

Clashes leave 20 injured at Pabna

UNB, Pabna

Twenty people were injured in clashes between rival groups in the town yesterday, police and witnesses said.

They said the clash ensued when a gang of miscreants allegedly led by Awami League worker Sharif stabbed three youths, Faisal alias Raki, Shamim and Shahidul, at Poilanpur at about 7.30 pm.

Feuding groups chased each other and blasted crackers during the hour-long clash that left 10 people wounded. Police later arrested Sharif and his brother Zahurul.

In another incident, 10 people were injured as two rival groups of ruling BNP clashed at Dilalpur in the town last night.

Of the injured, Nipu, 24, was sent to Sadar Hospital in critical condition.

A tense situation was prevailing in the town following the incident.

Meanwhile, Rajkumar, 38, a teacher of Hatkhali non-government primary school in Sujanagar, was injured in an attack by miscreants in the morning.

He was rushed to Rajshahi Medical college Hospital in serious condition.

BCL to enforce strike at CU today

CU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) Chittagong University unit will enforce a day-long strike on the campus today demanding arrest of those responsible for attack on its leader Ehsanul Haq Kanaz.

Kanez, a leader of BCL university unit, was beat up by Shibir cadres at university railway station on Wednesday while returning to the port city from campus.

BCL at an emergency meeting on Sholashar railway station premises yesterday demanded of the authorities to arrest the culprits within the next 48 hours, otherwise it threatened to enforce an indefinite strike on the campus.

Leaders of the student body also urged the university authorities to ensure security of their leaders and activists on the campus.

'Terrorists may pose as journalists to kill Zahir'

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan

Terrorists posing as journalists could try to assassinate former Afghan king Mohammed Zahir Shah, a British military spokesman warned yesterday following intelligence reports that al-Qaeda extremists were plotting to kill the ex-monarch.

"There has been intelligence that an assassination squad posing as media could threaten the king," Lieutenant Colonel Paul Harradine told a press briefing at this base north of Kabul.

Harradine urged reporters to be on their guard for any unfamiliar colleagues.

"Look around you during the day, they could well try to embed here to get favour."

Harradine's warning came after Italy revealed Thursday that plans for the king to return home last month were postponed following intelligence reports that al-Qaeda extremists were planning an assassination attempt.

The late leader of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance, Ahmad Shah Masood, was killed last September by suspected members of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network posing as journalists.

The 87-year-old king, who returned to his homeland Thursday after 29 years of exile in Italy, survived an assassination attempt by a man posing as a Portuguese journalist at his home on the outskirts of Rome in 1991.

US military spokesman Captain Steven O'Connor also warned that al-Qaeda could try to launch an attack against the interim Afghan government led by Hamid Karzai.

"We know that there are pockets of al-Qaeda that want to disrupt the new Afghan interim administration... and so the mission is to find those pockets and destroy them."

Fresh gunfight

FROM PAGE 1 recovered some ammunition from his possession.

Details of the incident could not be known till 8 pm yesterday.

On Friday, PCJSS and UPDF activists also fought gunbattles at village Navanga and Boro Doluchhari under Kawkhali upazila of the district, leaving two people dead and two others injured.

City corpn polls Criminals must be discarded thru' ballots: CEC

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Election Commissioner M A Sayed yesterday said some of the criminals are contesting the coming City Corporation elections because of legal loopholes, but they must be discarded through ballots.

He was talking to a 12-member delegation of Bangladesh Human Rights Commission that met him in his office with a set of recommendations for ensuring the elections free and fair.

The CEC underscored the need for arresting the listed criminals to make the April 25 elections smooth, free and fair. He also stressed the need for recovery of unauthorised arms and keeping the criminals out of the cities during the polls, said a BHRCC press release.

Welcoming the election observers from home and abroad during the polls, Sayed said their reports would be valuable.

The delegation informed the CEC that 10 mobile teams of BHRCC would monitor the polls in Dhaka City, 6 in Khulna City and 5 in Rajshahi City besides one observer in each polling centre.

Kushtia incident: 55 AL men sued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

As many as 55 leaders and activists of Daulatpur upazila unit of Awami League have been sued for their alleged involvement in the killing of two BNP men at village Majdiar on Saturday.

Two BNP activists -- Pintu Farazi, 36, and Saiful Islam, 23, were gunned down when a gang of unidentified assailants attacked a BNP meeting in the residence of Daulatpur upazila BNP vice-president Jahangir Alam Jhulu at midnight on Wednesday night.

