



Saber freed from jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, political secretary to Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina, was freed yesterday from the Kashimpur Central Jail in Gazipur after a month-long detention.

The army caught him before boarding a London flight on October 20.

The High Court on November 13 declared Saber's detention illegal and ordered his release, if not wanted in any other case.

Saber, facing a number of cases including a sedition charge, was detained under the Special Powers Act on October 23.

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Chair's conduct prompts two AL walkouts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League twice walked out of the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday, protesting the Chair's refusal to let its lawmakers speak.

The main opposition staged the first walkout only 15 minutes into the proceedings when its MPs were not given the floor to raise supplementary questions during the prime minister's question time.

The AL lawmakers rejoined the session after the prime minister's question time was over but stormed out again toward the end of the day's sitting after the Speaker denied them enough time to speak on their notices.

On both occasions, they held press briefings to air their grievance over the way the House was being run.

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina skipped the parliamentary proceedings yesterday.

Meanwhile, during her question time, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia responded only to queries from the ruling alliance MPs.

Besides passing two laws - on lowering court fees and on establishing a police staff college, the House yesterday heard the AL lawmakers voicing their resentment at the government's silence over removal of a mural of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from the Dhaka Cantonment.

Senior AL MPs raised the issue for the second consecutive day yesterday, demanding a clarification from the government. However, there was no statement from the treasury bench.

The session began yesterday with the prime minister's question time, in which not a single question from the opposition bench was entertained.

The Chair did not even allow the opposition lawmakers to raise supplementary questions, prompting Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul

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Dusts twinned with black smoke from faulty vehicles spread a foggy blanket, a common hazard, over a Sayedabad road in the city yesterday. As winter sets in, the problem gets acute.

Bills passed to slash court fees, set up police staff college

UNB, Dhaka

Two Bills were passed in parliament yesterday seeking to slash court-fees and establish Police Staff College, with opposition Awami League staying out to abstain from participating in discussion on the legislation.

The bills are The Court-Fees (Amendment) Bill 2002 and The Police Staff College Bill 2002.

Law and Justice Minister Barrister Moudud Ahmed placed the Court-Fees (Amendment) Bill 2002, reducing the court-fees from Tk 500 to Tk 200 for the cases where the subject matter cannot be determined in terms of money and for the Preemption cases.

Home Minister Ataf Hossain Chowdhury placed the Police Staff College Bill 2002 for better training of the police officers in the rank of ASP and above.

Awami League members boycotted discussion on the bills as Adv Rahmat Ali was denied more than one minute to discuss his proposal for disapproval on certain clauses of the Court-Fees (Amendment) Bill.

However, Jatiya Party members GM Kader and Hafizuddin protested

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Army arrests 21 listed criminals, seizes 35 arms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The army rounded up 146 people including 21 listed criminals across the country in the last 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday.

They also seized 35 firearms including 12 shotguns, five pistols, one revolver and seven pipe-guns along with 38 rounds of ammunition.

In the capital, the troops recovered 1,920 rounds of ammunition from a drain near the Banani rail gate after iftar yesterday. The bullets were in eight cement bags.

On Tuesday, the army arrested a contractor at Zia International Airport. Golam Rabbani Khan Moon was later sent to an army camp in Faridpur.

According to our Faridpur correspondent, an army team raided the 42-year-old contractor's Alipur residence and recovered a foreign revolver yesterday morning. In the evening, Rabbani was handed to Kotwali police.

The army also arrested two criminals and seized 24 firearms in separate raids yesterday in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar, report our correspondents.

In the afternoon, the troops arrested Chandan Dhar, a Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) activist who is on the Chittagong Metropolitan Police's wanted list, in front of the Chittagong Jail.

Dhar was released yesterday after serving a month's detention. The army had arrested him on the first day of Operation Clean Heart on October 17.

The troops also raided the residence of the Bandar Thana president of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Mohammad Miah Bhola, at Patenga and seized one gun and four rounds of bullet. The BNP leader was not home during the raid.

Away at Rangunia, the army recovered three sawn-off guns, one pipe gun and some arms-making materials from inside a pile of bricks adjacent to the residence of notorious criminal Haji Jamal on Tuesday night.

Jamal, who runs a criminal gang allegedly with the blessings of a BNP lawmaker, was arrested last Monday.

In crime-prone Fatikchhari, the

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AL boycotts PM's question time

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) yesterday boycotted the Prime Minister's Question Time calling it a stage-managed game to save Prime Minister Khaleda Zia from facing opposition questions.

