



Wedding party mayhem

Gunmen barge into community centre; shoot 50 bullets; pregnant woman killed; 12 wounded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A wedding reception party turned into a mayhem when unidentified gunmen opened fire inside a community centre, killing a woman and wounding at least 12 at Kazipara in Dhaka yesterday.

Nazma Akhter, sister of bride Afroz Aftab Doli, was hit by three bullets and died in the reception corner. She was carrying. Two children aged between 10 and 12 were also bullet-hit.

As fear-stricken guests shrieked

and ran for cover, the assailants of Golam Mostafa Labu, assistant organiser of the Tejgaon thana unit of the Juba League, and shot him point blank four times. He was taken to Shamarit Hospital in a critical condition.

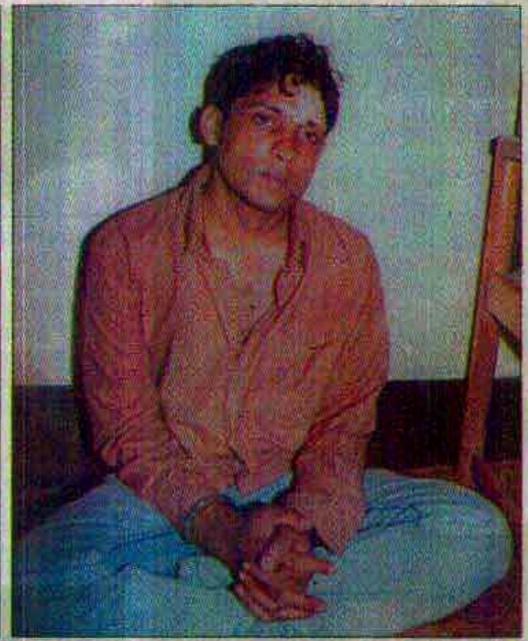
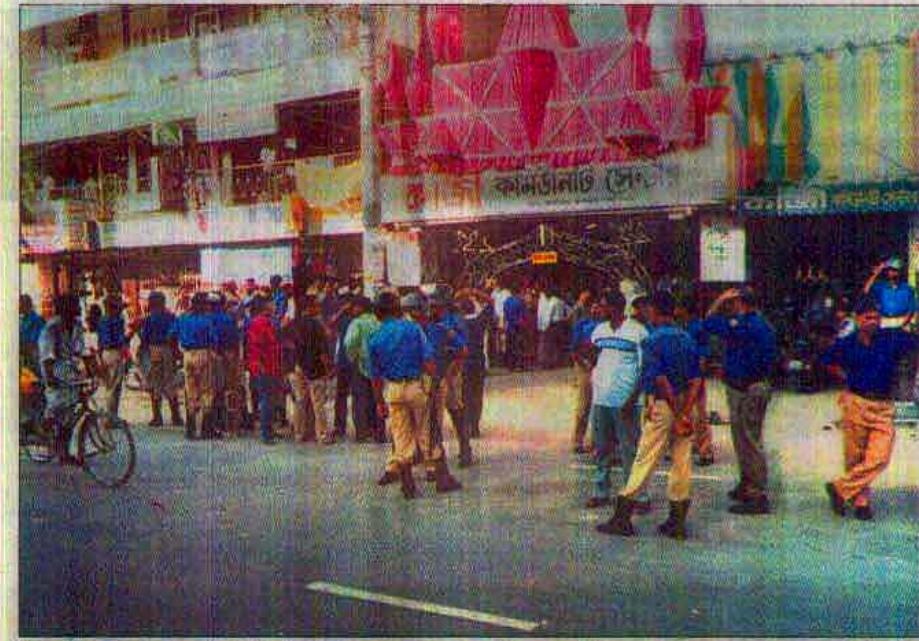
Police said the attack was aimed at killing Labu by hired assailants of another faction of the Juba League. The incident took place 20 minutes after former AL lawmaker Kamal Ahmed Majumder left the function.

But Nazma, sister of the bride,

received three bullets in her chest and abdomen when she stood up to see what was happening. She was taken to the Orthopaedic Hospital where doctors declared her dead.

