

BNP men attack Sramik Colony in N'ganj, ransack houses

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

BNP activists attacked Aliganj Sramik Colony twice -- yesterday and on Saturday night -- following the murder of Sechchhasebok Dal leader Masudur Rahman Masud.

Masud, 30, general secretary of Fatullah thana unit of Sechchhasebok Dal, was shot dead by unidentified assailants inside a shop at Aliganj on the bank of the Buriganga on Saturday evening.

The BNP men attacked the house of Sramik League leader Polish at around 8 pm on Saturday.

They set fire to the house and looted valuables, family sources said.

The attackers also beat up family members of Polish and ransacked two other houses in the colony.

Polish's family members alleged that police played the role of onlookers at that time.

However, OC of Fatullah thana denied the allegation and said that police arrested a youth in connection with the incident.

The second attack on the colony

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Tender documents snatched allegedly by BNP men at Laxmipur

UNB, Laxmipur

Contractors allegedly belonging to the ruling party snatched away tender documents from pourashava office here yesterday.

Witnesses said a group of contractors stormed into the office of the Executive Engineer at noon and snatched away all the tender documents submitted by their rivals.

The authorities invited tender for construction and reconstruction of roads, bridges and culverts at a cost of Tk 42 lakh.

The acting chairman of the pourashava filed a case with the police in this regard.

Meanwhile, State Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Ziaul Haque Zia asked the district administration to immediately arrest the terrorists who snatched tender documents of local pourashava.

The minister directed the Deputy Commissioner and Police Super of the district to arrest the terrorists.

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After Kathmandu handshake: Resume Indo-Pak dialogue

Praful Bidwai writes from New Delhi

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Two supplements--one on 'International Workshop on Arsenic Mitigation' and the other on 'Contemporary Asian Art Workshop'

Business 6,7

First 5-month export clocks 11pc negative growth

Japan, Singapore ink free trade pact, seek wider ties with Asia

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Jan 14		5-32 pm
Jan 15	6-44 am	

Prayer Timings		
Jan 14		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-40	6-10
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-37	5-42
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

IMF team wraps up mission without specific pledge

INAM AHMED

The visiting IMF team yesterday wound up its weeklong mission on providing a compensatory financing facility to Bangladesh without committing any specific support.

The government was keen to know how much fund the IMF could provide to support the country's fledgling balance of payment (BoP) situation.

But the IMF team said the amount would essentially hinge on the extent of reforms the government could commit to carry out.

Yesterday's meeting decided that another technical mission would come in February to assess institution capacity building, which is crucial to establishing monitoring and reporting of government expenditure.

Sources hinted that during the February mission visit negotiations would start on the standby loan support.

After the meeting, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman said loans would depend on the quality of government policy and improvements in areas like macro-economic management, tackling state-owned

enterprise systems loss and expenditure control.

Earlier, the IMF mission pinpointed a number of grey areas including macro-economic management, public expenditure and finance, and accountability and transparency of expenditures.

Meantime, the finance minister at a meeting of the cabinet committee on finance and finance ministry yesterday pointed out that it would not be 'easy to get' either compensatory finance facility or standby loans from the Fund.

He asked his colleagues to be cautious in spending and said the country stands to get more foreign aid in the coming donor consortium meeting at Paris if substantial reforms were made.

Earlier, the IMF team pointed out that it is difficult to assess the extent of impact on the country's exports because of global recession -- vital to commit BoP support because of data anomalies between different authorities like the Export Promotion Bureau, Customs Department and Bangladesh Bank.

First phase of White Paper may be made public Jan 26

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Preparation of a white paper on 'corruption' during the last five-year rule of Awami League is going on and its first phase is likely to be published on completion of 100 days of the present government on January 26.

A cell headed by former secretary Mohammad Moniruzzaman at the Prime Minister's Office is preparing the White Paper on the basis of files and documents of different ministries, divisions, departments and directors, sources said.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in her address to the nation on October 19 last year declared that a white paper on corruption during AL rule would be published within 100 days.

