

World Health Day

FROM PAGE 12 including a rally, a discussion meeting, and essay and painting competitions.

A colourful procession was brought out from the Jatiya Press Club in the morning. It ended at the Engineers' Institution after parading the main thoroughfares.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain led the street rally.

State Minister for Health Amanullah Aman, officials of the Health Ministry, representatives of the donor agencies, activists of NGOs and voluntary organisations and members of scouts took part in the rally.

The participants carried banners and placards inscribed with various slogans of the World Health Day.

A discussion meeting was held at the Engineers' Institution with Health Secretary Fazlur Rahman in

the chair.

Health Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, State Minister for Health Amanullah Aman and WHO Representative Suniti Achariya, among others, spoke in the meeting.

Later, the Health Minister distributed prizes among the winners of the essay and painting competitions arranged on the occasion of World Health Day.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines Flying Services Association of Cabin Crew arranged a blood donation programme on the occasion.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin inaugurated the programme. Managing Director of Bangladesh Biman Air Commodore M Khasrul Alam and senior officers attended the programme.

PDB official found dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The death of a deputy programmer of the Power Development Board (PDB) is shrouded in mystery.

Idris Ali, 45, was found dead yesterday on the front porch of the fourth floor of the 30-storey Bangladesh Bank building.

In the morning, he left his Mugdapara residence for his Motijheel office and came out of his office after an hour.

Family sources said he might have been murdered. A few days ago, he was abducted, they added.

The Bangladesh Bank employees found the body at noon and informed Motijheel Police Station.

Some of his colleagues said he was suffering from mental depression for the last few days. He was frustrated for not being promoted, as a note found in his pocket shows.

The incident took place between 11:30am and 12 noon, but his wife and daughter, a Dhaka University student, were not informed of the death until 5.00pm, family members complained.

The duty officer of the Motijheel Police Station said the man might have jumped from the rooftop of the building. Police recovered the body and sent it to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Rajiuddin Harun, a PDB director, filed a case with Motijheel Police Station in this regard.

Tk 7 lakh snatched in Rajshahi

BSS, Rajshahi

A gang of miscreants snatched away Taka seven lakh, three motorbikes and two mobile phone sets from three contractors from Sagarpara area under Boalia thana here Saturday night.

The contractors were identified as – Abul Hashem, 35, a resident of Baragram area, Shafique Ahmed, 32, and Nazrul Islam, 35, of Bheripara under Rajpara thana.

Police said the miscreants intercepted the contractors while they were passing the area riding three motorbikes. The miscreants stabbed Abul Hashem and Shafique severely and snatched away the money, their motorbikes and the mobile phone sets.

Police later recovered the snatched motorbike from the area.

Israel ignores Bush

FROM PAGE 1 since the Palestinian uprising began in September 2000.

Arafat remained pinned in his Ramallah headquarters while 200 armed gunmen inside Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity, one of Christianity's holiest sites, were in the sixth day of a stand-off with Israeli troops.

Major General Dan Halutz, commander of the Israeli air force, said Operation Defensive Wall, as it is called, could not be rushed. "The armed forces need time, more time," he said.

On the ground the Israeli crack-down appeared to be achieving its goal with no suicide attacks since April 1. The offensive was launched two days after a suicide bomb attack in Netanyahu on the Jewish Passover holiday.

Israeli radio said the death toll from that bombing rose to 27 on Sunday when Sarah Levy, an 88-year survivor of the Nazi holocaust, succumbed to her wounds.

The army says it has arrested 1,200 Palestinians, including 100 "terrorists" on a wanted list, and seized large quantities of bombs and other weapons in its campaign.

US officials said Bush made a personal phone call to Sharon on Saturday to press for quick action after saying at press conference with British Prime Minister Tony Blair that Israel should withdraw "without delay".

The Palestinian leadership said in a statement yesterday that Bush's failure to fix a firm date "encourages Sharon and gives him the green light to carry out further war crimes". The Palestinians said the previous day that the ferocious assault

Buddhadev's remarks baseless, FM tells JS

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Morshed Khan yesterday dismissed as untrue and baseless the reported remarks by West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya that foreign agents are operating from Bangladesh and Pakistan's security outfit ISI is sponsoring that.

