

Peacekeepers to train Afghan bodyguards for Zahir Shah

AP, Kabul

The international peacekeeping force in Kabul said yesterday it would start training 40 Afghans to become personal bodyguards for the former king once he arrives in the country.

The two-week training course starts Monday and comes after the United States and Italy raised concern about the security situation here ahead of Mohammad Zahir Shah's return. Those fears prompted a delay in his arrival, which had been scheduled for last Tuesday and now appears will occur toward the end of April.

Aspokesman for the peacekeepers, Flight Lt Tony Marshall, said the 40-strong personal security detail was multi-ethnic, but he refused to say which ethnic groups were represented and in what numbers.

The king is an ethnic Pashtun. He reportedly requested his security be provided by someone other than the defense or interior ministries -- both of which are dominated by ethnic Tajiks, most of them from the Panjshir Valley.

The Panjshiris consider themselves the only true wielders of power in Afghanistan and want no part of royalist Pashtuns who spent much of the Taliban era as exiles abroad.

The king has lived in Italy since he was ousted by a cousin Mohammed Daoud in 1973. The Italians have assumed responsibility for him ever since, and have been actively involved in planning his return to Afghanistan to convene a traditional assembly that will select a transitional government to rule until elections.

The United States has said it had been helping to train a group of Afghans to guard the king once he

arrives. Marshall said the 40 new recruits had received previous training, but refused to say by whom. He also refused to say who would be conducting the two-week course.

Italian carabinieri and Swedish military police have already been training a selected group of Afghans to be bodyguards for Afghan Cabinet ministers.

Marshall said the king's 40-man team would act as a close, personal security detail, traveling with him and guarding him while at is residence, a two-story gated compound in Kabul's nicest residential area.

The team will form just a part of Zahir Shah's security. Gen. Mohammad Jorat, head of security and public affairs in the Interior Ministry, said before the king's arrival was delayed that a 600-man detail would be deployed to guard the royal convoy from the airport to the king's home the day he arrived.

He said another 20 troops had been assigned to guard the king's house, working in two, 10-man shifts a day.

It wasn't clear if those plans had been altered, but Marshall did say there had been a slight change in the role. Italian carabinieri would play on the day the king touched down.

Attack on police 50 Jubo League, BCL men sued in Bagerhat: 6 arrested

UNB, Bagerhat

Over 50 leaders and workers of local Jubo League and Chhatra League were sued in connection with Thursday's attack on police at Chitalmari.

Six of the accused, including thana BCL president Shamim Anwar Babu, were arrested afternoon in connection with the attack which left three policemen, including a SI, injured.

Accomplice of listed terrorist Wahiduzzaman Panna attacked police, who went to arrest Panna at Barabaria Bazar Thursday evening.

BNP cadres

Within 20 hours till filing of this report at 8pm last night, frenzied mob of BNP workers set fire to at least 30 houses in three villages -- Mohishdanga, Malipara and Sanjipara. Houses of Dr Aynal, Ranjan Moitra, Nazmul Alam Dablu, Khair Uddin Sonar, ex BCL president and principal of Begum Fazilatunnesa College Abdur Razzak, Rajab Mollah and Dr Anisul Haq were burnt to ashes.

Houses of AL leader AKM Zakir Hossain, Jubo League secretary Khokon Mollah, Bonpara College BCL president Masud, UP members Sohbhan, Wahed Sonar, Abdur Rashid, Shahjahan, Ata Kalam and Ranjan Kundu were also set on fire.

Bangabandhu Library and Russell Smriti Sangha at Bonpara were also ransacked. Portrait of President Ziaur Rahman was hanged at the two offices replacing that of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

A tense situation is prevailing in the area.

Road accident kills 3 in Bogra

UNB, Bogra

Three people were killed in a road accident at Dargahat on Bogra-Naogaon highway here yesterday morning.

The dead were identified as Taslimuddin, 50, and his wife Hasina Begum, 40, of Joytun village in Kahalu upazila and van driver Belal, 30.

