



People of all ages gather at the Central Shaheed Minar on February 21 to pay homage to martyrs of the Language Movement. (Story on page 2)

BNP men 'attack' Munshiganj thana to free accused

UNB, Munshiganj

At least 13 policemen were injured as local BNP activists allegedly attacked the Sadar thana Thursday night to free an accused from the thana hajat.

Police said local BNP and Chhatra Dal leaders pressed acting officer-in-charge (OC) S M Haider Ali for the release of Borjahan, who was arrested earlier in the day in connection with a murder case.

As police refused to release Borjahan, the BNP men assaulted the acting OC. Police then arrested six of them, including JCD's district unit president, Kazi Biplob.

As the news of arrest circulated in the town, several hundred people besieged the thana at around midnight, exploded crackers and pelted

brickbats, leaving 13 policemen injured.

Three of the injured, SI Manjoor Quader and constables Golam Kabir and Abul Hossain, were admitted to Sadar Hospital. Others were given the first aid treatment.

Additional forces from the district police line rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control. Police fired two blank shots.

The arrested were produced before the court that rejected their bail prayers and sent them to jail.

District BNP and its front organisations brought out processions in the town yesterday protesting the arrest of six BNP men and demanding their immediate release.

In another incident in Mymensingh, ten people were injured.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

15 murdered in districts during Eid holiday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 15 people were murdered in different parts of the country during the Eid holiday, according to reports by our correspondents and news agencies.

Three alleged dacoits were killed in a mob beating when they attacked a cattle-carrying boat at Kanaidachar in Sibaloy upazila on the Eid day.

Police said the dacoits had waylaid the boat and attacked it when the cattle traders were going to Aricha Ghat.

Hearing a hue and cry, fishermen from nearby areas rushed in, caught 10 dacoits and beat them before taking them to Shibaloy Health Complex. Doctors declared two of them dead. They are Montu, 25, and Salam, 20 of Daulatpur, police and hospital sources said.

Eight of the injured were shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where another dacoit -- Sufian, 30 -- died later.

In Narsingdi district, unidentified assailants hacked to death Baghabo UP chairman Joyal Abedin Sarker, 48, at Kundarpara in Shibpur upazila early yesterday.

Police said they recovered the body after being informed by villagers.

Joyal was wanted in a number of cases including those of murder and robbery. He recently joined Jatiya Party from Awami League.

Two persons were killed in Narayanganj. An Awami League leader -- Golam Mosabber Bhuiyan Arju, 31 -- was chopped to death by terrorists allegedly belonging to ruling BNP on Thursday at Gabtoli under Fatullah thana.

Arju was the joint secretary of

Awami Sechhashevak League of Enayetnagar union. He was the son of one Abul Kashem.

Arju, an alleged terrorist, was absconding since the October election. He returned home on Thursday to celebrate Eid. He was killed allegedly by members of local Apu-Dipu group, police and local people claimed.

In another incident, a young man, Idris Ali, was hacked to death during a shalish (arbitration to settle a dispute) at Baghmara in Shidhirganj thana on Sunday. Ali was allegedly involved in a theft, police said.

One betel leaf trader -- Abu Tayeb, 26 -- was killed when he was caught in a shootout between activists of Awami League and BNP at Janglakhain village in Patiya upazila in Chittagong on Sunday evening.

The victim's brother Abu Sayed filed a case accusing local AL leader and Jangalkhain UP chairman Shahadat Hossain.

In another incident in Rangunia in the district on the same night,

Ranjit Dewan, 50, peon of the Rangunia High School, was chopped to death by unidentified terrorists at a place near the school. The terrorists dragged him out of his residence, then took him to the spot and killed him.

An unidentified tribal youth was shot dead and two traders were abducted in Rangamati in two incidents on February 20 and 21, police said.

Police recovered the body of the youth from Bonoyugichora village under Jurachhory upazila on Thursday night and sent it to Rangamati Hospital morgue for autopsy.

The traders -- Swapon Dey, 30

and Shadhon Das, 35 -- were abducted from Gilachhori Bazar under Naniar Char upazila on February 21.

In Khulna, a day labourer was shot dead by activists of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party when they attacked the house of Habibur Rahman, headmaster of Mokampur Pancha-Polli High School at Mokampur village on Saturday night for refusing to pay a toll of one lakh taka. The day labourer -- Hasan Biswas, 24 -- was

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Burglary at Agrabad

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Six commercial offices including those of three multinational companies were burgled at Agrabad commercial area in the port city during the Eid vacation.

The burglars took away Tk 20 lakh in cash. They broke into the offices of three multinational companies -- Loydd's Shipping Company, Maerks Lines Shipping and Soonsin Trading.

Maerks Lines filed a general diary with the Bondor Police Station.

Meanwhile, in another incident thieves broke into the 11-storied shopping centre of South Land Centre of Agrabad on Wednesday night and took away cash from Loydd's Shipping, Saraf Shipping Agency and Café Ridge.

A case was filed with the Double Mooring Police Station.

City still in holiday mood

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The holiday hangover persisted in the city although government and private offices reopened yesterday after four days' vacation for Amar Ekushey and Eid-ul-Azha.

The capital looked deserted as most of the shops and business centres remained closed. The menacing traffic jam was absent as the number of rickshaws, autorickshaws, minibuses and other vehicles were far less than normal. Usually crammed buses had seats for passengers and crowds on roadsides and other places were not seen. People in the city felt some relief from the hustle and bustle.