"Preparation of the first phase of the White Paper is almost complete and it will be published in time," said a top official on condition of anonymity. The White Paper will be made public in phases.

He said almost all the ministries after scrutiny of relevant files have already sent those to the cell and

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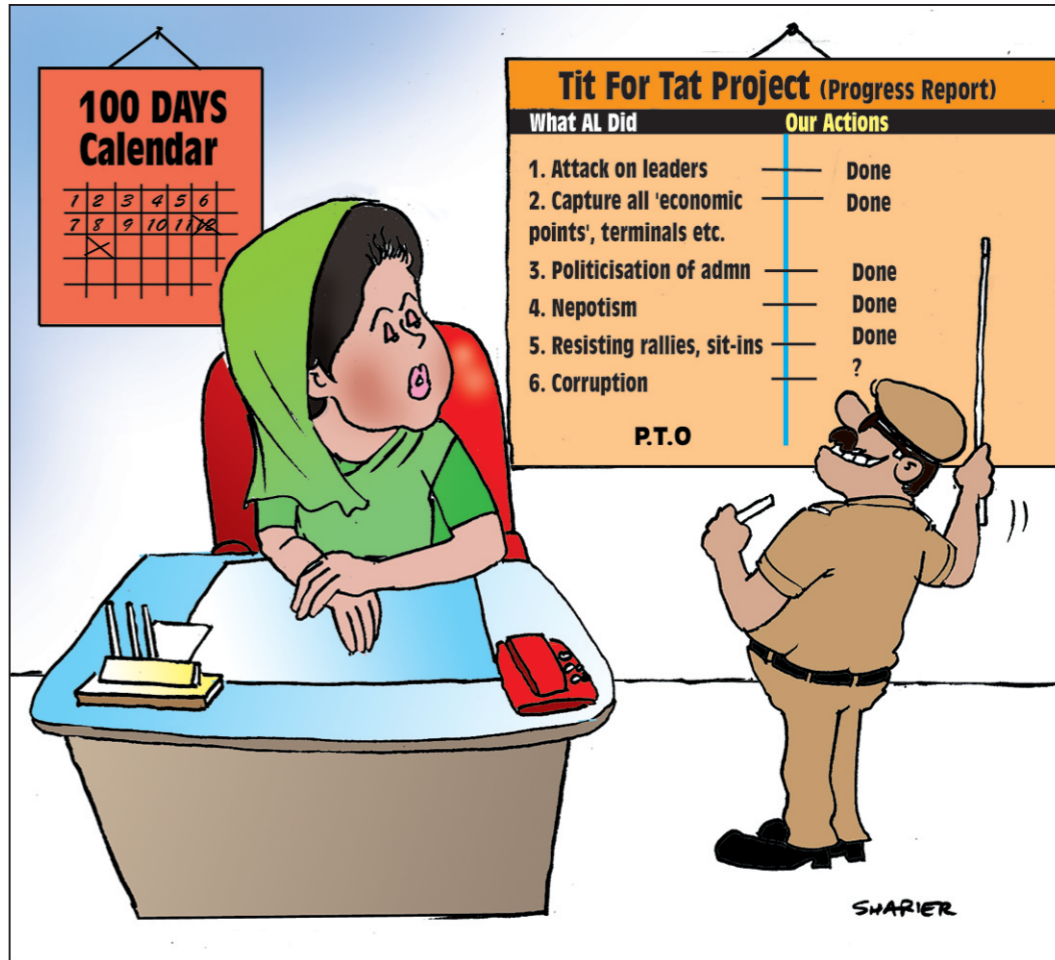


PHOTO: STAR

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia bidding farewell to Chinese premier Zhu Rongji at Zia International Airport. Zhu flew to New Delhi yesterday for a five-day visit to India.

