

40 injured as villagers clash in Magura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

At least 40 people were injured, 15 of them seriously, in a clash between two rival groups over harvesting paddy from a disputed land in Sreepur upazila of the district yesterday morning.

Witnesses and locals said, there has been a long drawn rivalry between two rival groups of villagers over possession of about eight acres of land.

Both sides used lethal weapons during the clash.

The seriously injured, identified as Biren, 50, Sayeda Khatun, 65, Harez, 35, Liakat, 46, Shukesh, 20, Mintu, 20, Alam, 25, Nannu, 20, Mahfuz, 25, Kamal, 20, Daliluddin, 55 and Anis, 34, were admitted to Magura Sadar Hospital and the next three to Dariapur hospital in Sreepur upazila.

No case was lodged in this connection with the incident till filing of this report at 4-35 pm yesterday.

Lawyers to boycott court at Shariatpur from today

UNB, Shariatpur

Local Bar Association has decided to boycott the District Judge's Court for an indefinite period from today demanding immediate removal of the judge.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the association on Thursday with its president Advocate Abul Kashem Mrida in the chair. Over 45 lawyers attended the meeting.

The lawyers in the meeting accused the judge of indulging in corruption.

The lawyers alleged that the judge in connivance with some senior lawyers granted bail to a number of accused in serious criminal cases taking bribe from them.

According to them, the judge arranged filing of bail petitions for some of the accused through some senior lawyers bypassing the defense lawyers of the cases.

Abdul Matin, Joint Secretary of the Law Ministry visited the District Judge's Court last month for investigation into the allegations against the judge.

Farmer slaughtered in Bandarban

BSS, Bandarban

A farmer was slaughtered in Galachhira area under sadar upazila Thursday night allegedly by tribal miscreants.

The victim was identified as Swai Aung Mamma, 35, of Kuhlalong village.

Police recovered the body yesterday morning and sent it to sadar hospital for autopsy.

Acid attack on Housewife in Laxmipur

UNB, Laxmipur

A housewife suffered serious burn injuries in an acid attack by another woman at Sherpur village in Sadar upazila Wednesday.

The victim was identified as Mariam Begum, 40, wife of Abdullah of the village.

Police said Mariam sustained injuries in her face as Nurjahan, 45, wife of Abul Kalam of Rashidpur village threw acid on her following a land dispute.

A case was filed with Sadar thana and police arrested Nurhanaj.

Deadline expires

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number of arms was deposited on the last day.

In the city, around 12,000 firearms were deposited since the government order was issued.

Of the arms, 2200 were deposited with the Gulshan Police Station, 1215 with Dhanmondi, 1200 with Mohammadpur, 1157 with Ramna, 835 with Kafrul, 737 with Motijheel, 650 with Mirpur, 595 with Uttara, 499 with Tejgaon, 442 with Khilgaon, 428 with Sutrapur, 347 with Cantonment, 287 with Labagh, 320 with Pallabi, 244 with Kotwali, 198 with Sabujbagh, 193 with Badda, 169 with Demra, 161 with Shyampur, 126 with Hazaribagh, 36 with Airport and three with Kamrangirchar police stations.

According to a report received from Pabna, 577 arms were deposited with different police stations of the district till Thursday.

Our Magura correspondent reports : a total of 127 arms were deposited with the police stations in the district yesterday.

BNP-Jamaat playing anti-Islamic role: Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina called upon madrassah teachers and other Islamic preachers to fight unitedly a "false propaganda by Jamaat-Shibir and a quarter" against Awami League.

Exchanging views with the central executive committee of Madrassah Teachers' Association at Sudha Sadan, the AL chief also called for protesting what she said anti-Islamic role of the present alliance government.

"The BNP-Jamaat government after assuming power in the name of Islam is now playing an anti-Islamic role," she told the teachers of Islamic education.

Hasina narrated that the previous Awami League government did for the cause of Islam and Madrassah development.

