

13 Palestinian deportees from Bethlehem arrive in Cyprus

AP, Larnaca

Thirteen Palestinian militants deported from Israel arrived on a British military aircraft here yesterday to begin their stay in exile.

Larnaca city's police chief, two armored cars and a squad of armed police were at Cyprus' main airport to meet the Palestinians, who were expected to stay on the island at least until Monday.

The 13 Palestinian gunmen, whom Israel regards as terrorists, had left the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem on the West bank early Friday morning. Israeli authorities processed them at a military base and then put them on the British aircraft for Cyprus.

Their deportation was part of a deal worked out with the United States and European Union to end Israel's five-week siege of the church. Under the arrangement, the more than 120 people holed up in the church were allowed to leave, with 26 Palestinians being banished to Gaza and the 13 militants sent into exile, and Israel is to withdraw its troops from the biblical town, whose residents had been under curfew since April 2.

The negotiations to resolve the crisis came to fruition late Thursday when the EU found several countries prepared to accept the 13 gunmen. Earlier Italy had refused to accept them all, torpedoing an

understanding.

Cypriot Foreign Minister Yiannakis Cassouides announced Thursday night his country would accept the 13 militants on a temporary basis.

The plane carrying the militants, a gray Royal Air Force Hercules, touched down at Larnaca shortly before 1 pm (1000 GMT).

A Cypriot police armored car followed the plane as it taxied to the airport apron, where an ambulance and several police cars were waiting.

A squad of 20 policemen, dressed in black and armed with pistols, surrounded the aircraft. A second armored car arrived and took up position at the opposite end of the aircraft.

Shortly afterward, the 13 Palestinians alighted and entered a minibus, parked almost under the tail of the Hercules.

One of the Palestinians came out on a stretcher. He was wheeled to the ambulance, escorted by Cypriot doctors and nurses.

The minibus, ambulance and police cars then left the airport in a convoy bound for Larnaca.

The minibus dropped the 12 Palestinians at the Flamingo Hotel on Larnaca's beach boulevard.

Hotel manager Anthonis Josephides said the Palestinians would stay under police supervision on the third floor. They would not be allowed to receive visitors.

Strike paralyses Kashmir

AP, Srinagar

Shops and businesses were shut yesterday following a strike call by political and religious leaders protesting an assault on a Kashmiri separatist leader.

A group of lawyers shouted slogans against Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and other Hindu nationalist leaders at the High Court in Srinagar, the summer capital of northern Jammu-Kashmir state.

The protesters were led by Nazir Ahmad Ronga, president of the Kashmir Bar Association.

The strike was called by the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, an umbrella group of more than two dozen Kashmiri political and religious parties seeking autonomy or independence for the disputed Himalayan territory. They were protesting Wednesday's assault on Yasin Malik, leader of the pro-independence Jammu-Kashmir Liberation Front.

A group of Shiv Sena Hindu nationalists attacked Malik in a hospital in Jammu, the winter capital, where he was taken from prison by police for medical treatment. Police later rescued him.

Police arrested Malik in March under a new anti-terrorism law and charged him with intending to receive \$100,000 illegally brought into the country to fund anti-India activities.

Malik denied the charge. His Jammu-Kashmir Liberation Front was a former militant group that laid down its arms and became a political party.

Meanwhile, government forces killed four suspected militants in a gunbattle Friday in Golgam, a town 30 kilometers west of Srinagar, a Border Security Forces official said. Details were not immediately available.

Suicide blast Pakistan releases sketches of three suspects

AP, Karachi

Pakistani police yesterday released sketches of three suspects in the bombing of a bus full of French naval engineers in the port city of Karachi and announced a 2 million rupee (\$3,000 dollar) reward for any information leading to their arrest.

The suspects -- all Pakistanis -- bought the car used in the bombing only a day before the attack, Syed Kamal Shah, inspector general of Sindh provincial police, told reporters.

The car was packed with explosives when a suicide bomber detonated it next to the Pakistan navy shuttle bus outside the Sheraton Hotel, killing 14 people and wounding 23. Eleven of the dead and 12 of the wounded were French. The rest were Pakistanis.

Shah said four people helped investigators in drawing the sketches of the suspects. He said authorities understood that the three sketches were of the planners of the operation and that a fourth person carried out the attack.

FBI and French investigators are providing Pakistan technical assistance in the case including a DNA test of the suspected bomber's body, he said.

Shah said no arrest had been made in connection to this case despite a nationwide sweep of Muslim extremists that began immediately after the explosion.