Police said the accident took place at about 6:30 am when a truck bound for Naogaon dashed the van in which the couple was travelling.

The couple died on the spot while van driver Belal sustained severe injuries.

Belal was rushed to Bogra Mohammad Ali Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries at about 10 am.

Police recovered the bodies from the spot.

Rallies

FROM PAGE 1 we had given permission to Jatyatadadi Bastuhara Dai to use loud speaker.

"I've urged Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) authorities to check how this happened."

Mentionably, despite prior permission from DCC, AL was not allowed to hold its scheduled rally at the Muktangan on March 28. As the AL leaders and workers left the venue and gathered in front of the party central office, police lobbed around 50 tear gas shells and charged batons on them, injuring at least 20 persons including former minister Matia Chowdhury.

Earlier on March 23, government banned assembly at the Osmany Uddyan barely 12 hours before AL's scheduled 'mass hunger strike' there.

As AL leaders and workers tried to stage a hunger strike on the pavement in front of the Jatya Press Club, police charged batons and tear shells on them.

On March 21, police foiled an AL rally at the Muktangan although the party had prior permission.

4-party nominees

FROM PAGE 1 Ahmedward 59, Haji Mosharrar Hossain Khokon-ward 60, Nurul Karim Jinnah -ward 62, Anwar Parvez Badal-ward 64, Mohammad Mohan-ward 69, Alhaj Hossain Mollah-ward 71, Binoy Sarkar -ward 72, Kazi Abul Bashar-ward 74, Mokbul Islam Tipu-ward 76, Mohammad Farid Uddin-ward 79, MA Shahed Montu-ward 80, Mohammad Shahed-ward 83, Atiqullah Atique-ward 84, Badal Sarkar-ward 85 and Nabi Ullah Nabiward 86.

There was hectic lobbying for alliance ticket for ward commissioner because the main opposition party Awami League is keeping off the polls race. The aspirants thought getting alliance nomination virtually meant winning the election.

Sources said this time the highest number of alleged criminals are going to contest the DCC election. They noted that the election would be quite different from the earlier ones for to reasons -- absence of AL from the race and 'more than one candidate' from the ruling coalition.

"Due to absence of AL, the alliance candidates (some without being nominated) will mainly go for show of strength against each other, instead of seeking vote," said one source.

Ramallah sieged

FROM PAGE 1 military operation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the callup of twenty thousand reserve soldiers, the largest mobilisation in a decade.

Sharon did not explain what branding Arafat an enemy would mean in practical terms, but left open the possibility that the Palestinian leader could be expelled from the Palestinian territories at a later time, as several Israeli Cabinet ministers have demanded.

Israeli Defense Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer said that no Palestinian engaged in terror activity against Israel was immune from being applied to Arafat, the defense minister said the Palestinian leader would not be harmed physically.

As the Cabinet met, tanks rolled into Ramallah, and soldiers exchanged fire with Palestinian gunmen. Four Palestinians and an Israeli soldier were killed in the fighting.

Tanks also surrounded Arafat's compound, and fired shells into the walls. Troops seized two buildings in the complex. "The Israeli forces are surrounding my office with tanks," Arafat said. "They are shelling the headquarters and we have some people who are injured, and can't move them to the hospitals."

Arafat moved from his third-floor office into a windowless room on the ground floor, said adviser Ahmed Abdel Rahman. Arafat followed events on television and spoke by phone to several foreign leaders, demanding immediate international intervention.



PHOTO: STAR

Members of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (movement for protection of environment) formed a human chain in front of Rajuk Bhaban yesterday demanding a planned Dhaka city.

5-yr plan for dev of gas sector finalised

UNB, Dhaka

The government has finalised a five-year plan for the development of country's gas sector at an estimated cost of about US\$ 2,095 million.

The plan includes exploring fields to increase reserve, development of new sites, construction of pipeline for transmission and distribution, setting up NGL plants, and expansion of LPG and CNG uses.

