

Satkhira bomb blast suspects put on remand

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Six persons arrested in connection with the bomb blasts in Satkhira town were put on a five-day remand yesterday.

Two of the accused -- Ruhul Quddus and Pradeep Saha, staff of Roxy Cinema -- were arrested in connection with the bomb blast at the movie house. Four others -- Dilip Biswas, Zulfikar Ali, Jahangir Hossain and Bazlur Rahman -- were arrested in connection with the bomb blast at the Lion Circus.

Meantime, the law enforcement agencies raided the house of a ward commissioner, Abdus Selim, in the early hours yesterday. Selim, also the panel chairman of the district pourashaha and a leader of the Jubo League, was not home during the raid.

A team of investigators led by Khulna range Superintendent of Police (CID branch) Mazharul Haq yesterday initiated probe into the incidents. The team visited both spots and collected splinters of bombs.

According to sources, an army explosive team has come to the conclusion that the bombs were made by experts.

Meantime, rumours are rife in the town about who to blame for such a crime. There are rumours that rivalry among influential people over the tender of the circus and dispute over the land of the cinema might have something to do with the bomb blasts. However, others believe that fundamental groups might have their hands behind the incidents.

Meantime, the local BNP, Jamate-Islami, the Awami League (AL) and 11-party alliance have condemned the incident.

Former ETV chairman, MD sued for fraud

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A fraud case against former chairman of the ETV AS Mahamud, its Managing Director Simon Dring and three others was filed yesterday with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka.

The other three are Nawajesh Ali Khan, chief programmer of the ETV; chief officer of its finance branch and Aftab Khan Tulu of Khalil Film (ETV's agent).

In the complaint, two persons were shown as prosecution witnesses.

The case was filed by Mohammad Sayeed, a resident of Mohakhali in the city, (film producer, distributor and director).

The complainant alleged that the accused persons on September 20, 2000 had made a 'verbal contract' with him through the accused No-5 in the case for telecast of an Indian Bangla film -- Sabar Uparey -- by t h e

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Restriction on 3 AL leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Authorities have imposed a restriction on three Awami League lawmakers from attending a wedding scheduled to be held at Senakunja of the Dhaka Cantonment this evening.

Mozammel Hossain, a retired colonel, recently invited AL lawmakers Abdur Razzak, Shawqat Ali and Syed Abul Hossain among others to attend the wedding of his daughter.

But, sources said, the office of the DGFI yesterday imposed the restriction on the three ALMPs from entering the cantonment.

Following the restriction, the host had to withdraw the three names from the guest list, said Shawqat Ali.

Table with columns: Sun Rises, Sun Sets, Prayer Timings (Oct 1, Oct 2), Oct 1 (Fajr, Zohr, Asr, Maghrib, Esha), Oct 2 (Fajr, Zohr, Asr, Maghrib, Esha). Source: Islamic Foundation

Hasina vows to foil 'plot' to sell gas to India

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday accused the government of "conspiring to sell gas to India for earning commission only" and vowed to resist the move.

"We will not allow this depriving our people", she said while addressing the inaugural session of Sylhet divisional conference of her party here.

Before election they (BNP leaders) had said they would sacrifice blood but not export gas. But now the prime minister and the finance minister are "very eagerly trying to arrange gas export anyhow", she

alleged. "We (AL) are very much clear on this issue. First there should be proper assessment of gas resources and 50 years' reserve should be kept before thinking about export", the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament said.

Held at the Government Alia Madrassah Maidan in the city in the afternoon, the inaugural session was also addressed by, among others, Sylhet district AL President ANM Shafique, Mayor and City AL President Badar Uddin Kamran, Moulvibazar district AL president Syed Mohsin Ali, Habiganj district unit president Dr. Mushfiqur

Rahman and a party leader from Sunamganj.

District AL General Secretary Iftekhar Hossain Shamim and city AL General Secretary Misbahuddin Siraj conducted the session.