Shot dead

FROM PAGE 1
where the doctors declared him dead.

Victim's father filed a murder case with Pallabi police station accusing some identified persons including Shamsuddin. Police arrested Shamsuddin from the area.

Rabi Niogi

FROM PAGE 12
of various political parties and activists of different socio-cultural organisations rushed to the clinic to have a glimpse of and pay respect to the leader.

CPB central leaders held an emergency meeting in the capital in the afternoon to take decision on the funeral of Rabi Niogi. The CPB leaders were scheduled to leave for Sherpur last night.

In a condolence message, Bangladesh Workers Party General Secretary Bimal Biswas said Niogi's sacrifice and fearlessness to establish a state for the workers community through waging movement against British colonialism and Pakistani rulers will always inspire the country's communist movement.

Biswas conveyed his heartfelt sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

Disabled

FROM PAGE 1
some governments to guard against it there remains a lack of enforcement.

ESCAP said there is a strong need to improve community access to education, training and rehabilitation for persons with disabilities in the region.

It will present a full study on people with disabilities in South and Southeast Asia at a meeting of regional government ministers for the 58th Commission Session of ESCAP from May 16-22 in Bangkok.



Rescue workers surround the train carriage lying across the platform after derailling at Potters Barn station north of London yesterday. At least five people were killed and scores injured in the train crash.

Inviting eco-disaster

FROM PAGE 1
along the Turag, which crisscrosses the area.

Ashuliya has the potential of becoming one of the most attractive recreation centres in the country. It attracts thousands of tourists during the rainy season every year and local people greatly benefit from increased tourist activities.

The executive engineer (Dhaka central zone) of the Water Development Board, Masud Ahmed told The Daily Star that they were very concerned about private 'projects' at Ashuliya and consequent effects on the environment. The WDB has conducted studies in the area and found out that Ashuliya is a vital flood-flow zone, he said.

"If we fill Ashuliya up, there will be a disaster during the flood season and the environmental degradation would be irreparable," Ahmed said.

Teacher of BUET told The Daily Star that about a year ago the Rajuk formally asked the BUET to do a study on Ashuliya and chalk out an effective plan to protect the wet land. But only a month or so later, Rajuk officials asked BUET to stop the study.

A Rajuk official source said that they withdrew from because the

BUET was asking for a huge amount for the study.

After the withdrawal, the Rajuk floated a tender in the local newspapers seeking applications from bona-fide consultants to conduct a study on Ashuliya. In the tender it was specified that the area of study would cover half a kilometre on both sides of the Tongi-Ashuliya Road over a stretch of eleven kilometres.

The tender was also awarded to a local firm but it could not be continued due to mysterious circumstances. The delay in saving

Ashuliya would cost the city dwellers dearly because, meanwhile, several developers have bought up the entire land and have started filling it up. The Rajuk is again planning to float a tender to appoint a consultant.

Rajuk sources revealed that a top official of the Rajuk's Town Planning section was involved in giving the 'go ahead' to the developers to build the model towns. The moment the same official sensed that the so-called development projects might be jeopardised, the dilly-dally began, they said.

For its Uttara third phase, the Rajuk is also filling up a huge flood-flow zone adjacent to Ashuliya.

Now if the government is sincere in saving Ashuliya, it should immediately start acquiring the land in Ashuliya and declare it a flood-flow zone and save the city environment from further degradation, experts said.

PM: Children

FROM PAGE 1
the UNICEF to create an irreversible momentum for universal effort that will address the concerns of children in the new millennium.

The audiences, which also included a number of heads of state and government, deeply appreciated Khaleda Zia's pledges.

Towkir, one of the two children representing Bangladesh at the meet, also made a statement at the roundtable discussion.

The student of UCEP Technical School, Dhaka, in his statement stressed on assistance from the world community, cooperation from international agencies, and greater regional and international cooperation to end all kinds of child abuse, including trafficking.

Members of the Bangladesh delegation were present during the presentation.

Rice supply from Naogaon

FROM PAGE 1
The action followed the latest incident of looting of a rice-laden truck near Bangabandhu bridge on Tuesday night. The looters also killed the driver of the vehicle. This happened barely a week after the Inspector General of Police Moadib Hossain Chowdhury had visited Naogaon, assuring the rice traders of no more recurrence of such incidents.

