

2 shot dead as PCJSS, UPDF activists clash in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Two people were shot dead and two others injured with bullets in separate clashes between the activists of PCJSS and United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) at villages Boro Doluchhari and Navanga under Kawkhali thana of the district yesterday morning.

The victims were identified as Chha Thoai Marma, 36, and Pramud Bikash Chakma, 40, police said.

Critically injured Chiung Pru Marma, 30, and Aung Thiu Marma, 40, were rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital, local sources said.

According to police, an armed group of men numbering 30-35 attacked UPDF activists at village at Boro Doluchhari at around 7:30am.

The UPDF activists returned fire, resulting in a 15-minute gunfight that left Chha Thoai Marma dead on the spot and two others injured.

At around 8:30am, UPDF activists shot dead Pramud Bikash Chakma, 40, of Navanga village, a supporter of PCJSS (Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity), the pro-peace accord organisation, police said quoting locals.

Being informed, Kawkhali thana police rushed to the spot and recovered the bodies.

Graft case against Nasim, Shafiur and 2 others sent to court

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The graft case against former home minister Mohammad Nasim, former home secretary and incumbent Election Commissioner Shafiur Rahman and two others was sent to the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka, on Thursday for trial.

Judge Ahmed Jamil Mostafa accepted documents of the case but did not fix any date for its hearing.

The two others are former assistant secretary in the home ministry and incumbent senior assistant secretary in information ministry

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WORLD CUP QUIZ
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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Apr 20		6-22 pm
Apr 21	5-32 am	

Prayer Timings		
Apr 20		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-45	5-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-25	6-30
Esha	8-00	8-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Defective & damaged sleepers used in JMB rail link project

NAZRUL ISLAM

Use of defective and damaged sleepers has threatened the Jamuna Bridge Railway Link Project.

The Indian Railway Construction Company (IRCON) was awarded the contract for the TK 300-crore project (Contract-2) in April 2000, which was due to be completed last month.

Completion of the project will however take about a year more for various reasons, sources said.

The authorities found recently that defective and damaged sleepers were being used in the rail track.

Asked about this last night, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda told The Daily Star that such an allegation against a foreign company is under investigation. "We will take the next step when the investigation report is in hand."

The damage to sleepers was due to natural calamity and the company was asked to remove those sleepers. Although those were 'abandoned,' the authorities found more 'faulty sleepers on the track,' the minister said.

A railway expert said those highly defective sleepers 'would not remain in their anchors' when a train runs on the track. "There might be fatal accidents if this rail track is used," he added.

Consultant of the project has been asked to remove the faulty sleepers, but it is yet to be done, according to sources.

Even if the work starts now, this would delay the project by at least six months. In addition to the sleeper problem, some other factors are delaying the project, said a former project official.

When contacted over telephone at Iswardi in Pabna last night, General Manager at IRCON's Bangladesh office Harjinder Singh denied the allegations saying, "We maintained international standard in constructing the rail track and did not lay any faulty sleepers on it."

Some sleepers with cracks were found on the track, but 90 per cent of those have already been removed. "We will also remove other sleepers with cracks."

Sources said local and foreign consultants have identified some 1900 sleepers having cracks on them and asked the company to remove those

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PHOTO: KAMRUL AHSAN

A labourer crosses the gangplank placed on loose slabs of the Khulna city protection embankment, which was constructed as a safeguard against river erosion. Slabs of the embankment went slack due to round-the-clock loading and offloading of trawlers and boats. The problem will worsen during the monsoon to come.

More disciplinary actions in May

AL 'rebels' regrouping to thwart cleansing drive

REAZ AHMAD

Rebels in the Awami League have become very active and are regrouping to thwart the 'home cleansing drive' as the party leadership is dragging its foot in taking action against them, sources in the party said.

There has been no follow-up action in over four months after issuance of show-cause notices on about 540 'rebels' including seven central leaders for acting against the party in the last general election.

The sources said this delay in taking disciplinary action has given the 'betrayers' a chance to regroup but frustrated active and dedicated party men who want 'complete regeneration' of the party.

In a move to stop expulsion of more 'betrayers', some expelled party men have resorted to tactics to put psychological pressures on the

AL leadership.

Expelled Presidium member Dr Mohammad Selim on Wednesday announced that he would float another party named 'Bangladesher Awami League.'

There are also rumours that if AL expels more party 'rebels', they might form 'Trinomul Awami League.'

However, reformist leaders in the party say these are ploys to stop reforms.

