

# Abductors slash boy

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abduction after Shihab recognised one of his captors.

Shihab, a student of class seven at Motijheel Model High School, was abducted from in front of his school at about 5:15pm and killed the same night. He was a resident of 47/B Eastern Housing, central Bashabo in Khilgaon.

Shihab's aunt had gone to the school to take him home. Shihab told her that he was going for an "important work" with his senior friend Monir Hossain Liton.

Since then Shihab could not be traced.

At night, Shihab's father Khandaker Dildar Ahmed got a phone call at his house demanding a ransom of Tk 20 lakh for his son's release.

Liton took him to a club at 287/2, North Goran, which was used as an election campaign office of Julekha Begum, a candidate of eleven-party alliance in the last parliamentary election.

Five more young men came to the club in the evening. One of them was Raju, who was known to Shihab as they resided in the same area.

Shihab had requested Raju to tell the other captors to release him, according to the statements of the culprits.

But as Shihab recognised Raju, he was killed, investigators said.

The innocent schoolboy was strangled at the club at about 7 pm. The killers left the body in the locked room and left. They returned at about 12 at night and cut the body into six pieces, put those in three bags and concealed in three places.

The knives and a machete used were kept under earth at an under-construction building in North Goran. Police also recovered those, acting on the statement of the culprits.

Seven days later, the gang again called the victim's father and demanded Tk 15 lakh as ransom. They threatened him that a dose of Pethedrine would be pushed into his son's body every day for delay in payment of the ransom.

The gang made several calls to the family later from different card phone booths.

At one stage, Shihab's father wanted a photo of his son from the captors or to allow his son to talk to him to ascertain that he was with them and alive.

The kidnappers told the father that they kept Shihab's shoes at the visitors' shoe rack at the National Museum.

The gang asked the victim's father to go to a place in Demra with the ransom. After contacting with detective police, Dildar told them to select a venue in the city.

Finally, they gang told Dildar to hand over the money to them at

Bhagyakul sweetmeat shop at Shipahibagh in Khilgaon area at 8 pm on Sunday.

ADC Ruhul Amin, ACAli Hossain Fakir of Detective Branch and a police team went to Shipahibagh and kept waiting around the shop since evening.

A DB sub-inspector in the guise of a family member of Shihab went inside the shop, kept a briefcase containing some money on a table and was about to come out. The manager of the shop drew his attention that he was leaving his briefcase.

Two of the gang members were already inside. One of them, puffing a cigarette, tried to grab the briefcase. Plainclothes policemen who were keeping eye on the briefcase immediately grabbed them. The culprits are Monir Hossain Liton, 20, and Abu Sayeed, 19.

They were taken to DB office at Minto Road. During interrogation, they confirmed that they along with four others had abducted Shihab from in front of his school on February 7 and killed him, police said.

Shihab was killed only to save the miscreant, whom he recognized, they said.

Acting on the statements of the arrested criminals, detective police recovered pieces of the decomposed body. The pieces were sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy, police said.

Police also arrested another gang member Rashedul Islam Rashed yesterday.

Raju and two other abductors are absconding.

Julekha Mridha, Kankan Akhter Kanak and Fazlul Haq were taken into custody for interrogation.

Shihab's father had filed a general diary with Motijheel thana on February 7 after his son was missing. Later it was turned into a regular case on February 10.

The case was handed over to DB on February 13.

Shihab was the second of his two brothers and one sister.

It may be mentioned that Ammar Shamsi, an O-level student at Nailia Fleur Tutorial at Dhanmondi was called out of his house by his friends on October 16, 2000. A ransom was later demanded for his release. He was strangled at the National Park in Gazipur and the body was left there.

Later, Shamsi's partially decomposed body was recovered from the park on October 26. DB arrested four youths in connection with the abduction and killing.

DB submitted charge sheet against four youths. Ziaur Rahman Zia, Salauddin, Mostafa Almas and Alamgir November 14, 2000 in the case.

