

JMB rail link project

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from the 245-km under-construction rail track -- Jantail-Iswardi-Parbatipur and Iswardi-Shantahar sections under the Contract-2.

"Thousands more damaged sleepers would be found if a thorough check is done," an official said requesting anonymity.

Earlier, the then general manager of the project Iqbaluddin Choudhury, in a letter to RJ

McCurdy, a foreign consultant, suggested a thorough check to find out the actual number of cracked sleepers in the Contract-2 area as well as in the Contract-1 area.

"You are requested to please take up the issue seriously and also ensure that all defective sleepers are removed from the track immediately. Please see that no cracked sleepers are on the track during the handing over of the same," the letter issued in late November last year was quoted to have said. Otherwise, it would be unacceptable, the letter added.

The letter also mentioned that since the arrival of the first consignment, large number of sleepers were being rejected outright because of broken ends and edges. A total of 8975 sleepers were found rejected till the second week of November last year.

Referring to different test results, the letter noted that the situation was worsening day by day and there should be an investigation by an independent international agency having vast experience on pre-stressed concrete sleeper in the environment of this subcontinent.

It also pointed out that an earlier consignment of concrete sleepers of Indian origin, procured to repair post-flood rail track damages in the Bangladesh Railway's east zone in

1998, were mostly defective. "About 745 sleepers were laid in Dhaka-Chittagong track near Feni between the period of October 20 and November 17, 2001, out of which 198 sleepers were completely damaged and most of the inserts have lost anchor in the concrete," it said.

Another official of the project said the contractor instructed the local consultants through a letter to use untested slippers of Indian origin (SIL and PCM) when a good number of defective concrete sleepers were found.

It was alleged that the contractor with a bad intention had laid some 50,000 untested sleepers worth about Tk 13 crore on the track.

"It is the contractor who is responsible for development of the track and maintaining it till it is handed over to the Bangladesh Railway," said a government official who previously worked for the project.

Alleged BNP men

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the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka yesterday. The court sent them to the Dhaka Central Jail.

Police however denied knowledge of any attack on Shahid.

In a statement, Shahid strongly condemned the atrocities unleashed on him and his relatives, and alleged that his rival candidate four-party nominee Md. Farid Uddin masterminded the attack sending defeat in the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) election.

Supporters of Shahid brought out a procession in the Debendra Das Lane area yesterday protesting the incident.

Israeli troops pull out of Jenin

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The Palestinians claim around 500 people were killed in Jenin, many of them women and children, and that some were summarily executed after surrendering.

Roed-Larsen decried Israeli efforts to block attempts to recover the wounded and dead from the rubble in Jenin.

"It is totally unacceptable and horrific beyond belief," Roed-Larsen told AFP while touring the camp Thursday.

"The stench of death is horrible," he added. "We have expert people here who have been in war zones and earthquakes and they say they have never seen anything like it," said the UN Special Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territories.

Palestinian officials condemned Bush's Sharon-friendly remarks as a "reward" for the Israeli leader's "war crimes".

"I do believe Ariel Sharon is a man of peace," Bush told reporters in the Oval Office as he was briefed by US Secretary of State Colin Powell on his Middle East tour, which ended Wednesday without a ceasefire agreement to end almost 19 months of bloodshed.

He said Powell could not resolve the decades-old conflict in one peace trip, adding: "But one trip from the secretary of state laid out the framework and the path to achieve peace".

Powell told reporters before leaving Jerusalem on Wednesday after six days of shuttling between Sharon and Arafat that there was a schedule for the pullback but gave no specifics.

Top Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat told AFP Bush's stance "is a

reward for state terrorism and the war crimes committed by Sharon".

Israel launched its assault on March 29, two days after a suicide bomber killed 28 people on the Jewish Passover holiday. A suicide attack killed six people in Jerusalem last Friday, hours after Powell began his peace mission.

UN chief Annan told the Security Council the two sides were so far apart that an international military force is required in the region.

"I believe the deployment of a multinational force deserves serious consideration," he said.

"The situation is so dangerous that the international community has an obligation to provide this assistance."

But Israel quickly rejected the call. "We do not want it and I think also the United States do not want it," government spokesman Avi Pazner said.

The Security Council decided to extend its open debate on the Middle East into Friday to give members time to consider Annan's call.

