

Two alleged muggers beaten to death in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg
Two alleged muggers were killed and another was injured in mob beating at Patia Friday night. Police and witnesses said four muggers hired an autorickshaw from in front of the Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) at around 7 pm and headed towards Kamal Munshirhat in Patiya upazila. When the autorickshaw reached Srimai Bride at Patiya at about 9 pm, muggers beat up the autorickshaw driver Mohammad Hossain and forced him out of the vehicle. As the muggers tried to flee with the autorickshaw, Hossain raised alarm, which drew locals to the spot. The locals then chased the autorickshaw. Finally, they caught three of the gang while the rest managed to flee. The locals severely beat up the three. Of them, Nurul Alam, 29, died on the spot while Nurul Islam, 30, succumbed to his injuries at the Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH). Another critically injured mugger, identified as Nasir, was undergoing treatment at the CMCH. Two cases were filed with Patiya police station.

Govt plans ceiling on banks' lending rates

STAR REPORT
The government plans to cap commercial banks' interest rate on term loans, said Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday. "In a competitive banking environment the interest rate should be low, but the opposite is happening here. I am thinking of putting a ceiling on the lending rate," Saifur told newsmen after a meeting with members of the Bank Reforms Committee (BRC). The minister, however, did not say when the government planned to effect the measure. Earlier at the meeting, the BRC members concluded that high interest rate on term loans was one of the major factors behind huge defaulted loans. "It would be better if the banks could reduce interest rate on term loans through a healthy competition. But this is not happening. We shall consider all the options including the highest ceiling on the interest on term loans for a limited period," BRC Chairman Professor Wahiduddin Mahmud told The Daily Star. Until the mid-1990s, the Bangladesh Bank fixed an interest band for term loans for the banks to follow. Later, the government changed the policy, allowing banks to fix their own interest rate. At present, banks charge as high as 14 per cent interest on term loans. Yesterday's meeting at the planning ministry was convened to update the finance and planning minister on the progress in the BRC work. Professor Mahmud, Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed and other members of the committee were present at the meeting. Saifur told the meeting that too many private commercial banks had touched off unhealthy competition in the market. "As the PCBs need fund to run their operations, an unhealthy competition is on." He also said their deposit rate was too high. "Although the government has reduced interest rate on different savings instruments, the PCBs are still taking deposits at 12-13 per cent interest." Saifur said the banks were sanctioning loans without properly following the rules or checking the

Public procurement flawed, motivated, says Saifur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman has come down heavily on the public procurement process, saying bid documents are 'motivated' and not properly prepared. "Basically, government institutions and officials are responsible for these motivated documents and some officials have a tendency to try to become rich overnight," he told a workshop on the Public Procurement Reforms Project at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city yesterday. The finance minister said that there are 'black holes' in the procurement process that are utilised to siphon off public money and a number of lapses in the procurement policy. The proposed project would set things in order, he added. "We have to improve administrative capacity and ensure transparency to control this wastage. If we can check 50 per cent of the wasted amount, it will help save a huge amount of money." A major portion of revenue budget was spent on government procurement, which makes it essential to appoint honest people on the procurement committees, Saifur said. The Public Procurement Reforms Project has a huge potential but its success depends on the government's political will and participation of people, especially those in the public sector, he added. The minister said the government's ultimate goal is to alleviate poverty, he said. "Efficient investment can generate employment which, in turn, will help reduce poverty." State Minister for Finance and Planning Anwarul Kabir Talukder attended the function as special guest with Manik Lal Sumaddar, Secretary, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) in the chair. Frederick T Temple, Country Director World Bank and Agustin Litvak, manager, Procurement Hub, South Asia Region of the World Bank, AKM Fazlul Karim, director general of Central Procurement Technical Unit (CPTU) also spoke on the occasion. Temple said the government procurement of services and goods amounted to nearly Tk 300 crore every year of which 10 to 15 per cent is siphoned off by delaying the process or through some other



