

8 abducted in Rangamati, Bandarban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Activists allegedly belonging to United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF) have abducted a labourer and a boatman from LGED's project site at Betchori under Jurachhori thana.

The abductors demanded Tk 2 lakh as ransom for the victim's release.

The victims were identified as Shahadot Hossain, 30, and boatman Saidur Rahman, 28, son of one Abul Hossain of Reserve Bazar.

Sources said a group of 5 to 7 UPDF activists went to the Betchori LGED project site on October 6 and abducted them at gunpoint.

Project contractor Kamal Hossain said he was trying to free the victims with the help of the village leader and some timber traders in the area.

LGED's executive engineer Golamur Rahman admitted the incident but said he didn't call police

Girl commits suicide in Rajshahi

BSS, Rajshahi

A teenage girl committed suicide by taking poison at her native Bilmaria village under Puthiya upazila of the district Sunday night, police said.

They said Champa Khatun, 16, daughter of Pyar Ali, took poison following a family feud. She was rushed to the local health complex where doctors declared her dead.

Police sent the body to the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

An unnatural death case has been registered in this connection with the local police station.

Local govt bodies

FROM PAGE 12 efforts would have long-term positive impacts.

The delegation informed the prime minister that they had taken up a programme to train young local government leaders for management and development administration.

They also showed their interest in imparting training to teachers, nurses and catering personnel. The delegation will also help Bangladeshis in getting admitted into postgraduate certificate courses on language.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia welcomed the decision and said such training would help trainees secure jobs at home and abroad. She put special emphasis on the council's assistance in setting up modern language laboratories.

Appreciating the success of Bangladeshi councillors in integrating themselves with the development process and politics of the UK, she billed each of them as an "ambassador of Bangladesh".

The PM urged them to uphold Bangladesh's image and culture abroad.

She also urged the councillors to participate in development efforts of Bangladesh and also encourage foreign investors to avail of the opportunities provided

Cabinet to decide UZ fate

FROM PAGE 1 upazila parishad, fearing that it would curb the authority of parliament members.

Surprisingly enough, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, who gave speeches in different national and international forums in favour of decentralisation of power, has allegedly joined hands with Huda in resistance, the sources added.

Donors that were pursuing decentralisation of power are surprised at Saifur's role.

Some senior leaders and ministers of the BNP have convinced Saifur that he needs supports of MPs to become deputy leader of the House and should oppose the upazila parishad revival.

BNP sources said the opponents of the upazila parishad argue that it would not be wise of the government to go for upazila parishad polls, as the overall situation, particularly the deterioration of law and order, lessened its popularity.

The Cabinet Committee on the Upazila Parishad okayed revival of the upazila parishad at its seventh meeting on September 14. The committee also gave a set of suggestions to remove the feared conflicts between upazila chairmen and MPs.

A cabinet minister close to Huda said, on condition of anonymity, that they would resist the move for reintroduction of the upazila parishad and, in case of any failure, would try to pursue the prime minister to formulate some laws giving

fearing reprisal. BSS adds: Nine tribal farmers were abducted by some armed extortionists at village Bagan Para under Ruma upazila of Bandarban on Saturday.

Police said a tribal armed group abducted the farmers but released three of them including the village chief (Karbari) after 12 hours on condition of paying Taka 40,000 as ransom.

The six other farmers are Hlamon Marma, Thuihla Marma, Sanui Marma, Chathuai Marma, Suchai Marma and Uranu Marma.

Army and police teams raided some remote areas to rescue the abducted tribal persons Sunday night.

A case has been filed in this connection with Ruma thana.

Extortionists attack trader in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Extortionists wounded a trader when he refused to pay toll yesterday afternoon at Dakkinghaon in the city's Sabujbagh area.

Abdur Rahman, 24, a construction material trader was attending his shop at 33/3 Dakkinghaon when a gang of four led by one Apu went there and demanded Tk 20,000 at about 2:30pm.

