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People's Right to Know

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Top 20 defaulters make NCBs sweat

4 state-owned banks recover only Tk 16cr of Tk 2,819cr stuck-up loans last year

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Despite various government steps, the four nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) recovered only Tk 16 crore in calendar year 2003 out of Tk 2,819 crore default loans lying with their top 20 loan defaulters.

In such a situation, the

Bangladesh Bank (BB) yesterday spelled out some corrective measures for bringing the loan defaulters to book.

The BB has instructed the NCBs to furnish it with lists of such cases that have remained unresolved for more than six months at the money loan courts. On receiving the lists,

the central bank will consult the law ministry and take further legal actions against the listed loan defaulters.

At a meeting with the NCBs, presided over by BB Governor Fakhrudin Ahmed, the central bank yesterday reviewed their performance. These banks had

signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the BB on a set of performance criteria in June 2003. BB deputy governors Nazrul Huda and Mohammad A Rumi Ali and chief operating officers of the NCBs also attended the meeting, which reportedly was alarmed by

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Attack horror haunts writer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Humayun Azad's health remained unchanged yesterday and his family said the horror of the butcher's knife attack on the prominent writer apparently haunted him in hospital bed.

"He was trying to say something, but I did not get him. He is yet to regain his speaking ability. During my 10-minute stay, it appeared that he is afraid of something," said Azad's wife Latifa Kholnour.

"He was trembling. Perhaps, he tried to narrate his harrowing tale." "He is still very weak and doctors said they would keep him in the intensive care unit as he needed rest to overcome the anaesthetic effects," she said after visiting the author at the Combined Military Hospital.

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BAU BAZAR SLUM BLAZE

4 children burnt alive, 25,000 homeless

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least four children were incinerated and 5,000 shanties reduced to ashes leaving over 25,000 people homeless in a devastating fire at Bau Bazar slum in Gulshan yesterday, police and firefighters said.

The blaze started by an earthen oven at a shanty at about 10:20am, engulfed the entire slum soon, charring dwellings, pet animals and utensils.

The dead included five-year-old Jasmine, daughter of Sohrab, who was retrieved from a heap of ashes.

The identity of others could not be established immediately.

Nobody claimed the bodies until yesterday evening as their parents were working away, slum residents said.

"I saw smoke billowing from the shanty of police Havildar Awal," said Fatema, a resident of the 20-acre slum wedged between Jamal Bazar slum to the north and a lake to the south and north and the T&T slum to the west.

Eight firefighting units rushed to the scene at about 10:50am and doused the inferno after five hours of fight.

Several goats and poultry were charred being trapped in the narrow lanes, by-lanes of the slum, said day-labourer Motiur.

"The fire, aided by strong winds, spread to the entire slum like a conflagration," Jabbar, a local boat-man said.

"I dumped all my valuables including the television set in a reservoir. But the fire gutted everything in its way. There is nothing left between heaven and earth," said septuagenarian Hashem said.

"I managed to escape the fire

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3 killed, body found in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two traders and a worker were killed in separate incidents and a decomposed body was found in the city in the last 18 hours ending yesterday evening.

Two unidentified youths, riding a motorcycle, gunned down Saidur Rahman alias Leel Mia, 28, at Ring Road in Mohammadpur at around 4:30pm yesterday. Saidur, a rice-trader, was shot once in his chest.

Wearing a green shirt and ashen trousers, he was then standing in front of the sales counter of Rajdhan bus service to buy a ticket for Brahmanbaria, witnesses said.

Mohammadpur police sent him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the doctors declared him dead.

Some policemen posted nearby said four other youths waiting in a yellow cab (Dhaka Metro-Pa 11-4783) parked near the counter also fled suspiciously after the gunshot.

Hearing the news, Saidur's brother Mosharraf Hossain rushed from Brahmanbaria to the DMCH. Mosharraf said Saidur used to supply rice to 44 shops at Mohammadpur

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Restive politics, slide in order pose big threat

Readymade garment exporters say

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Readymade garment exporters yesterday lamented restive politics and falling law and order that posed serious threat to the sector.

They urged political leaders to refrain from any activities that can affect export, import and production, and dent Bangladesh's image abroad.

"We are very concerned at the present political environment and deteriorating law and order. Our buyers are also too worried," said Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) President Quazi Moniruzzaman at a press briefing at his office yesterday.

"RMG buyers had shifted their orders from Sri Lanka to Bangladesh

due to political unrest there. And we are now getting the same sorry signal as of Sri Lanka from the present political state."

"We can't allow some people to toy with our investments and labour anymore. We can't afford halt and deterioration of law and order," the BGMEA president said.

Some buyers have become familiar with the political unrest here, but that will hardly have any softening effect on the murky garment sector after 2004, fear exporters.