The extension, announced at the start of the debate on Thursday by council president Sergei Lavrov, Russia's ambassador to the UN, averted an immediate clash over a proposal for a UN inquiry into the massacre claims in Jenin.

Diplomats earlier quoted US ambassador John Negroponte as saying he would veto an Arab-sponsored draft resolution asking Annan to investigate "the full scope of the tragic events that have taken place in the Jenin refugee camp".

Meanwhile, a Palestinian suicide bomber exploded his car yesterday

near the entrance to the Israeli settlement bloc of Gush Katif in the Gaza Strip, witnesses told AFP.

The car exploded near the heavily guarded entrance into the settlement area, the witnesses said.

Israeli military sources confirmed the attack. There was no immediate information on any injuries.

Witnesses said the car drove up to the settlement bloc from the southern sector of Gaza, and that Israeli troops staged an incursion into an area surrounding the southern village of Al Qarara following the attack.

Israeli troops also blocked off the main road linking southern and northern Gaza, witnesses said.

In Tehran the former head of Iran's conservative judiciary branded Bush and Sharon "war criminals" who should be tried by the new international criminal tribunal.

"Sharon is a war criminal and Bush is an accomplice who supports Sharon's crimes. Both of them are war criminals and must stand trial," Mohammad Yazdi, a member of the oversight Guardian Council and former judiciary head, told worshippers during a Friday prayers sermon at Tehran University.

In comments broadcast live on Tehran radio, Yazdi said Bush and Sharon should be brought before the recently ratified International Criminal Court, apparently to answer accusations in the Arab world that Israeli troops with US backing had massacred hundreds of Palestinians in their search for militants in the West Bank.

Govt to publish second part of 'white paper' soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led four party coalition government is going to publish within few days the second part of its 'white paper' on alleged corruption and mismanagement by the previous Awami League government, BBC reported last night.

The 'white paper' will contain corruption and mismanagement in at least 'twenty sectors' and in use of development assistance, BBC quoted Nuruzzaman Mia, a member of the committee on white paper, as saying.

The government published the first part of the 'white paper' two months ago.

BBC also quoted Haris Chowdhury, political secretary to the prime minister, as saying that that it would take one or two days to print the 'white paper' and then it would be published.

Graft case

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AW Mohammad Mostafa and chairman of ACE Business Systems Abdur Razzak.

In the case filed with Ramna thana, it has been alleged that Nasim ignored the opinion of the tender committee and gave the job of supplying 10 lakh passport books to a bidder, causing a loss of Tk 81 lakh to the national exchequer.

The case was filed by Mohammad Jalal Uddin Ahmed, inspector of the Bureau of Anti-corruption (BAC) on December 11 last year.

Jalal who is also investigation officer (IO) of the case submitted chargesheet to the chief metropolitan magistrate's court on April 2 against the four.

The IO got approval from the Prime Minister's office on March 27 for submitting chargesheet.

In the chargesheet, 11 people were shown as prosecution witnesses.

Meanwhile, the accused were granted ad-interim bail by the High Court till submission of police report.

AL public meet

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Maidan at 3 pm.

Meanwhile, Awami League will also begin a five-day mass contact tour across the country tomorrow (Sunday).

Eighteen teams consisting of central AL leaders and party lawmakers will visit district, thana and union levels and hold rallies to mobilise public opinion against the repression on opposition activists by the ruling alliance.

Zahir Shah

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aircraft at Kabul airport in late morning.

More than 200 people were recently arrested over an alleged bomb plot targeting leaders such as interim cabinet chairman Hamid Karzai and Zahir Shah, officials said.

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which played the supporting role to the interim administration in providing security at Thursday's homecoming, said the day had passed off with incident.

Spokesman Major Can Oz told journalists Friday that ISAF was not planning any extra patrols for the ex-king's security.

"Nothing extra because we have enough patrolling," Oz said.

"The security of the king is the interim administration's responsibility."

An ISAF source told AFP that the Italians, as a member of the multinational force, would share any relevant intelligence about the former monarch's safety.

JRC team

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navigability and to take steps to stop the severe erosion by the Kushiyara. A standing committee of the JRC also made a field visit to Sylhet-Assam border areas at that time.

The severe erosion by Kushiyara over the last three decades has changed Bangladesh's map in many places in this region. About 25-square mile area of Bangladesh has disappeared and new lands have emerged in the Indian side due to the continuous erosion, the sources said.