As the promise from the police force chief fell flat, it is affecting all those involved in rice processing and marketing in the country. Stopping of supply to Dhaka market would also result in suspension of operation in over a thousand rice mills in the northern districts and temporary unemployment of tens of thousands of people who work at the mills, mokams (shops at rice wholesale markets) and also as loaders.

Meanwhile, in a hectic bid to resolve the problem, the Naogaon district administration is learnt to have been acting as a go-between the government and the stakeholders.

Asked about this over telephone yesterday, Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Naogaon Khurshid Alam said he was trying to contact the home minister and the home secretary in this regard. The rice traders and truckers were no more listening

to any words of assurance and they resented that even the IGP's promise did not materialise.

He went on, "The reality is that the looting and murders occurred beyond my jurisdiction. These mainly took place in Sirajganj, Tangail and some other districts on way to Dhaka, Narayanganj and Chittagong."

District administration sources said at least one dozen rice-loaded trucks were looted on Naogaon-Dhaka route in the past six months and

five drivers and helpers were killed.

But rice traders in Dhaka claimed that some 15 truck drivers and helpers were murdered by highway robbers since this government took over.

Syed Monirul Islam Montu, organising secretary of rice shop owners' association at Mohammadpur Krishi Market told this correspondent that the wholesalers in Dhaka would be forced to close their shops unless the government take effective measures to resolve the problem. Many others shared his views.

They pointed out that looting of a truck (that generally carries 150 sacks of rice) meant a loss of about Tk two lakh to the trader concerned.

At the peak season of boro harvesting when price of rice usually shows a downward trend, A rise in

price might have serious repercussions, market sources feared.

A sad tale

FROM PAGE 12
centres, community centres, kutcha bazaars, natural wetlands and other conservation aspects as per the original plan has been carried out to a certain extent but not fully yet.

The social and environmental degradation of Uttara, according to observers, has occurred due to several factors. They include numerous unauthorised kutcha bazaars as well as 'long' shops, tailoring joints and grocery shops here and there on the roadside, building materials piled up on the roadside obstructing traffic, unrestricted movement of rickshaws, hawkers etc., and scores of garment factories operating within the residential area.

Apart from these factors, there is one galling aspect -- gradual disappearance of the residential character of the township giving way to a commercial one. Proliferation of commercial establishments set up by the Dhaka-Myensingh-Tangail highway has triggered an influx of people from outside increasing the congestion in Uttara. All this has caused a heavy burden on the area's demand for electricity, water, gas and sewerage.

100 still missing

FROM PAGE 1
and Akbar Chowkider, 60.

Six persons of Bashbaria union who remained missing are, Md Monir, 15, Malek Khan, 60, Imam Hossain Shah, 60, Monira, 22, Kazem Khan Mridha, 55, and Azhar Maulana, 50.

Thirty-one missing persons from Alipur union included Yunus Hawlader, 40, Jalal Hossain, 24, Absar Chowdhury, 45, Berek, 35, Debbahar, 25, Sattar Bepary, 60, Soleman, 25, Minara, 25, Reaz, 8, Babul, 30, Belal, 18, Liton, 15, Jashim, 25, four along with Alamgir, five along with Kamal Mir, 40, five along with Raju Begum, 40, and Joyнал Munshi, 50.

The seven missing persons from Bahrompur Union are, Jafar, 35, A Motleb, 45, Farida Begum, 40, Idris Munshi, 42, Rumi, 18, Halima, 30, and Naya Bibi, 38.

Nine persons from Ranagopaldi Union remained missing. They include primary school teacher Kamrunnahar, 38, six with Altu Khalifa, 42, and Forkan, 30, along

with his wife.

Meanwhile, special prayers were offered in all mosques, temples and churches of four upazilas of Patuakhali district yesterday for the peace of the departed souls, official sources said.

The people of the offshore region, in the mean time, demanded of the authorities concerned to operate the launches from Dhaka to the offshore districts in day time instead of night after the greatest launch disaster at Shaltnal areas.

A large number of people die in launch disaster every year, due to the confusion associated with night time travel as well as nor'westers.

At least 25 three-deck launches ply the Dhaka-Patuakhali and Dhaka-Barguna routes every day and reach their destination in 10 to 12 hours. So these launches could reach their respective destinations during the day.

In case of any such disaster at daytime, the loss of life and property would be very minimal, experts opined.

Train derailed

FROM PAGE 12
out of the debris.

"I saw two injured people walking away," the witness told Reuters. "One man had head wounds. The train is tipped slightly with its wheels in the air."

It was the latest tragedy to hit the trains in Britain, where the world's first public steam railway began, in 1825.