The killers did not stop there. They fired at least 50 shots, many of which hit the guests. Chaos, fight and frenzy reigned supreme as guests ran for safety. Some crawled under dining tables," said Nasiruddin, manager of the community centre.

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Mayhem at wedding reception party: (Clockwise) Police guard the Kazi Community Centre at Kazipara yesterday after unknown gunmen opened fire on a wedding reception party; arrested suspect Amir Hossain Babu; another suspect flanked by law enforcers and an injured man at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Case No. Four against Star, Alo editors, still counting

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Another defamatory suit was filed against the Editor of The Daily Star, Mahfuz Anam, and the Editor of the Prothom Alo, Motiur Rahman for publishing news on Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, the parliamentary affairs advisor to the prime minister.

Syed Emran Reza, the general secretary of BNP, Brahmanbaria district unit, filed the case before the First Class Magistrate's Court, Brahmanbaria yesterday.

The case was filed under sections 500/501/502/109 of the Bangladesh Penal Code. In his complaint, Emran Reza said the above two newspapers published defamatory news on SQ Chowdhury with ill intent.

The news contained false and misleading information.

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Cantonment road opened to civilian light vehicles

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Cantonment Road from Shaheed Jahangir Gate to Banani MP Check post was opened to civilian light vehicles on Friday.

An officer of the Inter-Service Press Relations said the road will be allowed for light civilian vehicles from 7:30am to 11:00pm in line with an executive order.

Only small vehicles were allowed to ply the road between 7:30am and 12:30pm and 3:30pm and 7:30pm since April 2.

Earlier, the road had been opened to light civilian vehicles

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NAZMUL AHSAN

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has called a special meeting of commerce ministers and secretaries of the member states in Dhaka between August 9 and 10.

Bangladesh and Pakistan have so far responded positively, sources said.

The purpose of the meeting is to take a common position on trade

issues ahead of the next World Trade Organisation (WTO) ministerial meeting, slated for September in Mexico.

The initiative of the SAARC Secretariat came at the heels of a request by Dhaka for such a meeting, sources said.

The commerce secretaries of the member states will start the discussion on the first day and the ministers will conclude it on August 10 with the possible adoption of a

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Dhaka Declaration.

Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives are the members of the SAARC.

During the forthcoming meeting, Dhaka would try to drum up support from the SAARC countries in favour of the 16-point Dhaka Declaration adopted in June last during the LDC trade ministers' meeting," a high commerce minister said.

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Day trips on four launch routes from next month

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The launch owners association has decided to operate launches on at least four routes during the day starting next month.

The routes are those connecting Dhaka to the four district towns of Barisal, Patuakhali, Pirojpur and Bhola.

The decision was taken yesterday at a meeting of senior members of the association, sources said.

In the beginning the operation would be on a test basis to get an idea about the viability, the source said.

The decision was taken following

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HASAN JAHID TUSHAR

Another 2,143 microfilmed manuscripts at the Dhaka University Central Library have decayed over the years due to hot weather and lack of persons trained on microfilm processing, sources at the library said.

These rare manuscripts were collected and microfilmed since July 1984 under a project funded by Ford Foundation. Sources also said that about 50 manuscripts were earlier found missing.

Librarian of the Dhaka University Dr. Mohammad Serajul Islam,

however, denied any microfilm damages and said, "Not a single microfilm of the library has been damaged."

"It is not necessary to keep the microfilms at a certain temperature," the librarian said and asked this reporter, "Who told you that the microfilms should be kept within the range of 18 to 22 degrees Celsius?"

Suraiya Begum, a teacher of information science and library management, told The Daily Star that the temperature of microfilms and manuscripts storage rooms

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More microfilms decay at DU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

CityCell Digital yesterday sliced off the call tariff for its subscribers and promised to reduce it further shortly.

CityCell has introduced a new post-paid package "Amar Phone" with call charges as low as Tk 0.75 per minute, read a statement of the Pacific Bangladesh Telecom Limited (PBT), a mobile phone service provider.

The announcement followed the slashing of call charges by leading cell phone operator GrameenPhone.