To a call-attention notice of Jamaat-e-Islam member Shah Mohammad Ruhul Quddus in parliament, Khan said the Bangladesh government through its diplomatic channel took up the matter with the Indian government.

They denied that the Chief Minister had made any such remarks at a public meeting in Guwahati in February, Khan said.

The Foreign Minister said, "Bangladesh never allowed anyone to carry on terrorism from its territory against any country and will not do so in future."

About the Jamaat member's allegation that opposition leader Sheikh Hasina is busy discovering Taliban in the 4-party alliance government, Morshed Khan said, "This is an unfortunate and suicidal attempt to tarnish the image of Bangladesh by launching false and fictitious propaganda at home and abroad."

Regional leader of Sarbahara Party arrested

UNB, Magura

A regional leader of outlawed Sarbahara Party was arrested from Kodalia village in Sadar upazila early yesterday.

Police, acting on a tip off, raided the village and arrested Shamsel Islam alias Robin, 68, when he was conducting a secret meeting with his associates.

Robin, who was accused in at least 13 cases including killing, extortion, dacoity, was recently granted bail in all cases.

Gas committee

FROM PAGE 1 Bangladesh (Hydrocarbon Cell of Energy Ministry) study.

The USGS and Petrobangla in its study said Bangladesh has an average potential of finding 32.1 trillion cubic feet (tcf) gas in the next 30 years, a 95 per cent potential of striking 8.4tcf gas and only five per cent possibility of hitting 65.7tcf.

Bushra murder Court issues warrant for arrest of Runu Kader

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Third Special Court for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka, yesterday accepted the naraji petition in Bushra Islam alias Phool murder case.

The court also issued a warrant for arrest of Runu Kader, wife of M A Kader, the main accused in the case.

Judge Sarker Abul Mansur passed the order following a naraji petition against the charge sheet submitted by the investigation officers (IOs) of the case on December 29, 2000.

In its order, the court mentioned that Runu's name was dropped from the charge sheet, although the charges brought against her were primarily proved.

The charges against Runu were found during the investigation but the investigation officers (IOs) dropped her name from the charge sheet, the court observed.

After scrutinising the case diary (CD) and documents, the court passed the order. The court also scrutinised the statements of the prosecution witnesses and found Runu guilty of charges.

Mosammat Laila Islam, complainant of the case, submitted a naraji petition on January last year as name of Runu Kader was dropped from the charge sheet by four investigation officers.

The court heard the petition on April 1 and gave the order yesterday. The court also fixed April 23 for hearing on charge framing in the case.

Accused M A Kader, Kaniz Fatema Hena, Sheikh Shawkat Ahmed Ruhul and Sufia Begum were produced before the court during the hearing. Another accused Sheikh Kabir Ahmed has been absconding since the incident.

Advocate T M Akbar appeared for the state while Advocate Mahbub Ahmed and Moslemuddin for the accused.

Rushdhania Bushra Islam alias Phool, 18, a college student and daughter of a retired police officer, was raped and murdered at their Hazipara resident in the city's Rampura area on the night of July 1, 2000.

Later, victim's mother Laila Islam filed a murder case with Ramna thana on September 5, 2000 accusing M A Kader, his wife Runu Kader and four others.

Shihab murder

FROM PAGE 1 As directed by Raju, Liton grabbed Shihab from behind and Sabuj pressed his mouth. Shihab fell on the floor. Nasim sat on his belly, Sayed held his legs tightly and Raju strangled him.

Later, they bought two sharp knives, a school bag and two shopping bags. They sliced the body into pieces and dumped those in three separate places in the city, Sayed said.

Meanwhile, Julekha Akther and her daughter Kankon Akther Kanok, arrested earlier for questioning in connection with the incident, were produced before the CMM's Court by detective police with a prayer for two days' remand.

After the hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate Sirajul Haider placed them on two days' remand.

Interrogation of three other accused continued for the fifth day yesterday. They are on seven days' remand.

The horrifying murder came to light on the night of March 31 when Liton and Sayed were arrested by detective police when they came to take the ransom money from a sweetmeat shop in Khilgaon area.