# House talks MIG-29

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special parliamentary committee be formed to probe the 'unprecedented' graft charges.

Concluding the discussion, Jute Minister Maj(retd) Hafizuddin Ahmed, who is in charge of the defence ministry in the parliament, told the House that investigation into graft charges in the purchase of Mig-29 aircraft has been completed and charge sheet in the case will be submitted soon.

He also said probe into alleged graft in the purchase of the frigate would be completed in the next 10 days.

The Bureau of Anti-corruption would then take necessary action regarding the graft charges, Hafiz said, adding the parliament would be informed of developments of the investigations.

Reflecting the sentiments of his colleagues in the treasury bench, the minister alleged that the previous AL government had no accountability and transparency in running the affairs of the state. Referring to press reports, he said the aircraft and frigate were purchased through a non-transparent process. Korean company Daewoo was given the contract for supplying the frigate although it was not the highest bidder, he mentioned. The gun of the frigate was now out of operation, he said.

The minister further told the House that purchase of such costly aircraft from Russia was a luxury for a country like ours. "Whoever found guilty of grafts in the two state pur-

chases will be punished," he said and assured that this government is committed to strengthening the armed forces with modern equipment. "But we will do everything through a transparent process."

Earlier, BNP lawmaker Moazzem Hossain Alai moved a notice seeking a general discussion on the alleged grafts in the purchases.

# Bomb scare at ETV

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rumours of a live bomb planted inside the Ekushey Television (ETV) building turned out to be a false alarm after a massive search conducted by a dog squad of the police last night failed to find any explosives inside the building.

Earlier, an anonymous letter from Bogra warned ETV authorities that four powerful bombs were planted at key points in the ETV building and might explode any time.

A police team with sniffer-dogs was immediately rushed to the ETV broadcasting centre after ETV authorities informed the matter to the police. But no bombs were found after a thorough search of the building, police sources said.

active in the border region. "Steps are being taken to reinforce border security," said a source, adding that security would be strengthened at the Rohingya camps and some bordering pockets as well -- where some fundamentalist groups were active.

The Far Eastern Economic Review report was headlined "BANGLADESH: A COCOON OF TERROR" with a sub-headline, "Secularism and moderate Islam are threatened by rising fundamentalism and religious intolerance". It said, "While the Western-led international war on terrorism continues to focus on a few high profile countries, Bangladesh, a nation with 120 million Muslims and 10 million Hindus, is moving away from its tradition of moderate Islam."

"FEER reports on growing religious extremism and intolerance within Bangladesh and an alarming rise in militant Muslim groups with links to international terrorist organisations."

# Bill on polybag ban tabled in JS

UNB, Dhaka

A bill was introduced in parliament yesterday seeking a ban on production and use of polythene shopping bags and other materials as well as control of toxic exhausts of transport detrimental to environment and public health.

Environment Minister Shahjahan Siraj moved the Bangladesh Environment Preservation (Amendment) Bill 2002, saying, "The existing environment act was not adequate and required some amendments and incorporation of some new provisions for effective application of the law."

The bill provides for a minimum of six months' and a maximum of 10 years' rigorous imprisonment on different charges ranging from production and sale of polythene.

Shajahan Siraj also introduced Environment Court (Amendment) Bill 2002 providing for establishment of environment courts in different divisions, and if necessary, in districts giving necessary powers to judges for quick disposal of environment-related cases.

# Stay order on Nasim's remand extended till April 13

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Third Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka, yesterday extended the stay order on remand of Bahauddin Nasim till April 13 in connection with a case filed with Madaripur thana.

Judge Mollah Mostafa Kamal passed the order following a time petition by the defence lawyers.

The defence lawyers filed a criminal revision with the Metropolitan Sessions Judges Court, Dhaka, seeking stay order on remand of Nasim on March 6.

