

## Extortion: 2 JCD activists held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists were arrested by Kotwali police while trying to extort money from a spectacles market at Patuatali in the old part of the city yesterday.

Witnesses said four JCD workers from Jagannath University College went to the market and demanded Tk five lakh from a former president of the market association, Haji Hasan Ali Bhuiyan. They told him that no other JCD man from the university college would come to the market for money if their demand was met.

As the trader refused to pay the money, the JCD activists put pressure on him to make him comply with their demand. As the news spread, others at the market rushed to the spot. The activists then exploded crackers and tried to flee.

Two of them were caught by the traders, identified as Selim and Zia. Police posted near the market saved them from mass beating and arrested them. The other two—Iman and Mesba—manged to escape.

## Canadian minister due today

BSS, Dhaka

Canadian Secretary of State for Asia and the Pacific David Kilgour arrives here today on a three-day visit to Bangladesh.

Foreign Affairs Ministry officials here said that the Canadian secretary of state would have official talks with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Reaz Rahman in the afternoon of the same day to chart out the bilateral relations for the next 30 years.

The two sides, they said, are expected to build upon the vision of bilateral relations as discussed by the two Prime Ministers, Khaleda Zia and her Canadian counterpart Jean Chretien, at Cooloom on the sidelines of the recent Commonwealth summit.

The visit takes place also to celebrate the 30th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries in 1972, officials said.

The Canadian secretary of state will, among others, call on the prime minister and the foreign minister.

## Boat capsized: One killed, 3 missing in Barisal

UNB, Barisal

One person was killed and three others missing as a boat capsized in the Maskata river during a storm that swept Mehendiganj upazila on Friday.

Officials said 3-4 fishing boats sank in the river during the 15-minute storm that lashed the upazila at about 5 pm.

Although most passengers of the boats swam ashore, four people were missing after the storm, the officials said.

Later, the body of one Moazzem was recovered from the river, but three people remained missing till filing of the report at about 8 pm. Two of them were identified as Monir and his younger brother Saiful.

According to the officials, over 1,000 houses and educational institutions, including two cluster villages, were damaged by the storm.

Tele link between Mehendiganj and other parts of the country remained out off for about 19 hours till yesterday noon.

## Mayoral post

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commissioner in Dhaka. Forty women candidates have withdrawn their candidature in the city.

Our Rajshahi correspondent reported that only one out of six mayoral candidates has withdrawn his candidature.

Those in the race are incumbent Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu MP, district BNP general secretary Advocate Qamrul Munir, Workers Party leader Fazle Hossain Badsha, Jatiya Party leader SM Basheruzzaman Hira and independent candidate Solaiman Hossain.

Minu has been nominated by the 4-party alliance.

Rajshahi city BNP president advocate Eklak Hossain has withdrawn his candidature.

Forty-seven ward commissioner candidates and three for women's seats have withdrawn their candidature.

Our correspondent reported from Khulna that four mayoral candidates have withdrawn their candidature.

Those in the race are incumbent Mayor and 4-party nominee Shaikh Tayebur Rahman, independent candidate Sheikh Enayet Ali (former Awami League MP) and CPB leader Advocate Feroz Ahmed.

## No AL reply

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Bhuiyan said the dialogue would focus on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's proposal to display portraits of both Mujib and Zia side by side in government offices.

But BNP sources said the government is still awaiting a reply from the AL.

The AL however at a press briefing hours after Bhuiyan's proposal attached some conditions including revival of the law for preservation and display of Bangabandhu's portrait, end to alleged repression on AL leaders and activists, withdrawal of 'false' cases against its activists and allowing the party to hold political programmes.

Mannan Bhuiyan declined to make any comment on the conditions set by the AL, as he is yet to receive any official response to the government proposal.

A number of senior BNP leaders said the government 'truly' wants restoration of a 'congenial political atmosphere' and an end to all controversies.

## Dawlatuzzaman

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off the last delivery.

The tall, right arm medium pacer of the 1960s and 1970s, once regarded as the fastest bowler in the country, spent most of his playing career at Mohammedan Sporting Club and helped the popular Motijheel outfit lift the coveted league championship on no less than two occasions.