Six people Liton, Sayed, Rushed, Fazlul Haq, his wife Julekha and his daughter Konok – were arrested on April 1. But the other accused – Raju, Rubel, Sabuj and Nasim – are yet to be arrested.

Branch closure

FROM PAGE 1 its 249 loss-making ones, Agrani Bank to close down 86 of its 142 loss-making ones, Rupali Bank to shut down 41 of its 82 loss-making branches and the BKB will close 10 branches out of 71 loss-making ones.

All the MDs said they are running with manpower shortage and as such, the staff of the closed down branches will be accommodated to the nearest branches or deployed in special classified loan recovery drive.

However, the Bank Reform Committee, headed by Professor Wahiduddin Mahmud, in its report in 1999 pointed out that the state-owned banks had 30 per cent excess manpower.

When the attention of the MDs was drawn to this point, Murshid Kuli Khan, managing director of Janata Bank, said the report was prepared three years back and the situation has changed since then.

"In most cases, recruitment have been put on hold. Many officers went into retirement and many lost jobs," Khan said.

ASM Emdadul Huq, managing director of Agrani Bank, said there are 2166 vacant posts in his bank as per the organogram.



PHOTO: AFP

Palestinian gunmen exchange fire with Israeli troops during street battles in the Old City of Nablus yesterday. Four Palestinians, including three fighters, were killed, Palestinian security officials said.

AL: Tarnishing image

FROM PAGE 12 statement came following a recent cover story on Bangladesh published in the Hong Kong-based newsmagazine the Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER). The April 4 issue of FEER, which the government has already banned, said, "Rising fundamentalism and religious intolerance are threatening secularism and moderate Islam" in Bangladesh, adding that the country had "militant groups with links to international terrorist groups."

Hasina's statement, however, did not have any direct reference to the FEER report. Rather, it was issued to clarify the AL position in general.

"Building a good country image is our national duty, which we all must perform as a unified and not as a divided nation," the statement read. While affirming the AL's tough position regarding any image-tarnishing moves, Hasina said, "We must, however, also ask ourselves how to keep our country's image untarnished and make it more positive at the same time."

She claimed that during the AL regime, the country was projected as a society of moderation, tolerance and communal harmony. "But since October, 2001 with the BNP-Jamaat coalition in power,

we have witnessed, as has the rest of the world, a countrywide and regular pattern of extra-judicial killings of Awami League activists and leaders, political repression and torture, a systematic persecution of religious minorities, a sharp rise in violence, religious intolerance and terrorism," she said.

She noted that in the age of information technology, none could hide violation of human rights or any other wrongdoing from the eye of the world. "It is however now critical that we silence criticism by rebuilding the country's image," she added.

Hasina stressed the need for reestablishing rule of law, rejecting those who breed and believe in religious intolerance, reining in criminals and toll collectors regardless of their political affiliation, stopping political persecution and torture, bringing culprits to book and respecting the values of tolerance and democracy.

Referring to the killings, terrorists vying for positions in local government bodies and the listed 'top criminals' meeting with a government minister, she said if this trend continues "the country's image will be tarnished in all spheres and the people will rapidly lose confidence in the government."

The opposition leader also stated that, "governance seems to

have failed and is now almost absent. The recent consistent and repeated remarks by the finance minister that governance, respect for human rights as well as law and order have to be considerably improved in Bangladesh and is a pre-condition to any assistance from the donors, strongly supports this growing perception."

While stressing the need for united efforts in rebuilding the country's image abroad, Hasina found it unfortunate that, "till date the BNP-Jamaat government seems to have done everything it possibly can to divide the nation by politicising and undermining the critical institutions of the police and the civil service, by obstructing and denying the Awami League, the largest political party in the country, its most rudimentary political rights, and by tarnishing and doctoring even the history of our nation."

Lakeside land

FROM PAGE D1 have built several structures on the land.

A Rajuk official said a case against the illegal occupiers is now pending and they may go for evicting them soon.

Appointment of judiciary officials

FROM PAGE 1 of the government -- which stands in the way of separation of judiciary.

