



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia addressing the IT Taskforce meeting yesterday at the International Conference centre in the city.

Shahid tight-lipped, on fresh remand

STAR REPORT

DB police have failed to gather any specific information from 'notorious criminal' Saidur Rahman Shahid at the end of a three-day remand yesterday.

DB on Wednesday arrested Shahid, also a DCC ward commissioner, in connection with the murder of Azizur Rahman Khokon.

Shahid remained tight-lipped most of the time during his interrogation by detectives and simply denied all allegations brought against him, investigation sources told The Daily Star yesterday.

Shahid was produced before the CMM's court yesterday on expiry of the three-day remand. Later he was also shown arrested in connection with the BNP leader advocate Habibur Rahman Mondol murder case and the Investigation Officer (IO) of the case sought a fresh remand for 10 days in that connection.

Shahid's defence lawyers also submitted a bail petition but the court rejected it and placed him on a four-day remand.

Police sources said Shahid, who started out as a vegetable vendor, became a millionaire don of the city's underworld.

Born in a poor family at AK Das Road in the city's Sutrapur area, Shahid is the second of his four brothers and three sisters and his father Ashraf Ali was a construction worker, local people close to the family said.

He dropped out of school at class



Saidur Rahman Shahid

six due to his family's serious financial hardship and started selling vegetables at the Loharpool area, police said quoting local people.

Later he took up a job as a porter at the CSD godown at Millbarak and became the main man there popularly known as 'Kulir Sardar'.

At a later time, he joined the BDR and stayed for some time before fleeing with his rifle, police and others sources said. Shahid then started committing robbery both in launches and also in the old part of the city. His close associates were Alta alias Altu and Wali.

Shahid's another associate is Tonai Mollah who was a police informer. The duo with the help of local hoodlums Sharif, Shahin, Boga Hanif, Dila, Kochi, Chakma Apu, Malek, Iron, Bablu, Tokon and Titu

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PM calls for rapid growth of ICT

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia called for a well-coordinated effort of all, including public sector, private entrepreneurs and expatriate Bangladeshis, for rapid development of information and communications technology in the country.

Pointing to the significance of the present age of information and communications technology (ICT), she said any delayed or incorrect decision would hold back the nation in the fast forwarding world.

The prime minister's suggestions came at a meeting of the ICT taskforce held at her office yesterday afternoon to discuss plans for involvement of the sector.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman, Education Minister Dr Osman Faruk and PM's Political Secretary Haris Chowdhury also addressed the meeting.

Taskforce members, including former advisers to the caretaker government Dr Mohammad Yunus and Professor Jamilur Reza Chowdhury and FBCCI President Yussuf Abdullah Harun, also attended the meeting and spoke on various aspects of the thrust sector.

Principal Secretary Dr Kamal Siddiqui, secretaries concerned and other senior officials were present at the meeting, which had elaborated on development of ICT infrastructure and formulation of a national policy on ICT that is fostering a knowledge economy around the globe.

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More power plants to become 'strategic business units'

RAZIUR RAHMAN

Some more plants of the Power Development Board (PDB) are going to be converted into Strategic Business Units (SBUs) to improve their performance.

Surprisingly, officials and employees' unions in PDB, which were dead against any kind of unbundling of the power sector, are apparently supporting the concept of SBU.

However they are still against turning any PDB plant into holding company.

SBUs would be partially autonomous with improved managerial bodies and maintain their accounts of cost and profit. However PDB will have authority over the management.

"PDB will have more authority on SBUs than it has over its holding company like the Power Grid Company of Bangladesh (PGCB)," said a PDB official. PDB has very little authority over the holding company now, he said.

By forming the PGCB, PDB has lost a lot of assets and it has to pay that company huge charges regularly to use its grids. But SBUs will not cause any financial burden for PDB, another source said.

There will be scopes for solving various problems through 'internal arrangement' between SBUs and PDB, which is absent in case of a holding company, he said.

Energy ministry sources said the government has decided to unbundle the power sector by converting PDB plants into holding companies or SBUs because of 'constant pressure' from major donors.

PDB's 110 MW Haripur plant was turned into a SBU in 2000 and the process to make the 724 MW Ashuganj plant a holding company began last year.

Generation capacity of the Haripur plant increased by over 60 per cent after making it a SBU, official sources said.

It is being managed by a Plant Management Board (PMB) comprising its officials and representatives of PDB Board and other bodies concerned.

Officials and employees of the plant are getting 2.5 per cent of the operational surplus of the plant as financial benefit.

Following the success of Haripur plant, the government is converting the 100 MW Baghabari plant into a SBU and the process is likely to be completed by the end of the year.

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BSF hands over bodies of 4 Bangladeshis

UNB, Meherpur

Indian border security force handed over the bodies of four Bangladeshi nationals to BDR on the second day of the flag meeting here yesterday.

BSF soldiers shot them dead and injured three others on the Gangi border on Thursday. The bodies of the victims Habibur Rahman, 25, Rezaul Haq, 40, Zamirul, 22 and Sadar Ali, 22 were taken away from inside Bangladesh territory.

BDR later handed over the bullet-riddled bodies to their wailing relatives in presence of DC, SP and other senior officials. The mourners asked them to ensure security of the villagers from the atrocity of Indian border force.

They recalled that BSF had killed 3 Bangladeshi nationals at the same place in 1993.

'Foreign tourists can now freely move in CHT'

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign tourists can now visit Chittagong Hill Tracts on 72-hour notice to the Deputy Commissioner.

Earlier, tourists required a seven days' notice for going to the Hill Tracts. The restriction has been eased following improvement of law and order situation.

