

Five mowed down in UP polls violence

STAR REPORT

A gang fired on Union Parishad (UP) election campaigners in Jhenidah, killing five instantly and injuring another.

The gang of 12 used a sub-machine gun in the killing that took place in front of a tea-stall at Kuthidurgapur Bazaar, said witnesses.

Meanwhile, a pregnant woman died from wounds in Dashmina, Patuakhali, on Sunday. Shawrojan, 22, was injured in pre-

election violence.

Those who died in Jhenidah are Jamal, 38, Khokon 40, Sajidur, 38, Ishaq Ali, 38, and Islamuddin, 45.

The injured is 45-year-old Rafiq, owner of the tea-stall, now admitted to the Jhenidah Sadar Hospital.

Police recovered the bodies and sent them to the same hospital for autopsy.

The five, said to be BNP activists, were campaigning in favour of Sarafat Hossain, a pro-BNP chairman candidate for the Ganna UP polls, scheduled for February 19.

Police believe the killers are the cadres of the outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBPC).

They shouted slogans in favour of the PBPC while fleeing the spot, said the witnesses.

Deputy Inspector General of Police (Khulna) Enayetullah Dewan visited the spot yesterday morning.

Police raided some hideouts but could not arrest any PBPC cadre until yesterday.

Other UP polls-related clashes have left around 70 people injured since Saturday night, according to

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

arrested for alleged involvement in the killing.

Five of them are Zuran Laskar, Ujjal Hossain, Jahangir Hossain, Rustum Biswas and Moshiur Rahman.

Police in nine districts of the Khulna range have been kept on red alert. Twenty platoons of police have also been deployed in several places of Jhenidah.

Other UP polls-related clashes have left around 70 people injured since Saturday night, according to

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Delhi watches Dhaka's step on its security concerns

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

New Delhi would watch closely Dhaka's response to its concern over "illegal immigration and ISI and anti-Indian activities" in Bangladesh before assessing the outcome of Moshed Khan's recent visit, diplomatic sources said.

The Indian government has so far remained circumspect in its assessment of the Bangladesh foreign minister's visit.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpeyi, Deputy Prime Minister Lal Krishna Advani and External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha have all made it clear to Moshed that New Delhi expects Dhaka to address its security concerns.

However, Moshed has reiterated his government's denial of illegal immigration and ISI and anti-Indian activities in Bangladesh, the sources said.

He has nevertheless emphasised continuation of dialogue between the two countries at different tiers over unresolved bilateral issues.

After last Friday's meeting, Sinha and Moshed expressed willingness to move beyond the bilateral irritants.

The two countries have also lined up a foreign secretary-level dialogue in April and a joint economic commission meeting in July to improve strained bilateral relations.

Any progress in this direction, however, depends on how Dhaka responds to Delhi's concerns, the sources said.

Vajpeyi is understood to have told Moshed that there is a consensus in India that Dhaka must address Delhi's security concerns.

Earlier, during his meeting with Advani on Saturday, Moshed is learnt to have told Advani that ISI is 20 times more active in India than in Bangladesh.

In reply, Advani said his government had busted several ISI modules in India and it was Bangladesh's turn to do the same.

Army redeployed to combat crime

No interrogation in custody this time

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The army has again been deployed in six divisions on Sunday night to join the law enforcers in curbing crime.

A company of 150 soldiers has been deployed in each division to patrol crime-prone areas and nab criminals.

But the troops have not been given the power to take the arrestees into their custody for interrogation. They will hand the

criminals to the police. A police team will always accompany the army during the anticrime drive, sources said.

Our Khulna correspondent reports that the joint forces yesterday arrested 17 people including a newly elected Union Parishad chairman.

Abdul Gafur Mollah, chairman of the Jalsa union of Baitaghata, was arrested along with 16 others from Banda village of Dumuria upazila.

Gafur is said to be a leader of the outlawed Biplabi Communist Party.

