



Joint forces of the anticrime operation arrested Rafiq Ahmed alias Baiccha in possession of an AK-47 assault rifle in the port city of Chittagong.

Mujib's image

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'Bangabandhu' from the title of the annual agriculture award. The bill was passed yesterday with the AL boycotting the session.

The agriculture minister came down heavily on the AL for what he said putting all the blame on 'razakars' (wartime collaborators of the Pakistani occupation army) and for 'demeaning' Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by naming various institutions and establishments after him.

Responding to AL's attack on him for introducing the bill and calling him a 'razakar,' the Jamaat leader said, 'Awami League is its own enemy. There is no use putting all the blame on razakars all the time.'

In this regard, Nizami said that following the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, 'no razakar had joined the Khandakar Mushtaq government, rather, the freedom fighters had joined his cabinet.'

People belonging to the AL such as Abdul Malek Ukil and Mohiuddin Ahmed had spoken against the Mujib government in London and Moscow respectively, Nizami said.

He went on, 'People like Sirajul Alam Khan, ASM Rob and Shahjahan Siraj, who were AL forerunners in pre-independence days, formed JSD (Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal) in post-

PM: Ziarat

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Saudi Royal Protocol made a special enclosure for iftar by the Bangladesh Prime Minister at the holy mosque complex.

Khaleda Zia performed her magrib, isha and tarabi prayers at the Masjid-e-Nabbi.

The Royal Protocol arranged all hospitality and arrangements for the prime minister who is staying in the Kingdom as a Royal Guest of the Saudi government.

Saudi electronic media gave wide coverage to the prime minister.

Earlier, on her arrival at Madinah, the Bangladesh Prime Minister was given a guard of honour by a contingent of the Saudi special security force.

Khaleda Zia will stay at Madinah till Friday before flying for Jeddah by a special aircraft on way to Makkah, where she will perform Umrah.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin and Prime Minister's Political Secretary Muhammed Masaddeq Ali are, among others, accompanying the prime minister.

Bus, truck collision

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The five other bodies could not be identified.

The bodies were sent to Narayanganj General Hospital for autopsy.

The injured, identified as Jasim Uddin, 25, was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for treatment.

In another accident, Bakul, 22, a helper of a minibus was killed and five others were injured when a minibus skidded off the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway and fell into a ditch at Modanpur at about 10.00 am.

Bakul died on the spot. The injured people were rushed to a local hospital.

Our Staff Correspondent adds: Two persons died in two separate road accidents in the city yesterday.

Khorshed Alam, 70, a resident of Ramna, Moghbazar area, was hit by a speeding bus at Moghbazar crossing at 6.30 am.

He was taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the doctors declared him dead.

In another accident at Jatrabari crossing, one youth, Shafiq, 20 of

Reazuddin, 3, was killed on the spot when a sand loaded truck hit him in front of Shahachar Mazar under Patiya in the morning.

Saifur

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teachers have to dissuade students from putting up such resistance, meeting sources said.

However, he said, the government cannot impose any decision on the universities because of their autonomous status and so they should work out their own mechanism on this regard.

The meeting also discussed in detail the fallout of acute budget deficits on Khulna University, Islamic University, Kushtia and Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet.

So intense is the fund crisis that some staff, working under development budget, have been working without salary for months now, the minister was told.

The UGC informed Saifur that against a demand of Tk 3.96 crore for a period of 18 months (from July 1999 to December 2000), Tk 3.49 crore was disbursed in the 2000-01 fiscal.

It requested the finance minister to arrange a fund of Tk 4.5 crore so that the universities can give salary to those staff. The minister agreed to give Tk 3 crore.

Budget deficit under the education head at the public universities have soared to Tk 55.71 crore between 1995-96 and 2001-02 due to inadequate government allocation, appointment of excess manpower, etc.

In the current fiscal (2002-03), the government allocated Tk 27 crore in the budget for public universities against a UGC demand of Tk 310.20 crore.

In this context the UGC requested the minister to increase allocation to offset the deficit.

Launch fares

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doubled on the eve of Eid. But the ticket seller of a Barguna-bound launch claimed that the fare was not raised.

All cabins of the launch have already been booked and the fare of a single-bed cabin increased to Tk 600 from Tk 400. And the fare for a deck passenger on the Dhaka-Barisal route increased from Tk 60-65 to Tk 112.

The Bangladesh Railway started sales of advance tickets on Monday and will run special trains to ease the rush of homebound passengers.