A meeting yesterday with Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury in the chair decided that foreign tourists can now freely move in the towns of the hill region. Besides, security measures will be taken for them in areas they would like to visit.

The meeting also decided to open five reception centres for the tourists in the Hill Tracts to attract the foreigners.



PHOTO: STAR

Shops remained closed at Keraniganj yesterday following the double-murder on Saturday. Local businessmen called an indefinite strike to protest the killing.

Maoists kill 200 civilians, 50 troops in Nepal

XINHUA, Kathmandu

More than 200 civilians and about 50 soldiers were killed Saturday night by the Nepali guerillas in Achham district in the far west of Nepal, a highly placed army officer said yesterday.

"In an unprecedented attack, the guerillas killed over two hundred innocent people in Achham district last night," the army officer said, adding that the communications link between Mangalsen and Dipayal areas in the district was also cut off by the guerillas shortly after mid-night.

In addition to the villages, barracks, police posts and local government offices were also the targets of the guerillas, the officer said, adding that about 50 army soldiers based in the district were presumed killed by the guerillas.

He also confirmed that at least four policemen were killed and five others injured when a group of Nepali guerillas suddenly attacked at a police post in Sarlahi

district in the east of Nepal Saturday night.

AFP says, Maoist rebels killed at least 53 people, including a district chief, in a new wave of attacks in troubled Nepal, officials said.

Up to 50 Maoist rebels were believed to have been killed in the attacks, but this could not be confirmed, a home ministry source said yesterday.

In the western Accahm district, at least 48 people were killed when the rebels attacked an airport and district administration headquarters, ruling Nepali Congress MP Govinda Bahadur Shah said.

"At least 48 people, most of them security guards, were killed and 11 others injured when Maoist rebels attacked Saphabagar airport and the district administration headquarters in Accahm district, to the far western Nepal," he said.

"A fairly large number of armed rebels attacked Saphabagar airport around Saturday midnight killing at least 24 security personnel and injuring 11 others," he

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PHOTO: STAR

Sheikh Hasina along with her deputies observe a one-minute silence to pay homage to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman while inaugurating yesterday a five-day programme to mark the International Mother Language Day.

Bill for women's seats to be tabled soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shawkat Ali told The daily Star yesterday.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Private Members Bills and Resolutions yesterday examined the Constitution (Fourteenth) Amendment Bill 2001 seeking provision for 30 reserved seats for women in parliament for more 30 years and suggested its placing in the House.

Parliament Secretariat sources said the bill proposes fresh demarcation of 30 constituencies in the country for reserved seats for women.

Directly elected members of parliament in the newly demarcated constituencies will elect a MP for each of the women's seats from among many contestants.

In the earlier provision, an MP had to vote for 30 women MPs in the reserved seats, mostly nominated by the ruling party. There was no scope of opposition candidates to be elected in the reserved seats.

This proposal is a step forward towards direct election to the reserved seats for women, former chairman of the committee on private members bills Col. (rt d)

Yesterday's meeting of the committee, the first one, was chaired by its chairman Md. Mozammed Haque. The bill was raised at the meeting by ruling party lawmaker Abdul Mannan.

The bill would be placed before the House immediately, the sources said. The House would refer it to any of the related committees for further vetting.

As the provision for reserved seats for women got abolished with the dissolution of the Seventh Parliament, the current parliament has no seat reserved for the women.

Various quarters, particularly women's organisations, have long been demanding increase in the number of reserved seats and direct elections to those.

After a detailed discussion, the committee unanimously recommended placing of the bill before House.

Committee Members Tajul Islam Chowdhury, Shawkot Ali, Md Abu Hena, Nazir Hossain and Abdus Sobhan attended the meeting while Law Secretary Afzal Hossain was also present.

Hasina opens AL's Ekushey programme

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday pledged to free the nation from the "new shackles of enslavement" and uphold the honour of Bangla.

"We are again enchained ... we need to be freed, will have to uphold the honour of Bangla," she said inaugurating a five-day programme of Awami League to mark the International Mother Language Day.

Addressing the function of the Engineers' Institution, she said the past Awami League government achieved an international recognition of Ekushey February as the International Mother Language Day.

The Awami League president depicted the history of the language

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BNP activists assault DFO

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

BNP and Jubo Dal leaders and activists assaulted the divisional forest officer (DFO) of the western wing of the Sundarbans Forest Division on Saturday night.

Shah-e-Alam, DFO, was assaulted at the circuit house for giving permission for 3,000-maund Sundari wood out of their 10,000-maund demand.

The BNP men swooped on the officer when he came out of the VIP room of the circuit house after a meeting with Forest and Environment Minister Shahjahan Siraj.

Immediately afterwards, the officer rushed back to the minister to seek security and said the BNP men threatened him with dire consequences, if he failed to permit issuance of the remaining 7,000-maund Sundari wood.

However, the minister could not be reached for his comments till 2.00pm yesterday because of his tight schedule.

The incident whipped up a wave of discontent among officials and employees of the divisional forest office.

The officer did not file any written complaint against the offenders till writing of this report.

Phulbaria bus stand freed from squatters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday freed the Phulbaria BRTC Central Bus Stand from illegal squatters and demolished unauthorised structures built in and around the terminal.

During the hour-long drive, some 28 shops, which had been illegally occupied by musclemen for the last six years, were handed over to their rightful owners.

"The BRTC was deprived of crores of taka in revenue as the bus terminal was under illegal occupants," said an official press release.

After the operation, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda, Communications Secretary Syed Rezaul Hayat and BRTC Chairman Taimur Alam Khandaker visited the bus stand and the adjacent markets.

The communication minister while addressing a gathering there said the government would soon take initiatives to build a modern central terminal for the BRTC.