During discussion, the leaders of madrassah teachers informed Hasina that the present government stopped giving permission for setting up madrassah and its recognition.

They mentioned that the AL government had filed a case and taken punitive measure against a travel agency for its involvement in Hajj scandal.

But they regretted that the present government "covertly gave hajj license to the people of that agency".

Madrassah Teachers' Association acting president Moulana Jahirul Islam and Secretary General Moulana Mostueddin led the delegation in the meeting with Sheikh Hasina.

Bakhrabad gas

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ture was damaged...although there had been a lot of gas, the production level started to decline significantly in the mid-1990s," said a Petrobangla source.

Besides the fall in gas pressure, sand and water started coming out along with gas -- interrupting the production.

Petrobangla then wanted to work over inside the well and install a compressor to keep the gas pressure compatible with other pipeline systems. The compressor costs several million dollars.

But the Awami League government did not pay much importance to the issue while allowing Mobil, a US company, to do a 'free' work in the Bakhrabad gas field. Mobil was then taking part in the Second Round Block Bidding.

Since then, gas production in the Bakhrabad field has fallen to 90mmcf/d to 35mmcf/d in the end.

Recently, Petrobangla has combined the Bakhrabad gas system with the offshore Sangu system by reducing Sangu gas flow pressure. The system has now been exclusively dedicated to Chittagong.

In lower pressure, the pipelines cannot 'store' emergency gas. As a result, Chittagong is running the risk of energy crisis just in case the Sangu suspends gas production.

10 PPP men

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breaking the five-week deadlock in the so-called transfer of power from Musharraf's military regime to civilians.

The PPP charged last week that Musharraf's aides were blackmailing, intimidating and harassing its legislators-elect with "midnight knocks on their doors" to force them to switch allegiance to pro-Musharraf parties.

But Hayat denied their move was forced by anyone.

"We are under no pressure or coercion. The decision is above any personal or party consideration to sort out the grave political crises," he said.

Local newspapers said yesterday that most of the dissenters or their relatives had corruption cases pending against them in the military-run National Accountability Bureau (NAB).

The NAB has been accused of selectively prosecuting graft cases and targeting political opponents of Musharraf's regime.

Hayat said the dissenters had not quit the PPP. "We are PPP and we will remain so," he said.

PPP spokesman Farhatullah Babar said the dissenters were acting under pressure from the military regime.

"This is a direct result of government pressure as we have predicted time and again," Babar told AFP. "We condemn the government and its agencies' manipulation of the political process."

The PPP's Central Executive Committee was meeting yesterday to determine the dissenters' future.

Another report says, General Musharraf will begin his new five-year term as president an hour before the first session of the newly-elected parliament sits today, officials said.

"The president is scheduled to take the oath of office at 9:30 am local time," a senior government official told AFP yesterday on condition of anonymity.



Awami League leader Suranjit Sengupta deposits his licensed firearm with the Dhanmondi Police Station in the city on the last day of arms surrender yesterday announced by the government.

40 more listed criminals held

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152 illegal firearms and arrested 19 people for possessing those.

The army-led joint forces have so far arrested 5772 people including 1466 'listed criminals' and recovered 858 firearms along with over 22,000 bullets since the anti-crime drive began on October 17.

Our Khulna correspondent reports that the army-led joint forces arrested 111 people including 21 'listed criminals' from Khulna division during the last two days. They were handed over to police after interrogation.

Awami League leader and former state minister Talukder Abdul Khaleque MP was shifted to Rajshahi central jail from Khulna central jail yesterday. Joint forces picked him up from his Gagan Babu road residence in the town on November 1. He was later shown arrest in the case in connection with murder of Purba Bangla Communist Party (PBCP) cadre Shangan Sana earlier.

Khaleque's bail petition was rejected on November 2 and on November 13.