The sources however hinted that an extended meeting of the Awami League Central Working Committee (ALCWC) might be convened in first week of May to take a decision about 'rebel' party men. AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman will submit a report on the 554 rebels at the meeting. The actions will obviously be expulsions. The sooner the cleansing is made, the better it will be for the party, they said.

A close aide to AL chief Sheikh Hasina told this correspondent that she does not want further delay in taking action against the party men served with show-cause notices. He quoted Hasina as saying, "Don't keep decisions in abeyance."

Earlier, just a month after its polls debacle, AL expelled 24 party 'rebels' who took part in the October polls violating party decisions. They included Presidium member Dr Mohammad Selim and some district level leaders.

In November last year, a joint meeting of the Presidium, Central Working Committee, Advisory Council and party lawmakers resolved to revamp the party and go tough against the 'betrayers' who acted against party interests in the

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Couple held for trying to illegally occupy house

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A couple was arrested yesterday on charge of trying to illegally occupy a tin-shed house in the city's Elephant Road area.

Dhanmondi police arrested Nazimuddin Uddin, a typist at the Prime Minister's Office and his wife Taslima Akhter Toma from their house at 3/9 Salimullah Road in Mohammadpur area and took them to custody.

Police said the two were arrested after Musa Majid, resident of house no. 126, Elephant Road, filed a case accusing them of trying to illegally occupying his house on April 12.

Sources said Nazimuddin, his wife and about 30 people went to Musa's house (No. 126 at Elephant Road) in the morning of April 12 and erected a signboard in front of it. The signboard read that Nazimuddin and his wife Taslima Akhter Toma were the owners of the house.

Musa removed the signboard in the afternoon. In the FIR lodged

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Alleged mugger murdered in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An alleged mugger was murdered at Shahidnagar in old part of the city in the early hours of yesterday.

Sources said unidentified people abducted Dukhai, 35, from his Shahidnagar house on Thursday night.

Beauty, wife of the victim filed a general diary with the Lalbagh thana immediately after abduction.

Body of Dukhai was later found lying in a ditch near Samad slum at about 12:45am. Police recovered the body and sent it to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue.

There were marks of sharp injuries in his head. Police suspected that miscreants hit on the head with sharp weapons.

Police arrested Nil Chand from the slum area following the incident.

A murder case was filed with Lalbagh thana in this connection.

Israeli troops pull out of Jenin

Annan's call to deploy multinational force in West Bank, Gaza rejected

AP, AFP, Jenin

Israeli forces completed their pull-out from the West Bank town of Jenin yesterday, Israel Radio reported, winding up a three-week operation that included a bloody battle in a refugee camp next to the town.

Israeli troops and tanks pulled back from the Jenin refugee camp allowing residents to return. Braving the stench of decaying bodies in the rubble of houses wrecked during a fierce weeklong battle that ended April 11, Palestinians searched for relatives and belongings.

Earlier, two Palestinian men were shot dead overnight during a military incursion by Israeli tanks and troops into the southern Gaza Strip, Palestinian security and hospital sources said.

The latest killings came after UN Secretary General Kofi Annan urged the deployment of a multinational force to quell the violence, a call swiftly rejected by Israel.

Israel was facing growing scrutiny over its assault on Palestinians

in the West Bank after Annan's Middle East envoy said the Jewish state had been "morally repugnant".

The envoy, Terje Roed-Larsen, described the devastation left behind by the Israeli army's operations in the Palestinian refugee camp in the West Bank town of Jenin as "horrific beyond belief".

However US President George W. Bush again threw his support behind Israel on Thursday, calling Prime Minister Ariel Sharon a "man of peace".

Sparking Palestinian anger, Bush accepted the pace of Israel's troop pull-out from the West Bank and said he understood its siege of Yasser Arafat's Ramallah headquarters.

Meanwhile, influential US senators on Thursday introduced a bill condemning Palestinian acts of terrorism and calling for sanctions targeting Palestinian Authority Chairman Arafat.

"This act takes aim at the weakest link in ongoing efforts to negotiate a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: Chairman

Arafat," said Republican Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, who introduced the bill together with Democratic Senator Dianne Feinstein of California.

In the latest violence -- in the Gaza Strip rather than the West Bank where recent Israeli military operations have been concentrated -- two Palestinian men in their thirties were shot in the head, according to Palestinian sources.

A dozen tanks also rolled 100 metres into the autonomous Palestinian zone in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, the security sources said.

However, international attention remained focussed on the ruins of the Jenin camp in the West Bank, which some observers likened to the scene of an earthquake.

The Israeli army said late Thursday that "dozens" were buried under the rubble of about 100 houses destroyed in the battles in the camp, reiterating its denial of a massacre.

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