He played in Bangladesh's first national team against the Merelybone Cricket Club in 1977 and represented Bangladesh in the first ICC Trophy Championship in 1979.

After retiring from the game at the end of the 1982-83 season, Dawlat, who had no child, took to professional coaching. He coached Mohammedan a couple of years back before taking over the reigns at Victoria.

The body of Dawlat was taken to the Victoria Sporting Club premises in the afternoon and kept there for sometime to allow his friends, clubmates, sports organisers and others to pay their last respects.

His first namaz-e-janaza will be held at the Larnini Shahra street Jame Mashjid after the Zohr prayers today. The second janaza will be held at the Bangabandhu National Stadium at 2:00 pm.

Bangladesh Cricket Board, Victoria Sporting Club and Mohammedan Sporting Club are among many clubs that have expressed their deep shock at the sudden demise of the former national cricketer.

# Energy cooperation should be a win-win game, seminar told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A policy paper on South Asian regional cooperation in energy perceives that the issue of gas export from Bangladesh is littered with political controversies and many feel that gas should be used first for domestic purposes.

"The size of the gas reserve remains highly uncertain, particularly in relation to future demand projections," said the paper prepared by Shanker K Malla of the Institute for Development Studies (IDS). It was presented at a technical discussion yesterday in the city on "Energy Cooperation in South Asia" organised by the South Asia Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS) and the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

However, pipeline gas export to India should not be mixed up with regional cooperation—an issue that has a much deeper positive implication for South Asia, participants at the dialogue said.

Regional cooperation in energy, which is faced with various hurdles at political and technical levels, may get momentum through systematic studies on the prospects of regional cooperation to influence the minds of the politicians.

"Regional cooperation should be a win-win game for the countries concerned. Given there is political will, we can overcome the hurdles of cooperation," said Dr Mohan Man Sainju, president of the IIDS, Nepal, who chaired the session.

The discussion was a part of SACEPS and the CPD organised two-day policy dialogue on SACEPS Taskforce Reports on South Asian Cooperation. Professor Rehman Sobhan, chairperson of the CPD and executive director of SACEPS, Nuruddin Kamal, former Power Development Board chairman and a number of experts, economists and intellectuals from India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh participated in it. Dr Sridhar Khatri of Tribhuvan University, Nepal presented the paper on 'Energy Cooperation in South Asia' at the discussion on behalf of Shanker K Malla.

The dialogue felt that the South Asian countries should initiate a long-term policy having step by step cooperation plan and a supra national institutional mechanism to deal with regional energy cooperation issues. It should encourage in-depth studies and power sector joint ventures.

The participants said regional cooperation in power might help utilise Nepal's hydropower potential of 83,000MW that would help meet the region's power demand to a

great extent.

Mainul Islam of Chittagong University said, "We should not mistake export for regional cooperation."

He observed that the debate over gas export issue pitched high because of donors' pressure, uneven production sharing contracts under which oil companies progressively claim higher share, gross understatement of future gas demand in Bangladesh by international oil companies and the confusion over gas reserve.

## ETV licence

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Supreme Court.

The counsel for ETV argued before the chamber judge that the High Court had asked for relevant documents of the issuance of licence to be produced for examination, but the prosecution failed, to do so.

ETV, country's first private terrestrial television channel, came into operation after a year the government granted it licence on March 9, 1999.

Following yesterday stay order, ETV will have no legal problem in continuing operation till April 23.



PHOTO: STAR

Riot police on guard in front of the Awami League office at Darul Fazal Market in Chittagong to prevent party activists from bringing out any processions during the AL-called countrywide demonstration yesterday.

# Arafat confined in ravaged HQ

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weekend. However, the troops did not enter Bethlehem.

After storming its way to Arafat's doorstep Friday in fierce fighting that left at least five Palestinians and two Israelis dead, the army hunkered down at his headquarters while arresting some 75 more Palestinians elsewhere in Ramallah.

