

Liaquat, Arman placed on remand

Sakyasen Mitra, Kolkata

A dragnet has been thrown all over the state of West Bengal following the arrest of the Bangladeshi nationals in Kolkata. Yesterday, an air force officer was arrested in Murshidabad after the alleged ISI agent in Murshidabad, Ziauddin Biswas, informed the interrogating officers that the former supplied him with maps and information regarding air force locations in India.

I.G (South Bengal) N.R.Das confirming the news of the arrest said, "Yes, it's a fact that an officer of the Indian Air Force has been arrested in Murshidabad. He was based in Pune but whenever he used to come to Murshidabad for a holiday, he used to supply Ziauddin and SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

50 criminals now in Kolkata hideouts

STAR REPORT

Kolkata is now home to nearly 50 top criminals of Dhaka, said sources.

Whenever there is a special drive to nab top criminals in the country, they cross over to the West Bengal capital.

Some of these criminals have links that run deep into the local administration, the sources said.

There are reports that the Seven Star group, a crime cartel, headed by Subrata Bain Shuvro, enjoys the

blessings of an Indian intelligence agency.

The foreign ministry informed the Indian government about it six months ago, but to no avail.

With the help of the Indian administration, the Shuvro-led group has built a big underworld network and acts as police informant.

Sources said the arrest of Liaquat and Arman could be a sequel to a longstanding rivalry between the Seven Star Group and Five Star Group, which Liaquat leads.

Other top criminals include Mollah Masud, 'Pichchi' Hannan, 'Kala' Jahangir, 'Killer' Abbas, Tanvir Islam Joy, Haris Ahmed, 'Freedom' Imam, 'Shada' Sentu, Nannu, Mantu of Sutrapur, DCC Ward Commissioner Solu and former commissioner of a Mohammadpur ward Sentu.

Of them, seven were arrested by Kolkata police and mysteriously released later.

On Tuesday noon, the chief of the

Kolkata detective police, Shoumen Mitra, told BBC Radio that the arrestees were handed over to the Bangladesh authorities. But at night, he told BBC that they were released.

The criminals have crossed into Kolkata since last December.

Besides, another top criminal named Prokash has been staying there since 1997.

In the early 1980s, Shahidur Rahman, a top criminal of Old Dhaka, fled to Kolkata after he was

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30 cases shifted to Speedy Trial Tribunals

BSS, Dhaka

The government has transferred 30 important cases pending with different courts to the newly formed six tribunals for speedy trial.

The sensational double murder case and Advocate Habib Mondal killing case of Sutrapur thana in the city, Advocate Nurul Islam murder case of Laxmipur and Gopal Krishna murder case in Chittagong are included in the important cases.

In a notification, the Home Ministry yesterday said the government empowered by the Article 6 of the Tribunal for Speedy Trial Ordinance, 2002 has transferred the 30 important cases to six tribunals for speedy trial.

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Dhaka in the dark over criminal arrest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka is yet to receive an official confirmation from New Delhi about the arrest of two wanted Bangladeshi criminals in Kolkata last Saturday, Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury told reporters yesterday.

"We have been trying to know about the arrests from the Indian authorities from the very day those were made. We requested India to allow Bangladesh's Deputy High Commission in Kolkata consular access to the arrestees," he said at the weekly press briefing at the

foreign ministry.

But, he said Dhaka was neither officially informed of the arrests nor was it given consular access until Thursday morning.

"We're still acting on media reports," he said, adding that Bangladesh missions in Kolkata and Delhi have been asked to verify such reports.

Besides, the Indian High Commission in Dhaka has also been issued a note asking for co-operation and verification of the reports of the arrests.

On Saturday, Kolkata police

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JS debates mosques fund

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad witnessed a lively discussion on a resolution yesterday for sanctioning of Tk 3 lakh each to all 300 constituencies for development of mosques.

Yesterday was a private members' day in the parliament, and BNP lawmaker Md Amjad Hossain Sarkar brought a resolution seeking an annual allocation of Tk 3 lakh for development of mosques in each of the constituencies.