Saifur Rahman

Al-Qaida 'big fish' netted

AFP, Karachi
Al-Qaida suspect Ramzi bin al-Shaiba, who was arrested after a fierce firefight here on the anniversary of the September 11 attacks, has reportedly boasted of a direct role in planning the attacks. His arrest on Wednesday is a major step forward for the anti-terror coalition. It followed the capture on Tuesday of a man claimed by Pakistan to be another senior al-Qaida operative. The arrests come nearly six months after Abu Zabaydah, a chief lieutenant to al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden, was taken in the eastern Pakistani city of Faisalabad in March. Bin al-Shaiba, a Yemeni national, is wanted for complicity in the murder of more than 3,000 people on September 11 last year. The 29-year-old is named as a co-conspirator of Zacarias Moussaoui, the only man so far indicted in connection with the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. Moussaoui reportedly took bin al-Shaiba's place among the hijackers when the latter failed to get a US visa. Bin al-Shaiba is believed to have handled logistics and wired money to the hijackers. He has also been linked with the bombing of the USS Cole in Yemen in 2000 and an attack on a synagogue in Tunisia in April, in which 14 Germans were killed. Bin al-Shaiba was a room-mate of Mohammad Atta, the ringleader of the September 11 hijackers, in Germany. He was quoted as saying, in a recent interview with the Arab TV network Al-Jazeera, that he was an active planner in the September 11 attacks, which he described as "real acts of heroism". The Al-Jazeera journalist who interviewed him in Pakistan earlier this year said bin al-Shaiba still keeps "souvenirs" such as Boeing flying manuals and air charts. "He is a very big fish to catch," Vincent Cannistraro, a former CIA counter-terrorism official, told the Washington Post. "He certainly was the coordinator with Khalid (Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, another top bin Laden aide and also interviewed by Al-Jazeera) of the 9/11 operation itself, and he might know some of the people who may still be in the United States if we can get him to talk." Bin al-Shaiba grew up in the eastern Yemeni province of Hadramaut, a hotbed of Islamic radicalism. He arrived in Germany in 1995, claiming to be a Sudanese refugee. He wasn't believed but by the time he was ordered out of the country, in December 1997 he had somehow managed to obtain a visa. Bin al-Shaiba based himself in Hamburg and immersed himself in



PHOTO: STAR

Police line up the detainees at Fatullah in Narayanganj yesterday. As many as 68 people were rounded up in overnight operations at Fatullah. Twenty-six were arrested.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia reviews a multinational platoon exercise on Peace Support Operations jointly organised by the Bangladesh Army and the United States Army Pacific (USARPAC) at the Rajendrapur Cantonment in Gazipur yesterday

9 killing fields used by Pak army in '71 to be preserved

UNB, Dhaka
Ministry of Liberation War Affairs has taken up a project for preserving the killing fields used by Pakistani army in 1971 and constructing tombstones there. Under the scheme, nine killing fields from across the country will be selected for preservation and upliftment this year. As part of the project, Khandakar Fazlur Rahman, secretary of the Liberation War Affairs Ministry and deputy secretary (development) Didarul Ahsan will visit two killing fields -- one behind the Shamsuzzoha Hall of Rajshahi University and the other adjacent to Rajshahi Cadet College -- on Monday. At 3:00pm today, the two high officials will exchange opinions with officials of Rajshahi on the scope of activities of the ministry. The officials will accept suggestions and views about the ministry's ongoing projects such as allowance distribution among poor freedom fighters, income earned by Muktiyoddha Sangsad, its distribution and other problems, said an official release.

Lawyers' march to JS today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Lawyers march towards the Jatiya Sangsad today to press home a six-point demand. The march begins from the Supreme Court premises at 2:30pm, says a joint statement of the Lawyers' Six-point Demand Implementation Parishad issued yesterday. Convener of the parishad Barrister Amir-ul-Islam and other senior lawyers are expected to have a meeting with Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar at his Sangsad Bhavan office at 3:00pm. Apart from withdrawal of enhanced court fees and stamp duty, the lawyers also demand

Houses raided at Fatullah, 26 arrested

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanj
Fatullah police in special raids in different areas of the town on Friday night held 68 people. Of them, 14 were arrested on various charges and 12 under Section 54 of CrPC. The rest were released. One foreign-made pistol along with four bullets and 14 bottles of phensidyl were recovered during the raids in Lanapara, Panchabati, Masdair and Aiganj areas, led by SP Shafiqul Islam. Some residents of the areas while talking to this correspondent alleged that police raided houses at random and held innocent people but filed to nab criminals. They also alleged that police released those who could give bribe. Police however denied the allegation. Fatullah thana OC Sharif Shamsul Huq said at least six notori

PM opens multinational military exercises All-out support to UN efforts for world peace