As there will be no quota after December this year, the RMG sector that contributes more than 75 percent to export earnings will face serious setback in attracting new

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PHOTO: STAR

Thick plumes of smoke curl up into the sky from Bau Bazar slum in Gulshan yesterday. The blaze burnt alive four children and gutted 5,000 shanties, making over 25,000 people homeless.

Garment unit boiler blast kills two

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

An iron boiler explosion killed two young women and injured 14 others, two of them critically, at a garment factory near Kadamtoli Bus Station in the city yesterday morning.

The dead, Shilpi, and Shipra, each 20 years old, were quality controller and quality in-charge of the garment factory, Sidma Fashion. Shilpi hailed from Brahmanbaria district and Shipra from Raozan in Chittagong.

Of the injured, Mizanur Rahman, 25, of Mymensingh and Abul Hashem, 26, are undergoing treatment at Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) for critical burn injuries.

The other injured including Sharmin, 20, and Banu Akter, 23, of Comilla; Shani, 21, of Noakhali; Hasina, 22, Shahnoor, 18, Yasmin, 18, Tafura, 35, Faruq, 18, and Mostafa, 18, of Mymensingh; Munna, 20, of Patiya in Chittagong; Sagor, age unknown, of Dhaka and Abul Kashem, 25, were released after first-aid from the CMCH.

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ICC UNDER-19 WORLD CUP

Hosts regain Plate glory

BISHWAJIT ROY

Bangladesh clinched the Plate title of the ICC Under-19 World Cup after a nerve-wrecking eight-run victory over favourites Australia at Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

This is for the second time Bangladesh have lifted the Plate title after upsetting the West Indies in the tournament's 1998 edition in South Africa.

The 15,000-strong suburbs crowd burst into euphoria when left-arm spinner Enamul Haque ended the brave Australians chase with the third ball of the final over by having last batsman Gary Pitland stumped.

Australia needed 11 runs in the last over with two wickets in hand, but Enamul kept his nerves at the death, snapping up both the wickets to end the match with fantastic figures of 9.3-1-31-5.

The Australians looked dead and buried when they were reduced to 108-5 chasing Bangladesh's impressive total of 257 before a 125-run sixth-wicket stand between Ahlenn Beadle (54) and Stephen O'Keeffe (64) propelled the game to an exciting finish.

But once the seemingly untroubled pair got themselves run-out, the Australian innings eventually folded at 249.

The day started perfectly for Bangladesh as the top-order returned among the runs much to the relief of coach Richard McInnes. Nafees Iqbal scored 59 and his opening partner Naeem Ismail struck 66 as the home side produced 124 runs for the first wicket.

Aftab Ahmed carried the charge from where the openers had left off, scoring a fluent 57 off only 53 balls. The dazzling right-hander struck four boundaries and two massive sixes.

The victory made up for Bangladesh's exit from the Cup competition. Besides, the success fulfilled McInnes' promises of making the final a memorable one. This

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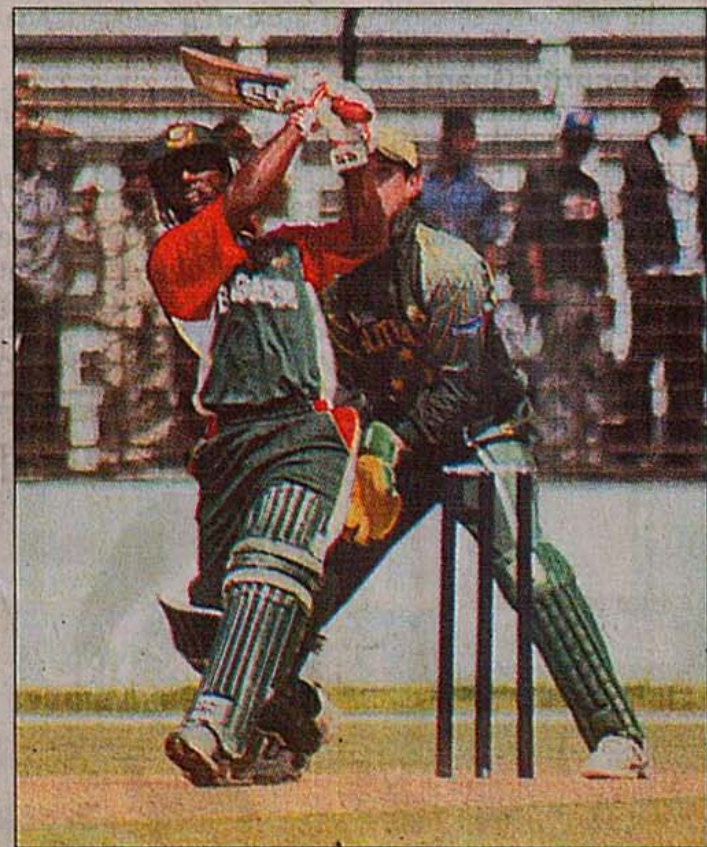



PHOTO: STAR

THE SHOT SAYS IT ALL: Bangladesh's Aftab Ahmed hoists one over mid-on on way to whack a whirlwind half-century against the Australians at Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.



