

JCD factions clash at RMC: 3 leaders held with arms

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

At least 12 people were injured in an armed clash between two factions of JCD at Rajshahi Medical College at midnight on Monday.

The clash erupted following a dispute over extortion and establishing supremacy on the campus.

The two factions -- one led by Zakaria and another by Naser -- exchanged gunshots and hurled bombs at each other. The clash continued for about two hours, leaving the 12 from both sides injured.

Of the injured, Rubel was admitted to RMCH while Mukul and Moazzem to a clinic.

Rajpara police in a pre-dawn raid on the hall arrested three JCD leaders with five shutter guns, six c o c k

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Call money rate rises to 30 pc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Inter-bank call money rate rose to 30 per cent for the second consecutive day yesterday, fund managers said.

Private sector banks borrowed from nationalised commercial banks at rates ranging from 27 to 28 per cent yesterday as against 25 to 30 per cent on Monday. But some leasing companies borrowed money at rates of up to 30 per cent yesterday.

Officials of the central bank could not give any satisfactory explanation for the sudden rise in call money rate from Monday. They however hoped that the rate would drop soon.

"There was no significant mismatch between government borrowing and maturity of treasury bills this week," one official said.

Some sources attributed the rise in call money rate to government

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Mahima rape case Court orders attachment of movable property of 3 accused

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The Special Court for Women and Children Repression Prevention in Rajshahi yesterday ordered attachment of moveable property of the three absconding accused in Mahima Rape Case.

Md Abu Hanif, judge of the special court issued the order and asked Puthia thana police to submit a report within June 8.

The three absconding accused are Selim of Boro Senbag, Farid and Faruk of Kanthalbaria in Puthia upazila.

The judge also rejected the bail prayer of the JCD leader Uzzal, one of the four accused in the rape case.

The four rapists -- Selim, Farid, Faruk and Uzzal -- gangraped

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12 insurance cos evade Tk 21cr VAT

RAFIQ HASAN

Most of the general insurance companies are allegedly evading payment of crores of taka in Value Added Tax (VAT) every year.

In an investigation recently, the government found that 12 general insurance companies evaded Tk 21.24 crore VAT during 1998 to 2001.

There are a total of 43 general insurance companies in the country and there was no such investigation earlier. VAT officials think they evaded payment of several hundred crores of taka in VAT in the previous years.

According to sources in the National Board of Revenue (NBR), the government gets around Tk 50 crore VAT annually from insurance sector, but the amount could easily be doubled if VAT evasion is stopped.

People involved in insurance business, however, denied the allegation of large scale evasion of VAT. It should be described as 'outstanding' VAT and not as 'evasion' of it because there is a practice of doing business on credit, they felt.

Some new companies might have operated unethically but that does not mean most of the companies are involved in VAT evasion, said a high official of an insurance company.

He also contradicted the view that VAT collection could be doubled if all the leakages were stopped. It is not possible because the total amount of premium income of the insurance companies are around Tk 400 crore a year, he thought.

Besides, he mentioned, many areas of business are not under the VAT net. For example, 15 per cent VAT is applicable to import of goods for garments manufacturing, but export of garments is exempted from VAT.

Chairman of Bangladesh Insurance Association Nasir A Chowdhury could not be contacted in this regard as he is abroad.

General Secretary of the association Mollah Nurul Islam declined to make any comment saying that they do not have any estimate of premium collection by the insurance companies. "We are just collecting facts and figures and it would not be wise to say anything before compilation of those figures."

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PHOTO: AMANUR AMAN

Dark design...sometimes money outshines beauty. Eight buildings have sprouted only to cover the front of Kuthibari of Rabindranath Tagore at Selidah in Kushtia. Alauddin Ahmed, a moneyed man in the area, has erected the concrete structures for an ambitious tourist complex.

Endless war of words

Vajpayee, Sonia add personal pitch to political rhetoric

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

An essential ingredient for effective functioning of parliamentary democracy is a certain degree of commonality and understanding between the prime minister and the leader of the opposition.

Is that ingredient missing between Atal Behari Vajpayee and Sonia Gandhi, who have been involved in a war of attrition on major issues for quite some time now?

There has been some concern in political circles over the number of times Vajpayee and Sonia Gandhi have attacked each other in recent months. At times, the battle tended to be more personal in nature than ideological or political.

Last month, Sonia Gandhi, addressing a brainstorming session of top Congress leaders, mounted a vitriolic attack on Vajpayee, accus-

ing him of losing "mental balance". However, a day later, she did apologise for the remarks.

Earlier, Vajpayee, during a parliamentary debate on the motion of thanks on the president's address to both houses of parliament, took Sonia Gandhi to task rebutting point

movement from discord to dialogue in Gujarat.

On May 1, Vajpayee issued a statement expressing surprise that a day after expressing the wish for reconciliation, Sonia Gandhi made a statement at a rally in Gujarat that was aimed at evoking the opposite effect.