The CMM's Court, Dhaka on February 28 placed A F M Bahauddin Nasim, special assistant to Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina, on a 10-day remand in two separate cases one relating to foreign currency smuggling and the other filed with Madaripur thana on charge of firing gunshots on the motorcade of the then opposition leader Khaleda Zia.

Nasim was arrested from ZIA on February 27 on charge of foreign currency, smuggling.

Later, a sedition case against Nasim was filed with the CMM's Court, Dhaka on March 11.

# Abolition of 10 pc regulatory duty on rice import recommended

BSS, Dhaka

A meeting of the Food Planning and Supporting Committee yesterday recommended abolition for the time being the 10 per cent regulatory duty imposed earlier on import of rice in the private sector to keep price of rice stable.

The meeting was held at the conference room of the Food Ministry with its Minister Abdullah Al Noman in the Chair, an official release said.

Agriculture Minister Motiur Rahman Nizami, Disaster Management and Relief Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf and State Minister for Finance and Planning Anwarul Kabir Talukder and secretaries of ministries concerned were present.

The meeting discussed in detail the overall stock position of food, fixation of procurement prices of Boro paddy, rice, wheat and maize.

# Telecom graft

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sheet of the Bureau of Anti-corruption refers to the Chinese and Canadian vendors' per line costs as \$256 and \$134 respectively.

According to the white paper's comparative figures, the BTBT overpaid \$80 per line to the CMEC. Therefore, the total overpayment made to the Chinese vendor is \$17.27 million for 2.16 lakh lines.

But the FIR claims the BTBT overpaid \$122 to CMEC for each line and the total amount of \$26.40 million have been embezzled in this 2.16 lakh line project.

If the white paper is right, the charge sheet is wrong and vice versa. Sources said such contradiction in the vital figures being claimed by two different wings of the Prime Minister's Office might be an embarrassing issue in the court of law.

# Robbers die

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were killed and the other was wounded critically. A helper of the truck was also injured critically in the collision.

The deceased were identified as Mokammel Hossain, 30, Muktel Ali, 28, Bablu Miah, 26, and Idris Ali of Sirajganj district and Ismail Hossain, 30, of Dhaka's Mirpur area.

The wounded helper of the Dhaka-bound truck from Bhupur in Tangail and the passenger of the private car were admitted to hospital in critical condition.

# Motia, Nasim asked to appear before court on Apr 25

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Second Special Tribunal for prevention of Public Safety Disturbances and Crimes, Dhaka, yesterday directed former home minister Mohammad Nasim, former agriculture minister Motia Chowdhury and two others accused in a case filed under the Public Safety Act (PSA) to appear before it on April 25.

The tribunal also fixed the same date for hearing on charge-framing in the case.

The two other accused are Awami League central leader Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin and city Sramik League general secretary Israfil Alam.

Judge Mohammad Abdur Razzak on Sunday accepted the documents of the case, sent by the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court earlier on the day.

The four were accused of obstructing traffic in the city during the AL -- called a half-day hartal on January 9 protesting price hike of oil, gas and electricity.

Sub-Inspector (SI) Moinur Rahman filed the case with Motijheel thana.

SI Mohammad Abdul Matin, Investigation Officer (IO) of the case, submitted charge sheet to the CMM's Court on March 28. In it, 21 people were shown as prosecution witnesses.

Meanwhile, Nasim, Motia and Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin were granted anticipatory bail in the case by the High Court (HC) on January 12. The bail period was till submission of police report in the case.

As per the HC order, the bail

period expired on March 28 as the IO submitted charge sheet. Now the accused have to seek extension of bail to the HC or the trial court.

# JCD men mug Iranian couple, clash with police at Cox's Bazar: 50 hurt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

At least 50 people were injured in a clash between police and JCD activists in the town on Sunday night.

Failing to snatch away 5 activists, arrested on charge of mugging and harassing an Iranian couple, JCD activists went on the rampage and clashed with police.

Injured JCD activist Jalal and constable Sheikh Kamal were sent to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

Police said they were directed by the higher authorities to take stern action against the accused.