As per the decision of the August meet, water officials of both the countries made hydrographic and topographic survey during the last two years.

After reviewing the findings, they agreed that there is no alternative to dredging of Surma, protecting the banks of Kushiyara and taking flood protection measures in the Borak valley in India.

The sources said a 'model study' is likely to begin next year to ascertain the behaviour of the rivers.

It will include study of silt carried by Borak, velocity of water flow and discharge of water through the rivers.

Originating from Manjipur, Borak meanders through hills and enters into Bangladesh.

The JRC officials had also noted that, the three rivers affect both the countries in many ways.

UN envoy concerned at Arafat's alleged involvement in terror

AFP, Jerusalem

The UN Middle East peace envoy expressed "concern" yesterday about whether Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat was linked directly to militants who have staged suicide attacks, following Israel's claim that it had uncovered documents incriminating the Palestinian leader.

"We are concerned by the allegations that we have seen, but we have had no opportunity to study these documents ourselves," said Terje Roed-Larsen, the UN special coordinator for the Palestinian territories.

But he told reporters that the Israeli allegations would not interrupt the United Nations' direct negotiations with Arafat or the Palestinian Authority.

The UN envoy emphasised that Arafat is the elected leader of the Palestinian Authority and as such remains the leading representative of the Palestinian people.

"We (the United Nations) cannot say that we will relate only to those whom we like, and not relate to those whom we don't like," he said.

At the same time, Roed-Larsen stressed that suicide attacks and other forms of terrorism are "illegal and counterproductive to peace. We are appalled by the human destruction that it causes, and have repeatedly condemned suicide

Potka fish tragedy: Two more die at KMCH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Two more persons died at Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH) yesterday, rising the death toll from Potka fish tragedy to 11.

Ten of the dead were identified as Saburunnessa, 60, Sirajul, 30, Dhala Mia, 30, Khaleque, 70, Rabeya, 22, Baby, 5, Priya, 13, Mizanur, 25, Khalil, 30 and Mujibar, 22. The identity of other could not be known.

At least 40 people of five villages in Digholia and Terokhada upazilas fell sick on Thursday after eating Potka fish. Nine of them died soon after admission to KMCH while two others, Priya and Khalil, yesterday.

Persons undergoing treatment at KMCH are Khaleque Molla, Kajol, Jahanara, Rahima, Kuti, Tumpa and Delwar of the same family. Others are Rizia, Anowara, Nuruzzaman, Yusuf, Rahila, Asma, Pinu, Jerina, Tahuran, Salma, Khadija, Chumki, Apurbo, Ajmal, Sakhina, Babu, Sharmin, Marjina, Al Amin, Rajul, Rana, Hossain, Delwar, Ruhul, Hasan, and Rabiul. Names of nine persons could not be known.

Flash flood in Sunamganj

UNB, Sunamganj

A flash flood inundated several thousand hectares of land with standing IRRI-Boro crops in Biswambharpur and Sadar upazilas early yesterday.

Locals said onrush of water from hills following heavy rain broke Gazaria embankment Thursday night flooding 3,500 hectares of land in Kharchar Haor of Biswambharpur.

Besides, a vast tract of land in Jamalganj, Tahripur, Dharmapasha, Dirai, Chhatak and Doarabazar went under water.

There are 131 big and small haors in the area.

Hasina: Corrupt govt

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referring to a recent attack on a secretary by a state minister.

"If the people once turn around, none can resist them," she said and called for all to join Awami League in the anti-government movement.

Alleging repressive measures adopted by the government for killing, arresting, harassing and enacting a black law, the opposition leader said, "It seems that the government is suffering from public phobia."

She noted that the government had said that it would repeal PSA, but it now enacted a black law, not to make trials speedy but to repress the opponents. "This black law has been enacted so none could protest the misdeed of the government."

Blaming the government for trying all possible ways to eliminate Awami League from this country, Hasina said it had imposed an undecreed ban on Awami League.

Mentioning government action obstructing Awami League from holding meetings-rallies and processions she questioned whether the government banned Awami League, whether Awami League is an outlawed party.

Referring to retrenching officials and employees from army, police and civil service, Hasina said this government was axing anyone it suspected as Awami Leaguer. About government action against officials in the name of offence for joining Janatar Mancha, Hasina said that at time officers and employees came out of the secretariat due to "repression by Aman"

bombings as morally repugnant."