As local and foreign investments will not be enough to implement the projects, the government in the recently concluded Bangladesh Development Forum meet in Paris sought foreign assistance.

The donors did not clarify anything about the assistance. Sources concerned here believe the donors are waiting for government's decision on gas export after receiving reports of the national committees.

However, for several projects

drawn up in the five-year plan the Asian Development Bank (ADB) proposed conditional financing -- one major condition being export of 300 mcf of gas to India everyday.

Sources at the Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry said the government planned various projects on priority basis that would cost \$1,000 million.

These included exploration-\$18.65 million, development and production of new wells-\$70.03 million, transmission pipeline-\$619 million, distribution pipeline-\$158.22 million, NGL fractionation and gas processing plants-\$107.6 million, and CNG transportation and clean fuel projects-\$26.5 million.

Besides, the government has also planned 14 new transmission lines to reach natural gas to different parts of the country. Cost for the pipelines has been estimated at \$1,095 million.

Of the 14 pipelines, several have

been listed in the ADB proposal. Apart from foreign assistance for the 10-inch to 30-inch pipelines, the government also expects private investments in the sector.

The proposed pipelines include 55-km Bakhrabad-Meghnaghat, 125-km Ashuganj-Elenga loop line, 240-km Nalka-Bonarpara-Ishwardi-Kushtia-Jessore-Khulna, 260-km Nalka-Bogra-Rangpur-Syedpur-Dinajpur-Thakurgaon-Panchagarh, 60-km Bonarpara-Rajshahi, 25-km Bibiana-Rashidpur, 94-km Kailashitia-Rashidpur, 40-km Elenga-Nalka, 45-km Dhanua-Dhamrai, 105-km Ashuganj-Narsingdi-Hariपुर with spur line up to Meghnaghat, 300-km for Cox's Bazar-Khagrachhari-Rangamati-Bandarban, 30-km Shahbazpur-Bhola, 200-km Shahbazpur-Patuaakhali-Barisal-Faridpur-Madaripur-Gopalganj, and 200 kms around Dhaka city.

Barapukuria power project

FROM PAGE 1

power project. A source said PDB has arranged payment of Tk 5.5 crore today -- apparently to put the finance ministry in a situation so that it is forced to issue the guarantee to avoid "complications" with China.

PDB argues that if this power project is not given a green signal, the whole coal mine project would be jeopardised and future power generation scenario would become grim.

"There are a number of power projects suspended by the government for one reason or another. But it is a hard reality that we need more power in the immediate future," the PDB official argued.

But getting the finance ministry guarantee is not the only problem for the project.

Sources said that Petrobangla, the owner of the 192 million dollar Barapukuria coal mine, has not given PDB any guarantee of coal supply for the power plant. Moreover, there is a general lack of coordination between Petrobangla, the raw material supplier and PDB, the bulk user of coal.

PDB claims that Petrobangla has given the guarantee for coal supply but Petrobangla differs with the PDB

claim. "We did not give any guarantee because we did not get any such request from PDB," said a top official of Petrobangla.

However, he claimed that the coal mine will go into full production from 2004, one year before the power plant is scheduled to start operation.

"We had a coordination meeting with PDB recently and we discussed progress of the coal mine project," he said indicating that Petrobangla verbally guaranteed coal supply to PDB.

"In fact, PDB's delay in implementation of the power plant project will create immense problems for us. The coal mine will start partial production from July 2003 and go into full production in 2004. But PDB's plant which is supposed to consume around 70 to 85 per cent of the produced coal will not start operation before 2005. That will mean we will have serious problems in storing coal," the Petrobangla source said.

However sources said that PDB requested Petrobangla long ago for a 30-year coal supply guarantee. Till date, the guarantee has not been given in writing.

PDB in July 12 last year signed

an agreement with a consortium of three Chinese companies--CMC, SEC and SEEC-- to implement the Barapukuria Power Plant Project.