Police said the JCD men beat up the Iranian tourist couple after snatching US\$ 100 from them at a filling station at Cox's Bazar.

They kicked the wife when she tried to save her husband from the hands of the goons.

Police later arrested 13 of the JCD men and lodged two cases under the public safety act.

# Ahad Chy granted permanent bail in criminal case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka, yesterday granted permanent bail to Prof Abdul Ahad Chowdhury in a criminal case.

Judge Ahmed Jamil Mostafa granted bail to former Chairman of Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Central Command Council upon a petition filed by the defence lawyers.

Ahad Chowdhury along with his lawyers Advocate Sahara Khatun, Abdullah Abu, Mohammad Ali and SM Altaf Hossain appeared before the court and prayed for permanent bail.

After hearing both sides, the court granted bail.

The same court on March 14 granted ad-interim bail to Ahad Chowdhury till March 31 upon a bond of Tk 30,000 with two guarantors.

The High Court on February 18 directed the accused to surrender before the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka within four weeks from the date of issuing the order.

Ahad Chowdhury appeared before the court and sought anticipatory bail.

The court also asked police not to harass or arrest the accused during the period.

It was alleged that on February 3 last year former Awami League MP, Alhaj Mockbul Hossain, Abdul Ahad Chowdhury and 80 others attacked the Jame Arabia Madrasah in the city's Mohammadpur area and looted valuables worth about Tk 10 lakh from the Madrasah.

Later, Hafez Mohammad Jahid Hossain, filed a criminal case with Mohammadpur thana on January 17 accusing 70 people, including Mockbul Hossain and Ahad Chowdhury.

# Tanks roll into Bethlehem

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In the bloodiest incident reported yesterday, gunmen killed 11 Palestinians suspected of collaborating with the Israelis in the northern West Bank town of Tulikarem, Palestinian security officials said.

A 10-year-old Palestinian child was also killed by Israeli gunfire in the southern Gaza Strip town of Rafah on the Egyptian border, the head of the town's hospital said.

But the Israelis feared they were being dragged into a second front on their border with Lebanon, where cross-border machine-gun fire raked their positions in the western sector late Sunday and tensions soared.

Israel has been under mounting pressure from the world community to pull back its forces besieging Arafat's headquarters in the West Bank city of Ramallah since Friday.

But hours after a new suicide bombing claimed 17 lives in the coastal city of Haifa, top security officials of the Jewish state decided Sunday to tighten the noose around the Palestinian leader in an operation code-named "Rampart".

"I am waiting for the army to take measures to totally isolate Arafat, but we do not intend to humiliate" or harm him personally, Defence Minister Binyamin Ben Eliezer told the state radio yesterday.

Ben Eliezer said Israel will continue to detain Palestinians "wanted for terrorism" who, he said had taken refuge in Arafat's offices and in the headquarters of Palestinian preventive security forces in Ramallah.

The police fled after the area came under Israeli tank fire and unidentified Palestinian gunmen then moved in for the kill. Two suspected collaborators were also found dead overnight in Qalqiyya, witnesses said.

In another incident, three Israelis were wounded, one seriously, when their car was fired upon yesterday near the Jewish settlement of Beit El on the West Bank, Israeli medical sources and witnesses said.

Clashes broke out between Palestinian stone-throwers and Israeli troops after Israeli tanks tried to enter the Qalandia refugee camp just north of Jerusalem, witnesses said. There were no initial reports of injuries.

The decision to intensify military operations against the Palestinian uprising that has claimed some 1,660 lives in 18 months was taken at a meeting of Israel's security cabinet late Sunday chaired by Sharon.

Sharon went on national television to brand Arafat "an enemy of the free world" and declare that "the state of Israel is in a war."

State radio said Sharon had met overnight with US peace envoy Anthony Zinni and advised him of Israel's determination to press its campaign despite a UN Security Council resolution calling for a pullback.