Failing to realise toll from the shop when Rahman refused to pay, the gang members hit him over the head with a shotgun handle.

The injured was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with severe head injuries.

Relatives of the victims said that the gang has been demanding toll from Rahman for the past few days.

for foreign investment. She particularly mentioned development of ICT sector in Bangladesh.

Among the Tower Hamlets local body councillors were deputy leader Denise Jones, chief executive Christine Gilbert, corporate director Stephen Grix, councillor Helal Rahman, councillor Shafiqul Haque, councillor Mohammad Abdus Salique, and businessmen Kaiser Ahmed, Rafique Hayder and Mahmud Hasan.

Prime Minister's Political Secretaries Haris Chowdhury and Masaddek Ali, and Principal Secretary Dr Kamal Uddin Siddiqui were also present on the occasion.

HIV-positive

FROM PAGE 12 Welfare Society said the government figures on AIDS patients are too conservative. They said they also periodically warn about the spread of AIDS in epidemic form in the country at any time as Bangladesh is situated in an AIDS-prone zone.

A UN study on AIDS released last year claimed that Bangladesh has 13,000 HIV-positive patients, India 40 lakh, Nepal 58,000 and Pakistan 78,000. The figures were described as gross exaggerations by all the governments of the four South

MPs maximum authority. They will suggest inclusion of a provision in the Upazila Law so that the upazila chairmen cannot do anything without MP's consent.

BGMEA

FROM PAGE 1 The meeting also decided to urge the home minister to raise the number of mobile patrols. Currently, four mobile patrols one each in Dhaka, Chittagong, Narayanganj and Feni Road operate.

According to an estimate of the association, there have been seven incidents of snatching of around Tk 3.03 crore, 248 thefts of garment machinery and numerous incidents of vandalism since February this year.

The BGMEA also plans to meet the local MPs and opposition leaders along with law enforcement agencies.

The meeting observed that the garment owners have become easy targets of organised criminals who are attacking and snatching money from them on their way to banks.

"Our businesses are suffering due to such crimes," BGMEA President Kutubuddin Ahmed said yesterday.

He said every garment factory is paying illegal tolls in the form of fabric waste, which they are forced to sell at throwaway prices to the local criminals.

Another garment owner, seeking anonymity, said he has been asked to buy lifitari at a higher price from the local criminals during the Ramadan.

Masked dacoits loot house in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Masked dacoits looted about Tk 2.7 lakh in cash and valuables from a house at Khadimpara in the city suburb in the early hours of Sunday.

A gang of more than 10 dacoits wearing half pants and vests and carrying firearms, daggers and knives entered the house of one Syed Miad Alam at about 3am. The house owner and his brother were then tied up with rope and women members of the family confined in a room.

While entering the house, the gang also cut off the telephone line and damaged a motorbike.

They took away gold ornaments weighing 33 tolas, Tk 20,300 in cash, prize bond worth Tk 9,500 and mobile phones from the house.

On information police visited the house. A case was filed with Kotwali Police Station.

Two children drown in Narsingdi

NARSHINGDI CORRESPONDENT

Two children drowned at the village of Bawshia in Narsingdi on the evening of October 13. Quaiyyum, 5, son of Sarfat Ali and Masum, 7, son of Iman Ali of the same village were with some other children beside a pond on the eve of the incident. While playing they dived into the pond and drowned.

Ctg tremor

FROM PAGE 12 indicative of a massive and disastrous earthquake, said speakers at a recent discussion meeting titled "Earthquake Preparedness and Disaster Management" organised here by Forum for Planned Chittagong in association with ActionAid, Bangladesh at the Council Room of Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh, Chittagong Centre.

The experts recommended immediate measures to analyse vulnerability at all levels and capacity building, preparedness and management of the disaster. Close to the boundary of two active plates (Indian plate in the west and Eurasian plate in the east and north), the country was always under a potential threat of earthquake, they said.

