

**Backlash against
murder of Pabna
BNP man:
Houses
torched, 30 hurt**

UNB, Pabna

A BNP worker was killed in the town Saturday night that set off a violent backlash yesterday, leaving 30 people injured.

Witnesses said some 25 youths attacked the Ramchandrapur area at 11 am yesterday as the news of killing of Asam, 21, by another group was known.

The ruling party worker of the area was stabbed to death near the Vocational Institute at 9 pm on Saturday.

Witnesses said the protesters swooped on at least 15 houses, ransacking all and torching some. Valuables, including cash and gold ornaments, were allegedly looted from the houses during the orgy.

Local BNP alleged that "terrorists backed by Awami League" killed Asam as he protested snatching of money from a small trader by the gang recently.

Awami Leaguers denied the allegation. They said the killing and the attack on the same area were in a sequel to rivalry between two factions in local BNP.

**AL 'against
tarnishing
country's
image'**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina has said her party strongly condemns any motivated effort to tarnish the country's image abroad.

"Regarding some articles published recently in some foreign media, we wish to state in unequivocal terms that as a matter of principle, we strongly condemn any motivated effort from any quarter to tarnish our national image through falsehood," Hasina said in a statement issued yesterday.

The Awami League (AL) chief's

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**President
assents to
four bills**

UNB, Dhaka

President Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury has assented to four bills passed in the second session of the fifth parliament.

The bills are -- Money Laundering Prevention Bill 2002, Jatiya Mukti Joddha Council Bill 2002, Bangladesh Environment Preservation (Amendment) Bill 2002 and Environment Court (Amendment) Bill 2002.

The President assented to the bills on Friday, said a Parliament Secretariat press release yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Life at a low ebb, friendship at a high tide... students of the Renaissance Pre-cadet and High School in Tongi form a human chain at Muktagan in the city as part of a fundraiser for the treatment of Rashedul Alam Riffat (in the chair), a cancer patient.

**Rift in Rajshahi BNP
over city polls**

ABDUL WADOOD, Rajshahi

A bitter in-fighting in BNP has now surfaced centring the city corporation election, but the local leaders seem to be in no hurry to resolve the crisis.

Sources in BNP said three to six party men are contesting for each of the 30 posts of ward commissioner. Two to four party candidates are in the race for each of the 10 reserved seats for women commissioner.

To add fuel the fray, BNP's ally Jamaat-e-Islami, which has a strong base in the city, has also fielded one candidate each in 14 wards.

The local leaders of BNP and Jamaat are under bitter criticism from party activists and supporters

for not announcing 'unanimous' candidates of the four-party alliance (FPA) for posts of ward commissioner. The situation has made election prospects of BNP men bleak, others sources claimed.

Sources in the two parties said the local committee of the FPA has not yet met to resolve the problem.

"There is no move by the leaders to resolve such a critical problem," said Sekender Ali, a BNP activist and ward commissioner candidate from Ward No 11.

The party leaders sat three times so far after announcement of the election schedule but the meetings discussed matters and took decisions regarding mayoral candida-

tes.

"The leaders are busy with their own problems. They have no time or interest for us," said another ward commissioner candidate seeking anonymity.

About a dozen leaders of BNP and its front organisations were vying for mayoral nomination. Finally, Mayor Mijaur Rahman Minu MP got the nomination.

BNP's Rajshahi city unit president Ekhlaq Hossain and its district unit general secretary Qamrul Munir were also candidates. Hossain withdrew his candidature in favour of Minu but has now become inactive. Munir is still in the

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**Safe Blood
Transfusion
Bill tabled**

UNB, Dhaka

A bill seeking to ensure collection of safe blood after screening and reducing health risk was introduced in parliament yesterday.

Health Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain tabled the Safe Blood Transfusion Bill, 2002 providing for collection, preservation and transfusion of safe blood.

In the statement, the minister said it is aimed to ensure safe blood transfusion at private hospitals. About 270,000 bags of blood are required in the country every year.