The committee also could not decide whether the jobs of judicial magistrates would be transferable to judicial services and vice versa.

The committee directed secretaries of the cabinet, and the establishment, home and law ministries to file a report within April 12 recommending a set of issues.

These should include recommendations as to the rules for promotion of judicial officers, whether the criminal and civil courts should be separate, whether magistrates could become High Court judges and whether there should be separate service rules for judicial magistracy and judicial service.

The committee would hold its third meeting on April 13 to discuss the progresses made so far.

The service commission would have a seven-member body chaired by a judge of the Supreme Court Appellate Division. The members would include a justice from the High Court, law secretary, a member from the Judicial Service cadre, a member from the Public Service Commission, the dean of the Law Faculty, Dhaka University and an official from outside the judicial service. The president will appoint the service commission members.

The service commission will scrutinise and hold tests for newcomers in the judiciary service.

The president may seek opinion on judicial issues from the service commission.

The two other rules and regulations being drafted deal with Judicial Service and Pay Commission, and

Judicial Service (administration). Though not finalised, it has been decided that the new judicial officer of the judiciary would be designated "Assistant Judge".

The assistant judges would enjoy a window of opportunity to join magistracy depending on the Supreme Court's decision. Similarly, the present magistrates will enjoy a window of opportunity to join the judicial service, also depending on the Supreme Court's evaluation.

This window of opportunity would be open for one year after the service commission is formed.

Sources said, in this manner, a maximum 50 per cent of the present magistrates might be absorbed in the judiciary.

Car bomb kills 12 in Colombia

REUTERS, Bogota

At least 12 people were killed and 25 others injured when a powerful car bomb exploded early yesterday in a crowded street in southeastern Colombia, police said.

No armed group fighting in the country's 38-year old war has claimed responsibility for the bomb, which exploded around 1.10 am local time (0610 GMT) in a popular area packed with restaurants and nightclubs in the city of Villavicencio, some 40 miles (64 km) southeast of the capital Bogota.

"At the moment we have 12 people killed and 25 injured. This is indiscriminate terrorism," police colonel Jorge Alirio Baron told Reuters by telephone.

Baron said the street was crowded with people enjoying a night out when the explosion occurred. The blast damaged several buildings, including three radio stations and shops.

Colombia is embroiled in a war pitting leftist rebels against state security forces and right-wing paramilitary outlaws. Efforts to end a war that claims the lives of 3,500 people every year collapsed last February after President Andres Pastrana broke off peace talks with FARC rebels.

Villavicencio is playing host this weekend for the tennis Davis Cup tournament between Colombia and Uruguay.

In January, a bicycle bomb blamed on FARC leftist rebels in Bogota killed six people and injured 14 others. Colombians go to the polls in May 26 to pick a new president. Independent candidate Alvaro Uribe, who is running a campaign on promises to crack down on rebels and restore law and order, is the front-runner, according to opinion polls.

New law : Hasina

FROM PAGE 1 opposition leader feared that only innocent citizens would be victimised under the proposed law.

She said the party in power will abuse the law to satisfy their personal grudge.

Her government while in power did not choose the path of revenge on its opponents, although the present government has been engaged in "Political persecution" since its assumption of power, she said.

"Bangladesh is an abode of peace and communal harmony. But because of this government religious harmony is being marred. Though the government tried to suppress it in the local press by issuing threats and intimidation, but it would not be able to do it on foreign media."

Reaffirming her party's stand on peaceful coexistence of all religious faiths, Hasina said secularism does not mean a negation of religion.

"Pious people of Bangladesh were misguided through misinterpretation of Islam by traders in religion who are now engaged in

acts of terrorism."

Expressing deep concern at deterioration of law and order, Hasina said the home minister himself admitted in parliament that 1,075 people were murdered under the alliance's rule, but actual situation is "much more alarming" as all murder cases were not recorded.

Leaders of Mymensingh Ulema League Alhaj A K M Badruddoza, Hafiz Abul Hasim, and Sahmsul Alam Jahangir also spoke on the occasion. Awami League leaders Abdus Samad Azad and Sultan Mohammad Monsur Ahmed were present.