Police Commissioner of Khulna Enayetullah Dewan said the army have been called out to help combat rising crimes.

The army launched a crackdown on criminals styled Operation Clean Heart on October 17. The government withdrew troops on January 9 after indemnifying the joint forces for all their acts during the cam

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

Islamic militants planned to bomb concert

Dinajpur people form anti-fundamentalist committee

ANWAR ALI, Dinajpur

As locals, political parties and socio-cultural organisations have got together to resist religious fanatics, police yesterday said some Islamic militants had planned to bomb a concert and a social function in the Dinajpur town.

A committee styled "Movement against Terrorism and Fundamentalism" has been formed and will demonstrate in the town tomorrow against Thursday's blasts at a den of Islamic militants — Jamaatul Mujahidin.

Police unearthed a Mujahidin stronghold at Ghoraghat upazila.

They got clues to the hangout from maps and documents found in the debris at the bomb blast site. The bombs went off at a mess where the militants camped, leaving at least 10 persons injured.

The documents revealed that the terrorists were planning to bomb an open-air concert at Dinajpur stadium and a Mehendi Utsab (festival of painting mehendi in hands) the town.

An army team yesterday detonated the bombs seized from the Jamaatul Mujahidin den at Chhoto Gurgoba.

Locals said the militants lived an isolated life and strangers used to visit the mess. Police recovered firearms, ammunition and bombs

from the mess after the blasts.

The seizure list includes four locally made pistols, several hundred bullets, bomb-making equipment, electric circuits, batteries, remote controls, petrol bombs and chemicals.

They also found money receipts of the Jamaatul Mujahidin Bangladesh, books on armed combat, list of members, commando dresses, mobile phones and documents.

One such document reads: "Sayakh (sir), we are in need of the list of muakids (fighter-members) that was given to you."

Over 5,000 slum people evicted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More than five thousand people were evicted from a slum near the Osmani Udyan yesterday.

"I have nowhere to go," said 50-year-old Laily Begum, who had lived in the slum since the liberation war.

Most evicted people took shelter on the sidewalk in front of the Fazlul Huq Hall and in the Osmani Udyan.

The Bangladesh Railway (BR) bulldozed about 1,200 shanties in a five-hour drive with back-ups from two platoons of police to recover land from encroachers.

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda instructed the railway authorities to recover the land, said Nurul Kabir Siddiqui, deputy commissioner and divisional estate officer of the BR.

The authorities will plant trees in the land in a week to ward off further encroachment, he said.

Heroin peddling that was common in the shanties will be stopped now, he said.

"I am not a heroin peddler. Why did the government evict me?" asked a slum-dweller.

"Slum-dwellers don't sell heroin. All drug peddlers are outsiders," said Sadeq, a construction worker, who used to live in a shanty.

Outsiders peddled drugs in connivance with police and the railway staff, alleged many slum-dwellers. Liton, Jahangir and Kajal

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

PM slams foreign media for smear campaign

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said a campaign was on, particularly in the foreign media, to undermine "the position of Bangladesh".

"In today's international troubled times, painting Bangladesh black harms us deeply," she said, appealing to foreign journalists to state the facts correctly after 'personal enquiries'.

The prime minister was addressing the inaugural session of the Silver Jubilee Conference of Commonwealth Journalists Association (CJA) at a city hotel.

Khaleda said, "Our doors are open to all the media people, though

not for some who attempt to conceal their identity." Holding of this conference here proves this, she added.

World Bank Country Director Frederick T Temple and Murray Burt and Hassan Shahriar, president and vice-president of the CJA, also spoke on the occasion.

The theme of the weeklong conference is 'Civil Society and Good Governance: the Journalist's Role'.

The prime minister said incorrect and untrue media reports are 'hurting the mobility of our labour, students and their dependent relations,' as Bangladesh greatly depends on remittances from expatriates. She portrayed

Bangladesh as a modern, democratic and progressive country.