According to available statistics, 30 per cent blood is given by voluntary donors while 70 per cent by professional donors. The health minister said the blood given by professional donors carries a lot of risk because most of them are drug addicts or affected by dangerous blood borne diseases like hepatitis virus and HIV.

**World Health
Day observed**

UNB, Dhaka

World Health Day was observed yesterday in the country as elsewhere in the globe with a renewed call to ensure better health for all.

This year's theme of the day was "Move for Health".

President A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages on the occasion.

The government observed the day with elaborate programmes

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Nuke against India last resort: Musharraf

AP, Berlin

the German newsweekly Der Spiegel. "And I am optimistic and self-confident enough to believe that we can also defend ourselves conventionally."

The South Asian nuclear rivals have fought three wars since independence in 1947. They have faced off on their border and the cease-fire line dividing Kashmir between them since a Dec. 13 attack on the parliament building in New Delhi

that India blamed on Pakistani-based Islamic militants.

Musharraf also said he wants to see the main suspect in the abduction and slaying of US journalist Daniel Pearl put to death and said it was "plausible" that alleged terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden had died of a kidney ailment in Afghanistan.

Musharraf, who aligned Pakistan

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**Police on hunt
for criminals
in DCC fray**

**Ruling BNP-backed thugs
off the netting list**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police have launched manhunt for the alleged criminals contending for the post of ward commissioner in the upcoming Dhaka City Corporation elections.

Interestingly enough, the names of the criminals belonging to the ruling party have been dropped from the police's manhunt list, sources said.

The accused contestants have already gone into hiding following publication of a series of news reports on their participation in the elections and the Election Commission's expressive stance on excluding them from the electoral race.

A top police officer, however, assured that they would arrest the criminals irrespective of their political affiliation.

In the list of 23 most wanted criminals, two of the four alleged criminals -- Aga Shahim of the old part of the city and 'Killer Abbas' of Mohakhali -- have stepped down from the electoral race.

They have withdrawn from the race only to work on behalf of other candidates, the sources said.

Killer Abbas and Kala Jahangir, another alleged terrorist, are working on behalf of Imam Hossain, another most wanted criminal contesting the DCC polls from Mohakhali area with Jahangir as chief coordinator of his election campaign.

Alaudin of Tejgaon, one of the four criminals, and Imam of Mohakhali -- are still in the fray. They stuck posters on the walls and went on electioneering in their localities.

The government ordered police to arrest the most wanted criminals. Published were their pictures to help police arrest them.

The locals of Tejgaon area said Alaudin threw it in the air that he and his members were checking telephones and cell phones, firms and offices. If anybody tries to contact the police, his gang will be informed, they added.

**Proposed law to ban
media coverage on JS
'unconstitutional'**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Parliamentarians, constitution experts and members of the civil society have blasted the proposed law seeking special privilege and powers for the Jatiya Sangsad, the Speaker and lawmakers and restrictions on the press.

They termed it an unconstitutional move.

Treasury Bench member Mohammad Abu Henza piloted the bill titled "The Jatiya Sangsad (Special Privileges and Powers) Act, 2002" on the last private members' day on Thursday.

The proposed provisions in the bill came under heavy criticism by the press.

Veteran parliamentarian Suranjan Sengupta of Awami League said privileges of MPs are inadequate and they need more privileges to serve the people. But he criticised the bill and said, "Most probably, a relatively new parliamentarian piloted the bill without knowing everything".

About the proposed clauses related to the press, Suranjan, also a constitution expert, said, "The press should not be repressed". Since the Constitution ensures freedom of speech and though, it is unnece-

sary to introduce such law to "throttle the press".

He suggested that the bill he drafted earlier during the tenure of the last parliament could be passed by the present parliament to increase privilege of lawmakers.

Eminent lawyer M Zahir said the press is the "guardian of democracy" in a civilized nation and it should not be controlled or threatened to be controlled. The restrictions proposed in the new bill are nothing but obstacles to press freedom and democracy.

