

Contractor shot dead at Savar

BSS, Dhaka

A young contractor was shot dead by a gang of terrorists near Shapla Kanon Housing Society at Savar yesterday.

Police and local people said a gang of eight terrorists demanded money from Nazim Uddin, 25, while he was working at the housing society at about 12:45 pm.

As Nazim refused to oblige, the miscreants shot him point blank.

Local people said they reached the spot hearing the sound of gunshots and caught six of the gang.

They beat the terrorists and later handed them over to police.

The terrorists were identified as Sohrab Uddin Bhulu, Mamun Ratan Mazif, Majnu Mollah and Yunus.

Nazim was immediately sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the doctors declared him dead.

Police later arrested two more terrorists -- Khorshed and Milon -- for their alleged involvement in the killing.

A case was registered with Savar thana in this connection.

Shahriar's cassettes Hearing on petition for screening Apr 24

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Fourth Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka, yesterday fixed April 24 for hearing on the petition for screening of the video cassettes seized from writer and columnist Shahriar Kabir in connection with a sedition case.

Judge Mohammad Sirajul Islam also extended the CMM's Court stay order on screening of the cassettes till the date of hearing.

Earlier, the matter was sent to the Second Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court for disposal. But it was not disposed of as the petitioner (Shahriar Kabir) had no confidence in the court.

The defence lawyers did not take part in hearing on the issue as the court rejected the petition of Shahriar Kabir on March 27, seeking return of his passport seized by Special Branch (SB) of police.

The defence lawyers filed a Criminal Revision with the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka on March 13, seeking stay on the order passed by the Metropolitan Magistrate Sirajul Haider on March 3.

The Magistrate on March 3 assigned two lawyers -- Advocate Zead-al-Malum and Khondaker Abdul Mannan -- to watch the video cassettes in absence of the accused Shahriar Kabir.

But the defence lawyers submitted the petition, seeking permission

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Rape of 7-yr girl Four Jubo Dal men arrested, refused bail in Rajshahi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A magistrate's court here yesterday rejected bail petitions of four ruling party-backed Jubo Dal activists accused in a rape case in Bagmara upazila and sent them to jail.

Police arrested the four -- Ashraful, son of Abdul Aziz, Rahimuddin, son of Shamsuddin, Moklesh, son of Badal and Israfil, son of Rahim Uddin -- on Friday night on charge of raping a seven-year-old girl.

Police also picked up Rahim Uddin, father of accused Israfil yesterday for interrogation.

On the night of March 21, the Jubo Dal activists entered the house of Rajab Ali by breaking open the door. Ali is a farmer and an activist of main opposition Awami League.

Ali was sleeping in a room while his seven-year-old girl, Rajufa, a student of class three of a local BRAC school, in another room. The miscreants entered her room and violated her in front of her brother Jewel Rana.

Rajufa was first treated at Bangmara health complex and later shifted to a private clinic in Rajshahi town on March 26. The incident was unearthed when she was admitted to the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital on Friday following deterioration.

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PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Death overhead... chinks have developed (in red circle) in the steel footbridge at Fulbaria and so have signs of erosion in the parallel beam. Unless the authorities undertake repair work immediately, it may crash down on the busy traffic, taking a heavy toll.

Abduction threat sends new panic chill

7 kidnapped in city in last 3 weeks

ABUL KALAM AZAD

The recent rise in incidents of abduction for ransom in the city, especially that of school children, has increased citizen's concern about lack of security.

In addition to the widespread extortion and kidnapping, these incidents have added a new dimension to the crime scenario. In the last three weeks, two schoolboys, an infant and four businessmen were abducted in the city. One of the schoolboys- Shehab- was killed and the other, son of a traffic sergeant, is yet to be rescued.

Police believe the abductions during the period would be much higher. "Under death threat, victims families try to get them released by paying money rather than seeking police help," said a police official.

Many of the city's crime rings have taken to abduction to earn big amounts of money quickly, he said.

Intelligence sources told this correspondent that dozens of organised gangs which were

earlier involved in mugging and extortion have been attracted to 'abduction business'.

The gangs target businessmen and schoolboys of rich families, taking advantage of the law and situation in the city.

Many guardians said they do not feel secure sending their children to school. They said the incidents increased as in most of the cases the abductors either escape punishment or come out of jail because of loopholes in law and long process of trial.

"I really feel insecure when my son goes out of the house. I have no way but to take extra care," said a housewife at Rampura, whose 10-year old son reads in class five.

Abdul Malek of Elephant Road area, father of a seven-year old school student said, "I myself now take my son to school and bring him home. In my absence, somebody else of my family does it."

Many residents said they are now alarmed after the abduction and gruesome killing of Khandakar

Shehab Ahmed, a student of class seven of Motijhel Model School and College.

A gang of kidnappers abducted and killed Shehab on February 7. Pieces of his body were recovered from three places in the city's Goran, Bashabo and Khilgaon areas on Monday.