BNP blamed Awami League for the attack immediately after the incident, but AL denied the charge.

EC to probe alleged violation of rules by commissioner candidate Newton in DCC Ward no 8

UNB, Dhaka

The Election Commission yesterday formed a one-member committee to look into the alleged violation of election rules by commissioner candidate for Ward-8 of Dhaka City Corporation Saidur Rahman Newton.

A meeting, chaired by Chief Election Commissioner MA Sayed at the EC Secretariat, constituted the committee with EC Deputy Secretary (Law) to submit its report within two days.

The EC will take action according to the recommendation of the committee, said a press release of the EC Secretariat.

The allegation made by Ward-8 commissioner candidate Saidul Chowdhury Ripon was discussed in yesterday's meeting.

Election Commissioner Shafiqur Rahman, Election Commissioner M M Munser Ali, Election Commission Secretary S M Zakaria and other officials were present.

PDB gas bills

FROM PAGE 1 If this week's meeting fails, Petrobangla would seek the finance ministry's guidelines before going for actions against PDB as per law, sources said.

Petrobangla has already sought finance ministry's intervention and said PDB must clear some of its dues within this month. This has become an urgent issue for Petrobangla because it owes Shell and Unocal over 50 million dollars for purchase of gas from Sangu and Jalalabad gas fields.

Petrobangla, which contributes around Tk 1500 crore to the national exchequer in the form of taxes and duty and another 100 crore as dividend, is faced with liquidity crisis due to non-payment various state-owned clients as well as private clients.

Different clients owe Petrobangla over Tk 1400 crore. Of this, Tk 512 crore is due from PDB which consumes half of the 1100 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) gas production. Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) owes Petrobangla Tk 240 crore -- equivalent to 14 months' bill.

On the other hand, PDB itself is crippled by liquidity crisis as its clients have not paid over Tk 5500 crore and the government did nothing to bring the situation to a tolerable level.

Of the huge arrears, Tk 3500 crore is due from DESA alone. Troubled by a section of unscrupulous meter readers and ledger writers who are involved in stealing of power and revenue, causing a loss of over Tk 30 crore a month, DESA is unable to fully pay PDB the monthly power purchase bills.

"So far the government has initiated many reforms in the power sector. Donors have given many prescriptions. But nothing was done so far to streamline sale and distribution of power and make it politics-free," one source noted

Scrap new black law: Hasina

FROM PAGE 1 "reign of terror" in the country where the coalition activists are unleashing violence and other crimes with the police protecting them.

"Police are arresting innocent people on false charges while letting go of the listed criminals as they belong to the ruling coalition."

Referring to the graft charge Denmark labelled against the shipping minister, the opposition leader said the donor country was compelled to bring the charge and withdraw Tk 264 crore in aid earmarked for the shipping sector. "It's an unprecedented slap not only on the coalition government's face, but also on the whole nation's. This is what the BNP-Jamaat rule has earned the nation."

Denouncing the coalition's rule in the past six months, the immediate-past prime minister told the meeting that a state minister attacked a government secretary as the latter declined to approve of his corrupt practice.

"What a shame! The level of corruption has reached to such an extent that the government has withdrawn graft charges against many including the prime minister's son and the home minister.

PM, Larma talk CHT accord

FROM PAGE 1 However, Larma said many other issues could not be discussed as it was not possible in the 60-minute meeting.

He also said that they brought up the issue of outlining the jurisdiction of different regional bodies and administration.

"Still, the army enjoys supreme authority in the region. We think it should be sorted out and the Regional Council and the Zila Parishad have to be made operational," said Larma, also the chairman of the CHT Regional Council.

The issue of rehabilitation of hill people also came up during the discussion.

According to sources, the PM assured the PCJSS leaders of total cooperation to the local administration in the improvement and maintenance of peace and discipline for unhindered development of the CHT.

However, the PM asked PCJSS chief to play a greater role in the development process and maintenance of law and order in the region, said Moni Swapan Dewan, deputy minister for CHT Affairs.

Larma however told the prime minister it was not possible for him

"Had they been honest they would have dared to face the trial in the court and would not have abused state power to drop graft charges."

Quoting press reports, the AL leader said the women are no more secure in the country. "Acts of rape by the ruling coalition activists are being reported everyday... They have surpassed previous records of violence against women."

Hasina bitterly criticised the government and the Election Commission for their inaction against the wanted criminals contesting the city corporation elections. Referring to the chief election commissioner's comment during the general election that "all the crooks have fled", she asked the CEC if these wanted candidates are crooks or gentlemen.

