

Chechen rebels

FROM PAGE 1
 been sitting here for 10 hours and your government has done nothing to secure your release." The main thing is that troops must be pulled out or they will start shooting people.

Earlier, Shkolnikova told Reuters, also by mobile phone: "A huge amount of explosives have been laid through the place."

She said explosives had been laid in passageways and on seats and even attached to hostages themselves.

Officials said some 60 foreigners were among the captives. Meanwhile, ITAR-TASS news agency quoted a police official as saying Chechen rebels have shot a woman dead.

But Russian officials from a crisis unit dealing with the hostage taking did not officially confirm the report, ITAR-TASS said, and one of the rebels, who said his name was Khasamat, told Moscow Echo radio "none of the hostages have been harmed".

Security sources quoted by ITAR-TASS said the woman had been shot late on Wednesday shortly after the rebels broke into the theatre.

The rebel website kavkaz.org said earlier that a woman was shot late on Wednesday as she tried to enter the building, with the rebels taking her for a security agent.

RIA Novosti news agency quoted a high-ranking police source as saying a woman hostage had indeed been killed. The details were not immediately available, the official said.

President Vladimir Putin, who rose to power on pledges three years ago to clamp down on the decade-old rebellion on Russia's southern fringe and boost public security, said the main task was to secure the hostages' safe release.

He said information from the rebels' representatives confirmed that "the terrorist act was planned abroad".

Contacts with the hostage-takers appeared erratic at best.

The Chechen news portal www.kavkaz.org reported what it said was a statement by the attackers' commander, Movsar Barayev. "There's more than a thousand people here. No one will get out of here alive and they'll die with us if there's any attempt to storm the building," the Web Site quoted him saying.

He called on Putin to stop the war and pull his troops out of

Chechnya if he wanted to save the hostages' lives - demands that were confirmed by Russian officials at the scene.

The rebels freed around 150 hostages soon after taking over the theatre, including up to 20 children and a number of Muslims. They released a handful more yesterday morning including three children and a Briton in his 50s or 60s.

But Iosif Kobzon, a member of parliament and entertainer who was taking part in negotiations, told Interfax news agency: "When I asked them to free others, they said they had already let the three smallest ones go and would release no one else."

Another negotiator, liberal deputy Irina Khakamada, headed to the Kremlin to see Putin after meeting the guerrillas. It was not clear what message she was conveying.

One Russian official said the guerrillas described themselves as a suicide death squad, or "smertniki". Police said there were up to 700 people still in the theatre, a modern building about three miles southeast of the Kremlin.

Austrian ambassador Franz Cede said the Western captives included Australians, Austrians, Britons, Germans and Americans.

The attack presented Putin with his sternest test since becoming president more than two years ago. He has taken an uncompromising stand on the conflict in largely-Muslim Chechnya on Russia's southern fringes, where the Kremlin has twice launched military pushes to crush separatists.

Western accusations of human rights abuses against civilians in the devastated province have died down since Putin threw Moscow's backing behind the US-led global war on terrorism following last year's September 11 attacks in the United States.

It was unclear what foreign groups Putin might be accusing.

US President George W Bush, meanwhile, telephoned Putin early yesterday to express support for Russia amid the hostage crisis.

"The president expressed his thoughts and prayers and solidarity with the Russian people," a senior administration official told reporters traveling with Bush as he campaigned in Charlotte, North Carolina for fellow Republicans ahead of the November 5 elections.

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JCD JU unit formed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An 81-member committee of the BNP-backed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), Jahangirnagar University (JU) unit, was formed yesterday by Parvez Mallick and Harunur Rashid respectively.

The committee was formed at a council of the organisation on the campus.

The committee included Nazmul Hasan Ovi, organising secretary; Monirul Hasan Royal, senior vice president; Shahidul Islam Jewel, Abu Nayem Mostafa, Faisal Uddin David, Monju Khan Rana, Rabul Islam Rabi and Debabrata Pal, vice presidents.

Convener of the JCD central committee Shahabuddin Lallu was chief guest at the council and legislators Shahiduddin Chowdhury Anney, Salauddin Babu and Abul Khayer were special guests.

Four to die

FROM PAGE 12
 Maram Ali, Abul Hashim, Nazrul Islam (Verai), Suruj Ali, Abus Sobhan and Bahram Ali -- were acquitted. Of them, Bahram had died during the trial.