Zhu won't mediate Indo-Pak row, says Delhi

AFP, Agra

Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji began a landmark five-day trip to India yesterday, as New Delhi made clear he was not here to mediate between India and Beijing's strategically Pakistan.

Zhu, the highest-ranking Chinese leader to visit India in a decade, landed in the afternoon in Agra. After a short rest at a hotel, he toured the Taj Mahal ahead of a flight to New Delhi.

"It is a wonder of the world and a treasure of history," Zhu wrote in Chinese in the visitors book at the 17th century monument.

India stressed as Zhu was arriving that the Chinese premier was not out to defuse the tension between it and Pakistan, both of which have been massing troops on their common border since an attack on the parliament in New Delhi on

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More changes in admn

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday brought a dozen more changes to the administration in the form of transfer, promotion, appointment and extension of services.

Dr Shoab Ahmed, chairman of National Board of Revenue (NBR) and secretary in-charge of Internal Resources Division, has been made secretary.

Five joint secretaries have also been promoted as additional secretary. They are Khan Shahabuddin of the Ministry of Science and Technology, Abdus Sattar of Cabinet Division, Abdur Rashid of the Ministry of Establishment, Director of Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation Nurul Amin Patwari and Director General of the Directorate of Youth Mohammad Nurunnabi.

All these five senior officials have been made officer-on-special-duty (OSD) for further posting, according

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Use rain, surface water to avoid arsenicosis

Experts at international confce in city suggest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 4th Dhaka Declaration adopted on the concluding day of a two-day international conference on arsenic contamination of groundwater yesterday recommended use of rain and surface water to avoid arsenic-related diseases.

It said there has been no significant achievement regarding supply of arsenic-free water in affected areas in Bangladesh.

The declaration called for "extreme caution" in recommending any solution, either as an alternative source of water or as an arsenic removal technology unless adequate scientific evaluation is carried out by a competent authority.

All agencies should consider use of surface and rainwater before suggesting groundwater withdrawal, except in unavoidable circumstances, it said.

President Bodruddoza Choudhury, while addressing the concluding session of the conference as chief guest, also expressed serious concern at the problem and

called for further studies on arsenic contamination of the food chain.

"The social ill effects and socio-economic problems of arsenic must not be overlooked. I am sure policy planners and implementers will take note of this serious issue," he said.

The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam, Environment Secretary Sabiuddin Ahmed and Local Government Secretary AYBI Siddiqui also addressed the concluding session, held at the BIAM auditorium.

The conference on 'Arsenic Contamination of Ground Water: Causes, Effects and Remedies' was jointly organised by Dhaka Community Hospital and School of Environmental Studies, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, West Bengal. Three other declarations were adopted at three international conferences held in Dhaka earlier.

The Declaration said, before recommending extraction of groundwater from deeper aquifers, safety of aquifers must be ensured. Geological parameters should be studied to ensure that the aquifers are safe for use in future.

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India welcomes Pak promise to halt cross-border terrorism

Islamabad must match words with action: Singh

AP, New Delhi

Cooling war rhetoric, India said yesterday it is willing to give President Gen Pervez Musharraf time to implement his promise to halt terrorist activity from Pakistani soil.

"I'd like to give all due time for effective implementation of what Gen Musharraf has announced," Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh told a news conference, responding to the Pakistani president's Saturday night address.

A resumption of dialogue between the two countries, and a lessening of tension on the frontier where India and Pakistan have amassed their armies, would be dependent, however, on the steps Pakistan takes to put Musharraf's intentions into practice, Singh said.

Once there are signs of a decline in militants crossing from Pakistan into India and a fall in terrorist attacks, the earlier India and Pakistan can move toward enjoining in purposeful dialogue," Singh said.

He quoted Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari

Vajpayee as saying, "for every one step Pakistan takes we will take two."

"Pakistan has only stated its intention. Let it first walk the talk," Singh said.