"We are boycotting the Prime Minister's Question Time, for the opposition lawmakers have been robbed of the opportunity to ask her questions," Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid said before leading the AL legislators out of the House a few minutes after the PM's 30-minute question time began at 1:30pm.

Hamid took the floor as none of

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Horn-happy drivers drive city deaf

MORSHED ALI KHAN

Although the city's air quality shows signs of slight improvement, noise pollution has reached an unbearable level.

Experts say the indiscriminate and unnecessary use of powerful vehicular horns is the main source of noise pollution in the city. Besides, faulty vehicles, construction sites, loudspeakers, and thousands of workshops let out loud noises round the clock.

In the city, millions of people, especially children, are exposed to the unabated noise pollution, which is worsening rapidly due to the new vehicles fitted with 'very powerful' horns. Although hydraulic horns are banned, 'normal' horns, used by smaller vehicles, are similarly harmful.

A random survey shows that most private vehicles are fitted with two powerful horns that sound deafeningly. Children can sustain a permanent hearing damage if exposed to the sound of the horns from a close range.

Doctors say noise pollution causes a wide range of malfunctions in the human body, including heart attack, high-blood pressure, chronic depression, irritation and respiratory and gastrointestinal disorders.

Noise pollution has remained totally unabated, as successive governments have ignored the pressing issue.

Sheikh Salauddin Ahmed, director of MACADEM, a reputed driving school in the city, said that in the lessons of his school there is no mention of how or when to use

horns. The school trains up hundreds of drivers every year but the instructors do not say anything about the use of horns.

"The BRTA (Bangladesh Road Transport Authority) or any other department never instructed us to educate the drivers on the use of horns," he said.

Ahmed suggested that the government force vehicle owners to remove the second horn, thus reducing the power of the horn.

"During fitness test, the BRTA should ensure that the additional horn is removed from every vehicle," said Ahmed.

A study carried out by the Department of Environment (DoE) about two years ago showed that the decibel level in residential and commercial areas was several hundred times more than the per-

missible to human health.

The standard set by the DoE allows the noise level between 45 and 75 decibels depending on the zone. In residential areas, for instance, the maximum level of noise allowed is 50 decibels and in industrial areas, it could be as high as 75 decibels.

The DoE officials have admitted that 'there is no doubt' that noise pollution has worsened in the city. Even in the so-called 'silent zones', the level of noise surpassed any acceptability.

The officials said they submitted their report to the ministry concerned and also to the press for public awareness, but nothing was

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Three to die for burning girl to death

UNB, Sherpur

A local court here yesterday sentenced three people to death for burning a girl to death.

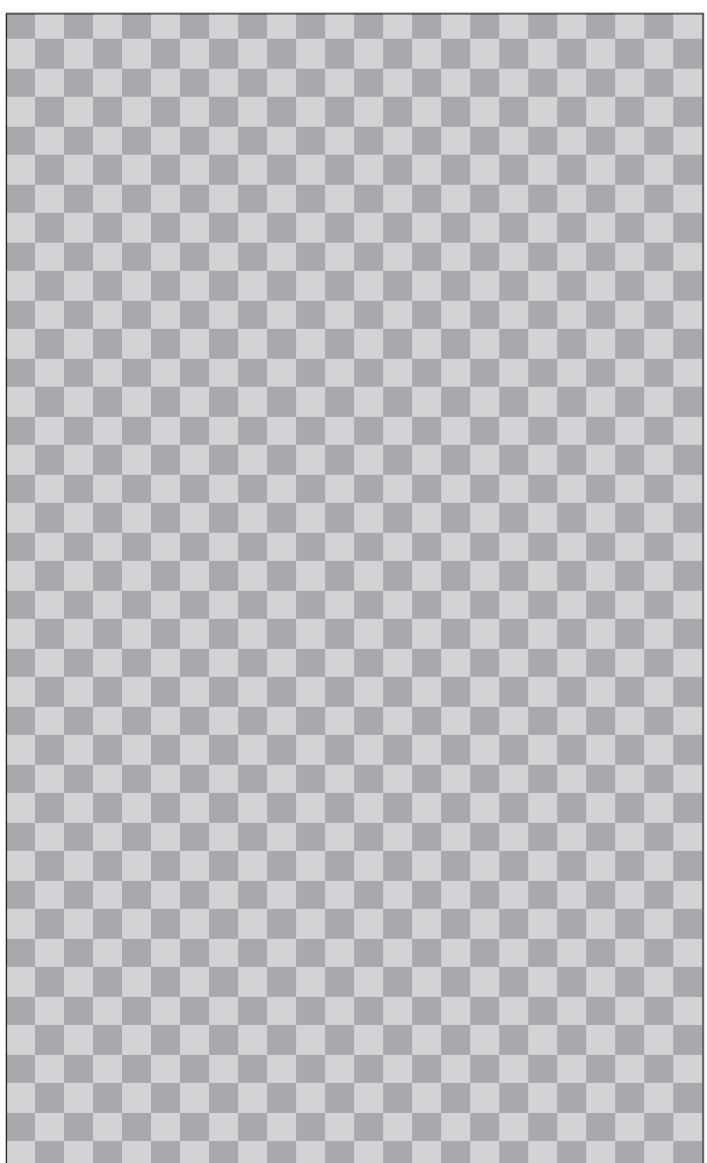
The convicts are Fazal Mia, A Jailil and Amir Uddin of village Piprikandi in Nakla upazila.