Hasina

FROM PAGE 1 Water Resources and Hydropower Engineering and Corporation (CWHEC) for development of the site for installation of the 450 MW Meghnaghat AES Power Plant Phase 1 for his "personal benefit". SACO is the local agent of CWHEC.

The contract involving Tk 141.65 crore was given to the company ignoring the lowest bid of Tk 123.76 crore, causing a loss of Tk 17.89 crore to the state, the FIR of the case said.

In the charge sheet, the IO said that names of Hasina and the two others have been included as investigation revealed their involvement in the scam. Eight prosecution witnesses were shown in the charge sheet.

BAC official Mohammad Golam Mostafa had filed the case accusing only Prof Rafiqul Islam.

It was alleged in the case that in the first tender for the project, a Chinese company -- First Survey and Design Institute of the Ministry of Railways -- had quoted the lowest price of 123.76 crore. But the then state minister for power cancelled the bid and re-tendered the project to award the contract to CWHEC for "personal benefit".

Hasina said Islam does not support interference in the religious rites of other faiths and those who resort to torture on the people of other religions cannot be truly religious.

BADC jobs

FROM PAGE 1 load, the BADC could run with 6,800 staff. By shedding the surplus manpower, it can straightaway save over Tk 24 crore a year, officials pointed out.

To justify the claim, sources explained that the BADC has no logic to have permanent farm labourers for production of horticulture and seasonal vegetables. Instead, temporary labourers would be hired whenever seedbed preparation and cultivation seasons start.

Sources noted that over the years funds from different projects have been diverted to pay the additional staff. But payment to farm labourers and contract growers remained suspended for several months.

Considering the BADC's importance as the lone public sector source of pure seeds for some 11 million farmers in the country, the government wants to reform the organisation.

Marketing of fertiliser and expansion of irrigation were two key areas for the BADC other than seed production. Over the years, fertiliser business has been taken over by the private sector while other government agencies like the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) and the Water Development Board (WDB) emerged as irrigation facilitators.

In this backdrop, the government spent over Tk 232 crore to say goodbye to 13,000 BADC staff since 1993 in three phases.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia receives a crest from the ten-member delegation of the London-based Tower Hamlets Council at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday.

Iraq goes to referendum

FROM PAGE 12 new conditions for arms inspections in Iraq.

"I think the (Security) Council will be discussing it this week and I'm sure there will be a resolution" to the issue, he said Monday in Beijing, apparently referring to a general agreement rather than a formal resolution.

Annan was speaking after meeting Chinese President Jiang Zemin, whose country has kept an ambiguous position on whether it would back Washington's push for the resolution to include a trigger clause that would authorise the use of force.

Annan denied the two had reviewed any draft text on Iraq.

The five veto-wielding permanent members of the UN Security Council -- Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States -- are engaged in hard bargaining over the framing of a resolution that would require Iraq to abandon its capability for acquiring nuclear, chemical or biological weapons.

Bush wants a single new UN resolution creating a beefed-up inspection regime with unfettered access to alleged chemical, biological or nuclear weapons development sites and spelling out the consequences for non-compliance.

His administration has blocked the return of arms inspectors, invited in by Baghdad, until the new resolution is passed. Bush has run into strong opposition from France, which is holding out for a two-step UN resolution that would call for a vote before any military strike against Iraq.

Baghdad denies having weapons of mass destruction, which it agreed to destroy in 1991 after its troops were ousted from Kuwait in the Gulf War.

In the drive to uncover Saddam's covert military efforts, US and British experts began Monday investigating claims that Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma defied a UN embargo and sold military radar to Iraq. They began their 10-day probe by meeting Ukrainian officials.

Kuchma has denied the charges, which Washington put forward last month after saying it had tapes of a conversation between Kuchma and a man said to be responsible for some of the sales.