Later, leaders of Awami League Bandaran and Rangamti met the Awami League chief at her residence and discussed the ways to strengthen the party in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region. CHT leaders Depankar Takulder, Bir Bahadur, Ashutos Barua, Abdur Rahim Chowdhury and Sahfiquur Rahman, among others, were present.

Anti-crime bill

FROM PAGE 1 the offenders are caught in the act. In such a case, the process of trial would be completed within 30 days from the date of submission of the charge sheet.

If the accused is not caught immediately, the police will submit the charge sheet within seven days and the trial would be completed in the next 60 days. The proposed law also has a provision for trial of the accused in absentia.

It also provides for a two to five years' jail term for bringing false charges. It also allows a magistrate to record a witness's statement right on the spot. A court will accept as evidences audio- and videotapes and recorded conversations.

The law in the pipeline enables the trial and the appeal courts to grant bail to the accused or the convict but the court will have to record the ground for such action.

The government will set up one or more special tribunals in every district and the metropolises with

first class magistrates heading them.

Jatiya Party lawmaker GM Quader opposed the introduction of the law for its being a 'black' one. "The proposed law would be used to harass the opposition," he said, adding that fair execution of the existing laws could well help contain crimes.

In his statement on the bill's aims and objectives, the home minister said the law is needed to improve the law and order through quick trial of the criminals like terrorists, extortionists and muggers in the special court. Only speedy trials of the offenders would restore peace in public life, he argued.

The minister admitted that such serious crimes as extortion, mugging, snatching of tender papers and tender manipulation, threats and vandalism on vehicles were disrupting public life and that different sections of society were demanding quick trial of the criminals.

Rajshahi BNP

FROM PAGE 12 race, creating feuds in the party. He has been expelled from the party by the party high command.

"Minu and Munir with their followers have become busy with their own campaigning. Some other leaders have become inactive to avoid feuds and now there is none to think about our problems," said Mustafij, a BNP man contesting for the post of commissioner in Ward No 10.

Losing the mayoral nomination to BNP, Jamaat was expecting "concession" from its ally for some posts of ward commissioner. "But BNP is not showing any interest to reach a consensus with us for fielding an unanimous candidate from four-party in each ward," said Maolana Habibur Rahman, who is contesting from Ward No 11.

There are rumours that Minu and Jamaat city unit Amir Ataur Rahman have reached a consensus over fielding "unanimous" candidates in some wards and have given green signals to their "faithful" followers.

But the rumours have created agitation among the candidates from both the parties. Consensus in all the wards is almost impossible as most of the candidates are not ready to accept the decisions of the leaders if those go against them, BNP sources said.

"Every one wants the decision to be made in his favour," said Jane Alam, joint secretary of the city unit of BNP. "We cannot find any alternative to seeing our people contesting against one another, creating opportunity for candidates from our opponent camps."

Meanwhile, mayoral candidates Minu and Munir have fallen into trouble in campaigning. Field-level leaders and activists are busy campaigning for their respective ward commissioner candidates

because there are five to 16 contestants in every ward. They say simultaneous campaigns for mayoral and a ward commissioner candidates would harm one or both.

Processions are being brought out everyday in favour of ward commissioner candidates but such programmes for mayoral candidates are seldom seen.

So far, only Minu made a massive showdown by taking out a big procession of about 5000 people in the city on March 31.

Under the circumstances, the mayoral candidates are preferring mass contact by moving from door to door, the sources said.

Proposed law

FROM PAGE 12 'fourth state' and an integral part of parliamentary democracy, the bill identified journalists as 'strangers' and proposed restrictions on news about certain issues regarding parliament.

Chief Whip of the Opposition Abdus Shahid termed it a 'black law' for the press.

Former cabinet secretary Mujibul Haq said the structure of balance and separation of authority, made by the Constitution, will be hampered if the proposed law is passed. He told Bangladi daily Proton Alo that it would also create social imbalance.

Asaduzzaman Noor, an Awami League MP, strongly opposed the proposal for use of the National Flag in cars of MPs. This will alienate lawmakers from the people.

He said he will raise his voice against any provision hindering press freedom and freedom of speech.