According to the prosecution, A Sattar of the same village along with all his family members except his daughter Sajena Selina, 13, went to enjoy a drama at a nearby village on the night of November 1, 1997.

Taking advantage of the situation, Fazal, Jailil and Amir Uddin broke into Sattar's house and tried to rape Selina.

But failing to rape the young girl,

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See you smile in 2006!

AP, Gelsenkirchen, Germany

Make no mistake about the theme for the 2006 World Cup in Germany.

The logo is "The Celebrating Faces".

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Criminal case against DCC magistrate

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A criminal case against a magistrate of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and six others was filed with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court yesterday.

The accused are Magistrate Nurul Alam, DCC Chief Estate Officer Fazle Zoha, assistant estate officers Mohammad Kaiser and Mohsin, estate officer Ruhul Amin, Surveyor Ali Ahmed and Sheikh Mamunul Haque, a resident of Mirpur in the city.

The case was filed by Motiur Rahman, chairman of Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Rehabilitation Association, Mirpur.

The complainant alleged that on November 13, the accused persons

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Judgement in Bappi murder case Nov 30

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Third Special Court for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka, yesterday fixed November 30 for judgement in the Bappi murder case.

Judge Sarker Abul Mansur Ahmed fixed the date after completion of argument.

Earlier, the court had recorded statements of 20 out of 37 prosecution witnesses.

Rubayet Ahmed Bappi, 8, a student of class III of Armanitola Government High School, was abducted by his maternal cousin Shahidul Alam Shipon from their Becharam Dewri residence in the old city on August 5 for ransom.

Later, Shipon and his four accomplices -- Ripon Kumer Roy, Sanjit Sarkar, Sankar Rajbanshi

and Shariful Islam alias Badal -- took Bappi to Demra.

They strangled Bappi the same day and dumped the body in the river Sitalakhya.

Victim's father Alfu Miah filed an abduction case under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act with Kotwali thana accusing Shipon and four others the same day. Bappi's decomposed body was found floating on the river near Kutubpurghat on August 14.

The Investigation Officer of the case submitted a charge sheet on August 21 against Shipon and four others.

The court framed charges against the accused on September 21. The trial of the case began on September 25.

Accused Shipon, Ripon, Sanjit, and Sankar are now in jail custody while Badal is still at large.

Bangladeshi held in India on criminal charges

PTI, New Delhi

A notorious Bangladeshi criminal allegedly involved in several cases of robbery and explosives has been arrested from East Delhi, police said.

Mohd. Mustafa, resident of village Krishna Nagar in Bangladesh was arrested on November 18 by the Operations cell of North District Police after receiving specific intelligence, deputy commissioner of

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Sehri, Iftar timing

Ramadan	Nov	Sehri	Iftar
15	21		5-15
16	22	4-54	5-15
17	23	4-55	5-14

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Nov 21		5-11 pm
Nov 22	5-17 am	

Prayer Timings

Nov 21		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-54	5-04
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-15	5-25
Esha	7-30	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Govt to open up Net phone

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government plans to legalise voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) as a means of low-cost telecommunications services, said Post and Telecommunications Minister Aminul Haque yesterday.

"We are working to legalise VoIP, which will make telecommunications services cheaper," the minister told The Daily Star on the sidelines of the launch of Internet service by Wintel Limited.

But the minister did not say anything about timeframe for the launch of the much-awaited service.

VoIP, a value-added Internet service, will enable users to make phone calls through Internet.

Legalising VoIP will open up the international gateway to the private sector, a high official of the Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC) told reporters at a function earlier.

Due to illegal use of Internet and call termination, the country incurs a huge revenue loss.

The minister said the government is also considering a proposal of corporatisation of the state-owned Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB).

The BTRC submitted two proposals to the post and telecommunications ministry for corporatisation or privatisation of the BTTB through offering

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