Our Barisal correspondent reported that eight robbers wearing dresses like army uniform entered the house of the upazila Amir of Jamat-e-Islami and principal of Ali Abdullah College at Daulat Khan in Bhola in the early hours of yesterday and tried to snatch money and valuables. As the inmates challenged them and neighbours came in following screams, the gang fled away.

Earlier on Tuesday, army arrested another ward commissioner -- Alek Mahmud. The arrests created panic among other commissioners, sources said.

In Bogra, army raided the house of one Shajahan Ali at Chalk Subendari village in Dupchanchia and recovered a pipegun.

Our Pabna correspondent reported that army arrested four people including a 'listed criminal' -- Khorsheed -- and seized a pistol and a pipegun.

In Sirajganj, joint forces arrested seven notorious criminals from Raiganj upazila and recovered two revolvers and a pistol from their possession. They are Selim Reza, 34, of Tobaripara village, Suruj Miah, 35, of Hathijila, Sadek, 30, of



A Bangladeshi Buddhist monk prays next to a Buddha statue during the "Donation Festival" in Dhaka yesterday. Thousands of Buddhist devotees observed one of their biggest annual festivals by making offerings to Buddha.

Leonid shower

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years.

"The outlook is exceptionally good this year," the French Astronomy Association enthuses. "The peak could be as much as 5,000 meteors per hour."

The Leonids start to arrive Saturday or Sunday, but these are nightly warm-ups in which astronomers are likely to catch only a few meteors per hour.

The peak will occur early Tuesday Greenwich Mean Time (GMT), in two waves that should each last a couple of hours, when the Earth first wacks into the 1767 rubble and, later, in the 1866 debris.

Sadly, meteor fans in Asia and the southern hemisphere will be out of luck because of the time and the Earth's tilt.

The first wave, according to Sky et Telescope, will be around 0400 GMT, favouring skywatchers in European, North and West Africa and northeastern North America, although the view may be somewhat spoiled by bright moonlight.

That will be followed by the second wave at 1040 GMT, which is just right for North America, especially those in the central and western parts of that continent.

The luckiest watcher will probably

be Robert Lunsford, an expert from the American Meteor Society, who will be observing the peak not once, but twice.

He will be flying aboard a NASA jet, crossing the Atlantic eastwards, and looking at the shower through light-intensifying goggles.

"Flying above the clouds will save the worry of weather, plus the high altitude will reduce the glare from the scattered moonlight," he told space.com.

Comets, famously called "dirty snowballs" by the US astronomer Fred Whipple, are believed to be mainly composed of frozen water and frozen carbon dioxide, mixed with rocks, pebbles and dust.

As they come closer to the Sun, the ice melts, leaving the debris in their wake.

Even though Temple-Tuttle's particles are only tiny, they can still damage orbiting satellites.

The European Space Agency (ESA) -- which lost a satellite, Olympus, in 1993 after it was hit by a Perseid meteor particle -- has warned operators to ensure that their satellites are moved so that they present the narrowest possible profile, and to close down any sensitive gear.

Bus dacoity in Jhenidah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Robbers looted valuables worth Tk two lakh from bus passengers in Kaliganj of Jhenidah district in the early hours of yesterday.

According to passengers, a gang of eight robbers boarded a bus bound for Maheshpur from Dhaka in the guise of passengers.

They took control of the vehicle when it reached Iswarba in Kaliganj upazila at around 3:55 am and looted valuables from the passengers at gunpoint. The gang left the bus at Elangi in Kotchandpur.

A case was filed in this connection.

Police arrested driver and helper of the bus.

Amu: Graft case

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ordered purchase of the rice at a price higher than the market rate. As a result, the government incurred a loss of Tk 20 crore.

The Bureau of Anti-corruption (BAC) filed the case against Amu on January 8 this year.

In the second case filed with the same police station, it has been alleged that as food minister, Amu misappropriated Tk 16.95 crore by procuring foodgrains (rice and wheat) through dealers of his own choice.

