



Riot police (left) are on guard in front of Awami League central office on Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday. Police fire tear gas shells to disperse AL activists who tried to bring out a procession in support of today's countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal.

Violence in West Bengal kills three

SAKYASEN MITRA, Kolkata

At least three persons were killed yesterday in violence between two communities in West Bengal.

A bomb explosion that left two women and a child injured sparked off a series of clashes at Telenipara, about 50 kilometres off Kolkata, at about 9.30 in the morning.

The number of the injured has crossed the 100 mark. Also burnt down were 30 houses. More than 500 police personnel rushed to the spot.

Witnesses said people vandalised houses and shops -- armed with swords and daggers -- and some were equipped with guns.

Rajendra Kumar Ghose, a shop owner, was hacked to death. Also killed were Iqbal Hussain and Prabir Pal. The fight between the two communities turned the entire area into

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Shihab murder DB police seize items as evidence

BSS, Dhaka

The Detective Branch (DB) of Police yesterday seized a gold chain, a bucket, part of a steel door and a ladder from Sabujbag area as evidence of schoolboy Shihab murder.

A team of DB led by Investigation Officer (IO) of the case Inspector Nazrul Islam yesterday seized the gold chain from a sister of an arrested accused on the basis of the confessional statements of the arrested persons.

The killers mortgaged the chain against Taka 3,000 for buying a bicycle for using it to kidnap and kill Shihab.

The DB police also raided some areas of the city yesterday to arrest the absconding accused of the case.

Khandkar Shihab Ahmed, a student of class seven of Motijheel Model School and College, was kidnapped from near his school on February 7 and police recovered severed parts of his body from different places of Sabujbag area recently.

Young man shot dead in Feni

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Feni

A young man was shot dead at village Katalia in Sadar upazila on Thursday night, hours before his elder brother's wedding.

Police said a gang of ten armed terrorists picked up Nurul Huda Sabuj, 20, son of Rabiu Haq, at gunpoint from his home at about 11 pm. They took him to a nearby place and shot him in the throat.

Sabuj was taken to Sadar hospital when doctors declared him dead.

Local people said the terrorists abducted Sabuj while he was illuminating their house for the marriage ceremony scheduled for yesterday.

Chhatri League claimed Sabuj to be their activist and held JCD responsible for the killing.

Victim's father filed a case with Sadar thana accusing 11 people.

In another incident, BCL activist identified as Rana, 22, son of Belal Ahmed of village Shubupur, was beaten up by unidentified terrorists in Ranirhat area near Feni town the same night.

BDR patrol party rescued Rana and sent him to Feni Sadar hospital in a critical condition.

Health sector now plagued with corruption: Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Sheikh Hasina has accused the four-party alliance government of destroying health sector by slashing budgetary allocations for it, massive transfers and influencing admission to medical institutions.

Health sector is now plagued with massive corruption, transfers for harassment and promotion of incompetent health professionals just because of their allegiance to the ruling coalition, the Awami League chief said.

Hasina was addressing doctors at a special council of the Swadhinata Chikithshok Parishad (SCP) at the Jatiya Press Club auditorium yesterday.

The former prime minister said her government had tried to reach

healthcare to the doorstep of the common man and taken a number of steps for development of the sector.

"Our government had increased budgetary allocation for health, introduced community healthcare system and we were able to declare Bangladesh as a country free from polio in 2001," Hasina said to the cheering doctors.

She said her government had allocated seven per cent of the national budget for health sector and Tk 15,000 crore for the Health and Population Sector Programme (HPSP).

The present government has downsized the HPSP on the plea of financial constraints, she said, asking how then it maintains a council of ministers comprising as many as 60 members.

About today's countrywide

dawn-to-dusk hartal, the AL chief said she did not want to call hartal but she had to 'concede to a demand of the repressed people, a spontaneous demand of the people when police did 'excesses' during the hunger strike programme of her party recently.

