

BSF pushes in 62 through Panchagarh border

UNB, Atoari (Panchagarh)

BSF pushed-in 62 Indian Muslims through different borders of Atoari upazila on Friday night.

All but four of them have fled to different places of the district.

The four held from the district town were pushed back by BDR yesterday. They are Abdul Kadir, 32, Yustif Ali, 45, Sekander alias Seken, 62, and his wife Sahida Begum. They had 580 Indian rupees with them.

Before being pushed back Seken and Sahida told newsmen that they were residents of Jamuna Pusta slum of Delhi. Police raided the area on the night of May 19 and picked them up along with some others.

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Algeria quake toll edges towards 2,000

AFP, Algiers

The known casualty toll from Algeria's earthquake has risen to at least 1,875 dead and 8,081 injured, the interior ministry said Saturday as the prime minister warned that the final toll could be much higher.

"We have to be realistic....I prefer to be honest with our compatriots," Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia said on radio as rescuers continued to hunt for survivors from under collapsed buildings.. "Unfortunately, we will still find quite a number of people under the ruins."

Ouyahia said he feared the death toll could be particularly high because at the time of the quake families had been gathered in their homes at dinner time just when a football match was in progress.

Meanwhile, angry residents of

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PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

It often takes four to six hours for taxi drivers to get their vehicles filled at gas stations and so, they finish their lunch while in wait for their turn at the end of the long queue.

Democracy needs anti-graft body, separate judiciary

CPD, The Daily Star and Prothom Alo consultation meet in Barisal told

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Immediate separation of the judiciary, an end to appointment of judges on political consideration and formation of an independent anti-corruption commission are imperative to restore people's confidence in the democratic order.

Moreover, political parties and their leaders should be answerable to the people, and the leaders and bureaucrats have to give estimates

of their wealth. The press should be free from political influence.

Speakers at a dialogue on 'Good Governance: Corruption and Judicial Separation' here yesterday made the observations.

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), The Daily Star and the Prothom Alo organised the dialogue, held at the BDS Hall.

President of the local Bar Library Manobendra Batabyal chaired

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Acquitted criminals throw acid again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, CTG

A gang of criminals, recently acquitted by a court in an acid throwing case, repeated the crime on Anowara Begum, 32, at Mukhtijoddha Colony in the Hill View residential area under Panchlaish Police Station on Friday night.

Anowara Begum, mother of four children, was rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

She was in critical condition with burn injuries in the face, shoulders, chest, throat and hands, according to hospital sources.

According to police, the incident occurred at around 9:00pm on Friday when Anowara went to get water from a tube-well. A gang of five, led allegedly by Moqbul, tied the victim's hands and threw

acid on her.

Police arrested prime accused Moqbul from Segun Bagan area under the Khulshi Police Station the same night.

Moqbul and his gang of 10 criminals were accused of throwing acid on 12-year old Baby Akhtar who succumbed to her injuries on October 7 last year.

They were acquitted of charges on March 30.

Baby was the daughter of Humayun Kabir, one of Anowara's neighbours.

Police hinted that land dispute between Moqbul and Humayun Kabir might be the reason behind such repeated incidents.

A case was filed with the Panchlaish Police Station accusing Moqbul, his son Ismail and brother-in-law Mannan of the crime.

China allows free access of 59 items

RAFIQ HASAN

China has agreed to provide duty- and quota-free access to 59 items, according to commerce ministry sources.

Beijing recently made the offer following the first meeting of the third-round of negotiations under the Bangkok Agreement for preferential trade in March.

The items to get the privilege would be finalised at the next round of meeting in August.

During the negotiation in Bangkok, Bangladesh sought duty-

and quota-free access of 129 items to China, 109 to South Korea, 89 to India and 124 to Sri Lanka. The other countries are yet to positively respond, ministry sources said.

As a least developed country Bangladesh sought the free access as a special favour, said a ministry high official.

Under the Bangkok Agreement, Bangladesh got zero to 50 per cent duty reductions on 188 items to all the signatory countries.

The Bangkok Agreement was signed in 1975 among five South and Southeast Asian nations --

Bangladesh, India, Laos, South Korea and Sri Lanka -- for preferential trade. China joined it in January last.

Earlier, China allowed Bangladesh 20 to 50 per cent duty reductions on 739 items. During the visit of Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji in January last, Beijing agreed to offer zero tariff access for jute and jute goods.

According to the agreement, Bangladesh also allowed duty reductions on several items from the member countries. Ten to fifty per

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Mixed bag on ministerial changes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thursday's cabinet reshuffle has created confusion and fuelled a mixed reaction in the ruling alliance.

Many leaders of the alliance that brings together Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) and Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) believe the changes are 'meaningless' and may not bring about anything positive.

Others, however, see the changes in the council of ministers as a much-needed shot in the arm of the alliance.

The major revamp caught all the six fired ministers and state ministers, apart from Sadeque Hossain Khoka, off guard. They termed their removal as 'sheer disgrace'.

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PM to pacify alliance leaders over reshuffle

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will hold a meeting with the top leaders of the four-party alliance soon to erase the dissatisfaction stemming from the cabinet reshuffle on Thursday and non-accommodation of some coalition partners in the cabinet.

Highly placed sources said the decision came when two frontline leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami called on her to air their grievances against the change in the portfolio of Matur Rahman Nizami, their party chief.

Besides, disillusion crept in Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) and

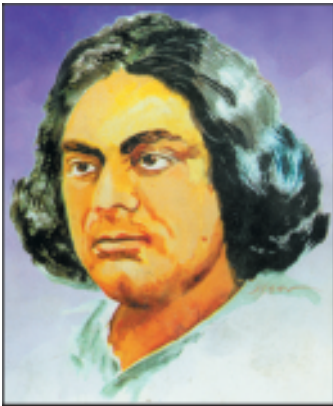
Islami Oikya Jote (IJO), two alliance partners, over non-inclusion of any of their leaders in the cabinet.

Although the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) committed to sharing power with all of its coalition partners, it is yet to deliver the pledge to the small parties.

Sources said Jamaat leaders Mohammad Kamaruzzaman and Abdul Qader Mollah met Khaleda at about 1:30pm and held an hour-long meeting.

They told the PM that the party rank and file took Nizami's transfer to the industries ministry from

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Nazrul's 104th birthday today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country celebrates the 104th birth anniversary of national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam today.

Different organisations have taken preparations to celebrate the occasion. A three-day national programme begins today at Darinampur, Trishal of Mymensingh. Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is expected to inaugurate the programme.

The poet was born on May 24, 1899 at the village Churulia of Burdhaman district in West Bengal.

Nazrul started his career as a folk poet but rose to the eminence of an uncompromising dissenter against the colonial British rulers. He was also a great source of inspiration to

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JS budget session from June 10

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday summoned the budget session of the Jatiya Sangsad at 7pm on June 10, said a press release.

The national budget for fiscal 2003-04 is likely to be placed on June 12.

Girl foils 'kidnap' attempt, helps rescue 3 others 'School teacher' arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A seven-year-old girl who escaped a kidnap attempt Wednesday helped police rescue three other girls yesterday at Shantinagar.

Police arrested Marjina Begum nicknamed Haramon, who introduced herself as a teacher of Motijheel Model High School, on

charge of kidnapping the girls.

She admitted to taking the girls to her residence because she enjoys their company. Marjina does not have any children.

"I had no ill motive behind taking the girls. I like to take care of children," she told journalists.

One of the victims, Soma, 7, said

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PHOTO: STAR

Two of the children rescued yesterday from the residence of a 'school teacher' who allegedly tried to traffick them.