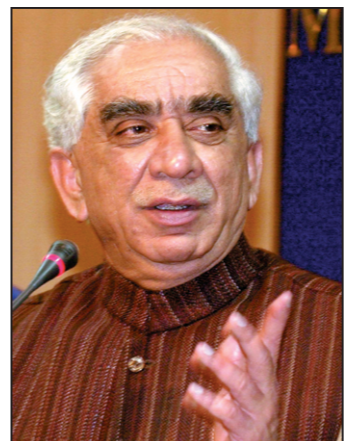
Noting Musharraf's declaration that he was banning two Islamic militant groups that India accuses of attacking the Parliament in New Delhi, Singh said that India was "looking forward to full implementation of this measure" so that members of the groups do not continue their activities under other names.

Pakistan's lack of action against 20 men accused of bombings, airplane hijackings, assassinations and other crimes in India "was disappointing," he said.

Most of those on the list India has given Pakistan are Indian citizens. India has demanded they be extradited.

Musharraf said on Saturday night that no Pakistanis would be sent to India for trial, and that Pakistan would consider action against non-Pakistanis in its territory if given proof of their guilt.

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Jaswant Singh

Processions in Ctg demanding end to CU stalemate

CU CORRESPONDENT

The teachers of Chittagong University (CU) yesterday demanded government intervention to put an end to the prevailing stalemate in the university.

They also submitted a memorandum to the Chancellor of the university through the Divisional Commissioner in this regard.

At a rally organised by the Chittagong University Teachers' Association (CUTA), the teachers said that the stalemate could be solved through discussion with the student organisations.

Held at the court building premises in the port city, the rally was addressed by Assistant Prof. Emdadul Haq, Prof. Mahbubullah, Prof. Moinul Islam, Prof. Jiban Chandra Pal and Prof. Yusuf Sharif

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Textbooks doctored

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

Wide factual replacements and insertions in the textbooks of the new academic year have surprised many students and guardians.

The initiative to make changes in textbooks has delayed their printing and distribution process for at least a week.

The BNP-led alliance government has brought changes in 18 books of primary and secondary levels, sources said.

The move to bring some changes was initiated to incorporate BNP's ideology into the books and eliminate the changes made by the previous Awami League government.

Changes have been made in the books of class II and IV. Two poems - one titled "Mujib Chhara" by Sanaul Huq and the other "Janajani" by poet Asad Chowdhury -- have been excluded from the book and two other poems have been included instead, since the first two poems contain words like 'Mujib' and 'Bangalee'.

In the essay titled "Bir Shresthra Mostofa Kamal" in the Bangla book of class V, a sentence -- "Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman announced the independence of Bangladesh in the early hours of March 26 prior to his arrest" -- was dropped from the essay and was replaced by the sentence -- "On the night of March 25, 1971 they (Pakistani occupation army) attacked with arms and started mass killing".

Facts were twisted in the essay titled "Duijan Bir Shresthra" in the Bangla book of class IX. The essay now opens with "Major Ziaur Rahman announced the independence on March 26 from the Kalurghat Radio Station". Previously, it was "Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman called for the independence of Bangla".

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No concession to 15000 accused even after PSA repealed

Bill to scrap PSA goes to Cabinet today

ZAYADUL AHSAN

The bill to repeal the controversial Public Safety Act (PSA) will be placed before the cabinet for approval today. Once approved, the bill would be placed in the next session of the Jatiya Sangsad starting 31 of this month.

However, trial of all pending cases under this act would continue even after the bill is scrapped. As a result, about 15000 people accused in nearly 2500 cases under the PSA would not get any concession.

The government will have the power, though, to withdraw any case filed under the PSA against any persons if it thinks those were filed with the intention of harassment. Earlier on January 7, the cabinet in principle agreed for repeal of the much-debated act.

Law ministry sources said the bill to repeal the PSA is making its way to the Cabinet agenda as a miscellaneous item. Law Minister Moudud Ahmed said the previous government had filed a lot of cases against leaders and workers of opposition parties to harass them.

However, noted Moudud, existing PSA cases should be allowed to con-

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