

Azad attack

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Investigation Department (CID), are yet to get any lead on the affair.

"I have no information to disclose to the media at the moment," said CID inspector Kazi Abdul Malek yesterday. "I have some information that I am verifying. I don't want to say anything further right now."

He also declined to reply when asked if he had derived any hints about identity of the assailants or their motive from the information available with him.

The police have so far recovered a machete, arrested Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) leader Abu Abbas Bhuiyan and Tablig Jamaat follower Golam Mostafa alias Mostafa Mahbub.

Ramna police arrested Abbas, joint secretary of BCL's Sir AF Rahman Hall unit of Dhaka University, on suspicion on February 28 and quizzed him on a five-day remand. He was sent to jail on March 2.

After the case was transferred to them on March 1, the CID investigators arrested Mostafa from Moghbazar in the capital. He was sent to jail the following day.

Police produced an eight-year-old boy, Suman alias Babu, and a woman, Meer Jahan, before the court, who said the writer had gossiped with five youths on a bench in the Suhrawardy Udyan for about an hour before leaving the bench to wave a rickshaw. Two

Reserved JS Seats

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ruling coalition leaders on January 14.

As per the government plan, 400 lawmakers will be elected in direct votes while the reserved seats will be distributed proportionately among parties having representation in parliament. A party commanding at least eight lawmakers in parliament will have a woman legislator.

A bill providing for the reserved seats would be passed in the current parliament and elections to the enhanced general seats will be held in the next parliamentary polls scheduled for 2006.

The prime minister is keen on enhancing the number of seats for women to 50 to 60, but the ruling alliance policymakers favour keeping the number of the seats down to a maximum 45, highly placed sources said.

The plan to enhance and reintroduce the reserved seats in the JS was delayed due to disagreement over distribution of the parliamen-

Indian foreign secy due today

UNB, Dhaka
Indian Foreign Secretary Shashank arrives here today on a four-day visit.

This is Shashank's first visit to Bangladesh since he took over as the Foreign Secretary of India in November 2003.

Besides holding talks with the Bangladesh Foreign Secretary on all issues of bilateral and regional interest, Shashank will also meet the foreign minister and his deputy, said a release.

Fresh bid to tap

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private cellphone operators take character and nationality certificates from the intending cellphone subscribers.

Contacted, a senior BTRC official acknowledged the content of the letter but said they cannot entertain such requests. "It is not feasible," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. He however would not elaborate.

Authorities are scrutinising 200 drafts on amending the 2001 telecoms act, incorporating the provision of tapping calls, busting e-mails and making police verification for cellphone connection mandatory following requests by the security agencies including Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) and NSI.

The Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MoPT) in an inter-ministerial meeting last month discussed modalities to amend the act and reviewed two drafts prepared separately by the Ministry of Law and BTRC.

"We have discussed various aspects and felt the need to hold another meeting where the attorney general and secretary of the law ministry will be present to express their opinions," a senior MoPT official told The Daily Star.

The final draft will be prepared following the meeting and be placed in parliament, said the official who also asked not to be named.

Despite widespread concern and criticism from home and abroad, the government is amending the law at the request of intelligence agencies, citing national security as the reason.

The home ministry in the inter-ministerial meeting last month sought the provision of mandatory police verification to get a cellphone connection in the wake of growing phone-based crimes like demanding ransom and making threats.

The security agencies want to tap calls on both fixed and cellular phones to ensure national security, said the official adding that such a law exists in the neighbouring countries.

The telecoms act stipulates that

Woman killed as microbus slams into shanty

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A woman was killed and her two-year-old daughter injured when a speeding microbus careered off the road into a roadside shanty at Uttara yesterday.

Day-labourer Sufia Begum, 30, was resting at her one-room hovel with three daughters at 2:00pm when the vehicle ran into her shanty at sector No. 11.

Khokon, a neighbour, rushed critically injured Sufia and her daughter Morsheda to a local clinic and then to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) at 4:00pm where doctors declared her dead.

Khokon told our DMCH correspondent that Sufia had come to her shanty a year back without her husband and left behind three orphans.

Uttara police seized the vehicle and arrested its driver Shafiqul Islam.

Libya ships

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Secret talks had been held between Muammar Gaddafi's state and its old enemies - the US and the UK - and further improvements in relations have been made since.

The US has announced that talks will begin on Sunday with Libyan officials on retraining their weapons scientists.

The BBC's Rob Watson in Washington says the shipment is another extraordinary twist in the warming relations between the once-sworn enemies.

He adds that both the US and Libya are getting what they want - with Libya's isolation ending while Washington can point to the rewards on offer for countries ready to abandon their weapons of mass destruction.