In recent years the network has been hit by a string of disasters, leading to long delays for commuters and fears of Third World safety standards in one of the world's richest countries.

Workers battled for 30 minutes to free one woman from under the wheels of a carriage tipped on its side. The walking wounded staggered into a local supermarket-turned-first-aid station.

The deralement was less than eight kilometre from Hatfield, where an express came off the tracks in October 2000, killing four people.

In February last year, 10 people were killed and dozens injured when a passenger express collided with a crashed car before being hit by a freight train travelling in the opposite direction, near the Yorkshire town of Selby in northern England.

In October 1999, two trains collided near London's Paddington station, killing 31 people. One of the trains had gone through a red signal.

AL activist held with arms in Natore

UNB, Natore

An activist of Awami League was arrested along with a revolver from Khamarpara area in sadar upazila yesterday.

Police raided the area at noon and arrested Hasan who allegedly went there to collect toll. Other accomplices of Hasan managed to flee the scene, police said.

Clash over land: One killed, 10 hurt in Habiganj

UNB, Habiganj

One person was killed and 10 others were injured in a clash between two rival groups at Baghasura village in Madhabpur upazila yesterday.

Witnesses said Tara Mia, 50, was injured in the clash with the supporters of Sabu Mia over land dispute at about 6 am. He succumbed to his injuries on the way to hospital.

Abdul Hye and Ayat Ali who received injuries during the clash were admitted to Sadar Hospital.

Kaifi Azmi dead

FROM PAGE 12
footpath dwellers build palaces for the rich.

At the other end of the spectrum were his love poems, which also included some of his better film lyrics.

"It is a great personal loss for me and my family. He was like a father figure to me. He left us when he was needed the most," said son-in-law Javed Akhtar, himself a well-known lyricist and screenwriter.

"He was the last of the progressive writers of Urdu literature. He was a very conscientious poet and always wrote against communalism and sectarianism," Akhtar said.

Azmi's writers' association wielded unparalleled influence during India's freedom struggle.

The lyrical beauty and powerful expression of his film songs have captivated millions. Despite the political and economic shifts in India, he retains his idealism and remains optimistic of a socialist

Newton

FROM PAGE 1
Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu MP, also the president of the JCD. He left a three-month old girl Chomok.

A tense situation prevailed at the DMCH, as his followers and fellow JCD men started gathered there. Several hundred people also gathered at 1/G, 4/22 residence of the victim at Mirpur section-1.

An additional police force was deployed at places of ward No. 8 in Mirpur after the killing.

future for India.

This optimism is reflected in poetry replete with dreams of a socialist egalitarian society in which the voice of another fellow human being will be felt like melodious music.

"I was born in enslaved India, have lived in independent secular India, and God willing, I will die in socialist India," (The Indian Express, September 9, 1998).

Kaifi Azmi received many awards and accolades including the Soviet Land Nehru Award and Sahitya Akademi Award. In 2000 he was conferred the first Millennium Award by the Delhi Government and Urdu Academy. He is the recipient of "Padma Shri" one of the Indian Government's highest civilian awards. The Maharashtra government conferred the Dnyaneshwar award on him in 1998.

Naushin's death

FROM PAGE 1
manager of the Masud Enterprise at north Badda. The gang also asked him to give his valuables. An extortionist shot Tarek in the leg on refusal and snatched Tk 33,000 and a cell phone from him. The gang fired off fear of reprisal.

Masudur Rahman, owner of the Masud Enterprise, filed a case with Badda Police Station in this connection. However, none on the side of the baby filed any complaint, police said.

Water management

FROM PAGE 12
taking into consideration the situation in the country, particularly after signing of the Ganges water sharing treaty with India.

The draft plan did not give any direction as regards negotiations with India on review of the treaty, for which the country is preparing. It completely ignored the issue, the sources said.

There are further instances of contradictory recommendations. It has recommended construction of a barrage at Mawa at the downstream of the combined flow of Brahmaputra and Ganges instead of one on Ganges to conserve the river water and prevent environmental disaster in the southwestern region of the country.

One of the major shortcomings of the draft NWMP is lack of any assessment on availability of water at the upstream of Meghna and Brahmaputra, which is vital for any future planning for water use.

It also failed to address the issue of increasing flows in old Brahmaputra. Dhaleswari, Ichhamati, Arilkan and Goral-Madhumi rivers during dry season. Increasing flows in these rivers is vital for revival of small rivers to help maintain navigation and irrigation, protect the environment and

increase fish production. It would also help availability of surface water for water supply in cities including Dhaka and reducing dependence on groundwater.

