

16 BNP men held in N'ganj on charge of terrorist acts

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Police arrested 16 BNP activists from BSCIC industrial area at Panchabati in Fatulla on charge of terrorist acts yesterday.

They are Bacchu, 30, Shamsher, 26, Harun, 30, Asgar Ali, 33, Saiful, 26, Ramjan, 25, Anwar, 25, Anu, 28, Arif, 21, Bijoy, 19, Monir, 28, Motaleb, 26, Borhan, 15, Mokter, 28, Mithu, 26, and Alamgir, 22.

Police said the arrested persons were involved in garment wastes (hut) trading in BSCIC area.

OC of Fatullah thana said the arrested had forced several garments factory owners to give them 'hut' and other garments wastes.

A case was filed with Fatulla thana in this connection.

Decorator's shop looted in Uttara

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of miscreants looted valuables worth about Tk 12 lakh from a decorator's shop at Hazrat Ali Market in the city's Uttara area on Monday.

A gang of 14 led by Joinal Abedin went to the Nila Decorator at Sector-7 and looted valuable at gunpoint.

The gang also beat up manager and other employee of the shop and ransacked it.

Romana Sultana, owner of the shop, filed a case with Uttara police station in this regard.

BRTA employee kidnapped in Chittagong

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Unidentified miscreants abducted a government employee at gunpoint from city's Oxygen Intersection under Baizid Bostami thana yesterday morning.

The abducted employee was identified as Mostafizur Rahman, 40, Head Assistant of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), Chittagong Office.

Witnesses said, four unidentified armed youths abducted Mostafiz on way to his office at around 11.30 am and fled the scene in a microbus.

Being informed by family members, CMP and District police raided several places in search of Mostafiz. But the whereabouts or fate of the kidnapped person could not be known till filing of this report yesterday evening.

Shipu Rahman, wife of Mostafiz, filed a case with Baizid Bostami thana in this connection.

8 alleged dacoits held with arms in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A team of the Detective Branch (DB) of police arrested eight alleged dacoits and recovered two firearms from their possession while they were preparing for a dacoity in the city's Khilgaon area yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of DB headed by assistant commissioner Mohammad Ali Hossain Fakir went to Khilgaon in the evening and arrested the eight from the roof of a house. They also recovered a revolver, a pistols and draggers from their possession.

Three of the arrested were identified as Saiful, Alam and Mehedi. DB sources said they are investigating the matter to nab other members of the gang.

Lobbying for demotion!

STAR REPORT

Believe it or not, an additional secretary of the government is lobbying hard for posting at the level of senior deputy secretary.

The official was promoted to the rank of additional secretary last month and made OSD in the establishment ministry.

Earlier, he was a director in the Bureau of Anti Corruption Bureau till the end of the tenure of the last caretaker government.

He is now trying hard to become a director of the Bureau again, sources said. Directors of the Bureau usually enjoy the rank of senior deputy secretary. Sometimes, officials of the rank of joint secretary hold the charge of director of the Bureau.

In the last few days, he visited the Prime Minister's Office several times with his files for his return to the Bureau. He also went to the Bureau, the sources said.

Felling of 150 trees at Osmany Udyan Six months over, no move yet to round up culprits

STAR REPORT

While conscious citizens have been keen to protect the Osmany Udyan, police seem reluctant to find out the responsible for the felling of its 150 grown-up trees.

Even six months after filing of the case with Ramna Police Station on July 16 by the Rajuk, police have miserably failed to make any headway.

Monwara Begum, the self-declared owner of 2.81 acres of the parkland, and 16 others were accused of chopping down the trees on July 14.

The Osmany Udyan is now faced with utmost negligence largely due to the administrative dilly-dallying.

The encroachers, including the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), did not shift away from the parkland. Although the park is situated opposite the Nagar Bhaban, the DCC cleaners never bothered to do their job, thus leaving the park extremely dirty.

Vagabonds, beggars, prostitutes and drug-addicts hang around the park day and night. For the people

who need a respite from the extreme pollution in the nearby Gulistan area, the Osmany Udyan failed to serve as a breathing space because of its look. The water of the pond inside the park is so polluted that it looks as black as burnt-out lubricant.

According to press reports, about three hundred hired men of Monwara Begum and Advocate MA Khaleque, her husband, chopped down about 150 trees on July 14 and fenced off the area, ignoring the HC order to maintain status quo on the piece of land.