Ridiculing the fact that 11 ward commissioners have been elected unopposed in Dhaka, the opposition leader said, "In fact, none dared to contest against these notorious armed goons." She also accused the police of failing to protect those running the city race without the support of any political party while sheltering the BNP-Jamaat nomi-

to play a greater role in the region unless the CHT Regional Council was empowered 'properly', according to meeting sources.

The prime minister also told him that she would soon visit the CHT to see the development progress.

Political observers rate the meeting very highly as the BNP opposed the peace accord signed in 1997 between the Awami League government and the PCJSS, the political front of now defunct Shantibahini (that fought for autonomy of the hilly region), ending decades-long armed insurgency in the CHT.

However, the PCJSS was unhappy with the AL government for what it said slow implementation of the peace accord.

Then in the opposition, the ruling BNP strongly opposed the peace treaty and also held a long-march in protest at the treaty. The BNP also promised to scrap the treaty when in office.

However, nothing in the line of scrapping of the peace accord was discussed during yesterday's talks, meeting sources said.

The meeting also discussed ways to resolve conflicts between the rival groups in the three hill

nees having criminal records.

The AL leader told the meeting that the government had restricted the issuance of on-arrival visa only to stop foreign journalists from reporting the ongoing "persecution, misrule and corruption". "By so doing, the government is trying to isolate Bangladesh from the rest of the world."

Castigating the ruling coalition for bringing sedition charges every now and then, she argued agitation against a political government is by no way a revolt against the state. "In fact, they have confused the ruling party or the government with the state while pressing sedition charges against the opposition activists. I doubt whether they know the definition of the state."

AL presidium members Abdus Samad Azad and Syeda Sajeda Choudhury, party's General Secretary Zillur Rahman and other leaders including Motia Choudhury, Mohammad Hanif, Abdus Shahid, KM Jahangir and Mofazzal Hossain Choudhury Maya also spoke at the public meeting.

Emerging from the meeting, Larma told newsmen that the meeting was 'cordial and constructive'. He said he discussed law and order, CHT peace accord and overall development of the region.

Asked about the implementation of the treaty, Larma said, "It is under process."

Political Secretary to the PM Haris Chowdhury told the newsmen any problem in hill districts would be resolved through discussion.

The PCJSS met the PM the day after two tribal groups in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) fought a bloody battle that left two persons dead.

On Friday, two tribal people were killed and two others injured in a fresh fighting in Rangamati hill district following a conflict between the PCJSS and the UPDF (United People's Democratic Front), which opposes the peace accord.

The victims were identified as Khoai Marma, 35, and Promod Bikash Chakma, 42.

The UPDF blamed the PCJSS for the killings.

State Minister for Works Alamgir Kabir, and PCJSS leaders Goutam Chakma and Rupayan Dewan were also present at the meeting.

Graft case Rafiqul asked to appear before court May 9

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka yesterday directed former state minister for power Prof Rafiqul Islam, an accused in a graft case, to appear before it on May 9.

After accepting the charge sheet, Judge Ahmed Jamil Mostafa fixed the date.

The CMM's Court Dhaka on April 9 sent the documents of the case to the Sessions Judge's Court for trial.

In the case, filed with Ramna thana, it has been alleged that Rafiq misappropriated Tk 23 crore in connection with the Meghnaghat power project.

The government paid a Chinese contractor, CWHEC, Tk 141.65 crore for developing the project site of Meghnaghat phase 1 power plant. Although the task was completed as per specifications, the minister ignored the PDB's opinion and arranged an additional payment of \$ 4.5 million for remedial work on the project site, the FIR alleged.

Mohammad Zahid Hossain, Inspector of the Bureau of Anti-corruption (BAC) filed the case on January 8 against Rafiqul Islam and former secretary for power, Arobindo Kar.

Zahid Hossain, also the Investigation Officer (IO) of the case, submitted a charge sheet to the CMM's Court, Dhaka on April 8 against Rafiq. But Arobindo Kar's name was dropped from the charge sheet as his involvement in connection with the case was not found during the investigation.

One sent to jail

FROM PAGE 12 After hearing the case, Magistrate Mamun AI Rashid granted bail to Taslima Akhtar Toma considering that she has two minor children to care for, but ordered her husband Nazimuddin to the Dhaka Central Jail.