Central leaders Abdus Samad Azad MP, Suranjit Sengupta MP, Abdur Razzak MP, Whip Abdus Shahid, Dewan Farid Gazi MP, Nazmul Hassan Zahed MP, Abdur Jalil MP, former ministers Matia Chowdhury, Sajeda Chowdhury, Tofail Ahmed, Amir Hossain Amu, former MPs Nurul Islam Nahid, Sultan Mohammad Mansur, central leader Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin and

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PHOTO: STAR

Prof. Serajul Islam Chowdhury addresses a rally of writers, teachers and artists, organised in protest at a rule that makes permission from the Dhaka University vice-chancellor a must for any gathering at the Central Shaheed Minar.

Security alert in the southwest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Security in the entire southwestern region of the country has been stepped up with bomb scare gripping people in the wake of Saturday's explosions at Satkhira wounding about 125 people.

Sources mentioned that the explosions at Satkhira, the first such incidents since the BNP assumed power on October 10 last year, have created widespread panic because four incidents of bomb explosion in the region during the immediate past Awami League (AL) rule had left at least 34 people killed and more than 300 others injured.

As part of tightened security, the OCs of all police stations in the region have been directed to gear up operations against criminals and expedite investigation into murder cases and cases recorded under the explosives act. They have also

been asked to recover illegal arms and bombs and identify 'crime prone' areas.

Besides, police stations in the frontier districts have been directed to remain vigilant against cross-border crimes and nab those involved in such crimes at any cost.

In Khulna city, the metropolitan police authorities have decided to launch a combing operation to arrest any one making bombs and selling ingredients for making those. They are also taking special measures to guard key installations and sensitive places.

Vigilance at all the temples has been intensified keeping in view the ensuing Durga Puja, police sources said.

It may be recalled here that 10 persons were killed and around 200 injured in the first incident of bomb explosion in the region on March 7, 1999 at a cultural function of Udichi

Shilpi Goshthi at Jessore town. The second explosion took place in July, 1999 in a Kadiana mosque at Nirala residential area in Khulna city, leaving seven persons killed and about 30 others injured.

The third such incident took place on June 3 last year in a Christian missionary church at Baniar Char in Gopalganj district, claiming 10 lives and injuring about 20 people.

In the fourth incident of bomb explosion, seven persons were killed and 57 others injured at a public meeting of the AL at Mollahat in Bagerhat district on September 23 last year.

In the Udichi case, charge-sheet was submitted against 24 people. Trial of the case has been stayed under an order from higher court. Investigation into the other bomb explosion cases seems to have made little headway.

Dhaka, EC agree on trade cooperation

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh and European Commission (EC) officials agreed upon the issues and areas of cooperation in trade and economic development under a four-year EC assistance package worth 411 million Euro.

European Commission-Bangladesh Specialised Sub-Groups held separate meetings with trade and economic officials here during September 29-30 to identify the areas for utilisation of the EC assistance between 2003 and 2006 under national indicative programme (NIP) for Bangladesh.

The sub-groups, one for trade development and the other for economic development, were established by the EC-Bangladesh

Joint Commission, which met in Dhaka in November 2000. These were their first meetings.

Of the NIP package, 49 million Euro is earmarked for technical assistance for trade development, which includes setting up of a trade institute, strengthening WTO Cell at the Commerce Ministry and establishing quality-testing laboratories for agro-based products.

Commerce Ministry officials Sunday appreciated European Union's offer for duty-free market access for Everything but Arms (EBA), but asked for relaxing the rules of origin, including SAARC Cumulation in textiles.

EC officials argued that SAARC Cumulation is aimed at integrating regional economies through complementarities, while

Bangladesh officials referred to differences on the issue among the textile-sector associations.

Ready-made garments and frozen foods make up 94 per cent of Bangladesh's exports to Europe. The EC officials also focused on maintaining high quality of frozen foods for export to Europe.

Other regional and bilateral issues such as SAARC regional cooperation, the Generalised System of Preference (GSP) and the regional cumulation of rules of origin, trade-related technical assistance and cooperation, the EC National Indicative Programme (NIP) for Bangladesh as well as o n g o i n g

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Goodnight, not goodbye, says Dring

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"Goodnight, sweet dreams but never goodbye" were the last words of Simon Dring, the managing director of the now-closed Ekushey Television (ETV), at his farewell yesterday.

