

2 murdered in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two persons, one of them a housewife, were murdered in separate incidents in the city yesterday.

Mohammad Russell, 18, son of Samsul Haq Mollah, of Matuall in Demra, was shot dead at 10.00am.

Sources said Russell was killed by an armed gang, allegedly led by one Nasir and his men, over his affair with Nasir's sister Irin. Irin's family said Russell used to tease her on her way to school.

Russell was killed 50 yards off his residence. The on-duty doctor at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) declared him dead on arrival.

Demra police has the same version of the killing. Police arrested Nasir. A case was filed with the Demra Police Station.

In another incident, Rahima Khatun, 32, was strangled by her husband at their Sirajnagar residence in Shyampur.

Police said Yunus Hawlader, a rickshaw-puller, killed his wife over a family feud in the early hours. He has been absconding since the incident.

Jahir Hossain, Rahima's brother, filed a case with the Shyampur Police Station.

Malaria claims 45 lives in Khagrachhari

BSS, Rangamati

At least 45 people died and 20,000 were affected by Malaria during last two months creating a serious public health crisis in the hill district of Khagrachhari.

Official statistics available at the Civil Surgeon Office of Khagrachhari admitted 40 malaria-related deaths.

Patients are not getting proper treatment as only 27 doctors are working in the 50-bed district hospital, out of 97 approved post, health officials said. They also said supply of medicine is inadequate for the treatment of malaria patients. Over five lakh people are living in the district.

A total of 130 Malaria patients are taking treatment in the Khagrachhari Sadar Hospital. Three doctors, out of 12 doctors, are looking after the patients of the hospital.

A large number of patients affected by Malaria are rushing towards the hospital from different parts of the district for treatment.

Upazila Health Complex of Panchhari bordering Tripura state of India, has been running with 'no doctor' for a long time, local people alleged.

Israeli tanks roll into Bethlehem, Ramallah

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli tanks and troops entered three more West Bank towns yesterday, making good on the government's threat to seize Palestinian territory in response to further suicide bombings.

The army rolled into Bethlehem, Tulkarem and a suburb of Ramallah following the latest suicide attack that killed seven Israelis at a bus stop in Jerusalem. The Israelis entered Jenin, Qalqilya and Nablus on Wednesday.

Tulkarem was the latest target, with some 12 tanks pushing into the northern West Bank town at around midday (0900 GMT) yesterday, the district's governor said.

Tank fire echoed as the troops made their way into the town's centre, and imposed a curfew on the entire area.

Earlier in the day, Israeli troops entered Bethlehem, with around 60 tanks taking up positions in the town centre near the Church of the Nativity and the Dheisheh refugee camp.

A curfew was imposed and the army carried out house-to-house searches, Palestinian security sources told this news agency.

Seven Palestinians were arrested, but the army failed to arrest any members of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, the armed wing of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah group, which claimed Wednesday's suicide bombing.

The Bethlehem operation followed a move by some 20 tanks and armoured personnel carriers into Beitunia on the southeastern edge of Ramallah, the town where Arafat's headquarters are located, security sources said.

Israeli forces pressed their operations on the outskirts of Nablus, with the army imposing a curfew on the neighbouring villages of Beit Iba, Beit Wazan and Sarra, the army said.

The army stepped up its military activity in the West Bank early on Wednesday, as Israel responded to a Palestinian suicide attack the day before which gutted a bus in south Jerusalem, leaving 19 Israelis dead.

Israel's mini-cabinet vowed late Tuesday to launch "a series of military actions" which would be on a larger scale than recent army operations, but not as huge as Israel's five-week Defensive Wall operation.

The prime minister's office also said Israel would respond to acts of terror by capturing Palestinian Authority territory and holding it "for as long as terror continues".

Israel's retaliation began within hours, with dawn raids into Jenin and Qalqilya followed by a brief reoccupation of Nablus in a bid to "eradicate terrorist cells", the army said.

A second incursion into Qalqilya later on Wednesday saw two Israeli soldiers killed and four others wounded in clashes with Palestinian militants. A Palestinian security officer was also killed during the raid.