Palestinian relief workers said an urgent call went out for medical supplies for the wounded and one heart attack victim, while Israeli army bulldozers continued to level the rest of Arafat's compound.

The Israeli operation was launched to avenge a suicide bombing that killed 21 people Wednesday as they sat down to a Passover meal in northern Israel,

one of the worst Palestinian attacks in their intifada, or uprising.

Heavy machinegun fire echoed through the mostly deserted streets of Ramallah early yesterday as Israeli soldiers fought with Palestinian security forces barricaded in office buildings.

Israeli forces took over the Ramallah office of the Voice of Palestine radio station, which abruptly halted broadcasts, one of its journalists said.

The fighting died down later, while Israeli forces backed by dozens of tanks and armored personnel carriers rounded up Palestinians, to reach a tally of 145 arrests since Friday, according to an army spokesman.

Among those arrested was Sakher Habash, a top official

of Arafat's Fatah movement, a Palestinian official in Gaza said.

A six-storey building in the city center was in flames, sending plumes of thick smoke into the cloudy skies. At least 10 Palestinians were reported to be inside, surrounded by Israelis demanding their surrender.

Israeli tanks crushed local cars while the crackle of automatic rifle fire and dull thud of an exploding grenade pierced the morning as army troops consolidated their second occupation of Ramallah this month.

The exact number of casualties was not known. Medics said five people were killed and more than 25 injured, although Arafat put the figures at seven dead and more than 40 hurt.

Two Israeli soldiers, an officer and a master sergeant, were also killed, one in the storming of a building in the Arafat compound, Israeli sources said.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has said the incursion was just the beginning of his drive to "isolate" Arafat, whom he branded the "enemy", and stamp out Palestinian attacks.

US Secretary of State Colin Powell did not endorse Israel's offensive but made no explicit call for an Israel pullback. He also said Friday that Arafat was to blame for failing to stop violence against Israeli citizens.

Raising the spectre of regional violence, the radical Lebanese Shiite movement Hezbollah fired shots yesterday across the Lebanese border into the disputed Shebaa Farms region occupied by Israel, the group said, triggering an Israeli air raid.

Elsewhere, a Palestinian caught trying to sneak into Israel was killed and an Israeli border guard seriously injured on the edge of the West Bank, Israeli police sources said yesterday. The border guard later died.

In Brussels, the European Union demanded "the immediate and total application" of the UN resolution, a spokeswoman said.

"The European Union hails the resolution which has just been approved by the (UN) Security Council and calls for its immediate and total application," Cristina Gallach, spokeswoman for EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana said.

However, police could not arrest Osman or any of his accomplices.

Police recovered an abandoned SMG from the same area a few days before the last general election.

# MCCI urges PM

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The MCCI team also urged the prime minister rethink the government decision, as reported in the press, to seal a deal with the Stevedoring Services of America to set up a private container terminal at Chittagong port.

"...It (private terminal) might create problems at Chittagong port which, in all probability, will dislocate normal port operations", MCCI said.

The chamber urged the PM to take initiatives with the highest political level in India to lift all tariff and non-tariff barriers on Bangladeshi products.

The MCCI observed that India's attitude has not been accommodative so far in spite of two rounds of agreements under SAPTA. "Tariff and non-Tariff barriers continue to be imposed on our products. As a result, we have got an adverse balance of trade."

The business body also threw its weight behind the Pre-shipment Inspection (PSI) and Tax Holiday facility.

The MCCI team suggested at least 30 per cent slash in the funding for the state-owned enterprises (SoEs) in the next budget. The

amount should rather be channelled towards public works programme, they observed.

Pointing to the reduced production of Aus and Aman crops this year, the chamber underscored the need for all-out efforts to achieve the targets of IRRRI and Boro crops.

Among others, Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury was present during the meeting.

The prime minister congratulated the newly elected executive committee of the MCCI and asked the business community to explore ways to increase trade, especially export, with South Asian countries.

Responding to the MCCI concerns over politics, she said the government alone cannot resolve all the problems and urged the opposition to join the parliament and discuss ways to resolve them.