The BAC filed the case on March 7. Investigation officers of the two cases submitted charge sheets against Amu on July 1.

He is now on bail in both the cases.

AL body

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Now that the council is billed for December 26, the party invited some of its young leaders to attend one of the ALCWC meetings as 'observers' recently. Party insiders hinted that these observers are among many others who would be inducted into the central committee in the coming council.

These 'observers' included Jahangir Kabir Nanak, Ahmed Hossain, Ashim Kumar Ukil, Shah Alam, SM Kamal, Shafi Ahmed, BM Mozammel, Enamul Haq Shamim and Ishaq Ali Khan Panna.

It may be mentioned that the AL leadership had taken up a move to rejuvenate the party following its debacle in the general elections last year. As part of the move, it wanted to have relatively young but potential leaders in important party positions. In the process, the party chief appointed Advocate Abdul Hamid as Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Abdus Shahid as Opposition Chief Whip and Saber Hossain Chowdhury as her political secretary.

Faisal was fleeing his village yesterday after a boy he held hostage for two days for Tk 20,000 ransom was rescued.

56 Nepalese cops

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security post at Takukot and then opened fire with machine guns, killing 24 policemen, a police official said. Eight more policemen were injured and rushed to hospital.

"At least 50 Maoists are also feared killed in the attack," he said.

Meanwhile in Jumla, 410 kilometers northeast of the capital Kathmandu, some 3,000 Maoist rebels overnight marched onto the district headquarters and briefly managed to take it over, a police official said.

"The Maoists took control of Jumla town for several hours. But when the morning came, the army dispatched helicopters and the Maoists were repelled," the official said.

"The town is now again under the control of the army."

The Maoists, who are fighting to overthrow Nepal's monarchy, already hold at least six of the king-

Pak national

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adviser, Mohammad Saeed an imam from northern Virginia, he had a brief 15- or 20-second conversation and then continued to chant in his native tongue until asked what his final words were, which were, "There is no God but Allah," Traylor added.

"He continued to chant until the first drug took effect and then he fell into silence."

Kasi, 38, was condemned for the 1993 killing of the two Central Intelligence Agency employees -- Frank Darling and Lansing Bennett -- with an AK-47 military rifle in front of the agency's Langley, Virginia, headquarters. Three others were wounded in the shootings.

Virginia Governor Mark Warner earlier refused Kasi's request for clemency after the US Supreme Court denied a last-minute appeal for a stay of execution.

Kasi's family and the Pakistani government had asked for his life to be spared and his sentence commuted on humanitarian grounds.

His impending execution also had sparked fears of reprisals by Islamist militants, despite Kasi's pleas for peace.

Security around the prison here was tight during the execution, and US authorities in Pakistan were at a heightened state of alert. Armed patrols circled the low white prison buildings and gunmen surveyed the scene from watchtowers.

The US State Department issued a worldwide warning last week. Officials said the US embassy in Islamabad and consulates in Peshawar, Lahore and Karachi were to close as a precaution.

"This is a criminal justice matter, and the decision of the jury is being carried out," White House spokesman Scott McClellan said.

Drug trader

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place.

As his condition worsened, he was taken back to the hospital at 11:00pm where the attending doctors declared him dead.

Local people said Anwar was frightened at the presence of army men and at one stage suffered a heart attack that caused his death.

Besides, 600 grams of bhng, a bottle of spirit and a toy pistol were also recovered and four persons arrested from different areas of the upazila on the night.

Army also arrested a listed criminal Abu Bakr Siddique of Rajbari from Shailakupa town and recovered a pistol and two big knives from the house of Atiar Rahman of village Austa in Shailakupa upazila. Atiar, however, managed to escape the army raid.

US, allies suspend fuel shipments to North Korea

AFP, New York

The United States and its European and Asian allies agreed Thursday to suspend heavy fuel-oil shipments to North Korea from December, to punish the energy-starved state for its nuclear weapons programme.

