



PHOTO: STAR

Students have ringed off the blood smeared spot where Dr Humayun Azad was hacked Friday night by unknown hitmen; Dr Kamal Hossain of Gano Forum joins a procession of teachers of Dhaka University on the campus yesterday protesting the attack.

Washington, Dhaka talk bilateral issues

UNB, Dhaka

As Dhaka and Washington yesterday reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral relations, US Ambassador Harry Thomas said increased American investment is coming to Bangladesh.

After an hour-long meeting with the US envoy, Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan said they had discussed all aspects of bilateral relations between the two friendly countries.

He said bilateral economic agenda, capacity building and Bangladesh's access to American market came up in the meeting.

"There was no new subject," Khan said, adding that the United States is happy with the investment climate in Bangladesh.

Asked his comment on the US report on human rights in Bangladesh, he refrained from making any specific comment, saying that it is an internal matter of the US foreign policy.

This is neither positive nor negative for Bangladesh, Khan said, adding, "We've our own mechanism

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Clashes leave 53 hurt at Shahjadpur

UNB, Sirajganj

At least 53 people, including two policemen, were injured in a series of clashes between two groups of people at Shahjadpur upazila headquarters yesterday.

Police and witnesses said the trouble started at about 9:00am over setting up of a madrassah on the land of a mosque near the bus terminal at Shahjadpur Pourasava.

On information, police rushed to the spot, lobbed three teargas shells and charged baton to bring the situation under control.

The officer-in charge (OC) of Shahjadpur Police Station and a sub-inspector (SI) were among the injured.

Nineteen of the injured were admitted to the upazila health complex while the rest given first aid.

Five shops at a bazaar adjacent to the spot were ransacked and then set on fire during the clashes.

Riot police have been deployed in the area to fend off further trouble.

Container train derails in Narsingdi

BSS, Narsingdi

A container train derailed at Amirganj in Narsingdi yesterday afternoon, disrupting train service on Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet routes.

The Dhaka-bound goods train from Chittagong met with the accident when ten bogies of the train fell on both sides of the rail tracks at around 1:30pm, railway sources said.

The accident also snapped the train service on Laksham route.

A relief train from Dhaka reached the spot and started rescue operation.

No breakthrough in N Korea nuke talks

REUTERS, Beijing

Six-party talks on the North Korean nuclear crisis yesterday ended without a breakthrough but a senior US official says the meetings advanced Washington's agenda of disarming Pyongyang.

Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing closed the four-day session saying all sides had agreed to set up a working group and hold the next set of talks in Beijing before the end of June.

"Differences, even serious differences, still exist," Li said at the closing ceremony, without specifying what gaps remained.

China's chief negotiator, Wang Yi, cited an "extreme lack of trust" between the US and North Korean

side and said further discussions were needed on the scope of both the North's proposal to freeze its nuclear programmes and the US demand for dismantling all atomic arms schemes.

But a senior US official declared the talks that also involved South Korea, Japan and Russia "very successful", saying all but Pyongyang had agreed to the goal of a nuclear-free North.

"The event has exceeded my expectations in a very important respect. It's been very successful in moving the agenda towards our goal of complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantling (CVID) of DPRK nuclear programmes," the US official said.

"CVID is now more on the table

thanever."

Russia's chief delegate, Alexander Losyukov, said the talks achieved "modest" results. But he called the working groups "a reasonable base for the continuation of discussions of those problems arising from the different positions".

Analysts said, however, that Washington and Pyongyang could both dig in their heels in this US presidential election year.

"North Korea does not have to strike any agreement now, ahead of the November election in the United States," said Yu Suk-ryul of Seoul's Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security.