Though legislators belonging to the main opposition Awami League, as well as the MPs of the BNP, the Jatiya Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami, supported the resolution, State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharef Hossain Shahjahan requested Amjad Hossain Sarkar to withdraw his resolution.

Amidst protests by the AL lawmakers, the minister argued that the country's economy was hard pressed and the government was not in a position now to allocate Tk. 3 lakh per year against the mosques i SEE PAGE 11 COL 7



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

A potter stacks earthen bowls at Rayerbazar in the city yesterday to be shipped off to markets. Ramadan sees halim, a traditional iftar item, served hot in earthen bowls, in demand, and the potters are doing a brisk business in earthen bowls of different sizes and shapes.

Commentary

The denial that brings discredit to govt

MAHFUZ ANAM

The first task of a civilised government (unlike those of Rwanda or Bosnia, and recently of Russia where they gassed nearly 700 innocent theatre-loving people, of whom 114 died, to catch 50 Chechen rebels, and not to mention Israel whose main passion seems to be to kill its Palestinian citizens) is to protect the lives and property of its citizens. From October 17 when the army operation started 26 people died in events directly linked to army action. On Tuesday the government has informed us, through the person of the Principal Information Officer (PIO), that not a single person died in army custody.

All the newspaper stories, we must conclude therefore, were wrong. What a sloppy journalism! How could we report these stories when the truth was so simple? Thank you, Mr PIO for righting our gross error.

Now that you have corrected our mistake, can you kindly tell us, in a credible manner, where, how and why 26 citizens of the democratic Bangladesh died since the beginning of the joint operation? Why is there a sudden spate of heart attacks in Bangladesh? Given the economic conditions of those who died, they couldn't have

been on a high cholesterol red-meat diet. Except for one 77-year old and another 50-year old, both of whom were leading perfectly normal lives, all the rest were below 40 years of age, not known to have any serious health problems. None of them met a natural end; on the contrary, all of them had violent deaths. Those, whose relatives had a chance to see the bodies, claimed to have seen numerous injury marks on the dead. Reports of six post-mortems of deaths occurring in Dhaka and Savar, that we learnt about, clearly stated that the deaths occurred due to extreme bodily harm that could have been only caused by torture. Some others died in hospitals following admission with severe body injury, due to beating after being picked up.

When the PIO was asked to tell the press that none died from army action, did the government actually think that people would believe it? It seems for those at the helm of power there is no limit as to how stupid they take the people to be. Please give us some credit for common sense and a tiny bit of intelligence. The PIO's claim adds insult to the already grievous injury of 26 custodial or post-custodial deaths.

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Another death linked with army drive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A middle-aged commercial artist, who was picked up by the army from his Babupura shop Tuesday evening, died yesterday morning.

According to sources, Tasu Mia fell sick during army interrogation yesterday morning and was taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where on-duty doctors declared him dead.

However, army sources claim a team of joint forces went to the city's Katabon area with the 40-year old at around 3:00am yesterday to recover firearms.

Asked to lead them to hidden

cache of firearms, Tasu removed the lid of a manhole in the area, pulled out a loaded revolver and shot at an army officer, leaving him injured.

As he tried to run away, he was run over by a pickup van. In critical condition, he was admitted to the DMCH where he died at around 4:00am.

The army sources also claimed Tasu had been picked up on Wednesday, not Tuesday, and had helped the troops recover a pistol from the Azimpur graveyard.

Family sources said the commercial artist was taken first to the Mohammadpur army camp and then to the Dhanmondi army camp after

his arrest on Tuesday.

On the same day, the officer-in-charge of the Dhanmondi Police Station told Nayantara, wife of Tasu, that her husband would be handed over to the police within the next 24 hours.

Next day, at the Dhanmondi army camp, she was told to go to the Dhanmondi police to inquire about her husband.

Yesterday morning, on the advice of the Dhanmondi police, Nayantara went to the DMCH only to find her husband's body.

According to the Dhanmondi police, Tasu, father of three daugh

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PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia spends a few sombre moments after placing a wreath at the Eternal Flame at the Dhaka Cantonment to mark the Armed Forces Day yesterday.