The country's frontline cultural activists, journalists and social workers bade Dring a fond farewell at the Liberation War Museum premises in the evening.

Directors, producers, artists and officials of the ETV, the country's first terrestrial private TV channel, attended the last informal meeting with their managing director.

The farewell opened with the presentation of a bouquet followed by a gift by Qaiyum Chowdhury, a painter.

"We are here to stay by the loyalty of people's hope to dream and brave to create a newer world and to stay within law," said Dring, e y e s

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PHOTO: STAR

Former ETV managing director Simon Dring and his wife Fiona receive a painting from Qaiyum Chowdhury at the farewell hosted by the Liberation War Museum in the city yesterday.

Legal experts ditch Bari commission report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some legal experts feel that the government should not use the Bari commission report on bomb blasts as reference to probe the incidents.

Barrister Ishfaq Ahmed told The Daily Star last night that although it is a fact that inquiry commission reports have no impact on the judicial process, still the government can take help of the reports.

"As a majority of the Bari commission members (two out of three) gave notes of dissent on the content of the report and suggested that there should be more covert investigation on the issue, the government should not use the report at all. The opinion of the majority should get priority," Barrister Ishfaq said.

Mentioning that the commission report does not have any legal basis, Barrister Amirul Islam said, "The formation of the commission was ill-advised."

"Some of the bombing incidents that the commission dealt with are under trial, while others are being investigated. In case of one bomb incident, an incumbent minister has been charged. In this context, it can be easily perceived why such a commission was set up through an executive order," he mentioned.

Earlier, a retired judge of the appellate division of the Supreme Court, Justice Golam Rabbani, the former and incumbent presidents of the Supreme Court Bar Association, Barrister Shafiq Ahmed and Ozaer Faruk, on different occasions said the formation of the commission was illegal.

Vendors cleared off Indira Road

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The eastern stretch of the Indira road in the city's Farmgate area has been cleared of all encroachment after a report was published by The Daily Star on how illegal businesses occupied the road.

Sources said the Tejaoga police evicted all shops running businesses illegally and occupying either side of the road.

The report published on September 25 said Tejaoga police banned rickshaw on part of the Indira Road to ease pedestrian movement. But at the same time, they allowed about 300 illegal shops on either side of the road to flourish because of monetary gain.

According to the traders, each shop had to pay Tk 20 to Tk 60 in toll everyday to a lineman engaged by the police.

According to sources, a cashier from the Tejaoga police collected the money from the linemen named Kadam Ali every evening. The cashier, a constable of the police station, kept account of the money.

At the end of the month, the proceeds, worth crores of taka, were distributed among police. A fair share of the money went to the police high-ups.

When contacted, a sub-inspector of the Tejaoga Police Station said they had evicted the shops following an instruction by Deputy Commissioner (West) of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Sajjad Hossain.

"This is nothing new. The police had previously launched such drives as this but those evicted soon returned to their business shortly by paying the police," said a vendor.

Crimes on women, children rise high

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different human-rights watchdogs yesterday revealed a staggering figure of rapes, killings, custodial deaths and other crimes that took place in January-September this year.

Some other organisations came up with reports on crimes that have occurred over the last one or two months.

The finds -- all based on press reports -- showed a rising trend in repression against women and children, kidnapping of juveniles, attack on journalists and human-rights violation.

Odhikar, a human-rights group, reported on 1,647 incidents of child repression, 1,066 rapes, 462 dowry victims, 310 acid victims, three

journalist-killing and 88 killings in border violence in nine months.

Of the 1,647 child repression incidents, 472 children were raped, 353 murdered and 98 committed suicides. Besides, 188 children were injured, 36 arrested, 149 trafficked, one fatwa victim and 55 attacked with acid.

In attacks on newsmen, three were killed, 95 injured, 12 arrested, three abducted, 34 assaulted, 127 threatened and one was attacked with acid. Cases were filed against 117 journalists, reports Odhikar.

The Bureau of Human Rights Bangladesh (BHRB) said that 2,678 people were murdered in nine months -- a nine-month rise of 218 from last year.

