

B'ban hotelier Bablu still missing

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Bandarban

Joint forces, until yesterday, failed to recover the abducted Bandarban hotelier Hasan Mahbub Bablu, a week after an indigenous outfit kidnapped him from his resort.

"They could not track the whereabouts of Bablu," a top police official said on condition of anonymity.

When contacted yesterday, Bablu's relatives seemed hopeful of rescuing him.

"We are bargaining with his abductors as they lowered the ransom to Tk 1 crore from double the amount previously demanded. And, we are expecting him released soon," said a family source.

Some local indigenous leaders were mediating the process, he added.

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Police yet to find rest of looted money

Look for city ward commissioner

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Police could recover no more money after recovering Tk 5 lakh of Tk 22 lakh looted from a Pubali bank's vehicle Saturday evening in the city's Kodomtoli area.

Teams from Sylhet Kotwali and South Surma police stations looked for the robbers and their cohorts in the different villages throughout Saturday night but failed to arrest them.

However, police officials yesterday said they are now almost certain about the involvement of the city Ward Commissioner Ashique Ahmed in the incident. His mother

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PHOTO: STAR

Hide traders wait out a steep fall in prices and lack of buyers for their stocks worth about Tk 10 crore in Natore.

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Hide traders face huge loss from 'artificial crisis'

Tk 10cr rawhide stockpiled in Natore attracts no major buyer

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Hide traders in Natore despair following steep fall in prices and lack of buyers for their stocks of rawhides worth about Tk 10 crore.

Traders said they bought cowhides at rates ranging from Tk 1,200 to Tk 1,800 and goat-hides at Tk 300 to Tk 325 during the Eid-ul-Azha. But, a standard cowhide is now being sold at Tk 1,000 to

Tk 1,200 and a goat-hide at Tk 250 to Tk 290.

A prominent member of the several hundred traders who operate at Natore hide market, the largest in the north-western region, described the situation as 'an artificial crisis'.

He alleged tannery owners, the main buyers of the market, were deliberately delaying purchase in order to force traders lower hide price. "They also

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COMPUTER SUPPLY FIASCO

Govt baffled over Dutch court fine

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

The government is in a fix over payment of a Tk 31 crore fine sentenced by a court in The Hague for cancelling a contract with a Dutch company for supplying computers.

The computers and accessories were intended to be used for implementing an education ministry project funded by a grant of the Netherlands.

The Dutch court has asked Bangladesh to pay the amount as fine and compensation to the plaintiff, Tulip Computers International NV, immediately, a senior diplomat of the Netherlands Embassy in Dhaka confirmed.

The diplomat, who talked to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity,

ity, however, refrained from commenting on the possible consequences of the fine on bilateral relationship. "The matter is now being dealt by the court, so no comment," he said.

The Netherlands embassy has informed the Bangladeshi government that if the court order is not followed then ocean- and air-liners carrying Bangladesh's flag would become liable to confiscation in European Union countries, according to EU laws.

Bangladesh can't even appeal, as the case was settled about four months back.

In December 2000, the Netherlands government had agreed to provide about Tk 49.95

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EKUSHEY BOOK FAIR 30 new books make way to shelves

DU CORRESPONDENT

The Amar Ekushey Book Fair 2004 was abuzz with bookworms who thronged the venue at the Bangla Academy premises yesterday on the second day of the three-week fair.

Thirty new books made way to the shelves at fair yesterday, said a Bangla Academy organiser of the annual event who works at the publication department of the academy.

Of them, Mazi Publications published six books, Agami Publication five books including three books of Humayun Azad and Press Institute of Bangladesh five books.

Hundreds of book connoisseurs, mostly youths, flocked to the academy premises to have a first-hand feel of the fair. They went around

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Resist 'chaos-creating' opposition: PM

UNB, Senbag, Noakhali

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday called for resisting 'those trying to unleash violence' to create chaos in the country.

"We want development, peace and an educated nation which only the four-party alliance government can give," she told a huge public rally at Senbag Pilot High School ground in the afternoon.

Responding to threats issued by the main opposition Awami League to bring the government down, the prime minister warned, "It's not the alliance government that will fall but you yourself will fall down if you try to go for a push."

"When the popularity of the alliance government is growing, the opposition is creating chaos," she said.

The prime minister's warning came just four days before the

CHT ROAD BLOCKADE First day passes off quietly

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Bandarban

The first day of the 48-hour road blockade in the three hill districts called by Parbatty Chattogram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) passed off yesterday without any violent incident as the army and police patrolled trouble-prone areas as well as major highways.

Our Bandarban correspondent reports: A large number of armed police were deployed at various points of the town to avoid any untoward incident.

Although non-motorised vehicles plying in the town, inter-district communication remained snapped as buses, trucks and other commuter motor vehicles stayed off the

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MURDER CASE

Home ministry moves to drop BNP leaders' names

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

The home ministry yesterday directed the district administration to drop the names of four BNP leaders from the Latif murder case.

A letter signed by Mohammed Mainuddin, senior assistant secretary of the home ministry, asked authorities to withdraw the names of Tozammer Hossain, Tozam, president of BNP's Duppachia municipal unit, his brother Rafiqul Islam, Golam Rabbani and Shahin from the case.

The letter said the four were implicated in the case for political harassment and directed the district administration to report back to the ministry after the names are dropped.

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