"The United States has a need to avoid collapse of the talks before the

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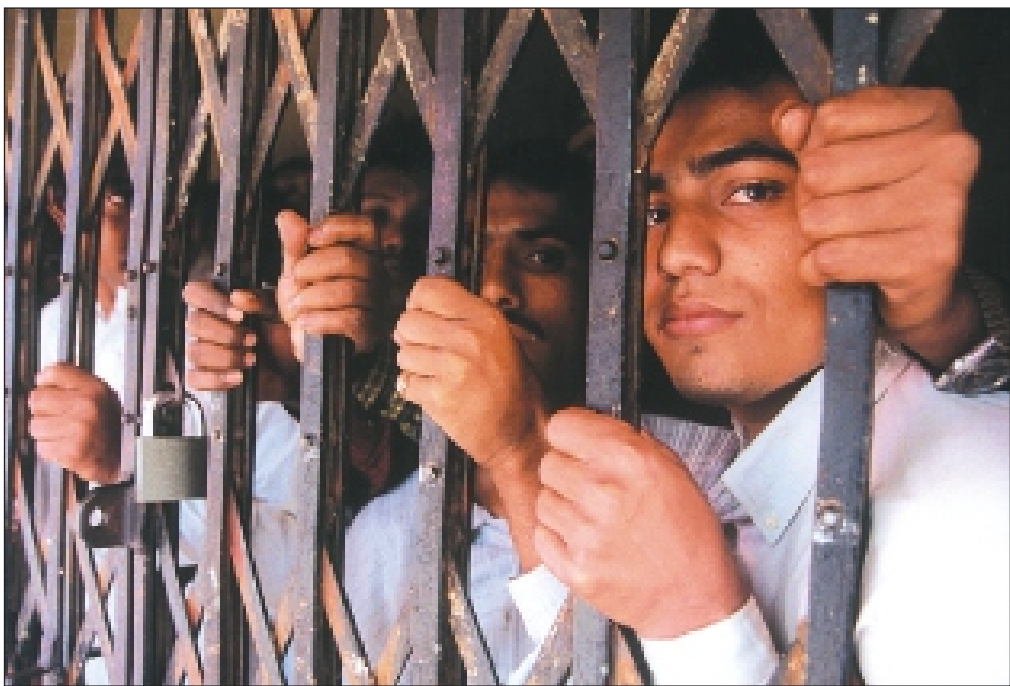


PHOTO: STAR

Awami League workers are confined inside the Bangabandhu Avenue party office by police during yesterday's hartal.

Red tape delays hepatitis-B vaccination

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bureaucratic tangles have delayed the launch of a countrywide hepatitis-B vaccination programme by about two years.

The programme was to start in June 2002 after official estimates that about 22,000 children die every year from chronic hepatitis B virus (HBV) came to light.

In 2002, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI) committed to providing hepatitis-B vaccines worth about \$40 million for all children under one year for free over a five-year period under

Bangladesh's Extended Programme of Immunisation (EPI).

But EPI officials attaching greater priority to polio eradication diverted part of the GAVI funds to 'sub-national immunisation programme' in several areas, delaying anti-hepatitis-B vaccination.

Studies show that the vaccine is 98 percent effective in preventing children and adults from chronic infection.

About five percent people in Bangladesh are chronically infected with the deadly virus.

Hepatitis-B virus is transmitted

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ATTACK ON DR KAMAL JS body for legal action against culprits

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Parliamentary standing committee has recommended the government to immediately proceed with legal action against the persons responsible for attacking Gano Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain's motorcade and barricading Deputy Minister Moni Swapon Dewan's Khagrachhari visit.

Termining the incident unfortunate, the committee on Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Affairs Ministry at its meeting yesterday also called for multi-party dialogue to defuse tension in the volatile region. It requested the high powered government committee on implementation of the peace treaty, headed by

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2 UPDF men abducted in Rangamati

PCJSS blamed for the act

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Two United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF) members were abducted from their village home at Chikonchhara in Ghilachhari union under Naniarchar upazila Thursday night.

The UPDF in a press release yesterday blamed it's rival Parbattya Chattagram Jono Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) for the kidnapping.

The release alleged a group of about 10 PCJSS armed cadres raided the village at around 8pm and took Jiban Chakma, 22, and Torit Chakma, 55, son of late Padma Ronjon Chakma, away at gunpoint.

The abductors also threatened with dire consequences if Tk one lakh was not paid to them immediately, the release added.

Despite repeated attempts yesterday, Naniarchar police could not be contacted over phone for comments.

B Chy near - completes political forum process

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury has almost completed the process of launching a political platform sponsoring his much-talked about notion of alternative political stream, beyond the bipolar political setting of the country.

A public meeting on March 10 in the city, the exact venue of which is yet to be fixed, is likely to announce the convening committee of the planned platform, sources close to Mr Chowdhury told The Daily Star last night.