In the north, Israeli officials said renewed activity by the radical Lebanese Shiite group Hezbollah is timed to coincide with the military push against Arafat and the Palestinians on the West Bank.

"Hezbollah is trying to open a second front in the north of the country and thus prove its solidarity with the Palestinians," said Avi Pazner, spokesman for Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

The Lebanese, for their part, complained yesterday that Israeli warplanes violated their air space again and roared over southern Lebanon, while at a forum of mainly pan-Arab militants in Manama Hezbollah called for weapons to be sent to the Palestinians.

# Waiting game

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holding a dialogue because they are yet to communicate with us," said a senior BNP leader, who wanted not to be named.

On the other hand, the Awami League (AL) says it is yet to get a response from the government to its three conditions for a 'meaningful' dialogue on the political situation.

"They (government) proposed a dialogue and we welcomed the move, giving some conditions. Now it's their turn to respond to our conditions," AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday.

AL President Sheikh Hasina questioned the prime minister's honesty in making a fresh proposal moments after scrapping the earlier law.

When asked if the AL had formally put forward its conditions to the government, Zillur said, "BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan did not give me any formal letter for dialogue. He phoned me and I also explained our position to him."

Zillur went on to add, "So, there is no point in responding. Rather, the government should respond by meeting our conditions if they really mean business."

BNP policymakers now feel that the AL demand for revival of the law relating to the display of Bangabandhu's portrait is illogical.

They said the AL imposed the law on the people. But since the BNP does not believe in unjustifiable imposition, it has proposed introduction of a new law through discussion in the parliament.

Moreover, they observed that there is 'absolute freedom' for all

political parties to practise their democratic rights such as demonstrations, rallies and processions. They also deny any political persecution.

On the other hand, they said, it is the AL which banned demonstrations and rallies in the street and introduced laws to hold meetings and demonstration in designated spots. The BNP is just implementing the laws and decisions taken by the previous AL government, they added.

When asked, BNP policymakers said the AL was obstructed when they tried to hold rallies in the street, violating the very laws introduced by them. They said the law-enforcing agencies are just following the rules.

The BNP leaders categorically denied any political persecution and added that the government has no intention to resort to political repression and harassment on opposition activists.

Referring to the arrest and filing of cases against AL leaders, they said some of them were arrested on specific charges and there are valid reasons to arrest them for 'maintaining peace and stability'. Similarly, the Bureau of Anti-corruption filed graft cases against the AL leaders following investigation.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said, "We have made an offer for dialogue with an open mind and we are sincere about holding a meaningful discussion with the main opposition. We hope the Awami League would also respond with an open mind."

On a query, he said there has been no formal or informal response from the AL since March 28. "I am

awaiting a reply from them and we are hopeful of a positive response," he added.

The LGRD and Co-operatives minister further added, "I have read the conditions in newspaper, but none from the Awami League formally or informally told me about them."

"No dialogue can take place with conditions imposed. We are sincere about a dialogue."

AL chief Sheikh Hasina told reporters on March 28, "We don't find the government sincere about holding a meaningful dialogue. It's ridiculous that the government invites us for a discussion on one hand and mounts its repression on our activists on the other."

She referred to police actions on AL protesters hours after the government's dialogue offer was made. "It's nothing but a political stunt that aims to draw press coverage," she observed.

Ever since the portrait law was scrapped, the AL has been waging street protests that were obstructed by the police. From March 21 when the law was scrapped till date, police foiled two AL rallies despite the fact that the party obtained prior permissions.

Besides, police also clamped a last-hour ban on gathering at the Osmany Uddyan where the AL was to observe a 'mass hunger strike'. In all three occasions, police clubbed AL leaders and workers and fired teargas shells.

# Top 23 terrorists

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village Krokerchar under Shibchar thana in Madaripur, address 14/C Mona Tower;

Liakat Hossain's younger brother Kamrul Hasan alias Hannan;

Aminur Rasul Sagar alias Tokai Sagar.

