



PHOTO: STAR

The WASA has launched a drive to cleanse its 16 lagoons of poisonous fishes found as carriers of diseases. Scores of people (left) catch the fishes in a lagoon at Fatullah on the outskirts of the city, while some WASA officials (middle) bury the dead fishes in a lakeside hole. Children (right) collect these toxic fishes probably to sell in the market.

Extortionists in guise of DB men at Ctg jail gate

They realise money threatening fresh detention of released people under Section 54

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD, Ctg

Accused persons released on bail are falling prey to a new trick for extortion allegedly by a section law enforcers.

Money is extorted from them at the gate of Chittagong Central Jail when they are released, threatening them of detention under Section 54. Several such incidents took place in the last two months.

For this, they use an order for keeping 'notorious criminals' behind bars even after bail till their cases are disposed of. The order was given to stop release of notorious criminals on bail through loopholes of law.

Police sources said a list of such notorious criminals have been prepared at the directive of higher authorities in the police administration here.

One such victim of extortion was Jahangir Alam of

Hathazari, accused in a criminal case. He alleged that he was released on bail on March 13.

As he came out of the jail, some "policemen in plainclothes" claiming themselves to be from detective branch demanded Tk 20,000 from him and threatened him of detention under Section 54 for non-compliance. They told him that he was on the list of 'notorious criminals' who can not be freed.

"They detained me in front of the jail gate for several hours. One of my relatives gave them Tk 15,000 at about 8 pm and got me released," Jahangir alleged.

Octogenarian Mahbubur Rahman, a former chairman of Sandip Union Parishad, was another victim. He told this correspondent that he along with a leader of

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Zinni meets Arafat under the guns of Israeli tanks

Israeli offensive on despite US call for pullout: 8 Palestinians killed

REUTERS, Ramallah

Washington's Middle East envoy met Yasser Arafat under the guns of Israeli tanks besieging the Palestinian leader's headquarters yesterday. Journalists were barred from covering the meeting.

Israel kept up its West Bank offensive despite US calls for a withdrawal.

At least eight Palestinians were killed and 24 wounded as battles raged through the night in Nablus, the West Bank's biggest city, Palestinian security officials and witnesses said.

In the northern city of Jenin, hospital sources said a Palestinian police officer was killed in a refugee camp. Witnesses reported house-to-house fighting, four helicopter gunships firing and roadside bombs exploding.

A 14-year-old girl was killed by Israeli helicopter fire in the northeastern West Bank town of Toubas, witnesses and town officials said.

Anthony Zinni, a former US Marine Corps general, was the first foreign dignitary allowed in by Israel for face-to-face talks with Arafat since his forces smashed into his compound in the West Bank city of Ramallah a week ago.

The first crack in Israel's "isolation" of Arafat opened shortly after US President George W. Bush pressed Israel to end its fierce, one-week-old campaign. The death toll mounted, with 10 Palestinians killed overnight and early yesterday.

Bush, who had previously defended Israel's actions as an understandable response to recent suicide bombings that killed dozens of Israelis, switched course under pressure from European and Arab allies to halt the spiraling Middle East violence.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon often pays heed to such admonitions

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Nobel Committee now regrets Peace Prize for Peres

AFP, Oslo

Members of the panel that selects the recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize said yesterday they regretted bestowing the prestigious honour on Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and would now revoke it from him if it were possible.

"Yes, I wish it was possible that we could recall the prize," Hanna Kvammo told AFP.

Kvammo is one of the five members of the Norwegian Nobel Committee that chose to award the prize in 1994 to Peres, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israel's late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin.

"What is happening today in Palestine is grotesque and unbelievable. Peres is responsible, as part of the government. He has expressed his agreement with what (Israeli Prime Minister Ariel) Sharon is doing," she said.

Police raid houses of Amu, Shahara

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police searched the houses of Awami League Presidium member Amir Hossain Amu and its law secretary Advocate Shahara Khatun in the city in the early hours of yesterday, party sources said.

On Wednesday night, police arrested about 50 leaders and activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), student wing of AL, from different areas of the city. They were arrested under Section 54 of the CrPC.

The sources said most of the leaders and activists of AL and BCL are on the run now in view of the 'police hunt'.

Awami League Chief and opposition leader Sheikh Hasina in a statement condemned the pre-dawn search of the houses of Amu and Shahara.

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Arrested people being denied fundamental rights

ZAYADUL AHSAN

The government is routinely violating legal procedures and human rights in handling persons against whom it has brought allegations of anti-state activities, according to legal experts.

This trend began with the arrest of writer-journalist Shahriar Kabir, followed by that of Awami League leader Bahauddin Nasim, NGO activist Omor Tarek Chowdhury and former AL state minister Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir. The allegations against them are common-- they were involved in anti-state activities.

Of the four, Shahriar Kabir and Omor Tarek Chowdhury have been released following High Court order

after they were repeatedly refused bail by the lower court.

Starting from the way they were arrested, to the way they were treated in custody, the way they were held in remand and the way they were produced (and not pro-

duced) before the court, violations of the legal and human rights of the accused are clear.

It became clear from the treatment of the persons that the government was determined to "teach its critics a lesson", observed a legal expert.