Arafat issued a statement condemning terrorism last Saturday during US Secretary of State Colin Powell's peace mission to the Middle East. That denunciation came after a suicide bombing in Jerusalem killed seven the day before.

Since the start of the Israeli army's three-week West Bank campaign, the Israel has seized documents from Arafat's Ramallah office appearing to show a headline militant group linked to Arafat's Fatah movement, the Al-Aqsa Brigades, requesting money for explosives from Arafat's financial adviser, Fuad Shubaki.

There were also documents allegedly with Arafat's signature, linking him to plots to attack Israel, the army said.

Israel has produced other documents pointing to links between Fatah and alleged terror cells in the north West Bank town of Jenin, which saw the heaviest fighting in Israel's assault on the West Bank.

Marlon Brando sued by his former lover

XINHUA, Los Angeles

A former maid and lover of Marlon Brando filed Thursday a one million-dollar breach-of-contract lawsuit against the veteran Hollywood film star, with whom she has had three children.

María Cristina Ruiz, 43, filed the lawsuit at Los Angeles Superior Court seeking one million dollars in damages and monthly living expenses from Brando, the 78-year-old actor that has won Best Actor Oscar twice.

Ruiz claimed that she and Brando, the star of A Streetcar Named Desire, On The Waterfront and The Godfather, became romantically involved in February 1988. During their 14-year-old relationship until they split last December, the couple had three children, who are now 8, 10 and 13 years old.

She claimed she and Brando lived together until last December, when Brando reportedly stopped paying Ruiz's living expenses except the children's.

Ruiz's lawyer, Donald Woldman, said the lawsuit is simply the equivalent of a divorce petition, demanding equal division of Brando's property. Ruiz said she "devoted all aspects of her life to... Brando's needs, the interests of their children, his personal interests and well being, to the exclusion of her own."

The lawsuit also alleged that Brando had agreed to split all of the property equally in the event of death or separation.

Brando, who has been living a reclusive life, was previously married three times. He reportedly spent most of his fortune in a case involving two of his other children. He paid a huge sum of money to pay for the legal bills for defending his son Christian, who murdered his half-sister Cheyenne's lover in Brando's Bel Air home in 1990.

Later Christian served five years of a 10-year term and was released from prison in January 1996. Cheyenne committed suicide in 1995 at age 25. Brando has seldom appeared publicly in the past years, except for playing occasional well-paying movie roles or attending pop star Michael Jackson's concert.

Acid throwing

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ing anniversary of Prothom Alo Sahayak Tahabil for acid victims.

An amount of Tk six lakh was raised yesterday

from auction sale of four cricket bats with autographs of players, nine paintings of prominent artists of the country and five photographs.

The cricket bat signed by all the Australian players who won the World Cup-1998 fetched the highest amount of Tk 1,50,000.

Tajin Ahmed, Principle of Sunny Dale School, bought the bat on behalf of the school.

Cross World Beverage Limited donated the bat to the organisers of the auction.

President of Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) Kutubuddin Ahmed bought another bat bearing autographs of players of Bangladesh national cricket team who played in the Kenia Mini World Cup in 2000. He bought the bat for Tk 35,000.

Farid Khan, Chairman of Summit Group, bought the cricket bat photographed by the Sri Lankan team which played in the Dhaka Mini World Cup in 1998 at a price of Tk 20,000.

Wali Bhuiyan, Managing Director of BOC bought the other bat for 20,000. It bore autographs of members of Bangladesh cricket team who played against England in the country.

An oil painting by Shahabuddin was sold at Tk 56,000. The other paintings sold at the auction were by Quaium Chowdhury, Rafiqun Nabi, Mohammad Kibria, Kazi Gias Uddin, Monirul Islam and Shakur Shah.

Five photographs by Nasir Ali Mamun were sold.

The programme was attended by, among others, Editor of the Prothom Alo Matiuur Rahman, former advisor of caretaker government Rokeya A Rahman, Aziz Khan of Summit Group, film star Elias Kanchon, cricketers Khled Masud Pilot, Naimur Rahman Durjoy and Saiful Islam, popular singers Ayub Bachchu, Shakila Jafor and Shuvro Dev.

Afzal Hossain, prominent television personality conducted the

Rape: Four arrested in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested four people yesterday in connection with the rape of a girl in the city a few days ago.