The prime minister was reacting to leader of the opposition's remark at the rally that Gujarat, the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi, was being turned into the "land of (Nathuram) Godse" who had fired shots at the father of the nation.

Some analysts believe that the growing verbal exchange between the two leaders could be the result of a series of Congress victory in assembly elections in a number of states in recent months and the BJP's declining electoral fortune.

There have been suggestions that Vajpayee and Sonia Gandhi should meet soon and sort out the

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by point the views given by the Congress chief in Lok Sabha.

On April 30, Sonia Gandhi, during a debate in Lok Sabha on Gujarat violence, strongly criticised Vajpayee but ended her speech with an appeal "to the nobler instincts of the prime minister" to help restore peace in the western Indian state.

The Congress president also pleaded for reconciliation and a

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AL defers decision on joining JS till Hasina's return

Report on rebels not placed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) did not decide on joining the Jatiya Sangsad, nor did it place the report on dissidents at its working committee meeting yesterday.

On the AL's comeback to the Jatiya Sangsad during the third and budget session beginning on June 4, the acting AL president, Abdus Samad Azad, told reporters that the party would take the final decision on this after the return of AL President Sheikh Hasina. The party boycotted the first two sessions of the eighth parliament.

The acting AL chief found lack of seriousness in the urge made on Monday by Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury, the advisor on parliamentary affairs to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. "With the budget session approaching, the government has come to realise the importance of the opposition in the parliament," he said.

He blamed the deadlock on the government. "It (government) did not heed our requests for withdrawal of the bill to remove Bangabandhu's portrait from public offices. Nor did it agree to adjourn the parliamentary session on that."

Also, AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman did not place the report on

the 'rebels', although he was supposed to do so before the Awami League Central Working Committee (ALCWC). Over 500 dissidents were show-caused four months back for their alleged anti-party activities during the last parliamentary elections.

Zillur did not show any reason for that, but some other ALCWC members said the issue would not be resolved till Hasina returns home.

Hasina, now in the USA, is expected to return home on May 23, party sources said.

Yesterday's meeting at the AL central office on the Bangabandhu Avenue was chaired by Abdus Samad Azad. The two-hour meeting over, Samad Azad briefed the newsmen on its outcome.

Samad Azad said the ALCWC meeting took stock of the overall socio-political and economic situation in the country.

The meeting urged other like-minded political parties to unite against the 'government-sponsored repression', as briefed.

The ALCWC also rejected the white paper published by the government bringing allegations of corruption against the AL during its 1996 to 2001 rule. It also criticised the government for withdrawing the

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AL to consider positive proposal from govt for dialogue

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League leaders yesterday gave a broad hint that they would consider any positive proposal from the government to end the parliamentary stalemate.

"Let the proposal come first, we'll examine that and then respond," Awami League general secretary Zillur Rahman told UNB reacting to reported government plans for a formal dialogue with the opposition.

Zillur said they had not yet received any proposal from the government party so they don't know what the ruling party wants to

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Fazil, Kamil may be recognised as bachelor's, master's degrees

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

Fazil and Kamil degrees under the Madrassah Education Board are likely to be recognised as equivalent to bachelor's and master's degrees respectively.

"The education ministry is now considering a proposal to recognise Fazil and Kamil degrees as equivalent to bachelor's and master's degrees in the present education system," a highly placed source in

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Fatal mistake

TB patients must complete antibiotic course as per doctor's advice

NAIMUL HAQ

Twelve-year-old Alamgir lost his right lung about four months back because of tuberculosis. Now he is gasping all the time and is bedridden.

Doctors have little hope for his life as his left lung is also infected with drug-resistant TB germ.

This happened because he did not complete the course of antibiotic as per doctor's advice.

When his right lung was infected, a doctor prescribed antibiotics. But as he showed signs of improvement, his parents did not complete the course.

Cases like that of Alamgir are not few. At least 20 per cent of the TB patients detected do not complete the course and are exposed to death because of this mistake.

If the course is not completed, TB germs become drug resistant and use of antibiotic after a gap yields virtually no result, doctors say.

When Alamgir developed persistent cough about two years ago, his father took him to a quack at their village in Hijla in Barisal.

As his condition did not improve, he was taken to a hospital in Barisal. Doctors diagnosed TB and prescribed antibiotic for six months.

After about three months, he showed signs of improvement and his father stopped the medicine.

After some months, his condition deteriorated again but doctors at Barisal had little to do as they knew antibiotic would not kill the germ because they have become resistant to the medicine.

"It was a fatal mistake by Alamgir's father," said Dr Rahmatullah who removed the left lung at the Chest Diseases Hospital in the city on December 4 last year.

The costly operation could not cure Alamgir because his right lung was also getting infected with drug resistant TB germ.

"A TB patient may never be cured if the prescribed dose is not completed without any break" Rahmatullah told this correspondent.

This correspondent visited Alamgir during the operation and also when he was brought to the hospital again recently.

One person dies from TB every ten minutes in the country. According to government estimate, 105 people are found TB-positive

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