with Pakistan is about to end, but its relations with its South Asian neighbours are changing.

BNP men allegedly beat up 3 cops in Naogaon

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Activists of the ruling BNP allegedly beat up three policemen at Naldanga under Sadar upazila in Naogaon Thursday noon.

Sub-Inspector Khairul Islam and constables Sultan and Abu Taleb of Naldanga Police Station were injured in the attack, witnesses said.

The moment the policemen caught Zahangir, an armed cadre of the BNP, a group of 15 to 20 BNP activists swooped on them.

Zahangir managed to flee the scene, taking advantage of the chaotic situation.

Earlier, Samir Ali, Zahangir's uncle, tipped off Naldanga police about his possession of arms. Zahangir attempted to murder his uncle over a land dispute.

The BNP activists called Mamunur Rashid, local correspondent of The Daily Korotoa, to the party office and threatened him with death, if he published the report in the newspaper.

When contacted last night, Sadar Uddin Ahmed, DC of Natore, said he instructed Tahsinur Rahman, UNO of Sadar upazila, to investigate the Naldanga incident and to submit the report within three days.

UNB adds: The BNP activists beat up Mamunur Rashid, who was on the spot to cover the incident and robbed him of Tk 1,100.

Human chain in city demanding release of Shahriar

UNB, Dhaka

City unit of Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote yesterday formed a human chain and organised a rally in front of the National Press Club demanding release of writer-journalist Shahriar Kabir.

Intellectuals, artists, litterateurs, journalists and representatives of different professions and Shahriar's family members attended the rally chaired by city unit convener of the Jote Jamaluddin Akbar Babla.

Speaking at the rally Arpita Kabir, Shahriar's daughter, questioned, "Is it his (Shahriar's) offence that he took part in the Liberation War, spoke against Razzakars and fought to establish communal harmony?"

"Razzakars are in the cabinet while my freedom fighter father is in the jail. What type of justice is it," she questioned calling upon all to go for movement for her father's release.

Blast at Sitakunda ship-breaking yard kills 3

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two more persons, injured critically in an explosion at the ship-breaking yard in Sitakunda on Thursday, died at the Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) yesterday morning.

Rashed alias Rasel, 20, of Kendukhali, Sitakunda, and Jasim Uddin, 22, of Nandai, Mymensingh -- both cutters at the Brothers Associates Ship Breaking Yard at Madambirhat, Sitakunda -- succumbed to their injuries at around 9.30 am, raising the death toll to three, police said.

Earlier, Ezahar Meah, 25, also a cutter, of Panchagarh, was killed on the spot when the scrap vessel MT Yahia weighing about 15,000 metric tonnes exploded during the cutting of its metal parts with gas cylinder.

Hundreds of workers were working on the vessel at the time of the explosion.



Flags adorn an empty conference table at Birendra International Conference Centre in the Nepalese capital yesterday after the inaugural session of the 11th Summit of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was postponed by a day due to Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf's late arrival in Kathmandu.