All the four persons were

arrested under Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) that deals with suspicious movement. This rogue and highly abused law is usually used to arrest petty criminals and prostitutes. Use of Section 54 to arrest prominent and well known persons was most unusual earlier, commented a legal expert. There were no specific charge against any of them during the time of arrest.

After arrest, the government violated legal and human rights of three out of the four while taking them on police remand.

While the CMM's Court placed them on police remand for specific periods, all the accused were sent to

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Road blocked as transport workers beat IU students

IU CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Agitated students of the Islamic University (IU) barricaded the Kushtia-Dhaka highway for five hours after at least 10 students were beaten up, two severely, by transport workers following an altercation over designated bus stop.

Five of the students Abdul Jabbar (Law), Nur Islam Khokon (BBA), Kutubuddin, Shawkat Ali and Haresur Rahman (English), and Abdullah Al Noman (Law) were admitted to the IU Medical Centre where the condition of Jabbar and Khokon were stated to be critical till writing of this report.

Buses bound for Khulna, Jhenidah and Dhaka as well as other destinations could not ply during

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Barapukuria power plant
Developer paid Tk 6cr without finance ministry clearance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Power Development Board (PDB) has disbursed Tk 5.5 crore to the developer of Barapukuria coal-fired 250 MW power plant without clearance from the finance ministry.

Sources said the payment was made to the developer -- a Chinese consortium-- so that it could arrange its own share of payment from the Exim Bank of China and the project under Suppliers Credit can move on.

But as required, PDB did not obtain a Letter of Guarantee from the finance ministry and submit it to the Chinese consortium. The ministry holds the view that it would not issue any guarantee for a project under Suppliers Credit. Without this guarantee, the Chinese builders would not be able to get its funds.

This would create a complication for the project, one source noted. However, he added that the PDB move was made as per instruction from the higher authorities which would also ask the finance ministry to issue the guarantee.

The finance ministry also believes that the 220 million dollar project is overpriced.

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HOSPITAL WATCH

Lone surgery machine out of order for over 8 months

NAIMUL HAQ

The lone laser surgery machine at the National Institute of Ophthalmology (NIO) has been remaining unutilised for over eight months due to lack of funds for its repair.

About 30 to 40 patients come to the hospital for treatment for blindness a day but all of them registered for treatment are asked to come later.

The engineers who checked faults with the machine said in their preliminary report that green and green-blue rays -- the main source of energy for laser surgery -- have run out and some energy-producing small parts and filters have also gone out of order. It will cost the government roughly Tk 10 lakh for repair.

"We have informed the supplier about the technical faults but the engineer concerned is now hospitalised, so without his final report we cannot inform the ministry about it," said Director of the NIO Professor MA Hadi.

"We have purchased the machine but the government did not allocate any money for its maintenance and operation. To get funds for repair, we have to write to the Directorate of Health. On the basis

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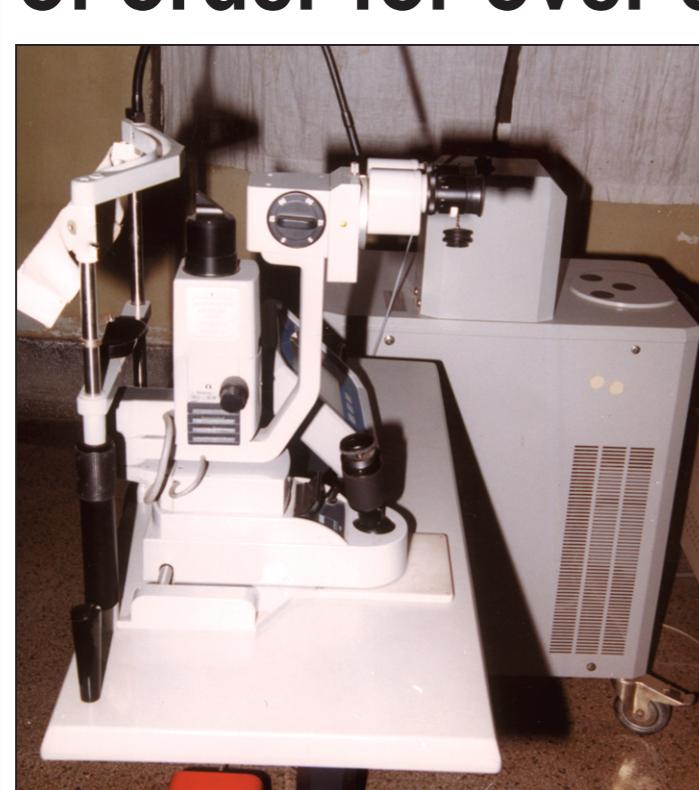


PHOTO: STAR

The laser surgery machine at the National Institute of Ophthalmology (NIO) remains unutilised due to lack of funds for its repair.

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Column: Between the Lines
Kulip Nayar

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Business

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8-month govt borrowing thru' saving instruments rises 23pc

Six banks, two law firms to be added to Enron suit

Prayer Timings

Apr 6

Sun Rises

Sun Sets

Apr 7

6-17 pm

5-46 am

6-25

6-25

7-45

8-15

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