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FM tags condition for 'overland' facility to India

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign minister M Morshed Khan has said Bangladesh can consider giving 'overland facilities' to India only if it agrees to share the 'usage benefit' it will accrue from this.

Without mentioning land transit or transshipment, he said, "We must examine how much benefit India will obtain by using alternate route (through Bangladesh) and not transporting goods through the 'chicken neck' corridor which connects the north-eastern states (of India).

"Let them say about the cost-way transit facility for more than 30 years at a cost of only Tk two crore annually and it was never revised. "It is a paltry amount given by our neighbour".

"Money is required for developing port facilities and keeping the waterways navigable. Let us fix the right costs for the benefits provided."

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Regional trade Commerce, foreign ministries at odds

SHAHRIAR KARIM

Some recent developments in regional trade negotiations sparked a 'subtle debate' between the foreign ministry and the commerce ministry, each blaming the other for interfering in its jurisdiction.

The debate intensified when the foreign ministry extended the trade agreement with India for two months and the commerce ministry agreed to a Nepalese proposal for trade talks, said sources.

"We don't understand why the foreign office took the initiative to extend the agreement, which is actually our job," a high official of the commerce ministry said.

The Bangladesh-India trade agreement was signed in 1980 with a provision for renewal every three years. The agreement expired in October 2001 and was extended several times.

Recently, Dhaka has been pursuing a new trade agreement with Delhi as it (Dhaka) thought the existing one is not serving its interest. Dhaka has already sent a draft

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Women, children can't be sent to jail in the name of safe custody

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women, children or juveniles can not be sent to jail in the name of safe custody, according to a decision taken at an inter-ministerial meeting on Wednesday.

The ministries of law and home affairs will issue directives to the Deputy Commissioner of Dhaka and the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) to follow the decision from now on, meeting sources said.

"We have given directives to the authorities concerned to send such persons to rehabilitation centres", Law Minister Barrister Maudud Ahmed told newsmen after the meeting.

The meeting also decided to implement some recommendations of the jail reforms committee.

Presided over by the law minister, the inter-ministerial meeting was attended by the home minister and high officials of the two ministries.

Bombs hurled on procession in Khulna: 3 hurt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Three persons were injured when a gang of drug traffickers hurled bombs on a procession in the city yesterday.

Khulna businessmen brought out the procession against rampant drug trafficking in Skid ghat area.

The procession came under bomb attack when it was passing through K D Ghose Road near Khulna thana at about 5:30pm.

Police arrested three persons named Abdul Hamid Shaikh, 35, Mohammad Yunus, 24, and Muluk Chand, 30.

Businessmen alleged that the attack was launched in front of the policemen who were on duty for guarding BNP office as usual. The injured persons were admitted to General Hospital.

Election to 9 municipalities on July 20

BSS, Dhaka

Elections to nine municipalities will be held on July 20.

These are Patgram under Lalmonirhat, Singair under Manikganj, Sreepur under Gazipur, Bhangra under Faridpur, Sharishabari under Jamalpur, Kamalganj under Moulavibazar, Ramgati under Laxmipur, Mirkadim under Munshiganj and Sandwip under Chittagong districts, an official handout said yesterday.

The elections to some municipalities including Nabinagar under Brahmanbaria district will not be held due to demarcation problems.

Demarcation of Nabinagar pourasava has not been completed and cases on demarcation of some other pourasavas are still pending. Election to these pourasavas will be held after completion of demarcation and disposal of the cases, the handout said.

Sedition case Bail petition of Dr Alamgir rejected

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka, yesterday rejected the bail petition of former state minister for planning Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir in connection with a sedition case.

Judge (in-charge) Mollah Mostafa Kamal passed the order following a criminal appeal, seeking ad-interim bail by the defence lawyers on behalf of Alamgir.

The court also fixed July 14 for full hearing on the issue.

The defence lawyers submitted the appeal to the Judge's Court following a rejection order by the CMM's Court, Dhaka.