The BIWTA team has run its drive in Fatullah, Kamrangirchar and Keraniganj over the last seven days. Yesterday was an additional day of the drive that cost Tk 80,000 a day.

Kamrangirchar Police Station confirmed the arrest of the seven people. No case was filed until yesterday evening, though, police said.

The decision on the launch of the demolition drive was taken at the meeting of a ministerial taskforce on November 13.

Speedy Trial

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In the case filed with Sutrapur police station, it has been alleged that Mohammad Mohsin, 18, and Mohammad Saem, 19, of Sharat Kumar Das Lane under Sutrapur thana were picked up from their houses by a gang allegedly led by Rabid Hasan Sumon on September 15, 2000.

The gang took the two to Gandaria Rifle Club and tortured them for Tk 50,000 ransom.

Later, the gang killed the youths, slashed their bodies into 12 pieces and dumped those into a manhole. Police recovered the pieces from the manhole the following day.

Mohammad Amin Miah, father of Mohsin, one of the two victims, filed a murder case accusing 14 people including Sumon.

The government on November 21 transferred 30 important cases pending with different courts to the newly formed six tribunals for speedy trial.

Before prorogation of the

Hasina: HR violation

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ing political opponents.

The international community, the opposition leader said, cannot 'turn a blind eye to these dark developments in Bangladesh and should denounce this'.

Hasina, whose lecture was on 'Cooperation in South Asia,' said the efforts to find a solution to the problems of poverty, illiteracy and economic decline in SAARC have become hostage to hostilities between India and Pakistan.

Pointing out that the track record of SAARC has not been very encouraging so far, the Awami League chief said resolution of the common problems facing the countries of the region appear to have held hostage by disputes between India and Pakistan.

She said SAARC countries were afflicted with extreme poverty, poor infrastructure, terrorism, cross-border trafficking of drugs, weapons, women and children and all the problems could be solved by a common programme and its time-bound implementation.

But such a common plan of action was missing in SAARC for the last several years, Hasina added.

Singling out poverty as the factor responsible for increasing number of youths joining the ranks of terrorists, she said, 'If you can arrange food, jobs and decent living for them, the youths will not be attracted to terrorism.'

Hasina suggested promotion of

disputes between countries of the region could be taken up bilaterally. If the issue proved very difficult to be resolved, then a third country could take the initiative to bring the two sides to the table on the basis of mutual understanding.

She said SAARC countries should strictly adhere to the charter of the regional association which bars members from raising bilateral disputes in the forum.

In this context, the Awami League chief recalled her own trip to New Delhi and Islamabad as Prime Minister soon after India and Pakistan conducted nuclear tests in a bid to break the ice between the two South Asian neighbours.

Hasina also listed how her government had solved the Ganges water-sharing issue with India and the 'deep-rooted' Chakma ethnic problem without any third party mediation 'which is unique in the history of conflict resolution'.

She said it was a great disappointment to find SAARC had failed to enhance economic co-operation in a manner ASEAN and North America and Europe had done and the flow of trade and investment in South Asia is among the lowest in any economic grouping in the world.

Hasina suggested economical communication link among SAARC capitals saying this would promote tourism and trade among the countries.

Earlier on Tuesday, Hasina called

on Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and was understood to have discussed bilateral issues.

The 30-minute interaction between the two leaders was officially termed as a 'courtesy call' by Hasina but there is no official word on what transpired at talks between them.

Later, Hasina had a dinner meeting with Indian External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha yesterday.

The Awami League leader's meetings with senior Indian political leaders assumes significance against the backdrop of recent humps in relations between New Delhi and Dhaka following the spar on issue of reported presence of Al Qaida elements in Bangladesh.

Indian Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani's remarks that Al Qaida militants were present in Bangladesh and that terrorist activities from that country had increased following the change of government there last year have drawn sharp rejoinder from Dhaka.

While denying the charge, Bangladesh alleged India is not responding to its request for the handover of 'criminals' who took shelter in West Bengal following the anti-crime crackdown in Bangladesh.

Hasina arrived at New Delhi on Monday night on a five-day visit to India, her first since being voted out of power last year.

2 journalists quizzed

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entered the country using fake identities and visited various places to gather twisted information. Their motive seems to be to know whether Bangladesh has Taliban and Al-Qaida network and highlight in foreign media that there is no communal harmony in the country.

Counsel of the arrested, Barrister Rokon Uddin Mahmud and Advocate Khondakar Abdul Mannan expressed concern over security of their clients. They alleged that they were not allowed to meet the arrested and were also not given documents of the case.