As US troops readied for war, The New York Times quoted US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld on Sunday saying he had ordered regional commanders to rewrite war plans to make best use of precision weapons, intelligence and swift deployment.

The US military then "could begin combat operations on less notice and with far fewer troops than thought possible or even wise before the September 11 attacks," it said.

In a letter at the weekend to chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix and Mohammed el-Baradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Iraq clarified its agreement on the return of UN inspectors after a near-four-year hiatus.

But the letter stopped short of promising inspectors free access to the ultra-sensitive presidential palaces, and the US State Department dismissed it as word play.

Religious freedom

FROM PAGE 12 "But in last one year," she said, "the people of the Hindu community and minority groups have come under repeated attacks."

She alleged that ruling party cadres tortured the minorities and mentioned that the resultant insecure situation prompted the government to deploy BDR at the Puja temples.

The Awami League president told her audience that ruling party cadres attacked the minorities and blamed Awami League for this, which she said is a "blatant lie".

She observed that people of the minority groups are always living in fear of attacks and it is known to all who are unleashing violence. "How long the people of this country will tolerate such torture and attacks?"

Hasina said Islam does not support interference in the religious rites of other faiths and those who resort to torture on the people of other religions cannot be truly religious.

Awami League leaders Suranjit Sengupta, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin and Mukul Bose accompanied Hasina during visit to the Puja Mandaps in the city.

The government is also trying to have parliament pass an anti-terrorism bill.

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"Islam is the religion of peace and harmony," she said, alleging that now a section of people using Islam are perpetuating torture on other religious groups and telling lies.

She asserted that her party believes in communal harmony and secularism. Secularism does not mean atheism, but it guarantees people's right to exercise their religious faiths. She said no attacks on the minorities had happened during the five-year rule of Awami League.

This country is for the people of all faiths -- everyone will enjoy their religious rights -- said the former prime minister and asked the government to ensure peace and security of all.

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Saudi Arabia, Washington's main ally in the Gulf, reiterated its refusal yesterday to render "any assistance" to a US military offensive against Iraq, its defence minister said in remarks published yesterday.

"Saudi Arabia will provide no assistance in any strikes against Iraq," Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz told the London-based Al-Hayat newspaper.

Arab League chief Amr Musta meanwhile said in the Arab Gulf state of Qatar, a possible launchpad for US forces in light of the Saudi cold shoulder, that "no Arab soldier will join in any US military action" against Iraq.

He said that Arab diplomatic efforts had been decisive in persuading Iraq to accept the return of UN inspectors.

Bijoya Dashami

FROM PAGE 1 beginning on the Shashti or the sixth day of moon brought a festive mood to the mind of Hindus. Crowds at the Puja Mandap all night, drumbeats and chants recited by the priest created an enigmatic ambience in the past few days.

Transcending the limit of religious ritual, the Durga Puja has become a cultural activity for Bengali Hindus.

The Bijoya Dashami reinforces the bond between various generations and works like a way to build new relationship and mend the old ones when people visit each other's house offering sweets.

JCD leader's wife, police constable slap each other on DU campus

UNB, Dhaka

Wife of a JCD leader yesterday slapped a police constable on the Dhaka University campus, as he did not respond to her call to catch a mugger.

The constable also allegedly slapped her creating a chaotic situation on the campus yesterday evening.

Witnesses said a mugger snatched a gold chain from the daughter of JCD joint-convenor ABM Mosharrar Hossain while she was going to Jagannath Hall with her mother to see Durga Puja.

As Mosharrar's wife raised alarm for help, police constable Aminul, who was standing close by, did not turn up quickly.

"Both of them engaged in a hot altercation, hurled abuses and slapped each other," said a spot account.

3 wanted accused arrested in Narayanganj

BSS, N'ganj

Police in a drive against criminals arrested three wanted accused from different places in the town Sunday night.

According to police sources, absconding accused Suruj Mia, 55, an alleged human trafficker, was arrested from Tanbazar on Sunday night.