Moving the appeal, Barrister M Amirul Islam, Advocate Sahara Khatun, Abdullah Abu and Abdur Rahman Howlader stated that five other accused in the case were earlier granted bail by the same court. So, Alamgir should be granted bail as a co-accused, the lawyers added.

The prosecution side opposed the bail petition. After hearing both

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Dr Kamal Hossain speaks against the spiraling trend of violence, killing and extortion at a citizens' gathering at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh in the city yesterday.

Budget balanced on poor's back

Speakers at discussion say

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday blasted the finance minister for burdening people of the low-income bracket with taxes while giving respite to the rich, which would intensify social instability and increase poverty.

In the face of economic slowdown, the finance minister should have stressed the need for regulation of public expenditure and other areas like defence and the annual development programme (ADP) but instead, he has proposed measures aimed at encouraging the 'theft culture', they pointed out.

With former finance minister

SAMS Kibria in the chair, the roundtable on the 'proposed budget for 2002-03 fiscal' was organised by the Weekly Mridubhashan at a city hotel.

Chairman of the Centre for Policy Dialogue Prof. Rehman Sobhan, former finance ministers M Syeduzzaman and AMA Muhi, economist Atiur Rahman, President of Bangladesh Economic Association (BEA) Dr Moinul Islam, former principal secretary to the former prime minister SA Samad and former vice-chancellor of Dhaka University AK Azad Chowdhury, among others, participated in the discussion.

People's expectations have

been ignored in the proposed budget and it would reduce the purchasing power of people with low-incomes due to the increased tax net, the speakers said.

SAMS Kibria said the proposed budget would make the rich richer and the poor poorer. The finance minister has taken measures to make air conditioners, cars and other luxury items cheaper for the rich.

"Poverty alleviation should have been the highest priority in the present situation. It would not be possible to eradicate poverty with poor economic growth. Besides, high inflation will have a serious

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Govt-UNDP talks soon to resume aid in CHT

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Officials of the government and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will begin talks soon to prepare development programmes for the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and resume assistance, according to highly placed sources.

This follows a recommendation by a UNDP-government 'risk assessment committee' on June 13 for resumption of assistance for CHT.

Assistance for the region was suspended on security reasons after kidnapping of three European engineers by some armed tribesmen on February 16 last year.

The Sustainable Environment Management Programme (SEMP), launched by the UNDP earlier in cooperation with the government and NGOs, will be the first to be resumed, the sources said.

A SEMP-UNDP assessment team is already visiting the CHT to prepare the programme, they said.

Before suspension of aid, the SEMP, through holding 19 workshops in the CHT, had identified at least 30 projects for implementation involving local people.

UNDP Resident Representative Jorgen Lissner at the press conference in the city on June 13 said that Tk 4.3 crore would now be available under the SEMP for the area.

Meanwhile, the government is also working out projects to generate employment and alleviate poverty, and to improve the communication system for better marketing of agricultural products in the CHT.

It is expecting donor support for the projects, the sources said.

Moni Swapan Dewan, Deputy Minister for CHT Affairs, after a six-day need assessment tour of the region, told The Daily Star here yesterday that talks between donors and the government will be held soon to prepare development programme for the CHT.

Forex worth Tk 32 lakh seized at ZIA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs officials at Zia International Airport seized Saudi rial equivalent to about Tk 32 lakh from an outgoing passenger yesterday morning.

The passenger, identified as Nurul Islam, was boarding an Emirates flight.

Acting on an information, a customs team led by inspector Wajed Ali stopped him on the boarding bridge and took him to the cus

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Table with 3 columns: Date, Sun Rises, Sun Sets. Row 1: June 21, 6-49 pm. Row 2: June 22, 5-11 am.

Table with 3 columns: Prayer, Azan, Jamaat. Header: June 21. Rows: Fajr (4-15, 4-45), Juma (12-15, 1-20), Asr (5-00, 5-15), Maghrib (6-53, 6-57), Esha (8-15, 8-45). Source: Islamic Foundation.