She was upbeat that the opposition would realise their responsibility and respond positively to her call.

Khaleda also expressed her government's resolve to improve the economy.

# Hasina: Tyrant govt

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after the country's independence had tried in vain to efface the Awami League," she said. "The Awami League has its roots in the people and repression to any extent to delete it will fail."

"It's only natural that BNP, which did not exist during the War of Independence, and Jamaat-e-Islami that opposed the war would act against the AL that earned the nation independence though a protracted struggle for 24 years."

She asked her followers to prepare for a tougher street agitation aimed at freeing the people from 'misrule'.

The AL leader wondered how the BNP-Jamaat coalition could dare to torture her party MP Tanzim Ahmed Sohel, the son of wartime Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmed. She also condemned Friday's police action, barring former minister Motia Chowdhury from attending a public rally in Kapashia. The people would answer to the government atrocities in due course, she warned.

The opposition leader accused the prime minister of unleashing "graft and terrorism" despite her election commitment to make Bangladesh a corruption- and terrorism-free country.

Hasina also blamed the BNP-Jamaat coalition government for destroying all that her 1996-2001 government had achieved on economic, social and diplomatic fronts. "Conspiracy is on to turn us again into a nation of paupers."

Later on, Hasina led a colourful procession of thousands of anti-government protesters that termi-

nated in front of the Bangabandhu Museum at Dhanmondi. The procession drew a large crowd along the streets from Bangabandhu Avenue to Dhanmondi Road No. 32.

The marchers chanted slogans denouncing "misrule" and "persecution" by the coalition government. Police, however, did not interrupt yesterday's opposition protest unlike in the last two weeks.

Before concluding the procession, the AL chief asked her followers to successfully enforce the April 6 hartal.

## Production at Haripur power plant remains suspended

UNB, Dhaka

Power generation in the 360-mw private power plant at Haripur in Narayanganj remained suspended since yesterday morning due to technical faults.

Power production in the plant, owned by American AES company, ceased at 9:11 am, according to a PDB press release.

The country was to face 250 MW power shortfall during the peak hours today due to suspension of power production in the plant.

PDB was trying to overcome the shortfall by producing additional power in its active power stations.

# Saifur: Regional ties

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Chairman of the Marga Institute of Sri Lanka Godfrey Gunatileke, Dr Mohan Man Sainju of the Institute for Integrated Development Studies of Nepal and Syed Babar Ali of Lahore University of Management Science (LUMS), Pakistan, also spoke on the occasion.

Saifur was also of the view that the small states' efforts cannot be enough in shaping a meaningful regional cooperation unless the bigger states come up in bigger way.

In this context he also mentioned that the European Union could succeed in forging a significant regional block as France and Germany, two powerful states of the region, wanted it.

The finance minister also said that in different global forums all the regional blocks or groupings take a unified stand, but the only exception is South Asia.

"If the politicians do not decide to go for a meaningful cooperation then no efforts will work," Saifur said. "Everything depends on the political will of the masters who are governing."

Turning his eyes on globalisation, Saifur said it has merits and demerits as well. "But the poorer nations are yet to get its due benefits from the globalisation process."

He also said with the process of globalisation fast food chains like McDonalds and Kentucky Fried Chicken are also coming to developing countries. "This is the bad side of globalisation. These sorts of investment are rubbish as it will not do anything towards the development of a country."

Emphasising that the economic cooperation has to lead in South Asia, Maldivian minister Ibrahim Hussain Zaki said to make it a reality SACEPS is also exploring the possibility of establishing a South Asian Development Forum in the line of the World Development Forum at Davos, Switzerland.

"The idea is still at infant stage. But once realised it will give greater opportunity to explore vital areas of cooperation," he added.

Giving a brief resumé of SACEPS and its efforts, Prof. Rehman Sobhan said if the region fails to foster a meaningful cooperation then globalisation will take its toll on the people of the region.

Godfrey Gunatileke of Sri Lanka was optimistic that despite persisting problems among the states of the region the rationality of economic cooperation will ultimately get top priority.