The ground water table is declining and there is the danger of arsenic contamination in it.

When the draft NWMP was published in March 2001, it evoked sharp criticism by water experts in the country. This resulted in non-approval of the draft plan by the then government. The consultants had submitted the draft NWMP to the then government in June 2001.

After the new government took over, the Executive Committee of the National Water Council approved it on January 26 after a review by the water resources ministry, the sources said.

Textbooks

FROM PAGE 12
independence of Bangladesh on March 26, 1971 as president and supreme commander of the armed forces.

Some history books say Zia called the nation to join the War of Independence on March 27, 1971 from Kalurghat radio station on behalf of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

EMS-sent parcel

FROM PAGE 12
addressee by 72 hours.

Surprisingly enough, the envelope containing the documents reached Russel's brother seven days later. The envelope was enclosed with a letter of apology -- dated March 4 -- from the security manager of Parcelforce Worldwide, Packages & Express based in Coventry, the UK.

Security Manager C Hunt in his letter to Jakirul Islam said, "Please find enclosed, some packaging which was found minus its contents in our National Sorting Hub..."

"I have looked into an number of possible reasons why the packaging and contents could have become separated, but I have been unable to determine exactly what happened, nor have I been able to locate the missing contents at the National Hub."

The EMS charges a minimum of Tk 496 for an item to be sent to the UK. The package is supposed to reach its destination by 72 hours. But delay is commonplace. Worse, some employees of the GPO are involved in pilferage of valuable documents, it is alleged.

After hearing from his brother, Russel sent the same documents to his brother through an international courier service on a much higher charge.

Contacted, Assistant Post Master Golam Murshid in charge of the EMS section of the GPO

assured that the post office would take action following any written complaint by the sender or receiver.

Asked about the delay in delivery, he said that there is no timeframe for the consignment reaching the addressee. "We try to send the package as quickly as possible."

A top official of the GPO on condition of anonymity admitted to some incidents of missing of EMS-sent consignments.

The unreliability of the service will result in a slide in the number of EMS users who will definitely opt for private courier services as an alternative, though much costlier, observed the sufferer.

BCL activist abducted in N'ganj

UNB, N'ganj

A Chhatra League activist was kidnapped from Dapa area in Fatal thana yesterday.

Police said a gang of armed youths abducted Shaheen, 30, at noon. They later demanded Tk two lakh ransom from Shaheen's family for his release.

Police failed to rescue him till filing of this report at 8 pm yesterday.

Hindu families

FROM PAGE 12
quences unless they paid them toll money.

Earlier on May 4, the gang had notified the 13 families in advance to pay them toll money ranging from Tk 20,000 to 50,000 sources said.

None of the villagers dared to disclose the names of the gang. Sources however said BNP cadres Kausar, Hossain, Zia, Ruhul, Babul, Amin, Tofazzal and Amjad of Basantapur and its adjoining areas might have been involved in the extortion.

Police lodged a dacovity case and arrested four BNP cadres -- Hossen, Zia, Ruhul and Mazem. A temporary police camp has been set up in the village to avert further untoward incident.

With Wednesday's attack, the Hindus of Basantapur came under attack for the fourth time since the October 1 parliamentary elections.

Local Awami League leaders Shahjahan Ali and Hanif Ali Shaikh visited the village.

Road accidents

FROM PAGE 1
Member. Abdus Sobhan, Tofael Ahmed and Sabir Ahmed Sohel, all hailed from Sunamganj. The identity of other could not be known.

Seven of the injured were admitted to Moulvibazar Sadar Hospital in critical condition.

The deputy commissioner visited the spot. A case was filed with the police in this regard.

Our Sirajganj Correspondent adds: Two persons were killed and eight others injured when a truck collided with a tempo on Bogra-Nagarbari Highway at Chandeh Chitolia under Shahjadpur upazila yesterday.

One of the dead was identified as Manju Sheikh, 42, son of Abu Taleb of village Dhariapur under Shahjadpur upazila.

The identity of the other could not be known.

Two of the injured were admitted to Bera Health Complex while the rest six released after first aid.

Meghna tragedy

FROM PAGE 12
while talking with these correspondents aboard a Dhaka bound launch from Patuakhali on Wednesday night.

Since both the owners and passengers of launches are violating laws, the government must act to stop this dangerous practice and save numerous lives, he emphasised.