

Hasina demands 'unconditional' release of BCL leaders

UNB, Dhaka

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina strongly protested the arrest of BCL leaders and demanded their 'unconditional' release.

In a statement yesterday she said 10 Chhatra League leaders were arrested without any case or warrant on Monday night while coming out of her 'Sudha Sadan' residence.

Expressing concern over deteriorating law-and-order, Sheikh Hasina mentioned that some 52 people were killed during the four-day Eid vacation across the country.

"After capturing cattle markets, an unprecedented spate of terrorism is now going on centering raw hides of the sacrificial cattle. But police kept silent about the identified terrorists involved in killings and crimes," she said.

Newspapers are publishing incidents of killing, rape, snatching, dacoity, toll collection and many other crimes almost every day, but the government is observing a shameful silence," she said.

"In such situation, it appears that there is, in fact, no existence of government or administration. The whole country is taken hostage by terrorists," said the AL chief.

The immediate-past PM thinks that downfall of this "autocratic government is a must" as no autocratic governments could stay in power by filing false cases, arresting and unleashing repression and oppression.

She urged the countrymen to launch a movement against this 'neo-fascist government', which she said is against democracy, peace and humanity.

One to die for raping 6-yr-old girl in Netrakona

BSS, Netrakona

The District and Sessions Judge Court yesterday awarded capital punishment to a young man for raping a minor girl at a village under Madan upazila of the district.

According to the court sources, Humayun Kabir alias Rajat, son of late Atahar Ali Talukder of Chandaon village was sentenced to death in absentia.

The case in brief was that Rajat called a six-year-old girl from her house of the same village on July 5 in 1999 and raped her.

Later, father of the victim filed a case with Madan police station under Women and Children Repression Act. After investigation, police submitted charge sheet against Rajat.

District and Sessions Judge Alhaj AKM Ishaik Hussain, after examining the witnesses and evidences, found the accused guilty and pronounced the verdict.

Police raid Agargaon BNP slum: 40 held

UNB, Dhaka

Police yesterday raided a slum in the city's Agargaon area and arrested at least 40 people on various charges.

The slum, popularly known as BNP Basti, is a den of criminals, police said.

The raid was conducted when two groups of criminals clashed in the area, exploding bombs and firing gunshots at about 1:30 pm.

Police said some criminals engaged in drug trading in the slum had tried to resist the law enforcers during the operation.

In another raid on Monday, police arrested 40 people from the slum.

One killed while making bombs in Barisal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

One person was killed and another injured in a bomb explosion at village Dhandoba under Gouradi thana of the district in the early hours of yesterday.

According to Gouradi police, Sagar Khalifa, 20, and Sharneem, 23, were making bombs at a house of the village. Suddenly a bomb exploded, leaving the two seriously injured.

They were rushed to Barisal Medical College Hospital (SBMCH) where Sagar Khalifa succumbed to his injuries at about 2:00 am, hospital sources said.

A case was filed with Gouradi thana.

Earnings from overseas employment sliding

RAFIQ HASAN

Bangladesh's annual overseas employment earnings continue to dwindle as the country finds it increasingly difficult to get its citizens employed in overseas jobs.

From a difficult economic period, absence of large-scale manpower export to three major destinations -- Kuwait, Qatar and Malaysia -- that has remained nearly suspended for a long time, is eating away the country's fragile financial infrastructure.

According to available figures, the number of overseas employment during the January-October period in the year 2001 came down to 1.60 lakh from 2.22 lakh in 2000.

The corresponding remittance earnings also fell to Tk 6,275 crore from Tk 10,199 crore.

A high-powered government delegation led by State Minister for expatriate welfare and overseas employment Major (retd) Quamrul Islam would visit Kuwait and Qatar this week in a bid to increase manpower export to those countries, according to sources in the ministry.

Earlier, a similar delegation visited Malaysia and requested the Malaysian government not to fire Bangladeshi nationals whose contracts had expired.

"Manpower export to Malaysia has started again after my visit," Quamrul Islam told the Daily Star.

"The restriction on Bangladeshi workers still remain in place but the government is gradually relaxing it," he said adding that some people are going there amidst the restriction, which he said would be withdrawn after a cabinet decision of the Malaysian government.

According to sources, sending people to Malaysia virtually remained suspended since 1996. A move to send people to that country last year saw a small suc-

cess and only around a thousand people have gone there so far.

Sources at recruiting agencies said that earlier, large number of Bangladeshi used to go to Kuwait and Qatar for jobs but the number has now been reduced to a mere few thousand a year.

Kuwait had stopped recruiting Bangladeshi nationals following the killing of an influential Kuwaiti citizen by his Bangladeshi employee in 1997.

Following the killing, manpower export to that country remained suspended for two years, according to sources in the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA).

Although the ban was withdrawn recently, large-scale employment is yet to begin because the employee recruitment process has been made critical and lengthy.

A local recruiting agent said that a prospective employee's passport and other related documents have to be sent a few months ahead of his employment and only after approval from the ministry of labour in Kuwait would the embassy here issue a visa.

Earlier 20,000-25000 people went to Kuwait every year but now only two to three thousand make it over there.

The manpower export scenario in Qatar is also dismal as the number drastically fell following agitation by Bangladeshi nationals in different factories there.

Bangladeshis normally worked in garment factories in Qatar but due to strikes and agitation by them, factory owners became hesitant about employing Bangladeshi workers.