The prosecution case in brief states that on March 27, 1996, Chand Miah and his accomplices prevented the earth-filling work of an under-construction road at Megargaon under Kotwali Thana in Sylhet and beat up the labourers. When some of the local people came forward to settle the dispute, the accused persons also beat them up, fatally injuring Haji Abad Ullah who later died at the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital.

Faruque Ahmed, eldest son of the deceased, filed a case with the Kotwali Police Station in this connection. After investigation, police submitted chargesheet against 10 persons.

Additional Public Prosecutor Abdul Hamid conducted the prosecution while advocate Nazmul Islam, advocate ASM Abdul Mumin and others represented the defendants.

Army raid

FROM PAGE 12
 Some JCD and BCL leaders and many of the general students told this correspondent they feared army raid on the campus and the halls anytime. They do not move on the campus without keeping their identity cards with them even in daytime, they said.

Usual gatherings of activists of various student bodies at the Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) and other places on the campus were not seen in the last few days.

Army personnel have set up a camp at the DU gymnasium. They usually move out after the evening and patrol the campus till late night. However, they did not arrest any one till yesterday.

Meanwhile, the JCD leadership is facing a crisis in the process of revitalisation of the organisation because many of its leaders and activists went into hiding following the army crackdown.

JCD leaders said they have already rescheduled the councils of some district units. "This is because of many of our district unit leaders and activists have now gone into hiding," one leader said.

CNG plan

FROM PAGE 12
 to deposit Tk 25 lakh, which is refundable, for purchase of the lands so that those are not used for other purposes, the sources added.

A top official of the Ruptanarita Praktirik Gas Limited, a concern of the energy ministry, said the crisis would be overcome very shortly. He however did not specify any time limit.

Saifur

FROM PAGE 12
 tion pledge," he said.

Dr Yunus said the slide in law and order and corruption are two major hurdles. "If we cannot improve the law and order and put corruption on a leash, the country will sink in a black hole."

Professor Wahiduddin Mahmud pointed to the peculiarity of the country's banking system saying the way it works does not follow any book. "Access liquidity in the banking system is increasing, but still the interest rate is not coming down."

Talking about audit on different ministries, M Hafizuddin Khan, chairman of the Public Expenditure Review Commission, said, "A year passed after the general election, but the public accounts committee has not yet been formed."

Hafizuddin questioned the government initiative to set up a 'youth bank' saying the same sort of bank, named Karmasangsthan Bank, exists in the country.

Professor Abu Ahmed of Dhaka University, former president of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Latifur Rahman, member of Public Expenditure Review Commission Binayak Sen, members of Bank Reforms Committee Quazi Abdul Mazid and Anisul Islam Mahmud, and Editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam, among others, also spoke.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia receives a letter of Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi from his special envoy to Shin Sakurai during a meeting at the Prime Minister's Office in the city yesterday.

1 more death in army custody

FROM PAGE 1
 Officers Housing State (DOHS) residence of Giasuddin Mamun, a close friend of BNP Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman. This however could not be independently confirmed.

As many as 155 people including 12 listed and 143 suspected criminals were arrested on the eighth-day of the 'Operation Clean Heart' across the country. Twenty-three firearms and 92 rounds of ammunition were also recovered. However, till yesterday none of the 23 top-listed criminals was arrested. Five of the top 23 criminals arrested before the ongoing crackdown are now in the Dhaka Central Jail while another was recently jailed down in the city.

In Savar, army recovered five nine-shooters along with 370 rounds of bullet from Panna Textile Mills owned by former Awami League (AL) lawmaker Mockbul Hossain.

Army Chief Lt. Gen. Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury visited different army camps in Bholia, Barisal, Patukhali, Jessore and Khulna

districts yesterday.

The army chief along with the general officer commanding (GOC) of the Jessore Cantonment went to Barisal and met the deputy inspector general (DIG), deputy commissioner (DC) and superintendent of police at the Barisal Circuit House yesterday.

Army searched the Sher-e-Bangla Road residence of opposition AL lawmaker Sheikh Helaluddin at Sonadanga Wednesday night. However, no arrest was made.

Meanwhile, army arrested a cousin of Sheikh Helaluddin, Masum Biswas, in the early hours of Wednesday from his house. He was admitted to the Khulna Medical College Hospital late yesterday afternoon as he fell sick at the army camp at the Khulna divisional stadium.

In Chittagong, army nabbed 10 more people in the port city and in the district yesterday.