The couple were arrested from their house at 3/9 Saimullah Road in Mohammadpur Friday afternoon following a case filed against them for illegally occupying a tin-shed house in the city's Elephant Road area.

Musa Majid, a resident of house no. 126, Elephant Road, filed the case with Dhanmondi Police Station Friday morning accusing them of occupying his house on April 12.

He alleged that Nazimuddin and his wife along with about 30 people went to his house behind the Xian Chinese restaurant in the morning of April 12 and put up a signboard claiming themselves as owners of the house. The signboard was however removed by Musa on the same day.

Following the incident, a general diary was filed with the Dhanmondi Police and subsequently, the PMO suspended Nazimuddin on April 14.

Sandwip clashes

FROM PAGE 1 hundred people of the old part of the town resisted the move and laid a siege to it.

The clashes erupted when people of the new town joined police to facilitate the shifting.

Police fired over 600 shots and tear gas shells during the clash. People of the old town used lethal weapons and brickbats during the clash.

At least 15 people and five policemen were injured in the clashes that continued for about two hours.

After the clash Thursday evening, a team of 70 policemen was sent to Sandwip from Chittagong in the next morning.

With their help, a fresh move was taken to shift the UNO Office that resulted in bloody clashes from

Housewife Mukta

FROM PAGE 12 According to her statement, she went to her sister's house in Masdair area in the town on March 31. While she was returning home in a rickshaw, Dipu and his accomplices arrived in a microbus and stopped her. They then bundled her up into the vehicle and drugged her with chloroform. When she came around, she found herself in a tin-shed.

The next morning, the criminals numbering about six, blindfolded her and took her to the first floor of a building after driving around for about an hour and a half. There she was kept in a room for the next 16 days. She was given only dry food during this period. A tall man guarded her all the time.

After 10-12 days, Dipu showed her a newspaper and said, "Your story is now published in the paper, your husband and in-laws will not take you now."

On the evening of April 16, Mukta was blindfolded and taken for a ride in a vehicle, and later dropped off near Shapla Chatter in Motijheel.

Mukta said she could also identify the other criminals if they were produced before her.

Police is yet to nab Dipu. There is however allegation against police of trying to 'save' Dipu as he is a cadre of the ruling party.

Anticipatory bail for engr Mosharraf

BSS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday granted four months anticipatory bail to former works minister Engineer Mosharraf Hossain.

The Bureau of Anti-Corruption filed a case against him for his alleged involvement in corruption in allotting plots at Banani and Baridhara.

Engineer Mosharraf Hossain yesterday surrendered to a division bench comprising Justice A K Badrul Haque and Justice Nazrul Islam Chowdhury and prayed for the bail.

The court granted four months anticipatory bail upon hearing the petition and issued rule asking the government to show cause within four weeks why the petitioner should not be granted permanent bail.

EC warns

FROM PAGE 1 The CEC at another meeting with representatives of Bangladesh Human Rights Commission (BHRCC), an NGO, reiterated his call for arrest of notorious criminals who are contesting the April 25 election and others vitiating the polls atmosphere.

The BHRCC delegation led by Saiful Islam Dilder expressed concern over "deteriorating" law and order and requested the CEC to take steps so that tougher action is taken against the criminals in the polls race.

BHRCC will monitor the polls in the three cities.

Trial courts

FROM PAGE 1 "Never use the law as a political weapon so that none can allege that it was enacted to harass the opposition," he said.

The home minister also instructed officials to be very careful in filing cases and not to indict names of accused and witnesses at random.

Joint Secretary of the Home Ministry Delwar Hossain presented the keynote paper at the seminar, which was presided over by Secretary Dr Sa'adat Hossain.

State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar and Inspector General of Police Mudabbir Hossain Chowdhury addressed the session, which was attended by the divisional commissioners, chief metropolitan magistrates, police commissioners and other high officials.

A CMM raised the question whether the trial would be speedy in reality. While the law has specified a timeframe to complete a trial, it does not specify any time restriction at the Appeal Court level, he said.

The parliament passed the act on April 9.

According to the new law, if a criminal is arrested red-handed, the trial has to be completed in 30 days. Otherwise the trial must be completed within 60 days.

Friday evening. The clashes lasted over two hours.

While talking to this correspondent at CMCH, the injured persons alleged that police and the people of new town backed by local MP Mostafa Kamal Pasha attack the agitating people of the old part of the town.

One of the injured, a van driver, said, "I was standing in front of a shop near the police station. Suddenly I heard indiscriminate firing and fell on the ground with a bullet hitting me." Injured Monir Hossain said, "Kamal Mia (Mostafa Kamal Pasha MP) backed the attackers as he wants to take the UNO Office near his house."