Some 720 women were raped and 113 of them children, and 131 were

murdered after rape. Ninety-one journalists were tortured, one was killed and 27 were threatened, the report said.

In a one-month report, the Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) totalled 65 rapes, 38 murders, 28 dowry victims, 22 acid attacks and 21 abductions in September.

The Bangladesh Nari Progoti Sangha released a report on 337 incidents of repression against women in September, including 89 murders, 94 rapes and 27 acid attacks.

The Institute of Democratic Rights (IDR) said that 268 people were murdered in September and 291 in August; and 71 women and children were raped in September

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Police get tough on truant cabbies, 80 cases filed so far

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over 80 cases were filed till yesterday in the first three days of police drive against taxicab drivers refusing to take passengers to certain destinations or charging over the meter in violation of the code governing taxicabs in the city.

"We have received an average of 60 complaints each day for the last three days and are seriously looking into each one of them," deputy commissioner (DC) of Traffic (south) Abu Musa Mohammad Fakhru Islam Khan said yesterday.

He said a register is being maintained to keep track of the complaints and violations will be seriously dealt with.

Drivers who would take off before police arrives following a complaint would be reported to their respective operators and police action against them would also follow, he added.

Khan said cab drivers refusing to take passengers despite request by the on-duty police would be arrested on the spot. However, no arrests had to be made yet as all concerned have so far complied with the requests by police, the DC said.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) launched the special drive following a series of complaints against cab drivers discriminating against passengers on the basis of their destination or charging over the meter taking advantage of the transport crisis due to the government ban on two-stroke.

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Japan celebrates 30 years of ties with Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Japan will hold a 45-day programme beginning tomorrow to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the establishment of its diplomatic relations with Bangladesh.

Many colourful events will mark the programme titled, "Japan Month", including honouring a Bangladeshi painter, traditional Japanese karate competition, Japanese film festival, Japanese new generation 'blue' concert, doll exhibition, speech contest in Japanese language, Ikebana contest and education fair.

It is the pride of the people of Japan to have been very supportive of the Bangladeshi people in their struggle for independence, Minister of the Embassy of Japan in Dhaka

Tetsuo Yamashita told reporters at a briefing at the embassy at Baridhara in the city.

He added, "Japan was one of the earliest countries to officially recognise Bangladesh". Japan recognised Bangladesh on February 10, 1972.

He said the bilateral friendly relations in various fields got momentum during the last 30 years.

Japan has been supporting Bangladesh's efforts to alleviate poverty based on the agreed priority areas such as agricultural and rural development, improvement of agricultural productivity, improvement in social areas, health care and infrastructure development.

Yamashita said Pan Pacific

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Three to die for murder

UNB, Jhalakathi

A court here yesterday awarded the capital punishment to three people for killing a woman.

Additional District and Sessions Judge Jesmin Anwar sentenced the victim's husband Kabir Hossain of village Ghagra, and his relatives Firoz and Maruf of village Bamunkathi in Rajapur upazila, to be hanged till death.

The case story, in brief, says Kabir along with his associates strangled his wife Nasima Begum on the night of November 2, 2000 and buried her body into a field. They also sowed mustard seeds in the field after dumping the body.

Kabir killed Nasima because he had to serve a jail sentence for a few days following a case filed by Nasima regarding Kabir's second marriage and the physical torture inflicted on her for dowry.

The victim's brother filed the case and police submitted the charge sheet against the three people in January 2001.

Police arrested Kabir and Firoz but Maruf has been absconding since the killing.

'Mugger' dies in mob beating

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An alleged mugger died in mob beating at Kachukhet under Kafur Police Station in the city yesterday afternoon.

Witnesses said traders at the Kachukhet market area, caught Rocky, 25, and three others when they went to the market at about 3:00pm and demanded toll from a trader.

As the trader shouted for help, other traders in the vicinity raised alarm by blowing whistles, which drew several hundred people to the spot.

They caught the four alleged muggers and beat them up severely.

Rocky was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where he succumbed to his injuries.

A murder case was filed with the Kafur Police Station in this connection.