But the agreement remains ineffective due to a government policy against supplier's credit -- a non-transparent financing system that is often criticised by World Bank-led donors for creating scope for corruption.

As this project remained suspended, China took initiative to give it some life during the visit of Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji in early January. During his visit, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed on the project although there was already a final agreement.

The project came under criticism by industry insiders as it is at least 70 million dollars costlier than any plant of similar size.

The coal mine is designed to produce one million tonnes of coal a year.

The mine has an estimated deposit of two billion tonnes of high quality coal, which is equivalent to 60 trillion cubic feet to gas in terms of thermal value.

Friend turns foe over DCC polls

FROM PAGE 1

nymity. Rivalry between Wahid and Salu climaxed when Wahid, also considered a criminal by police, decided to contest the election.

Wahid, 35, was shot dead by armed men in Mohammadpur's Tajmahal road area on Tuesday night.

The manager of a roadside hotel near the murder spot said Salu had ordered the murder of Wahid in order to ensure his success in the election.

"He assigned some of his gang members to kill Wahid who had a very good chance of winning. About 10 armed members of the gang came in a microbus and lay in wait for Wahid. As soon as he appeared, they sprayed bullets on him," he said.

Fatally injured, Wahid later died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Police said Salu has long been leading a gang of more than 30 youths in the area, named as accused in many criminal cases with the Mohammadpur Police Station, Salu was recently arrested in connection with the Sajal Chowdhury Murder case and released on bail.

Salu is also accused of grabbing others' property, extortion from people doing construction works in the area and blackmailing innocent residents of the areas.

Since the killing, a tense situation has been prevailing among the candidates for ward commissioner of Mohammadpur area including those belonging to BNP and its different front organisations. Residents of the area apprehend

more killings, as these candidates are severely divided over the DCC election scheduled for April 25.

Meanwhile, two persons -- Md. Ahsanul Islam Titu, son of former Awami League lawmaker Alhaj Mookbul Hossain, and Md. Mukul Hossain alias Ratan -- arrested in connection with the Wahid Murder Case were placed on a two-day remand.

Mohammadpur Police produced them before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court, Dhaka on Tuesday with a prayer for seven-day remand.

The defence lawyers submitted a petition seeking bail for the two along with cancellation of the remand prayer.

Titu's defence lawyers pointed out that Titu was not named in the FIR of the murder case, but was falsely implicated, as his enemies wanted to harass him.

After hearing both sides, Magistrate Al-Mamun rejected the bail petition and placed the two on a two-day remand.

Ferdousi Zaman, widow of the victim, filed the murder case with Mohammadpur thana on Tuesday night accusing several people including Salimullah Salu for murdering her husband.

The FIR named accused are -- Salimullah Salu, Salu's brother Shahidullah, Shamsul Haq, Nasir, Haji Akkas Ali, Anwar, Zafrul Hasan Sony, Amir Hossain alias Amir Mamu, Amr Kibria and Ratan.

In the FIR, the complainant said, "Few days ago, the group of accused met at the house of accused Akkas Ali at Babar Road in Mohammadpur and conspired to kill

Wahid. My husband came to know about the conspiracy and told me and his brother Humayun Kabir that he might be killed any time."

Investigation Officer (IO) of the case Sub-Inspector Samiul Alam told The Daily Star Thursday night that several police teams were assigned to arrest the FIR-listed accused, including the principal accused Salu.

Asked why Mookbul's son was arrested although his name was not included in the FIR, SI Samiul Alam said he was arrested on suspicion.

KCC polls

FROM PAGE 12

tary Nazrul Islam Manju has rejected this nomination board and served show cause notices upon two senior vice-presidents of the party, Sekander Zafullah Khan Shachchu and Kazi Mohammad Rashed, accusing them of anti-party activities.

Manju has formed another four-member nomination board, which did not include the city mayor or the two Jamaat MPs elected from Khulna-5 and Khulna-6 constituencies. This board has so far interviewed 141 aspirants including 88 women for selecting eligible candidates.