Executive board members of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) which implements a 1994 anti-nuclear deal with Pyongyang announced the decision in a statement after a one-day meeting here.

"Heavy fuel oil deliveries will be suspended beginning with the December shipment," board members the United States, Japan, South Korea and the European Union said in a statement.

"Future shipments will depend on North Korea's concrete and credible actions to dismantle completely its highly-enriched uranium programme."

"In this light, other KEDO activities with North Korea will be reviewed."

The pact, known as the Agreed Framework, promised to provide two nuclear power reactors to North Korea plus 500,000 tonnes of heavy fuel oil a year, in return for a freeze on the Stalinist state's nuclear weapons programme.

But Washington considers that Pyongyang nullified the pact, after confirming charges laid by US envoy James Kelly last month that it was trying to build nuclear weapons with enriched uranium.

South Korea had called for shipments to continue -- at least to mitigate the suffering of impoverished North Korean over the winter and admitted before the New York meeting there was a rift between Seoul and Washington.

Secretary of State Colin Powell earlier announced in Ottawa that Washington, the major financier of the fuel shipments, planned to stop shipping fuel to North Korea -- but in a concession to Japan and South Korea, had agreed to let a final shipment already at sea go ahead.

"North Korea has to end this programme that we discovered to enrich uranium and I think we are all united on this," said Powell at a joint news conference with Canadian Foreign Minister Bill Graham.

"With respect to continuing to provide advantages from the Agreed Framework such as free

fuel, we believe it is appropriate and prudent to send in this shipment that is already on the high seas and is only a few days away from docking."

The KEDO executive board condemned "North Korea's pursuit of a nuclear weapons programme, which is a clear and serious violation of its obligations under the Agreed Framework, the Nonproliferation Treaty, its IAEA Safeguards Agreement, and the Joint South-North Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula."

"North Korea's nuclear weapons programme is a shared challenge to all responsible states."

"This programme threatens regional and international security and undermines the international nonproliferation regime based on the (treaty)."

"North Korea must promptly eliminate its nuclear weapons programme in a visible and verifiable manner."

South Korea was represented at the New York meeting by its ambassador to KEDO, Sun-Sup Chang, Japan by Ambassador Katsunari Suzuki, the European Union by Ambassador Jean-Pierre Leng and Washington by Ambassador Charles Pritchard.

KEDO executive director Charles Kortman and deputies Kyu-Hang Cho and Hideto Mitamura presided over deliberations.

Pyongyang's nuclear confession appears to have achieved what many observers believe was its desired effect -- to put under strain the close coordination on North Korea policy between Japan, South Korea and the United States.

Listed criminal

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a resident of 7775, East Tejturi Bazar.

Police said Zubayer, a listed criminal of the area, was involved in different criminal activities and is believed to have been killed by his rivals.

The body was recovered at about 5:00am yesterday from behind 'Mughal Sweets', a sweet shop in the locality and sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

A case was filed with the Tejgaon Police Station in this regard.

(SSS) are running projects in brothel areas with support from Save the Children Australia and other donors.

In Jessore, the local NGO Jagorani Chakra runs an education and drop-in centre for brothel children and their mothers.

Founded by the European Commission and supported by Terre des hommes Italy, the centre is home to 157 children, offering a variety of activities like non-formal education, recreational activities, sheltering, skill-building courses, legal support and human-rights counselling.

Many sex workers in brothels are thankful for the opportunity. The young mother in the visited brothel, for instance, sends her daughter to the centre in daytime.

"This is the only chance for her to get education," she says.

Not everyone thinks the same way. One sex worker, her daughter in her arms, says, "I don't want her to go out, I want her to stay with me."

Although the children profiting from the centre have a better chance to do a common work once, none can guarantee that they will never return to where they have grown up.

[The writer is a Swiss journalist