The convening committee members will be assigned to scrutinise and finalise the strategies to float the party by this month.

A meeting today among the adherents of the ex-president would finalise the venue and date of the

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More diesel on way to avert crisis

NURUL ALAM, Chittagong

Kuwait, India and Singapore are expected to supply 266,000 tonnes of diesel within a month as per negotiated deals, official sources said.

Two lakh tonnes will arrive from Kuwait, 50,000 tonnes from India and the rest from Singapore.

Failure to buy fuel through international tender prompted the state-owned Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) to procure such a huge quantity of diesel without any bidding to offset a looming crisis of the fuel oil in the peak season of irrigation-based farming across the country, the sources said.

"BPC went for emergency purchase of diesel from the three

Haiti rebels close in on capital

Anarchy grips Caribbean country

REUTERS, Port-Au-Prince, Haiti

Rebels yesterday overran a key crossroads town and crept closer to the Haitian capital as supporters of embattled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide terrorised the civilian population of Port-au-Prince.

Bands of armed Aristide loyalists roamed in trucks and cars through the chaotic capital. A body was seen at a roadside near the Cite Soleil slum, apparently hacked with machetes, and two more were found near the airport, one with hands bound.

Crowds of armed men, many

wearing masks, blocked dozens of intersections, igniting piles of tires and harassing motorists. Gunfire rang through the sprawling city.

The stage was set for a showdown between the ragtag band of former soldiers and gang members trying to unseat Aristide, and the diminutive former priest and one-time populist hero of Haitian democracy backed by an ill-trained, 4,000-member police force and armed supporters from the slums.

Aristide, who political opponents have long accused of corruption and political thuggery, again vowed he would not be pushed from office and

appealed for help from foreign nations.

In Washington, US defence officials said they were considering sending a three-ship group carrying US Marines to Haiti to help deal with the crisis in the Caribbean country of 8 million, the poorest nation in the Americas.

President George W Bush, asked if Aristide should resign, pointed to comments from Secretary of State Colin Powell on Thursday. Powell had said Aristide should "examine his position carefully," indicating US support for him was wavering.

Land-grab sinks shrimp farm dev in Noakhali

MD NURUL AMIN, Noakhali

Government land-grab by political and business bigwigs and administrative inactivity hold back shrimp farm development in Noakhali seaboard.

About 3,000 acres of 11,805 acres of government land allocated for shrimp farming have fallen into influential encroachers' hands over the past eight years, contributing to about Tk 5 crore in lost revenue.

Legalisation of some illegal occupations and cases pending with the High Court are also delaying the district administration's attempt to finalise land allocations for shrimp farms.

Locals doubt the administration's ability to recover large farms from illegal occupants and divide them into 10 acre plots for individuals and 30 acre plots for a company for fresh allocation as names of ministers, lawmakers and ruling alliance leaders figure high on the list of encroachers.

Asked about the identity of powerful shrimp-farmers or applicants for larger farms, Deputy Commissioner Kamal Haider said: "We have not processed all the applications and are not yet aware of the applicants' identities."

"There is no scope to allocate lands to applicants bending the

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Cops fear to be marked during hartal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Most police officials during hartal-hour duty in the city yesterday did not wear name tag on their uniform, fearing reprisal from those who are now in the opposition.

Several police officials said whenever on hartal duty, they keep the tag in their pocket to evade being identified by the agitating political party.

"We have observed in many cases that whenever we go into action under direction of our superiors, the strike enforcers list us as pro-government," said a police official at Russell Square in Dhanmondi yesterday.

An on-duty police inspector at Maghbar crossing said every time there is a change of government, the police officials have to face adverse situations during hartal hours.

"Ramna and Motijheel police officials were most vulnerable when the Awami League was in office, as those are the places where BNP agitations were most pronounced," he added.

"As soon as the BNP came to power, police officials who had carried out hartal duty and at times had to use force were one way or the other reprimanded."

A police official at Russell Square said cops of Motijheel, Ramna and Dhanmondi police stations are subject to such fears during the BNP rule.

"The officers and constables alike don't want to be mentioned as supporter or even sympathiser of any political party and that's why we keep the name tags hidden," he noted.

Prayer Timings		
February 29		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-07	6-12
Esha	7-30	8-00
Source: Islamic Foundation		