Family members of the arrested are totally unaware where they were kept, Rokon Uddin told BBC.

Principa's sister Premanjan Raj told BBC she went to police station and court but was not allowed to meet Principa.

Sources said the two foreigners after coming to Bangladesh on November 6 were engaged in a series of clandestine activities with an apparent motive of portraying Bangladesh as an 'Islamic fanatic' country. For this, they visited Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Khagrachari and different parts of the capital.

In a statement, Principa's mother Hasna Begum said her daughter has been working as a translator and interpreter since her student life. On November 23, she left home to work on a daily basis as an interpreter for the two journalists, she added.

She went on, 'Some dailies portrayed Principa as an associate of the two journalists, which disheartened us very much.'

She believed that truth would come to light through investigation.

Meanwhile, Meser Ali, driver of the vehicle that took the two journalists and their guide to Benapole, gave a judicial statement before a Metropolitan Magistrate yesterday. Arrested as an accused, Meser later turned a witness in the case. He said the three had visited several places in Jessor and Satkhipur and took video footages and statements of several people before going to Benapole.

'They also met two correspondents of two Dhaka dailies,' Meser said. He was released after his statement was recorded.

The BBC issued a statement on the arrest of the two journalists. It said the two, Zaiqa and Bruno, were remanded for five days, but Channel 4 chiefs are still not sure what they have been charged with.

In a letter to the Bangladeshi High Commission in London, following a request from Channel 4, BBC news chiefs have asked for their immediate release.

BBC's head of current affairs Peter Horrocks wrote: 'I write to express the concern of BBC Current Affairs at the arrest of the filmmakers Zaiqa and Bruno in your country. These two journalists are well known to the BBC and we know them to be journalists of high integrity.'

'We call on your courts to respect their rights as film-makers and we are confident they would not break the laws of any country. We respectfully request they are released immediately.'

The international press watchdog, Reporters Sans Frontiers, has termed the arrests a 'serious attack on press freedom'.

AL agitation

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Mohammad Nasim, former home minister, said that the people's mandate for running the Jatiya Sangsad in a democratic way has been marred by the BNP-Jamaat government's autocratic attitude.

They would not allow the elected representatives to speak against their anti-people activities.

The European Union Parliament adopted a resolution criticising the Operation Clean Heart, but we are not permitted to talk against it in our own parliament, he said.

'The people's representatives are entitled to speak in the Jatiya Sangsad and enact laws for the people. But when we protested the introduction of the anti-people 'Speedy Trial Tribunal Act 2002' on November 24, they did not pay any heed to our opinion,' he said.

'We will not withdraw this act after we come to power, we will hold trial of the BNP men under this very act,' Nasim warned, addressing the prime minister.

Pointing to the amendment of the 'Bangabandhu Award Fund Ordinance, 1976' that was passed at the JS session on November 25, he termed erasing of Sheikh Mujib Rahman's name 'a naked manifestation of political vendetta'.

'The country's sovereignty is threatened as the well identified anti-liberation people like Nizami now dare

surrender before it by November 28.

Pop music

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committed a crime by dangling his son from the fourth-floor window of his five-star hotel before hundreds of fans last week, a frightening moment captured on film and widely broadcast.

Jackson apologised, saying he was caught up in the emotion of the cheering fans. He had held his baby, whose head was covered by a towel, over a balcony with one arm. Fans screaming his name on the street below gasped in horror.

Berlin police opted against starting a formal investigation.

Jackson also dismissed criticism about covering the faces of his children with veils – believed to be an attempt to thwart potential kidnappers – as they toured Berlin's zoo.

EC sticks to plans

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government since its request had been turned down, he said, 'We hope we will hold the elections smoothly with help from the government.'

The government found itself on increasingly fragile footing after the Attorney General's Office termed the LGRD gazette notification improper.

The CEC, meanwhile, had a detailed discussion on security coverage with Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Hasan Mashud Chowdhury.

According to an EC press release issued yesterday, the commission had sought opinion from the upazila and thana administrations about dates for election to the union parishads in their respective areas before the schedule was finalised.

The EC also held a series of meetings with the Local Government Division (LGD) secretary and the inspector general of police (IGP) in this regard.

Meanwhile, the meeting yesterday also discussed elections to the Barisal and Sylhet city corporations.

It was decided that after a meeting with the home secretary, the IGP and the divisional officials on December 10, the EC would finalise the election schedule.

Electron Commissioners Saifur Rahman, MM Munshi Ali and AK Mohammad Ali and Secretary to the EC Secretariat SM Zakaria attended the meeting among others.