The other nine criminals listed under the second category are the following:

Sohel alias Freedom Soheli, son of Habibul Haq of Razapur under Daganbhuiyan thana in Feni, address 1063, Malibagh Bazaar Road under Khilgaon thana;

Khandakar Tanveer Islam alias Joy, son of Khandakar Nazrul Islam of Baniara village under Mirzapur thana in Tangail, address 43/8/16 Indira Road under Tejgaon thana;

Haris Ahmed alias Hares, son of late Abdul Wadud of D/9, Noor Jahan Road under Mohammadpur thana;

Imam Hossain, 35, son of Abdul Mannan of GP-Cha-39, Mohakhali Wireless Gate under Gulshan thana;

Jabbar Munna, son of Abdus Sobhan of Atpara village under Netrokona sadar, address 18, Razia Sultana Road under Mohammadpur thana;

Kamal Pasha alias Pasha, 30, son of Liakot Ali Mia of Jabrajan under Kalihati thana in Tangail, address D-3 Housing Quarter, Kazi Nazrul Islam Road, Mohammadpur;

Arman, son of SM Ainul of 603, Baro Moghbazar under Ramna thana;

Moshiur Rahman Kochi, son of Moklesur rahman of DMC-261, Malancha, 3rd floor, Ibrahimpur;

Shamim Ahmed alias Aga Shamim, son of Dr Shamsuddin, of 41 Abdul Hadi Lane under Kotwali thana.

Sources said both types of posters have already been distributed to all police stations in the city, and have also been sent to different

district headquarters to be distributed to various police stations.

They have already been posted on different walls in the city. In the posters, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) calls upon the people to help arrest the most wanted criminals terming them "enemies of the state and the society" and assuring that the informer's identity would be kept secret.

"This is part of the government's bid to arrest those responsible for criminal activities and consequent deterioration of the law and order situation," said a police official asking not to be named.

Many city-dwellers however think that sticking posters alone would not bring any positive change in improving law and order. "None of them could be arrested because they already had sufficient time to escape," said a resident of Green Road area.

He also said that no significant improvement took place in the country's crime scenario but the situation has gone from bad to worse. "We the city-dwellers see no ray of hope yet."

In a bid to improve city's law and order situation, the BNP-led four party government announced the list of 23 top criminals on December 24 last and ordered police to arrest them immediately.

The initial euphoria it created among people took almost no time to evaporate as the government's "war against terrorism" was hopelessly failing to produce any results with incidents of murder, mugging, extortion and plunder showing no signs of let-up, and even escalating in the city and elsewhere in the country.

Sources allege that due to their strong links with many top and influential political leaders, terrorists continue to operate with virtual impunity. Although a few were arrested, they were however released shortly on bail.

# PM seeks Canadian investment

UNB, Dhaka

Praising government's socioeconomic programmes, visiting Canadian Secretary of State David Kilgour billed Bangladesh as a moderate Muslim country that can be a role model in the region.

"You (Government) has the right attitude," the envoy was quoted as saying to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia appreciating development and progress made in women education and social sector in Bangladesh.

During a courtesy call with the Prime Minister at her office yesterday noon, Kilgour said Bangladesh women are doing well and keeping meaningful contribution to garment and IT sectors.

The Canadian Secretary of State, who is leading a business delegation for exploring investment prospects here, has visited some ICT firms and RMG factories in Dhaka, official sources said.

Expansion of trade and commerce, assistance in conversion of natural gas to CNG, IT, education, vocational and professional training and business and student visas of Canada came up for discussion during his meeting with the Prime Minister.

Khaleda Zia said Canada could invest under joint venture in gas-based industry in Bangladesh, which would generate employment opportunities besides benefiting both the countries in terms of financial returns.

She also sought Canadian investment and cooperation in IT education, particularly in female education, professional training and social sectors.

The PM hoped that Canada would import more items from Bangladesh, including jute and jute products, ceramic, tea, pharmaceutical products, leather and agro-based products.

# AI seeks probe