The incumbent ward commissioners Hasibul Haq Bala, Shaikh Saiful Azam, Moniruzzaman Mamon and Babu Morol have not sought re-nomination from the party. They do not belong to either of the groups loyal to the mayor and Manju, party insiders said.

Fresh violence kills 10 in Kashmir

AP, Jammu

Suspected Islamic militants raided a paramilitary camp, ambushed a village mayor, and blew up an army truck and a bridge in separate clashes yesterday in Indian-controlled Kashmir that left at least 10 people dead and three wounded, police said.

No one claimed responsibility for the attacks.

But police suspected militants from any of more than a dozen Islamic groups that have been fighting since 1989 for Kashmir's independence or merger with Pakistan. The Indian government says that more than 30,000 people have been killed in the violence. Human rights groups put the death toll at twice that number.

In the attack on the Rajouri district paramilitary camp, attackers opened fire killing two Indian paramilitary soldiers and wounded one before fleeing, a police officer said on condition of anonymity. The camp, nearly 150 kilometers (95 miles) north of Jammu city, houses 600 paramilitary troops.

In another attack, suspected militants used a remote-control device to blow up an army truck

passing through Reasi, a mountainous border area 120 kilometers (75 miles) north of Jammu, army officials said. Two soldiers were killed and two wounded in that attack.

Elsewhere in the Himalayan territory, four suspected rebels and two civilians were killed in two separate incidents.

The two civilians were killed in the village of Rajpora, 90 kilometers (55 miles) north of Kashmir's summer capital, Srinagar, where suspected militants barged into the village headman's home and shot him and a visitor, a police statement said.

Indian security forces also killed four suspected militants in a gun battle in Kulgaam, 65 kilometers (40 miles) south of Srinagar, the statement said. The guerrillas blew up a bridge connecting the towns of Pattan and Baramulla.

India accuses Pakistan of arming and training Pakistan-based militants who carry out attacks in Indian-controlled Kashmir. Pakistan says it provides only diplomatic support to the rebels.

India and Pakistan have fought two wars over control of Kashmir since it was divided between them half a century ago.

BNP to go by Constitution

FROM PAGE 1

telephoned his Awami League counterpart Zillur Rahman and made the offer for talks.

This was in line with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's proposal for display of the portraits of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and late president Ziaur Rahman in public offices and institutions along with that of the chief executive.

She made the proposal in parliament following repeal of the Preservation and Display of Portrait of the Father of the Nation Act. The law made by the seventh parliament provided for mandatory display of Bangabandhu's portrait in public offices.

Responding to the talks offer, Hasina imposed three conditions--display of Bangandhu's portrait, right to agitation and end to political persecution. She also termed the offer a political stunt.

Nazmul Huda said the conditions are unexpected. About the main condition relating to the portrait of Bangabandhu, he said the prime minister had already made it clear that decision would be taken after discussion in parliament.

Asked to comment on the gov-

ernment proposal for dialogue on the one hand and police action on opposition leaders and activists on the other, the minister said such happenings might be due to lack of some one's good will. "Any controversy could be ended through dialogue," he added.

Despite repeated attempts, Mannan Bhuiyan could not be contacted last night.

Youth beaten to death in Bagerhat: 5 arrested

UNB, Bagerhat

A youth was beaten to death allegedly by the boarders of Satgambuj Rest House here Thursday night.

Police said the boarders of the rest house who came to attend a religious function in the area beat Masum Billah, 22, to death on charge of stealing their money and a wrist watch.

Agitating people laid a siege to the rest house after the incident.

Police arrested five people in this connection. They were identified as Salahuddin Billal, 38, Alhaj Shafiqul Islam Khorsheed, 48, and Alhaj Ruhul Amin, 60, of Chittagong, Alhaj Abdul Karim Hawlader, 60, of Khulna and Wabed Molla Montu, 38, of Bagerhat.