"This is so far the lowest mobile cell charge in the country. This rate is applicable even for nationwide

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Kelly's death doubles Blair's trouble

BBC ONLINE

Police have confirmed that the expert at the centre of the Iraq dossier row died to death from a slit wrist, as Tony Blair comes under increasing pressure over the affair.

Local people told Partha to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the attending doctors declared him dead.

Son of Nirmal Sarkar of 37, Orupchand Lane in Sutrapur, Partha was a second year HSC student of Imperial College.

The motive behind the killing could not be known.

No case was filed with Sutrapur Police Station till 9:30pm yesterday.

In another incident, a youth died mysteriously in old Dhaka's Atash Khanah road yesterday.

Friends who brought Siddiq, the victim, to DMCH said he died jumping from the roof of a six-story building.

But police said the youth bore an injury only in his nose.

A UD case was filed with Lalbagh Police station.

A senior officer said a knife and a packet of painkillers had been found

close to where his body was discovered in woodland near his home in Oxfordshire on Friday.

Dr Kelly's family said he was a "loving, private and dignified" man, adding that recent events had made his life "intolerable".

The government will now hold an independent judicial inquiry into the circumstances surrounding his death.

The prime minister has faced tough questions over the government's handling of the affair.

He was asked if he had Dr Kelly's death on his conscience during a

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Rail to link Gazipur with Khulna, Rajshahi this month

REAZ AHMAD

Direct train communication between Gazipur and the divisional headquarters of Khulna and Rajshahi begins later this month.

Trains from the northern and southern regions will also run up to the capital with the completion of dual gauge (metre gauge and broad gauge together) track-laying between Joydevpur and Kamalapur in the city (34 kilometres) by the end of next year, Bangladesh Railway (BR) sources told The Daily Star recently.

The prime minister is likely to inaugurate the Khulna-Joydevpur rail route in the last week of this month. A train - Sundarban Express - will be pressed into service on the day.

Moreover, Padma Express, which plies between Rajshahi and Ibrahimabad to the east of Bangabandhu Bridge, will now run another 80 extra kilometres to reach Joydevpur. The train will be renamed Silk City Express.

Track-laying on a 80-kilometre stretch from Ibrahimabad to Joydevpur has been completed recently and Sundarban Express and Silk City Express will run up to Joydevpur from Khulna and Rajshahi.

Sources said officials of police and paramilitary BDR conducting the operation from three sector headquarters of Pirojpur, Sathkhira and Jhenidah had parleys for three

days to finalise the strategy to mop up the criminals.

"We will go for block raid, search every house," said an official requesting anonymity.

Despite secrecy maintained by the operation leaders, movement of forces has alerted the underground activists and criminals who have gone into their hideouts. Many of them may have crossed the border, said villagers.

Rupsha upazila of Khulna and

Fakirhat and Mollarhat upazilas of Bagerhat are the most troubled areas where about a dozen policemen fell victim to underground activists in recent months.

UNB Sathkhira correspondent said more than 2,000 personnel of the joint force camped at nine centres in the town last night to launch operation against the underground criminals.

Sources said as the news of

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UNB, Pirojpur

An over 11,000-strong joint force comprising police, Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Ansar launched a special drive last night to flush out criminals and underground activists in southwestern districts.

Sources said officials of police and paramilitary BDR conducting the operation from three sector headquarters of Pirojpur, Sathkhira and Jhenidah had parleys for three

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AL plans tie with left parties

SHAMEEM MAHMUD

The main opposition Awami League (AL) recently decided to talk its like-minded left-leaning parties into a common platform against the BNP-led four-party alliance government.

A meeting of the AL Central Working Committee (ALCW) on July 10 assigned its senior leader Suranjit Ganguly, MP, to give it a try again.

The last year's AL bid for a rapprochement with pro-liberation parties fell apart as the leftists opted to stick to an "independent policy line."

"Taking the present political state into account, the AL will be ready to forge an ideal alliance of parties on mutual understanding," said Suranjit, who tabled the proposal for coalition in the meeting.

"Traditionally, we enjoy good relationship with the left-leaning parties. We want to strengthen that

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CityCell cuts call tariff

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