According to police, a 14-year-old girl was picked up from near her shanty in North Goran on the night of April 16, and forcibly taken to a nearby house belonging to one Moitul Hossain.

There, she was allegedly gang-raped by four young men several times throughout the night.

Afterwards, two of the men took the unconscious girl in a rickshaw and dropped her off near her home in the early hours of April 17.

The accused, all of whom were arrested separately from the Goran area yesterday, were identified as Naim Elahi Shanju, Shohag, Shihab and Razzak.

The girl herself came to the Khilgaon thana and filed a case yesterday.

She lives in a slum in the area along with her mother who works as a domestic help.

programme, attended by a large number of businessmen.

Sazzad Sharif, Assistant Editor of the Prothom Alo told the function that about Tk 28 lakh was deposited with the Pratham Alo Sahayak Tahabil in last two years and Tk 11 lakh of it was spent for assistance to victims of acid throwing.

Eighteen women were rehabilitated with the assistance in the last years and four others are being rehabilitated, he said.

7 alleged muggers arrested with arms in city

BSS, Dhaka

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) have arrested seven alleged muggers and recovered two firearms from their possession in last 48 hours ending at 6 pm yesterday.

Pallabi police yesterday arrested two alleged muggers -- Mohammad Sohel Rayhan alias Zia and Mohammad Abul -- from Shialbari area while they were trying to flee after snatching money from a pedestrian. Police also recovered snatched money from the arrested muggers.

A team of Detective Branch (DB) of police led by Assistant Commissioner (AC) Ali Hossain Fakir arrested a snatcher, Mohammad Aftab Uddin, from near Shishu Mela at Shyamoli Thursday night and recovered a German made .22 bore revolver and an American pistol from his possession.

Police also seized a snatched motorcycle from his possession.

In another operation, Inspector Lutfar Rahman of the DB arrested four alleged muggers from a restaurant near Gawsia Market Thursday night.

The arrested muggers were identified as Ali Hossain, Mohammad Rahmat Ali, Borhan Uddin and Mohammad Billal Hossain.

Gunfight between supporters of 2 commissioner candidates in Rajshahi: 10 hurt

UNB, Rajshahi

Ten people were injured, one with bullet, in a clash between the supporters of two ward commissioner candidates in the city's Chhoto Banogram area yesterday.

Witnesses said the clash ensued when a procession of ward commissioner candidate Alauddin came under attack allegedly by the supporters of Moniruzzaman Sharif at about 6 pm.

Several gunshots were fired during the clash. Alauddin alleged that gunmen of Moniruzzaman Sharif opened fire on his procession, leaving an unidentified man wounded.

Nine other people were also injured in the clash. Of them, Meraj, 26, and Seja, 23, were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital while others released after first aid.

A tense situation was prevailing following the incident in ward no 19.

Alauddin is a joint secretary of city BNP while incumbent ward commissioner, Moniruzzaman Sharif joint convener of city Juba Dal. Sharif is wanted in several cases.

11-party demands probe into Danish charges, minister's resignation

BSS, Dhaka

The 11-party combine yesterday termed the charges brought by a Danish diplomat against the shipping minister recently as unprecedented, audacious and devoid of diplomatic decency.

In a statement, the high command of the combine said the allegations against the minister did not only tarnish his image, it also eroded the dignity of the country.

The 11-party said the government should constitute an independent committee to investigate the allegations in a transparent way and let the world know about its findings. The minister concerned should resign at the time of the investigation, the statement said.

It also demanded publication of the details of corruption by the donors.

The 11-party blamed the alliance government and its minister for this situation and said the government would have to take the responsibilities to restore the glory tainted by a foreign diplomat.

Couple held

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with Dhanmondi thana he claimed that he has been residing in the house for the last 30 years.

Dhanmondi police informed the PMO about matter when Nasrin Majid, sister of Musa, filed a general diary with the thana.

After verification, the PMO suspended Nazimuddin on April 14.

Talking to newsmen at Dhanmondi thana, the arrested claimed that they had advanced money for the house in 1990 and they were the real owners.

The arrested will be produced before court today, police said.

Sub-Inspector Motiur Rahman is investigating the case.

RCC polls campaign

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Also accused were many commissioner candidates, in the 30 wards, of higher expenditure. For a commissioner candidate, the