BNP-backed chairman of Baharchhara Union Parishad of Banskhali thana Mahfuzul Haq, Sitakunda thana Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal President Abul Bashar

Bhuiyan and Satkania thana BNP leader Abdul Munnaf were among the arrestees.

Meanwhile, the two AL-backed ward commissioners Haji Nurul Haq of Bokshirhat ward and Mohammad Hossain Hiron of Pahartoli ward were placed on a two-day police remand each yesterday.

The ward commissioners were hauled up on Wednesday for their alleged involvement in criminal activities.

In Narayanganj town, army arrested 17 people yesterday. Shadat Ali, Monwar, Kalachand Mia, Firu Mia, Shafiqullah, Jamal Hossain and Badal Mia were arrested from Bandar area. Monwar and Firu are listed criminals.

Meanwhile, army released former municipal commissioner Khwaja Ahsanullah and Mohammed Shiplu, an undergraduate business administration student and member of the Narayanganj Club, Wednesday night. The two along with three others were arrested from the Narayanganj Club.

Ex-PSC chief

FROM PAGE 12
 Bala.

In the case, filed with Kafurlithana in the city, it was alleged that Prof Mostafa Chowdhury, Farhad Hossain Khan, Kabirul Alam Khan and Sharfuddin Ahmed Khan were involved in illegally allowing Tarun Kanti Bala to participate in the 20th BCS examination under the freedom fighters' children quota. Producing fake documents, Tarun had submitted papers showing him as a freedom fighter although he was only about five during the Liberation War (his date of birth is 20-10-1966).

The four accused also helped Tarun get the post of executive engineer (probationer) in Bangladesh Railway, the FIR said.

Bureau of Anti-corruption (BAC) Inspector S M M Akhter Hafid Bhuiyan filed the case against Prof Mostafa Chowdhury and four others on December 11 last year.

The investigation officer (IO) of the case submitted a charge sheet against Mostafa Chowdhury and seven others on April 9. The IO included the names of Ahad Chowdhury and two others in the charge sheet as he found charges against them during investigation.

In the charge sheet, 25 people were shown as prosecution witnesses.

All the accused, now on bail, were present in the court during the hearing.

Special PP Fazlur Rahman Khan appeared for the state while advocates Sahara Khatun, Jahangir Hossain Selim, M Sajwar Hossain and Mohammad Habibur Rahman appeared for the accused.

Special envoy meets PM Japan's full support for dev assured

UNB, Dhaka

Appreciating the progress achieved in various sectors in last one year of the coalition government, visiting special envoy of the Japanese Prime Minister Shin Sakurai has assured of his country's full support for socio-economic development of Bangladesh.

Shin Sakurai, also member of the House of Councilors of Japan, gave the assurance when he made a courtesy call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office at noon yesterday.

Khaleda Zia gave him a comprehensive brief about the progress achieved in various sectors, including primary and mass education, education of women, poverty alleviation and economic reforms.

Sakurai, who visited Bangladesh on various occasions in the past and is involved in the development pro-

cess of Bangladesh in many ways, reaffirmed that Japan would always extend cooperation to Bangladesh in its efforts to consolidate democracy and accelerate the nation-building process.

The special envoy of the Japanese prime minister is here along with a delegation to take part in a month-long celebration of "Japan Month" arranged by the Japanese Embassy in Dhaka, marking 30 years of diplomatic relations between Japan and Bangladesh.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia hoped that Japan as a close friend of Bangladesh would invest here on a larger scale, either independently or jointly taking advantage of the investment friendly policy offered by her government.

She told the envoy that her government would provide special facilities to Japan in EPZs.

Army probe

FROM PAGE 1
 In addition, monitoring teams are also on the move to inspect army raids and interrogation processes.

An instruction has also been circulated to all army units for either hand-over to police or release of the arrested within a few hours of arrest.

Earlier the home ministry gave the army a guideline under which the teams can detain a person for a maximum of 12 hours.

"There has been enough mishaps; there should not be any more negative incidents to damage the image of army," commented a well-placed government source.

Meanwhile, the defence forces were discussing formation of a joint media cell with representatives from the defence ministry, the army, the BDR, the navy and the police. However, it is not certain if this cell would soon come into being.

In another development, the army has started working on a website on the Operation Clean Heart. The website, expected to be launched on Saturday, will have daily updates on arrests and arms

recovery, sources said.