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Prime Minister Khaleda Zia converses with her deputies at the Zia International Airport yesterday before flying off to Queensland, Australia to attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).

Arrest culprits who gangraped Mahima

National Committee on Crime against Humanity demands

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Committee on Crime against Humanity has demanded immediate arrest of persons who gang-raped schoolgirl Mahima, that led to her suicide.

The local authorities have resorted to a dilly-dally tactics in arresting the criminals, the committee leaders alleged at a press conference held at the Jatiya Press Club here yesterday after a visit to Mahima's native village Kanthalbaria in Rajshahi.

They also demanded security to her family members.

The brutalities meted out to Mahima is a political reprisal by local goons backed by the ruling party. They also blamed the BNP-led

coalition government for harboring terrorists and rapists.

"The government has been harboring terrorists and trying to put down such barbaric incidents for political motive," Barrister Amir-ul-Islam, joint convenor of the committee said at the press conference.

Daughter of local Awami League worker Abdul Hannan, Mahima was gang-raped by local Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists Uzzal, Faruk, Farid, Selim and others on February 15 and snatched nude, according to two cases filed by Hannan. A traumatised Mohima ended her life by taking pesticide on

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Tipu leaves for Bangkok today for treatment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalist Tipu Sultan, who was severely roughed up allegedly by the hired goons of Jaijal Hazari, a former Awami League MP, leaves for Bangkok today.

This is for the third time that Tipu is going to Thai, capital of Bangkok for treatment at Bumrungrad Hospital.

Tipu will have a regular check-up there, and doctors will examine him for further operations on the left hand.

He was operated upon several times at the hospital. The Daily Star and Dainik Prothom Alo had raised fund for the treatment of Tipu, the UNB correspondent in Feni.

He came under attack allegedly by the hired goons of Jaijal Hazari following publication of several news items on the criminal activities of the godfather of Feni.

Armed gang loots garment factory in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Armed gang took away instruments worth about Tk 1.25 crore from a ready-made garment factory in the city's Shantibagh area early yesterday.

Police said a gang of six went to Beximco Apparels at 7/A, Shantibagh at about 3:30 am and looted instruments from the factory, holding the security guards and garment supervisor hostage.

The owners filed a case with Motijheel police station.

80 held in Ctg but listed terrorists escape CMP raid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

None of the identified listed terrorists including those snatched by press photographers with the state minister for home recently could be arrested during the 24-hour combing operation by Chittagong Metropolitan Police ending at noon yesterday.

Police however nabbed 80 'terrorists and wanted criminals' during the period.

Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) launched the sudden combing operation in the city and adjoining areas as press reports on presence of top terrorists at a meeting of the minister and ruling party leaders in the city became a talk of the town.

CMP officials said the identified terrorists have gone into hiding following the press reports.

"But we are on the move to nab the listed terrorists" one of them said.

"We have alerted all the 12 thanas in the city to arrest them".

During the raid, CMP arrested Md. Ali, the main accused involved in looting Tk 8 lakh from a garments factory at Agrabad in the city on the eve of the Eid.

Ali was arrested from Chowdogram area on Tuesday night on a tip-off. The car used in the looting was also seized during the raid.

Ali had looted the money with the backing of BCL leader Shamim of Ambagan, also a listed terrorist.

Police also raided the residence of Shamim last night, but could not arrest him.

Ali emerged as a terrorist from a slum at Dewanhat in the city. He had started with phenyid business and turned into a mugger with the backing of Shamim, police said.

Terrorists on the same day looted Tk 33 lakh from another garment factory at Agrabad. But none involved in the looting could be arrested.

15 shot as BCP, PBCP cadres clash in Rupsha

UNB, Khulna

Two extremist groups clashed yesterday at village Badal in Rupsha upazila, leaving 15 people injured with bullets.

Police and locals said the clash took place between the members of Biplobi Communist Party (BCP) and Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) at noon.

The injured were admitted to Khulna General Hospital.

Quoting witnesses, police said the gunfire began at noon when some 50-60 BCP cadres of Mokampur-Dujanmal area entered the village and started beating the villagers after failing to catch their rival PBCP member Omar.

The PBCP cadres opened fire on the BCP members who also sprayed bullets on their rivals, leaving 15 people injured.

Water pump, shrimp gher and some dwelling houses were damaged in the three-hour-long encounter.

On information, police rushed to the village and arrested nine persons from the spot.

19,000 without phone lines in old city



Technicians work feverishly at the Chawkbazar Telephone Exchange to fix the burnt-out phone lines.

Fire damages Chawkbazar MDF

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

Some 19,000 telephone subscribers in the old part of the capital have been left without phone connections following a fire at the Chawkbazar telephone exchange Tuesday.

It may take another week before the network in Babubazar and Lalbagh area would be restored, Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) sources said.

"We have started restoration works of the exchange keeping a seven-day target in view. However, it might take longer," BTTB Chairman ATM Badrul Huq told The Daily Star.

He said works would continue round the clock.

Minister for Post and Telecommunications (MoPT) Aminul Islam during his visit to the damaged exchange told this correspondent that the BTTB is yet to determine the extent of damage, but a preliminary estimate suggests the damage to be over Tk 1.5 crore.

He said the Main Distribution Frame (MDF) has been totally damaged due to the fire caused by an electric short circuit.

Tuesday's fire fully damaged the MDF and

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