Following Friday's clash, another team of 150 policemen led by an ADM and an ASP was sent from Chittagong yesterday.

The MP could not be contacted. But his supporters said the process of shifting the UNO office began during Ershad rule and a new building was constructed at Haramia to house the UNO office. The office at its present location very often goes under water during tidal surge, they said.

AL activist

FROM PAGE 1 The OC did not allow Jamal's mother Ramiza Begum to meet her son and misbehaved with her when she went to the thana next morning, family members alleged.

They also alleged that police showed Jamal 'arrested at 10 am on Thursday' and did not produce him before court even after 24 hours to 'torture' him in custody.

Police informed Jamal's family Friday morning that while fleeing the thana, he jumped into the Shitalakhya and was 'missing' since then.

But family members and local AL leaders alleged that he was tortured to death in custody and his body was thrown into the river.

A search was conducted in the Shitalakhya yesterday and Jamal's body was recovered at about noon. There were marks of torture in most parts of his body.

It was alleged that the OC also tortured other youths picked up in connection with a dacoity at Targaon on the night of April 13.

Meanwhile, six AL activists were arrested at Kapasia yesterday when they were demonstrating against 'police atrocities' resulting in the death of Jamal. Local AL leaders demanded a judicial probe into the incident.

Earlier on Friday, assistant sub-inspector at Kapasia thana Abu bakar Siddique and guard Altaf Hossain were suspended for negligence of duty.

Shihab murder

FROM PAGE 12 charge sheet to the CMM's Court, Dhaka on Thursday against six people.

The accused are Monir Hossain Liton, Abu Syed, Faisal Sharif Razu, Mahbubul Haq Rubel, Imran Hossain Sabuj and Mohammad Nasim Sheikh. Of them, Liton and Syed were arrested. The four other accused have been absconding since the incident.

Liton and Syed gave confessional statements before a magistrate disclosing the names of four other accused Razu, Rubel, Sabuj and Nasim.

The IO dropped the names of the arrested Rashedul Islam Rashed, Julekha Akhter, her husband Fazlul Haq and daughter Kankon Akhter Kanok from the charge sheet as their involvement in connection with the case, were not found during the investigation.

Shihab, 13, a student of class seven of Motijheel Model High School, was abducted from in front of his school on February 7. He was later killed as he recognised one of the abductors.

Shazneen case

FROM PAGE 12 1998.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, Chairman of Transcom Group, was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998.

Latifur Rahman filed a murder case with Gulshan thana accusing Shahidul Islam alias Shahid, a domestic help at his house, on April 24, 1998.

Mojibur Rahman filed a rape case with Gulshan thana against seven people, including Shahid after six months' investigation into the Shazneen murder case.

All the accused -- Shahid, Hasan, Shaniram, Badal, Minu and Parvin -- were present in the court during the hearing.

Special PP Arfanuddin Khan, ABM Sharfuddin Khan Mukul, advocate Sheikh Baharul Islam, Saima Khanam, Ali Hossain and Anwar Hossain appeared for the state while Advocate Mosarraf Hossain Kajol and MA Kamrul Hassan Khan Aslam for the accused.

The murder case, pending with the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's court, Dhaka was earlier stayed by an order of the Supreme Court. The order will remain valid till disposal of the rape case.

The trial of the rape case began at the Special Court on July 9, 2000.

Biodiversity protection

FROM PAGE 12 measures to be taken, if need be by using financial assistance from other countries, and promised to "promote forest law enforcement and address related trade", which is diplomatic language for taking on illegal logging.

The two main negotiating camps, the Europeans led by France and Germany and the main producers of tropical wood led by Brazil and Malaysia, expressed their satisfaction at the outcome of the conference.

French Environment Minister Yves Cochet said in a press statement that the question of the future of forests had been dealt with and the EU had "won its case" on the issue of illegal logging.

Faber, hailed the conference outcome as "a breakthrough", but environmental group Greenpeace said the conference was a failure.

"We came here with high hopes to reverse the trend of ancient forest destruction," a Greenpeace statement said.

"We are left only with minor steps that fail to match the scale of the crisis."

BTBT. In return, each mobile operator was to get sufficient interconnection with the BTBT network.

The BTBT obtained a 4,068,450-euro quotation from Alcatel and asked the mobile operators to implement the project. Alcatel proposed 480,5