UNB, Rajendrapur (Gazipur)
Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday pledged her government's all-out support for successful implementation of United Nations goals set in this millennium for establishing durable world peace by resolving conflicts. She reaffirmed Bangladesh's active role in global effort devoted to peace, democracy and development while inaugurating multinational military exercises aimed at enhancing skills of army personnel for peacekeeping operations under UN aegis. The Multinational Platoon Exercise-2 (MPE-2), an exercise in UN peace-support operation, began at the Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training in the Rajendrapur cantonment premises in the morning. "In the changed security scenario today, peacekeeping forces need to be well-equipped to face new and difficult challenges of the day. A well-trained force is a prerequisite for carrying out the challenging duty of peacekeeping," the prime minister observed. The traditional role of soldiers has also changed, with the "warmongers" now becoming "peacemongers", the prime minister noted. The peacekeepers have to motivate warring factions to work for political understanding, democratic stability and national reconciliation and reconstruction. Bangladesh Army is hosting the MPE-2, code-named "Shanti Doot (ambassador of peace)", co-sponsored by US army's Pacific outfit. Six countries -- Bangladesh, India, Mongolia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and USA -- are the major participants in the fortnight-long exer-

Probe report submitted Intention to grab land led to the Malibagh tragedy

BSS, Dhaka
The judicial probe commission report on Malibagh T&T Colony killing says wealthy and armed influential quarters triggered the incident that left four people dead and many others injured. Talking to journalists at the commission office, Supreme Court Justice M Joyrul Abedin, chairman of the probe body, hinted this ahead of submission of the report to the home ministry yesterday. Four people were killed and many more injured on August 15 over the eviction of encroachers from T&T lands at Malibagh Chowdhurypara in the city. The probe commission was formed on the same day at the prime minister's directive and began work on August 20. Justice Abedin said financial motives of the influential quarters and their desire to occupy land led to the tragedy. He also said four to five categories of people were involved in the incident. He hoped the government would take necessary steps on the basis of the recommendations made in the report and publish it. Justice Abedin said investigation into the incident was a complicated task, adding that it took 26 days to finalise the report. He said the report found considerable dissimilarities between press reports on the incident. Justice Abedin said the commission recorded testimonies of 162 people, divided into seven categories. Of them, 42 were residents of T&T Colony, 12 officials and employees of T&T, 31 devotees and businessmen, 20 Ansars of whom 19 were on duty on the day of the incident, 14 policemen, 16 staff of Dragon Sweater Factory and 27 from madrassah. According to police and witnesses, a gang of six swooped on Abdus Sattar at a tea stall at Alaipur Bazar at about 11 am. They dragged Sattar out of the tea stall and shot him point blank. He died on the spot. The alleged killers left the place firing several blank shots. The deceased left behind two wives, four sons and five daughters. The slain freedom fighter and his two sons -- Faruque Shikder and Abdul Rouf Shikder -- were members of Purba Bangla Communist Party (PBCP). They surrendered to police in 1999 to take advantage of general amnesty. Their relations with PBCP got strained after they surrendered to police without decision of the party, said local people and OC of Rupsha thana. Police superintendent, Khulna, said that the murder was a sequel to an intra-party rivalry of PBCP.

JS to discuss law & order today

UNB, Dhaka
The Jatiya Sangsad will take up the country's law and order for a review today, when it resumes sitting after a two-day recess. The Speaker was learnt to have accepted the opposition lawmaker Shajahan Khan's notice under the rule 68 for a 'short' discussion on the matter but rejected Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shaheed's notice on the matter under the rule 147. If the notice is moved in parliament today, it might be a one-hour discussion. But there will be no resolution or voting. The opposition chief whip told UNB that it was decided at Thursday's business advisory committee meeting that the date, time and the precise rule of the proposed discussion on law and order would be determined in consultation with the opposition. "But", he said, "the government does not want to discuss this important issue in detail under the rule 147 to avoid any resolution against the government or voting on it." Shaheed had a meeting with the Speaker yesterday afternoon, pressing for acceptance of his notice under the rule 147, but the

No date yet for BUET reopening

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Prof. Alee Murtaza, Vice Chancellor of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) met with the senior teachers of the university to discuss recent campus situation. The meeting, as part of a series of meetings with all concern bodies of the university, discussed re-opening of the university that has been closed since September 8 in an unsteady atmosphere. However, did not discuss any probable date for re-opening. Date for the re-opening of the BUET will be fixed at its Syndicate very soon after reviewing suggestions of all bodies of the university, sources said. BUET teachers at the meeting offered co-operation to the Vice Chancellor to create a congenial campus atmosphere. Later, Prof. Murtaza met with the officers of the BUET on the same issue.

Table with Sun Rises and Sun Sets for Sept 15 and Sept 16.

Table with Prayer Timings for Sept 15, including Azan and Jamaat times for Fajr, Zohr, Asr, Maghrib, and Esha.