Dr Mohan Man Sainju of Nepal said external forces mostly dictate policies of the countries of the region. "The homegrown policies are increasingly becoming important for development and SACEPS can act as an articulate institute in this regard," he observed.

SACEPS Chairman Prof. Arjun K Sengupta said a common platform of the civil society of South Asia is what they are striving to put in place. "We want to set up this institute in Dhaka and we need help of the Bangladesh government. Please consider how we can institutionalise this centre in Dhaka," he said to the finance and planning minister.

To pursue the objectives of SACEPS, six task forces prepared draft reports on vital issues of cooperation and development in South Asia. The reports will be discussed at the programme. The issues include SAFTA, the WTO, investment cooperation, cooperation in energy sector, macro-economic policies and also preparation of a 'citizens' social charter' for the region. Once finalised, the task force reports will be handed over to the heads of governments of the South Asian countries.

The inaugural session was followed by two technical sessions on energy cooperation and SAARC social charter.

## Army deployed

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Acute crisis of water in most areas of the city during summer causes great hardship to the people.

The areas include Khilaon, Talatala, Reazbagh, Moulvirket, Rampura, Mughda, Basabo, Gopibagh, Tejuri Bazar, Tejkhoniapara, Mogbazar and most parts of Old Dhaka.

Supply of WASA water depends entirely on extraction of groundwater. Besides inadequate extraction of groundwater, the supply is also affected by frequent power failure, WASA officials said. Out of 391 pump houses, 240 have generators, they said.

The system loss in WASA water supply is about 40 percent due to illegal connections and dilapidated supply lines in many areas. Officials put the number of illegal water connections at about 15,000 but unofficial sources say it is around 50,000.

The daily demand for water in the city is around 160 crore liters, which increases by ten percent during summer. WASA supplies 128 crore litres through its 2200 km pipeline network.

# Log-in hitch

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Commission (BTRC) against the BTBT for hiking monthly telephone line rent, faced the problem.

The BTBT increased the monthly line rent for the ISPs nearly seven folds. The ISPs were asked to pay Tk 1,000 rent per line from the previous Tk 150. But the BTRC blocked the move following the complaints.

The subscribers of all the members of the ISP Association (ISPA) including Information Services Network Limited (ISNL), Bangladesh Online Limited (BOL), Aftab IT Limited, Agni Limited, BDCOM Limited, Global Online service Limited and Grameen Citechco Limited faced the problem.

The ISPA alleged that the Internet users of the BTBT's and those ISPs which are not members of the ISPA did not face this problem.

The ISPA demanded an investigation into the issue. And it also cried foul play by the BTBT against the private ISPs.

But the BTBT brushed aside the allegations. "It is totally absurd. We have no means of disrupting services of certain ISPs," Jamil claimed.

When asked why the subscribers of the BTBT's Internet service did not face the hitch, he said the BTBT uses two types of system for the Internet. "This is the probable answer why the BTBT's Internet service escaped unhurt by the glitch," he said.

But some ISPs were dismayed at

the slow response of the BTBT in fixing the problem. "If this is the situation then how can we make a big stride in Information Technology?" quipped an official of a leading ISP.

## Graft cases

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Moshed, all accused in corruption cases filed by the Bureau of Anti-corruption.

Justice Badrul Haque and Justice Nazrul Islam Chowdhury of a division bench passed the order on separate petitions. The government law officers were conspicuous by their absence from the court to oppose the bail when the petitions came up for hearing.

The accused except Mohammad Nasim were implicated in three cases for alleged irregular awarding of tender to a bidder ignoring the lowest one in constructing Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Novo Theatre.

Mohammad Nasim and SAMS Kibria, accused of awarding tender for installation of digital telephones without floating international tender, moved the fourth petition.

Former prime minister and also chairperson of ECNEC Sheikh Hasina who had approved the projects, is the main accused in the corruption cases.

Former state minister for Planning Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir as member of the ECNEC was also implicated in the corruption cases. He is already in jail in connection with other cases.

Barrister Amirul Islam and advocate Abdul Matin Khasru moved the bail petitions.