Son of late Nemai of Shahid Nagar in the town under Sadar Thana Police Station, Suruj was wanted by police in connection with a case of trafficking of a child of one Bedana Begum, for use as camel jockey in Dubai in 1996.

Zangalia alias Liton, of Deobhog in the town, was arrested from Sweeper Colony for his alleged involvement in the murder of one Habib in 1997.

Another fugitive Humayun, 32, son of MA Jaill of Gopchan in the municipal area of the town, was arrested from a bus stand in connection with a murder case (No 5-3-1997).

2 more direct bus services with Kolkata open

BSS, Dhaka

Communications Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda yesterday formally inaugurated two more direct bus services between Dhaka and Kolkata.

Addressing a function on the occasion at Kamapur BRTC bus terminal here, the minister said the present government has taken initiatives to recast the entire transport system, including BRTC services.

"We want to ensure better services for the travellers as well as bring qualitative changes in the conduct and behaviour of drivers and helpers," he said.

The minister said special emphasis is being given to ensure safety and security of passengers and fend off any crime during the journey.

Barrister Huda expressed the hope that the friendly relations between Bangladesh and India would be further cemented with the introduction of the two new bus services.

Presided over by BRTC chairman advocate Taimur Alam Khandkar, the function was also addressed, among others, by Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas, Communications Secretary Syed Reazul Hayat and Deputy High Commissioner of India Dilip Sinha.

The new bus service named "Four-star Consortium" has been jointly floated by four private sector transport agencies namely Shohag Paribahan, Hanif Paribahan, SR Paribahan and S Alam Paribahan. Under this service, two buses will leave from Kolkata every day.

Meanwhile, BRTC sources told BSS that although this fully air-conditioned bus service would be run by private agencies, its overall management would be looked

after by the BRTC itself.

Ctg JCD

FROM PAGE 1 Dipti and Yeasin Chowdhury Liton as its convener and member secretary respectively.

Sources said Dipti is now on bale in a criminal case. He married in 1992. After the announcement, another ten members were included in it, according to a press release signed by the new convener, Dipti.

Talking to a group of newsmen yesterday evening, Dipti said the ten members have been included after consultation with Tareque Zia, son of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and first joint-secretary general of ruling BNP.

The ten include Iqbal Bahar Chowdhury, Nurul Alam and Rashedun Nabi Biplob, who are on Chittagong Metropolitan Police's list of terrorists, sources said.

All members of the 31-member body announced by the central committee belong to the JCD factions loyal to Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Mir Nasruddin and Food Minister Abdullah Al Noman, party sources said.

The committee was formed after a team of central JCD leaders from Dhaka led by former student leader Ilias Ali MP visited Chittagong recently and held talks with JCD leaders here.

The announcement also said a full-fledged committee would be formed through a convention by December 14.

Meanwhile, the faction opposing the new committee distributed a leaflet to local newspaper offices giving details about its married non-student members.

They are Shah Alam (three children), Ismail (two children), Moniruzzaman Komol (three children), Shahad Akbar, Shahed Box (two children), MA Hamid, Ali Akbar (two children) and Kazi Mansur. It said many of the members are involved in criminal activities.

PTI on terror link

FROM PAGE 1 tarnish the country's image.

"It is at best a figment of someone's wildest imagination and at worst a reflection of an irresponsible and malicious attempt to harm the prevailing friendly and smooth relations between India and Bangladesh, two of the largest democratic nations in Asia," the spokesperson said.

In this regard, he referred to the latest congressional hearing in Washington DC where Bangladesh was declared a role model of tolerant democracy. He also cited the congratulatory message of George W Bush to President Iajuddin Ahmed, in which the US president recognised Bangladesh, a Muslim majority state, for its steadfast and consistent stand against terrorism in all forms.

The Time report, the PTI has pegged its report on, quotes unspecified sources in the