Two-year old Antim was snatched from his father's lap while he was travelling in an autorickshaw in Farmgate area on Friday evening. The abductors took him to an unknown place with a motive to realise ransom. But as the child could not tell his father's name and address, they left him near the Farmgate over-bridge.

"I was horrified at Shihab's killing. After Antim's incident, I am now bewildered how to send my son to school," said Mozammel Haq whose son is a student of class three at Residential Model School and College.

Fall of govt inevitable, says Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League president Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the "fascist BNP-Jamaat" government would not be able to foil the ongoing mass movement by resorting to repressive measures.

"The government will not be able to resist its inevitable fall in the face of a mass upheaval," she said in a statement while congratulating the people for their "spontaneous observance" of the dawn-to-dusk hartal across the country.

Hasina accused the government of using police force in obstructing her party leaders and workers in holding rallies during the hartal. Even senior leaders were prevented from entering the party central office, she alleged.

"The people have made the hartal a success as they have become hostage to terrorists who are engaged in killing, oppression, grabbing property, extortion and rape under the patronage of the government," she said.

She said the people ignored arrest and repression and expressed their non-confidence in the government by observing the hartal as the government has completely failed to run the country.

She called upon all irrespective of their party affiliations to carry forward the movement and unitedly resist the "anti-people activities of the fascist government."

BCL central committtee announced

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 189-member central committee of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), student wing of the Awami League, was announced yesterday for a one-year tenure.

Liaqat Sikdar and Nazrul Islam Babu were elected president and general secretary respectively of the new BCL body through direct vote by the councilors at the 27th central council of BCL convened on Wednesday night.

The Awami League and BCL leadership named the other BCL office-bearers based on their performance and dedication to the organisation.

The vice-presidents of the new committee include Marufa Akhtar Popi, Rafiqul Islam Kotwal, Balram Poddar, Anisur Rahman, Ashrafud Azim Ruban, Abdul Wadud Khokon, Saifuddin Nasir, Shahjada Mohiuddin, Golam Sarwar Mamun, Najmul Hasan Anik and Jasimuddin Azam.

Saifuzzaman Shikhar, Mazhar Anam, Mihir Kanti Ghoshal and Khan Mainul Islam Mostak were named joint secretaries.

Zakir Hossain Maruf, Nazmul

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Businessman murdered in Rajshahi

BSS, Rajshahi

A businessman was murdered and five others were injured when a gang of miscreants attacked them at Moukhara under Gurudaspur upazila of the district yesterday, police and hospital sources said.

The motive behind the attack could not be known immediately.

Police identified the victim as Sazzad Hossain, 30, son of Khalil Uddin of Chanchokir Bamonkola village under the same upazila.

Police said the gang attacked Sazzad Hossain and his uncle Chhabil Uddin, 57, while they were going to Moukhara Bazar.

The miscreants stabbed them indiscriminately and fled the scene, local people rushed to the spot and took the victims to Natore Sadar Hospital where the attending doctors declared Sazzad Hossain dead.

Seriously injured Chhabil Uddin was shifted to the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital as his condition deteriorated.

Police arrested one of the alleged attackers, Faridul Islam, 32, along with some lethal weapons from the area.

A case was filed with Gurudaspur thana accusing 17 people.

ADB to help build Padma Bridge

UNB, Dhaka

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has shown interest in providing assistance in construction of the proposed Padma Bridge as the prime minister sought the bank's cooperation in the project.

Newly appointed ADB country director Toru Shibuchi held out the assurance when he called on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday. He said a feasibility study on the bridge would be conducted soon.

Khaleda Zia said the entire country would come under direct road communication network following construction of the bridge. This will be the longest bridge in the country.

She recalled that work on the Jamuna Bridge started and major portion completed during the past tenure of BNP in the office.

She said the BNP-led 4-party coalition needs assistance for

development and to provide better life to the people. She assured proper utilisation of all assistance without pilferage, abuse or wastage.

She said development work during the 91-96 BNP regime was a testimony to her government's commitment.

Khaleda Zia lauded the role of Asian Development Bank in the socioeconomic progress of Bangladesh.

The ADB country director said the bank is formulating a policy to assess the assistance needed for 2003-2005 in Bangladesh and how the bank could be involved in 10 different sectors particularly primary education, energy, rural electrification, agro-based industry and health.

The bank executive also assured of increasing its assistance in development, poverty alleviation and information communication technology (ICT).

Principal Secretary Dr Kamal

Siddiqui and Deputy Resident Representative Omkar Shrestha were present, in the meeting.

During the meeting the bank executive appreciated the prime minister's strong personal commitment for poverty alleviation, development of education and ICT sector.

He appreciated the government's initiative for economic and social uplift, infrastructure development and improvement of law and order situation immediately after it came to power.