TOSHIBA

F L A T BO X

DYNAMIC BOMB SOUND SYSTEM

Colour TV

RANGS GROUP

CPJ condemns attack on journos at DU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The delegates of New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) yesterday expressed deep concern over the attack on journalists on Dhaka University campus by the Jatityabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) Wednesday.

CPJ Executive Director Ann Cooper, Asia Programme Coordinator of CPJ Abi Wright, Sri Lankan journalist Iqbal Athas and Indonesian journalist Andreas Harsono yesterday visited the injured photojournalist Firoz Choudhury of national daily Prothom Alo at Shamaria Hospital.

Cooper said as journalists play a vital role in democracy and people learn about everyday events through them, the government

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JCD men issue harsh threat to DU teachers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of students, mostly pro-government Jatityabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists, yesterday issued threats to the demonstrating Dhaka University (DU) teachers from a rally just a few yards from Battala where the teachers were staging a sit-in.

"Forget about blue or red panel. We'll give a sharp, befitting reply if you continue destroying our academic life in the name of movement," said a department unit president of the JCD, pointing finger at the teachers staging a sit-in under the umbrella of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) to protest the attack on their senior

colleague and eminent writer Humayun Azad last week.

The JCD activists under the banner of 'general students' also turned the loudspeakers toward the teachers and continued delivering provocative speeches. The teachers later lodged complaint with the vice-chancellor and demanded necessary measures.

Duta yesterday decided to indefinitely continue with the class-boycott programme in protest at the attack on Azad.

A brief 'solidarity rally', presided over by the Duta president, was also held simultaneously at Battala to press home the demands for arresting the attackers, sending Azad abroad for better treatment and

resignation of the home minister.

The speakers at the rally include Gono Forum President Dr. Kamal Hossain, Communist Party of Bangladesh President Manzurul Ahsan Khan, Justice KM Sobhan, Convenor of 11-party Khalequzzaman, Awami League leaders Mahamudur Rahman Manna, Akhteruzzaman and Sultan Mohammad Monsur, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology Teachers Association President Prof Aminul Haq Bhuiyan and its General Secretary Prof Nazrul Islam, Editor of the Bangladesh Observer Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury and Bangladesh Economic Society President Kazi

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Cops enjoy little public trust

TIB survey finds 98.5pc city residents dissatisfied with police

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An overwhelming majority of people places little confidence in police, an anti-graft body's survey revealed yesterday, prompting leading civil society members to call for immediate reforms of the force.

About 98.5 percent residents of metropolitan areas, 85.7 percent at district and 81.6 percent at upazila levels. They need to pay between Tk 1,000 and 50,000 to the law-enforcers in metropolitan areas, Bangladesh (TIB).

Police should be at the service of people and act as a friend and service provider, but the law-enforcers have now emerged as "repressors, corrupt, human rights violators", it added.

People have to bribe the police to file a complaint in 91.5 percent police stations in metropolitan areas, 85.7 percent at district and 81.6 percent at upazila levels.

They need to pay between Tk 1,000 and 50,000 to the law-enforcers in metropolitan areas, Bangladesh (TIB).

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JS session now to run till Mar 30

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The current session of the Jatiya Sangsad scheduled to be prorogued yesterday will continue till March 30 after an 11-day break from today.

A Business Advisory Committee (BAC) meeting chaired by Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar at Sangsad Bhaban decided to extend the session yesterday afternoon.

The decision came on the heels of a very little amount of discussion so far taken place in the House on a thanksgiving motion on the new-year speech of President Iajuddin Ahmad.

Although an earlier meeting of the BAC decided to hold the

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Rampal Jamaat leader bombed to death

Rickshaw-van-puller dies in attack; OC closed; BNP leader, activist arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Unidentified assailants bombed to death the vice-president of Jamaat-e-Islami Rampal unit in Bagerhat in a drive-by attack that also killed his rickshaw-van-puller early yesterday, prompting police to arrest a local ruling BNP leader and an activist.

Moulana Gazi Abu Bakar Siddiqui, *nayeb-e-amir* of the ruling coalition partner's local chapter,

came under attack on Khulna-Mongla Highway near his home village of Solakurha in the outlaw violence-scarred southwest region, dubbed as the valley of death.

Deputy Inspector General Abdul Aziz Sarker closed Officer-in-Charge Badruddoza of Rampal Police Station to Bagerhat Police Lines, whom local Jamaat leaders blamed for his role in the murder at a protest rally at 11:00am yesterday.

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