February 21 was a holiday for Amar Ekushey, followed by a three-day Eid holiday.

Attendance was very thin at the Secretariat yesterday. Most of the top officials were however present. A good number of ministers were not seen. Attendance in other government offices in the city was also thin.

Sources at the Secretariat said there was virtually no work at offices as most of the officials and employ

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Daniel Pearl murder Suspects complain police pressuring them to confess

REUTERS, Karachi

A British-born Islamic radical accused of masterminding the kidnapping of murdered US reporter Daniel Pearl and two accomplices complained yesterday that police were pressuring them to make confessions.

In a brief appearance before a Karachi anti-terrorism court, a judge extended the trio's detention for 14 days after police said they needed more time to find Pearl's body and the weapon used to cut the Wall Street Journal reporter's throat on camera.

Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, the prime suspect, was arrested on February 12 while Sheikh Abil and Salman Saquib, both accused of sending ransom emails, were arrested four days earlier.

"The (14 days) remand has been granted on the basis that the investigation agency wants to recover the dead body and wants to recover the weapon used in the offence," Raja Qureshi, Advocate General of Karachi's Sindh government, told reporters after a hearing closed to the press and public.

Khawaja Naveed, defence lawyer for Adil and Saquib -- Sheikh Omar does not have a lawyer -- said all three complained to the judge that while they were not maltreated they were pressured into signing confessions including signing blank sheets of paper.

"The honourable court has directed the police not to use coercive measures and not to pressurise the suspects," Naveed told reporters.

Pearl, the Journal's South Asian bureau chief, disappeared on January 23 in Karachi while working on a story about Islamic radicals in Pakistan and links with Osama bin Laden, chief suspect for September 11's attacks on the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Foreign sailor missing at Ctg port

BSS, Chittagong

A crew member of a foreign ship has been missing for four days after he fell into the sea on Friday last. In a small boat, he was trying to mount his main vessel berthed in the jetty area of the Chittagong Seaport.

Charly Johnson, an Indian citizen, aged about 40, suddenly slipped into the water along with his four colleagues in an abnormal swing of the boat at the mid-river point of the Karnaphuli at about 8:15pm on February 22, police and shipping agent sources said yesterday.

Three of them managed to swim to the ship, but Johnson probably could not cope with the strong current, an official of the East Coast Shipping Lines Limited, the ship's local agent, told the news agency.

Johnson, was a fabricator-cum-welder of the Singaporean flag carrier vessel MT Duke, which was loaded with diesel imported by Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation.

The fate of Johnson could not be

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

7 criminals arrested in Pallabi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pallabi police arrested a gang of seven criminals, including an accused in 15 cases, from near a slum under section-7 of Pallabi in the city on Saturday night.

Police said the gang was arrested while planning criminal activities with the aid of a hijacked taxicab in Pallabi area on the night of the Eid.

The gang got in a taxicab in guise of passengers and hijacked it at gunpoint.

The criminals tried to flee with the cab when police encountered them.

Police however arrested them after a chase and took them to the police station.

Later, the driver of the cab went to the station and identified the terrorists.

One of the criminals, Nuruzzaman Lotus, is accused in 15 cases, including those of murder, women harassment and explosive.

Alleged plot to kill Mugabe: Opposition leader to be questioned

AP, Harare

Zimbabwe's opposition leader said he had been ordered to report to police later yesterday for questioning on allegations he plotted to assassinate President Robert Mugabe.

Morgan Tsvangirai, who is running against Mugabe in presidential elections scheduled for March 9-10, denies the allegations.

"Of course this is intended to divert people... there is no case to answer. It is a conspiracy. My campaign will go on," he told reporters.

Tsvangirai is the main threat to Mugabe's almost 22-year hold on power. Mugabe, 78, has dismissed opposition claims that the government is trying to frame Tsvangirai ahead of the election.

The government claims Tsvangirai met with members a Canada-based political consulting firms last year to arrange for the "elimination" of Mugabe.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

2 garment factories, warehouse gutted in Chittagong

BSS, Chittagong

Two garment factories and the warehouse of another one were gutted in a devastating fire at Momin Road of the CDA Avenue in the city on late Sunday night, Fire Service sources said yesterday.

The three export-oriented readymade garment factories on the second, third and fourth floors covered approximately ten thousand square feet of Salma Building. The fire broke out at about 2:30am and was brought under control at about 6:45am yesterday, the sources added.

Three garment units are Rosette Garments Limited, Dewdrop Apparels Limited and Tonny Garments Limited. However, the Fire Service could not ascertain the cause of the fire.

Factories of Tonny Garments Limited and Dewdrop Apparels Limited and a big portion of the bonded warehouse of Rosette Garments Limited were gutted.

Some 220 cartons of readymade garment products awaiting shipment abroad after Eid vacation were completely gutted, the sources said.

Mohammad Jahangir Alam, a local shop owner and witness of the mid-night incident, said that as the blaze started engulfing the building, he dialled 999, an autohunting number of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP), because he did not have the phone number of the Fire Control Department at the time.

The fire could have been brought under control much earlier if the stairs of the building had not been congested and the factory windows, ventilators not airtight with steel sheets for which firefighters could not conduct the operation smoothly, he said.

Nearly 500 workers and employees of the three factories have been on

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7