"None should muzzle the press," the lawyer said referring to the expressive role of the press during the War of Liberation in 1971. "Since then, the press has been playing its role as the guardian of people's right".

He termed extra-constitutional the proposed judicial powers for the parliament and the Speaker. The persons who make laws should not exercise judicial powers. Persons exercising judicial power must be independent, free from any government influence and political affiliation, he said.

Although the press has long been considered the

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PHOTO: STAR

Mayoral hopeful Sadeq Hossain Khoka waves at crowd to kickstart his election campaign at Mirpur in the city yesterday.

**Simi's family threatened
with dire consequence**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The absconding hoodlums who harried Simi into committing suicide in December last year are now threatening her family members to withdraw the case filed against them or to face 'dire consequences'.

According to sources in Bhuiyanpara in Khilgaon area in the city where the suicide incident took place, the alleged criminals -- Khalil, Ripon, Doel, Mofazzal -- and their accomplices are threatening Simi's father Mohammad Ali Emdad over telephone and also in person to withdraw the case filed against them with Khilgaon thana, according to earlier press reports.

Six persons including the sub-Inspector, Abul Bashar, were accused of abetting the suicide.

The Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Livestock and Fisheries Minister Sadeq Hossain Khoka and some top government officials visited the victim's house and promised to

bring the alleged criminals to justice.

Although police submitted charge sheet against the six, none except the sub-inspector could be arrested so far.

The victim's family is passing days in extreme insecurity, the sources said.

When contacted last night, duty officer sub-inspector Shahjahan at Khilgaon thana told The Daily Star that they were not aware of the threats as there was no complaint from Emdad's family. He however said he would inform higher authorities about the threats.

Sub-inspector Razzaq, investigating officer of the case, could not be contacted.

**HC asks govt to report on
hill demolition in Ctg**

SUPREME COURT CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday directed the government to submit a report on the demolition and leveling of hills in Chittagong upon a writ petition filed earlier in this regard.

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) had filed the writ petition before the High Court Division on November 20, 2002.

On the same day, Justice Golam Robbani and Justice Nazmun Ara Sultan issued a rule upon the government to show cause as to why Section 3C of the Building Construction Act 1952 and its Amendment Act 1990 should not be declared ultra vires Articles 31 and 32 of the Constitution.

The case came up in the list for hearing on March 13.

Yesterday, Justice Shah Abu Nayem Mominur Rahman and Justice Arayes Uddin heard the application and directed the government represented by secretaries of the Ministry of Environment and

Forest, Ministry of Housing and Public Works, and Ministry of Land to submit a report.

The report has to point out the total number of existing hills in Chittagong and the total number that existed in 1971. It also has to list the number of hills that have so far been cut, demolished or partly cut or demolished or damaged with or without administrative permission between 1971 and March 2002.

Measures taken so far for leveling and cleaning salted areas to improve the local environment should also be mentioned in the report.

The court also sought a report from the Environment and Forest Ministry and director general of the Department of Environment regarding the minimum requirement of hills and tilas in the country to ensure ecological balance.

The writ petition will also come up in the list for hearing on March 22. Advocates MI Faroqui, Ruhul Quddus Babu and MA Mannan Khan appeared on behalf of BLAST.

including Khatian and Plot numbers and for what purpose those were given and under what terms and conditions.

The court also directed the Environment Ministry and the DG (Environment) whether they have issued any clearance certificate as required under the Building Construction Act before cutting the hills. How many of such certificates have so far been issued and for what purpose was also asked for.

The Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Ministry of Land, CDA, DG (Environment), and the CMP commissioner have been instructed to report by May 21, 2002 as to what legal actions and how many criminal cases have been initiated against the unauthorised cutting of hills.

The writ petition will also come up in the list for hearing on May 22. Advocates MI Faroqui, Ruhul Quddus Babu and MA Mannan Khan appeared on behalf of BLAST.