Sub-Inspector (SI) ATM Masud Khan, the investigation officer of Ramna Police Station told The Daily Star that he had been assigned to investigate the case only a month ago. Earlier, SI Nizamuddin was investigating the case.

SI Masud Khan admitted that there had been no significant progress in the case.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

HC order on Shahriar's detention likely today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court is likely to pass an order today on the writ petition challenging the detention of writer and journalist Shahriar Kabir under the Special Powers Act (SPA), 1974.

A Division Bench of the HC comprising Justice Md Hamdul Huq and Justice Nazmun Ara Sultana heard the petition yesterday.

Barrister Amir-ul-Islam and Barrister Shawkat Ali appeared for the petitioner while Deputy Attorney General Mizanur Rahman Bhuiyan appeared for the state.

The defence lawyers submitted that the order for detention of Shahriar Kabir was illegal, arbitrary, mala fide and without any lawful basis and thus liable to be set aside.

They cited earlier judgements in Bangladesh and India.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8



Parents and guardians wait for children to come out after taking admission test at a school in the city. Admission tests at public schools began yesterday.

PCJSS, UPDF trade fire at Khagrachhari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

The activists of Parbattya Chattagram Janasonghati Samity (PCJSS) and United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) clashed here yesterday morning.

According to police and witnesses, the clash erupted at the district headquarters centering the 4th founding anniversary of Hill Women Federation (HWF), a wing of anti-peace treaty.

Both sides traded gunshots and chased each other.

Shops and other business establishments were closed.

A tense situation has been prevailing at Khagrachhari following the clash. None, however, was hurt in the incident.

Additional police have been deployed at different points of the town following the incidents.

District administration held a meeting in the afternoon and reviewed the prevailing situation.

In another incident, a gang of terrorists damaged two buses in rubber bagan area under Panchhari upazila yesterday demanding toll.

7 held in Ctg for illegal hill cutting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police arrested seven persons on charge of illegal hill cutting and seized eight truckloads of earth in the city on Monday.

In a midnight joint raid, two police teams led by the senior assistant commissioners, Shafique Uddin Chowdhury from Kotwali zone and Moslehuddin Ahmad from Panchlaish zone, raided the Jalalabad Housing Society area under Khulshi thana and the Oxygen intersection area under Baizid Bostami thana at around 2.00am. The police caught seven labourers while they were cutting earth of the hills and seized the trucks.

Arrested were Md. Forkan, 27, Abul Hossain, 26, Md. Bazal Ahmad, 50, Mokhtar Ahmad, 28, Tanzir Hossain, 26, Abdul Matin, 26, and Md. Siddique, 25. Two separate

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

IMF team links poverty alleviation to aid

UNB, Dhaka

change.

The minister told the mission that Bangladesh is in need of foreign assistance to ensure macroeconomic stability, since persisting global recession has cast a shadow on the economy, affecting exports and decreasing reserves.

Saifur apprised the donors that he inherited a 'fragile economy' that needs technical and other supports from abroad for a recovery.

He also informed the mission about his worries for the loans and liabilities left over by the previous government.

Luis Valdivieso led the four-member mission that also included the resident representative of IMF.

A visiting IMF fact-finding mission advised Bangladesh to take prudent and bold steps for poverty reduction in broader spectrum as a prerequisite for getting external development aid.

"Unless such steps are ensured, development partners won't give us assistance," Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman told waiting journalists after the mission met him yesterday.

The visit of the Article-4 mission, as the IMF delegation is called, follows another IMF mission that visited Bangladesh in November for stock taking of Bangladesh's overall economy after the political



Police clubbed an Awami League demonstration (left) and teargassed (right) a party procession brought out in the city yesterday to garner support for today's hartal.



Blair mission fails to ease Indo-Pak tension

AFP, ISLAMABAD

Military tension between Pakistan and India has not eased over the past 24 hours, Pakistan said yesterday, after British Prime Minister Tony Blair completed a peace-making mission to South Asia.

Asked if there had been any change in the stand-off between the two nuclear rivals, foreign ministry spokesman Aziz Ahmed Khan said: "For the moment no."

However, he stressed Pakistan would not stop trying to bring India to the negotiating table to discuss their long-standing differences, brought to a head by the December 13 attack on the Indian parliament.