"We have called the hartal to protest continued torture and repression, distortion of history, price hike and move to dishonour the father of the nation," she said and called upon the people to make it a success.

"Unrest is prevailing in the country, people of all professions and all strata of the society are living with a sense of insecurity due to a spurt in terrorist activities and killing," she said.

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7 killed, 30 hurt as bus skids off road in Sitakundu

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

At least seven people were killed and 30 others injured, four of them seriously, when a passenger bus skidded off the Chittagong-Dhaka highway fell into a ditch at Sitakundu point in the early hours of yesterday, police and witnesses said.

The injured persons were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

Police said the bus bound for Fatikchhari from Laksam in Comilla met with the accident at Terial bazaar under Sitakundu thana at 1.30 am as the driver lost control over the steering.

Of the dead, six died on the spot while another on the way to hospital. They were identified as Selim, 30, Khorshed Alam, 28,

Shafiq, 55, Kala Mia, 22, Rafiq Ahmed, 26, Shahabuddin, 40, and Salam, 23.

Police rushed to the spot and rescued the victims.

They seized the bus, but the driver managed to flee.

In Gazipur, a woman and her daughter were killed in a road accident near Gazipura bus stand on Dhaka-Gazipur road yesterday, according to UNB.

Police said Halima Khatun, 29, and her daughter Mousumi, 4, were crushed under the wheels of a Dhaka-bound truck at about 1:30 pm while they were crossing the road.

Mousumi died on the spot and her mother succumbed to her injuries at Tongi Hospital.

Police seized the truck, but its driver managed to flee.

Rajshahi BNP leader challenges expulsion, sues Mannan Bhuiyan

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Mayoral candidate Advocate Qamrul Munir, who was recently expelled from the BNP on disciplinary charges, filed a case Thursday against BNP secretary general and LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and others concerned accusing them of wrongfully dismissing him from the party.

In his complaint filed with the court of Rajshahi Sadar Senior Assistant Judge, Munir appealed for imposing an injunction on the expulsion order issued on him by Bhuiyan.

The BNP high command recently expelled him from the party and cancelled his primary membership for his alleged violation of party discipline.

After BNP fielded Mizanur Rahman Munir as the four-party alliance candidate for the mayoral election of the Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC), Munir, who was

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Organised gangs smuggle motorbikes from India

Known as 'tana party' in Satkhira and Jessore, they also change brand, forge documents

SHAIKHZARUL ISLAM

An organised syndicate called 'tana party' in Satkhira and Jessore is engaged in stealing and smuggling motorbikes from India.

On an average, its gang members bring in 50 such motorbikes in a month and sell those at prices between Tk 25,000 and 50,000 per piece. The price depends on quality and supply. Their target is new motorbikes. They do not touch bikes running over 1000kms, people in the border areas alleged.

They are capable of converting a motorbike of one brand into any other brand by making necessary changes. They can dismantle and reassemble any bike, change the chassis number and emboss new number on it.

They also give fake registration numbers and papers for these bikes. For this, duplicate copies of genuine licences and papers of motorbikes registered in far away districts are used. For example, for

stolen motorbike to be registered in Khulna, genuine papers of a motorcycle registered in Chittagong or Cox's Bazar are forged.

The syndicate comprises several gangs, each having specific task. The groups work under the protection of law enforcers. A section of motorbike traders in bordering

districts are also allegedly involved, some members of the syndicate told this correspondent.

Members of one gang go to Kolkata and steal motorbikes with the help of their men there. They can cut the iron grills of a garage with specialised equipment called 'fighters' and steal a bike in minutes.

They hand over those to another gang stationed in bordering Baghachara in Satkhira district and some other points in Jessore. The two-wheelers are then smuggled into the country through another gang, members of which are called 'carrier'. A carrier gets Tk 2,000 for each motorbike.