Khaleda Zia referred to 'misrepresentation' of Bangladesh in foreign media on issues like Islamic fundamentalist groups in her government, repression on minority people, shelter of 'jihadis' (Taliban forces) from Afghanistan in Bangladesh and Clean Heart Operation that ended recently. Reports on the issues are 'false, fabricated and baseless,' she said.

The prime minister said Jamaat-e-Islami was a partner in her government to honour an election

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



ADAB split climaxes next week

NAZRUL ISLAM

The split of the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) will be complete next week, with the launching of an alternative platform by the anti-ADAB organisations.

And it may have an adverse impact on development activities, according to NGO sources.

Since its inception 29 years ago, ADAB, the NGO apex body, has been working for development, providing support to the local NGOs, and coordinating their activities with national, international and government agencies.

Negotiations between the two

groups, one led by BRAC chief executive Fazle Hasan Abed and the other by ADAB chairperson Qazi Faruque Ahmed, over government-NGO relations failed many times, since the present government took office in October 2001.

Qazi Faruque said it was an "evil design" by the government to split the NGOs, while Abed's representative BRAC Executive Director Muyeed Chowdhury claimed that the move would protect the sector as a whole.

Since the government has reservations about the present ADAB leadership, a proposal was given to the chairperson and seven other elected representatives to quit

"This initiative came as the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Bill to bring foreign visitors under travel tax-net

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A bill to bring foreign visitors under travel tax-net was introduced in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

"There is no justification to exempt foreigners from travel tax-net," State Minister for Finance Shah Mohammad Abul Hossain said while placing the bill — The Travel Tax Bill 2003. Opposition lawmakers objected its introduction.

The bill proposes levy up to Tk 10,000 on any passenger travelling to any country from Bangladesh by land, air or water routes. The government will determine the rate to be on rule in line with the proposed law.

Till the rate is fixed, foreigners

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6



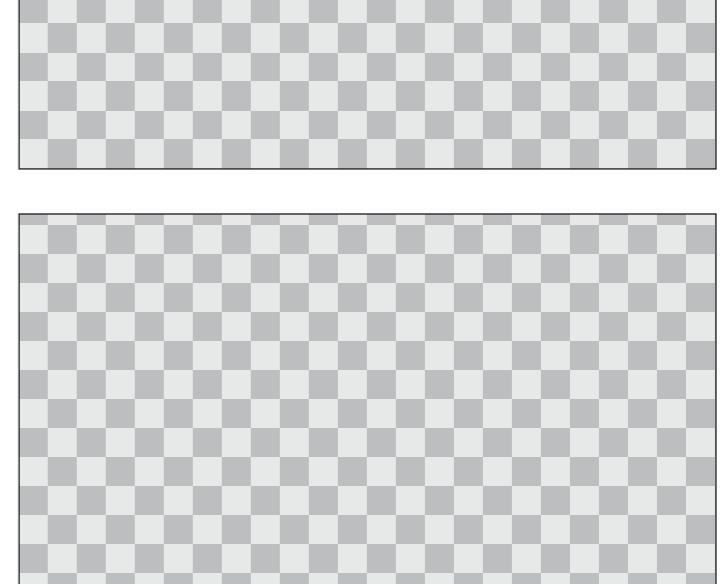
Khaled Mashud



Carl Hooper



Mashrafee-bin-Mortuza



Rice import duty cut

STAR REPORT

The government, yesterday, slashed duty on rice imports from a total of 29 per cent to 7.5 per cent.

From now on, rice importers need no longer pay any advance income tax (AIT) or development surcharge (DSC). "It is expected that importers will be encouraged to import good quality rice," the National Board of Revenue (NBR) said in a statement yesterday.

In addition, rice can now be imported through the Sona Masjid Customs House in Rajshahi, addition to the previously permitted houses at Darshana, Birol, Burimati, Hili, Tamabil and Teknaf.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3