Nearly 20,000 personnel belonging to defence forces began the Operation Clean Heart from October 17 in the backdrop of alarming rise in criminal activities.

11 get life-term

FROM PAGE 12
 jail custody while the rest still at large.

Judge Didar Ali Fakir also fined the accused Tk 10,000 each, in default, to suffer six more years' imprisonment.

According to the prosecution, Jubo League leader Anwar Hossain Anu was gunned down by the accused at 10 pm on December 22, 1998 at TB Road in the city.

Victim's younger brother Nazrul Islam Babu filed a murder case with Khulna police station the following day.

The investigation officer (IO) of the case submitted charge sheet on September 2, 2000.

Charges against the accused were framed by the court on September 20, 2001.

Amnesty concern

FROM PAGE 1
 death. The dead bodies were not handed over to relatives, fuelling doubts about the official postmortem results, the statement said.

Some detainees are possible 'prisoners of conscience'. Two AL leaders -- Saber Hossain Chowdhury, political secretary to Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina, arrested on October 20 and Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, an AL MP and former health minister, on October 21, were held initially incommunicado.

Amnesty said no details about the possible charges against them were made public, and it fears they may be detained solely for their peaceful opposition to the government.

Amnesty urged the government to make sure that all those detained for peaceful political activities are released immediately and unconditionally.

In the past, the government filed criminal cases against opposition politicians, leading to their detention and removal from active politics, the statement added.

"It is every government's duty to ensure law and order for the benefit of all citizens, but this cannot be imposed at the expense of basic rights of the people," Amnesty said.

"Operation Clean Heart" is the government's response to continued deterioration in law and order, Amnesty said.

At the same time, it urges the

government to ensure that the army operation is carried out within the rule of law and with respect for human rights.

Amnesty also questioned the use of Section 54 of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), which allows the police rather than the army to detain people on suspicion.

"The legal status of the army's involvement in 'Operation Clean Heart' is not clear. Many of the detainees have been arrested under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code."

Following interrogation by the army -- often involving torture -- the detainees are handed over to the police who then decide whether to release or hold them in custody for further interrogation.

Many of the arrested in the recent army crackdown have been released, but hundreds of them are believed to be remaining in detention, the statement continued.

Amnesty expressed concern over the remand of Saber Hossain Chowdhury and Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim.

The human rights organisation also sought guarantee from the government that they will not be subjected to torture or maltreatment.

Amnesty has faxed appeals to the prime minister, the home minister, the chief of army staff and the inspector general of police.

Bangladesh-SA 2nd Test

FROM PAGE 12
 Gary Kirsten, there was the chance that Gibbs would drop down to four - where many feel he is better suited in the five day game - while the two left handers open the innings.

This in turn would allow possibly South Africa's best batsman, Jacques Kallis, to return to the Number three position in the batting line up.

"I wouldn't want to mess about with the opening partnership," countered Pollock. "It depends on how the innings is developing, but we might move Martin van Jaarsveld up the order. But we won't change the openers, we have to get the platform right."

Pollock missed the first Test in East London through an injured knee. Even though his side was surprisingly dragged into the fourth day by some stubborn Bangladeshi resistance, Pollock said he was still quite happy with the performance.

"I tried to keep myself out of it but from what I saw I felt they did well.

"They took the 20 wickets and they had to contend with a very strong wind. Bowling in those conditions is never easy.

"But we're in a no-win situation. If we win well, so what? If we don't win well, questions will be asked."

"We just have to bowl the ball in the right place and get big runs."

SQUADS
 South Africa: Shaun Pollock (captain), Gary Kirsten, Herschelle Gibbs, Jacques Kallis, Makhaya Ntini, Ashwell Prince, Graeme Smith, David Terbrugge, Martin van Jaarsveld, Mark Boucher, Claude Henderson, Morneantau Hayward, Alfonso Thomas

Bangladesh: Khaled Mashud, Kazi Bashar, Mohammed Al Saharir, Tushar Imran, Khaled Mahmud, Monjurul Islam, Tahla Jubaaer, Mohammed Rafique, Tapash Baisya, Alok Kapali, Javed Belim, Hannan Sarker, Sanuar Hossain, Islam Khan, Anwar Hossain Umpires: Russell Tiffin (Zimbabwe) and Daryl Harper (Australia)



Chief Justice Mainur Reza Chowdhury swears M Arayes Uddin in as a judge of the High Court Division yesterday.