During the discussion the ADB country director informed that the bank has ensured assistance of 264 million US dollars of which 199 million would be utilised for power generation, transmission and distribution while the rest 65 million in the education sector.

The prime minister sought the bank's support in setting up an ICT

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HOSPITAL WATCH

Mitford Hospital has no artificial ventilator

NAIMUL HAQ

A patient like Khorshed Mia, 45, with critical respiratory ailments at the Mitford Hospital suffers doubly due to absence of any lifesaving artificial ventilator.

Without the respiration machine that ventilates air into and out of the lungs, the state-owned second-largest healthcare provider refers patients with critical respiratory ailments to other hospitals, especially the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

"It is a lifesaving device commonly used in emergency, but in the absence of the machine, we apply manual respiration with the help of Ambu-Bag to keep patients alive," said Dr Manzurul Alam, head of the Department of Anaesthesia of the Mitford Hospital.

On Tuesday, the Department of

Anaesthesia had to send Khorshed in an unconscious state to the DMCH -- a case in point.

In the bed No. 1 of the postoperative ward next to the general operation theatre on the second floor of the hospital, Khorshed was gasping for air with a young doctor struggling to save his life with Ambu-Bag, a manual ventilation device. Khorshed, a cancer patient, is a resident of Kamrangirchar.

Khorshed badly needed connection to an automatic ventilator. His condition might dip further unless he was put on an automatic ventilator, doctors apprehended.

Admitted on March 24, Khorshed suffered heart failure among other complications. His brain cells may have suffered damage as he remained without oxygen for over a minute while in a coma, doctors said.

Father of five, Khorshed, a carpenter who earns hardly Tk 50 a day, with throat cancer over the last couple of years, was earlier admitted to the ENT Department.

The son-in-law of Khorshed said he went to many other hospitals for the treatment of his father-in-law. "I have no idea why he is being referred to another hospital," he said.

Khorshed was shifted to the DMCH at around 1.00pm as the hospital's only ambulance was out of order. A private ambulance cost Khorshed's family Tk 400 at a discount for a one-way eight-kilometre trip.

Every week, the hospital refers patients requiring artificial ventilation to other hospitals.

Last month, the hospital sent more than ten such critically ill patients, mostly to the DMCH.

"I know the problem with ventilator and also aware of the fact that many patients are referred to other hospitals," said Dr Abdur Rahman Khan, director of the hospital.

Asked if he has taken any initiative to resolve the matter, he said, "No, I did not inform the Directorate of Health about it yet."

A ventilator is usually used during suspension of natural respiration caused by diseases like poliomyelitis or cardiac failure, by electric shock, by an overdose of depressants such as morphine, barbiturates or alcohol, or by suffocation from drowning, breathing noxious gases, or blockage of the respiratory tract.

If the brain is deprived of oxygen for five minutes, it may be permanently damaged. A slightly longer period without oxygen usually results in death, the doctors said.

The exception is drowning in the very cold water, in which the body's oxygen demand is greatly reduced, and people have been revived even after one hour and a half in the cold water.

First human cloning pregnancy

REUTERS, London

A woman taking part in a controversial human cloning programme is 8 weeks pregnant, Britain's New Scientist magazine reported on its Web site on Friday.

It cited Italy's outspoken fertility expert Severino Antinori, one of two specialists leading the effort, as saying: "One woman among thousands of infertile couples in the programme is 8 weeks pregnant."

If true, this would represent the first human cloning pregnancy. However, Antinori's office in Rome declined to confirm or deny the report.

Antinori's colleague, Panos Zavos of the Andrology Institute of America in Lexington, Kentucky, had previously announced that the pair planned to clone a baby by the end of 2001. He also refused to confirm or deny the report to New Scientist.

The magazine, which seeks to popularise science for lay readers, said its report was based on an article in the Gulf News newspaper. Antinori is said to have made the claim at a meeting in the United Arab Emirates. He did not disclose the nationality of the woman or her location.

If confirmed, the pregnancy will cause uproar, New Scientist said. Many countries have banned reproductive cloning and most prominent scientists have warned of the high risk of severe birth defects, as well as very high rates of miscarriage. The technology is also opposed by many on ethical grounds.

Richard Gardner, an expert on early mammalian embryo development

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Army deployed at Ctg WASA installations

BSS, Ctg

Army personnel have been deployed at WASA headquarters here and other distribution points yesterday to ensure smooth supply of water.

Two platoons of army of the engineering core have been posted to assist uninterrupted supply of water from the WASA's existing system. In addition, army will take steps to supply water by its own arrangements to different crisis point, official sources said.

WASA sources said the present production capacity of Chittagong WASA is about 38 million gallons of water a day against the demand of 120 million gallons.

The problem worsened following the onset of dry season. Chittagong WASA has taken initiative to set up three water supply Stations at a cost of over Taka 500 crore to produce 40 million gallons of water a day, WASA sources said.