"We pay Tk 3000 to BSF men, Tk 5,000 to BDR and police and the owner of a ghat in Bangladesh", one syndicate member said. A ghat is a point through which the smuggling takes place.

A gang member who does the job of stealing motorcycles in Kolkata gets Tk 10,000 to 22,000 apiece.

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ASM NURUNNABI

Dhaka city's main roads measure approximately 2,300 kilometres, out of which only 165 kilometres are reportedly accounted for footpaths. By and large, the pedestrians are unable to use a large part of the footpaths for various reasons. Besides the large-scale encroachments by hawkers in all commercial areas of the city we find a continuous process of encroachment on footpaths in new areas. For example, the footpaths of Parthapath have been occupied by traders of so-called 'foreign ships furniture' at the same time, building materials, rent-a-car stands have taken up much space of the footpaths. The footpaths on the Sonargaon Road are largely occupied by businessmen dealing in tiles and mosaic materials. In the New Paltan area, there are some instances of encroachments on footpaths from overflow of stocks from the several

car shops.

The city footpaths attract a large number of people as these places serve as venues for sales of a wide range of commodities at comparatively low prices. The problem is admittedly a difficult one. The number of people seeking a living on the footpaths is always on the increase. The police authorities sometimes launch raids to clear the encroachments but the encroachers always reappear with uncanny resilience.

It has been lately observed that

while the government is planning an end to illegal occupation of

DOWN TO EARTH

Footpaths in misery

footpaths by hawkers, a large portion of footpaths at Bijoy Sarani in the Tejkunpara area is found to be used as a parking lot by some leading business firms. More than a dozen business establishments are alleged to have used the footpaths on the eastern side of the VIP road as a parking lot.

The parked automobiles cause a lot of inconveniences to the pedestrians and the local residents as they are often compelled to step into the busy road side taking risks.

A pedestrian's steps are also beset with hazards when he tries to cross a road from one side to the

other. The so-called zebra-crossings offer no guarantee of safety to the pedestrians. Moreover, zebra-crossing marks are not found at all important road-crossings. This situation places pedestrians at a grave risk when road crossing is necessary at such points. Many vehicles either through ignorance or carelessness are seen encroaching on the supposedly safe zones for pedestrians, where such markings exist.

A serious threat to the safety of pedestrians is posed by the existence of open manholes in many

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10 'listed criminals' in KCC polls race

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Mayor of Khulna City Corporation (KCC) Shaikh Tayebur Rahman has said if re-elected he will make the corporation corruption-free.

"It is my commitment to the city dwellers to make KCC a corruption-free local government body", he said while talking to this correspondent on Wednesday.

The four-party alliance candidate in the April 25 city corporation election said he will remove all corrupt officials and employees from different departments of KCC.

He said despite a "step-motherly" attitude of the immediate past Awami League government he completed many development

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April 25 polls race include Molla Abdus Sattar from ward-21,

Mohammad Hossain Mukta from ward-31, Taslimuddin Khan Babul from ward-15, Shamsur Rahman from ward-21 and Anis Biswas from ward-16.

Police records say Golam Mawla Sharu is a professional killer. But he always evaded arrest due to 'blessings' of the successive ruling parties since 1985. Although he went underground in 1996 and remained so till January this year, he was involved in several murders as a hired killer.

Litu was expelled from Jubo League after he was suspected in the murder of Shamsur Rahman. Several operations for arresting him were simply viewed as eye-

wash because he was found moving freely. At present, he is reportedly being 'blessed' by a ruling BNP lawmaker and this encouraged him to contest the KCC polls. There are also reports that the party has 'secret deal' with Litu, Sharu and such other terrorists centring the KCC polls.

Sharu and Litu are now allegedly threatening voters in their respective wards to vote for them.

Litu's father Muslim League leader Abul Khair was stabbed to death near Khulna Collectorate building in 1970 and his uncle Jatiya Party leader Abul Kashem was gunned down in front of Khulna thana in 1995.