Hasina

FROM PAGE 12 and ex-state minister Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, were tortured on police remand ignoring court orders. The AL chief also narrated how police assaulted Sohel Taj MP, son of the country's first Prime Minister, Tajuddin Ahmed on March 24 and fired upon a protest rally at Kapasia yesterday.

Referring to a reported government move to prepare new lists of terrors, the former prime minister said while in power her government had already made a list of "identified terrorists." But instead of arresting those, she said, new lists are being prepared branding Awami League leaders and workers as terrors.

Hasina also questioned the arrest of ex-MP Haji Mookbul's son on charge of killing Wahiduzzaman of BNP at Mohammadpur when Zaman's brother in his complaint did not mention Mookbul's son. She wondered at the reported comment of Mohammadpur thana OC that he was arrested at the instruction of higher authorities.

Welcoming the newly-elected bar leaders, Hasina said despite repression, pro-Awami League panels won 56 out of 58 bar elections across the country.

Newly elected general secretary of Barisal Bar K B S Ahmed Kabir and general secretary of Bhola Bar Jahangir Alam also spoke at the meeting.

Party leaders Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Suranjit Sengupta MP, Adv Rahmat Ali MP, Mayor Mohammad Hanif, Obaidul Qader, Abdul Mannan and Saber Hossain Chowdhury were, among others, present.

2 cops hurt

FROM PAGE 12 Police raided the Skid Ghat area at midnight and nabbed 18 alleged drug peddlers. They also recovered five hand bombs from their possession.

A case has been recorded with Khulna thana accusing nine armed cadres of both the rival gangs.

Khulna thana OC said members of both the gangs are being hounded by two rival groups of BNP for capturing leadership of handling workers' union at Skid Ghat which Ershad Shikder ruled for over 20 years.

Meanwhile, fish traders and proprietors of all business establishments, have expressed their grave concern at reemergence of armed cadres who have again created a reign of terror at Skid Ghat.

Woes of commuters

FROM PAGE 12

task for traffic controllers to bring about immediate improvement in the chaotic city traffic by strictly enforcing traffic laws.

Lately, visitors to Kolkata have reported quite an improvement in that city's traffic management. If Kolkata, which has a greater volume of vehicular traffic than Dhaka, can appreciably improve their traffic control system, there is no reason why Dhaka cannot do so, unless, of course, we choose to maintain the status quo indefinitely.

It has lately been seen that the so-called 'maxis' that have now joined the ranks of buses and minibuses, are gradually deteriorating in their service as well as appearance. They are resorting to the same overloading practices of buses and minibuses. The traffic police are apparently quite indifferent when it comes to checking overloading.

On a happier note, the BRTC, which has lately introduced city service, is found to be observing some discipline in matters of discipline and stopping at designated spots. Significantly improved service is also noticeable in the operation of Metro AC coaches and also of Nirapad coaches plying the Motijheel-Uttara routes. However, since availability of such services is very limited, it has a very little impact on the whole transportation scenario of the metropolis, which can be best described as precarious.

The ever-growing number of rickshaws will continue to remain an

intractable problem in the way of smooth traffic in Dhaka City so long as a viable plan to phase out rickshaws is not formulated.

Khulna clash

FROM PAGE 12

enforcers. Police resorted to baton charge, fired tear gas shells and blank shots to disperse the demonstrators who made several attempts to attack the four-storied Al-Qadr Hotel.

In an hour-long clash between the two sides, at least 20 people including a constable were injured and several vehicles and shops damaged.

Police arrested seven persons from the spot on charges of attacking police and damaging vehicles and shops.

Moulana Salah Ahmed, president of Khulna Zila Imam Parishad and Principal of Govt Alia Madrassah has strongly condemned police action on their 'peaceful procession.'

Meanwhile, the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate has already issued warrant of arrest against Dr Azizur Rahman and four of his followers on charge of writing articles against holy Quran and Namaz.

Dr Azizur Rahman and four others accused have been absconding since publication of a booklet where he has misinterpreted holy Quran, creating serious reaction among Muslims.