"That does not mean we should be discouraged and give up our efforts of reducing tension and of moving to a resolution of all disputes through peaceful means," he told reporters.

"We remain steadfast in our resolve that all issues between Pakistan and India including the issues of Jammu and Kashmir should be resolved through bilateral talks through negotiations," Khan said.

Both India and Pakistan have massed troops on their borders and exchanged tit-for-tat sanctions in

the wake of the parliament attack which New Delhi blames on two Pakistan-based militant groups.

Khan said Pakistan was fully aware of the international community's desire for the two countries "to sit across the table and discuss all issues through peaceful negotiations."

"We hope ultimately that India would listen to this widely held opinion and withdraw its forces to its peacetime positions", he said.

"Blair Monday delivered the same message to President Pervez Musharraf that he gave to Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee the day before that a complete rejection of terrorism followed by "meaningful dialogue" was the only way to resolve the dispute.

But despite his regional peace-making mission, India has ruled out any immediate prospects of a dialogue.

"Where is the question of dialogue, when there is no change of attitude?" India Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh said Monday. "So far as Pakistan's attitude and approach towards terrorism is concerned ... regrettably there is no change."

Home Minister LK Advani said India was involved in a "decisive fight" against terrorism and called



Mohsin Ali Khan made envoy to Canada

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The government has appointed Mohsin Ali Khan, Secretary (current charge) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh High Commissioner to Canada.

Mohsin Ali Khan joined government service in 1970 and served in various important positions in Bangladesh missions abroad and in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Ali was appointed acting Foreign Secretary by the last caretaker government.

He served in Bangladesh missions in Tokyo and Rome. He was also Director of South Asia desk, SAARC desk and the Multilateral Economic Affairs Directorate.

He was Consul General at

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

CMC rejoinder and our reply

The China National Machinery Import & Export Corporation (CMC) in a rejoinder yesterday differed with some information in a news item headlined "Barapukuria set to become another white elephant" published in The Daily Star on January 2.

CMC differed on the following points— construction of a third shaft at 1.5 km south, control of water by maintaining zero temperature in the coal basin, due to thinning out of the seam 50 per cent coal is available and life of the coal mine is about 30 years.

CMC said that due to unknown geological fault there was an unfortunate water onrush in the mine on April 5, 1998. After sealing the source of flooding, mine development work is progressing. However, it added that drainage of water from the coal bed will begin next month.

"Within July 2002, Bangladesh will have her first coal coming out of Barapukuria coal mine. From October 2004, the mine would start

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Three former Taliban ministers surrender

REUTERS, Kabul

Where have Laden, Omar gone?

Three former ministers of Afghanistan's ousted Taliban government surrendered but the hunt for Osama bin Laden and Taliban chief Mullah Mohammad Omar entered its fourth month with the trail growing colder.

In a reminder that bin Laden and other leaders of the al-Qaida network might never be taken alive, an al Qaida fighter holed up in a hospital in the southern city of Kandahar blew himself up yesterday, an Afghan official said.

A spokesman for Kandahar governor Gul Agha said the ousted ministers of defence, justice and mines and industry had given themselves up to authorities in Kandahar, the Taliban's former southern stronghold.

"Ministers of the Taliban and senior Taliban are coming one by one and surrendering and joining with us," he said.

"Among those who surrendered were former minister of defence Mullah Ubai Dullah, minister of justice Mullah Turabi and minister of mines and industry, Mullah Saadudin," he said.

Separately, an Afghan tribal commander said the head of the militia's information department and one of their senior spokesmen, Abdul Hayee Motmain, had been detained and handed over to US forces.

But the whereabouts of Saudi-born bin Laden and his ally Mullah Omar remained a mystery.

Washington started bombing Afghanistan on October 7, vowing to hunt down bin Laden, whom it accuses of masterminding the September 11 attacks on US cities that killed more than 3,000 people.

As the third month passed, US officials were showing growing signs of frustration that their efforts to capture bin Laden, and Mullah Omar had so far proved fruitless.

The Al-Qaida man's body was found in a garden outside the ward where he and several other wounded fighters, mostly Arabs who came to Afghanistan to fight for in

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



Dust and black fumes gushed out by motor vehicles spread a smoky blanket at the zero point in the city, narrowing visibility and posing serious health hazards.