BB

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The meeting, chaired by BB Governor Fakhruddin Ahmed, reviewed the 'spread' situation. On average, the spread in the nationalised commercial banks is 5.75 percent, in private banks 6.6 percent and in foreign banks 7.5 percent.

Among them, 16 banks have interest spread as high as 7 to 12 percent.

The BB moves to cut interest rates were meant to benefit the loan receivers in order to boost investment by lowering lending interest rates and, at the same time, not to affect the depositors by leaving the rates on deposit unchanged.

The banks however disagreed with the BB over the method used in measuring the spread. They said the spread would come out lower if the central bank took some additional factors into calculation.

Bankers' Association President and National Credit and Commerce Bank Ltd. Managing Director M Aminuzzaman said, "By the next two months, we'll try to fix a standard method for spread calculation in consultation with bankers and the BB. We'll also narrow down the spread."

Huda however pointed out that the central bank calculated the spread as per an internationally recognised method.

At the meeting, the commercial banks raised an issue of grievance. They alleged the Bureau of Anti-Corruption was filing cases against the banks instead of the exporters for a major chunk of the country's export proceeds having remained overseas.

The bankers said the bureau should deal with such cases through the central bank, so that they could be free of harassment. The BB governor assured them of his intervention in the matter.

The central bank also alerted the banks on foreign exchange management as some banks incurred a loss of Tk 124 crore in this business in just one year. Fakhruddin asked the chief executives of the banks to personally look into foreign exchange dealings.

The central bank also asked all the banks to send it a list of their defaulted loans, whose cases have remained unresolved for more than 120 days with money loan cunts.

Power crisis

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Siddhirganj), expected to be commissioned by the end of March, has been delayed.

Pointing fingers at the installers of the plant, the PDB officials alleged that the Russians do not want to complete an assignment unless they get a new one.

PDB Chairman MA Mayeed could not hide his frustration over the failure to commission the plant in time.

"This plant was our last resort in the tight situation. But anyhow it didn't happen," he said on a note of frustration, but hastened to add that they were optimistic about launch of the plant shortly.

According to the PDB officials, the current demand-supply position of electricity was neck and neck 3,500mw. But the demand will surpass the generation shortly.

In that case, commissioning of Siddhirganj plant was being considered as an alternative in the event of any shutdown down due to a crisis to meet the demand in the summer," said the PDB chairman.

Referring to the sudden trouble at Ashuganj that reduced the supply to 3,400mw yesterday, he said it is not unlikely that they would face similar problems when the demand climbs to its peak.

Experts observed that the country would never get rid of power crisis unless there is a reserve margin of at least 25 percent. The PDB chairman also subscribed to the view.

Hasina threatens

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The procession coincided with the occasion March 7, 1971 -- Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman set the tune for the Liberation War from a huge public rally at the now Suhrawardy Udyan.

Justifying her calls for hartal, Hasina said: "Had the country been run properly, there had been no violence and corruption, no price hike of essentials and people had lived in peace and happiness, we would have not called the hartals."

She said the ills along with 'siphoning off wealth abroad, violation of human rights, persecution of opposition political activists under the Khaleda regime' forced the AL and others to call hartals.

On reneging on no-hartal commitment, the former prime minister said: "My non-hartal announcement was met with more violent hartals by the former opposition BNP. The BNP had enforced 382 hartals during the five-year AL rule."

Referring to the price spiral of baby milk, Hasina came down heavily on the government wondering how they could "do business" with the food of babies.

Alleging corruption by the prime minister's family and its cronies, she said they bought kerosene as agents from India without tender.

Referring to a recent statement by New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Hasina said, "The government earned the nation the first position in repression on journalists in Asia after the epithets of the most corrupt nation in the world and a terror-risk country."

A CPJ delegation in Dhaka on Friday pegged Bangladesh as the most violent country for journalists in Asia.

In the largest haul of foreign banknotes at Dhaka airport recently, the AL chief smelt the hands of ruling alliance men in the attempted smuggling.

The leaders and activists of the AL began to converge on the road in front of the AL headquarters in

PM criticises AL

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again because of the development activities under the present government.

Amidst claps from the crowd, she mentioned her government's achievements so far and said the rest of its election commitments would be fulfilled in the remaining years of her government's tenure.

About the post-independence and the immediate past AL rule, Khaleda said their times witnessed famines, violence, corruption, plunder of public wealth and insecurity of life and property.

She said her government is working to build a country free from poverty, illiteracy and unemployment.

The prime minister reiterated her government's stand on maintaining communal harmony.

Presided over by Asadul Habib Dulu, deputy minister for disaster management and relief, and local MP, the meeting was also addressed by Communications Minister Nazmul Huda, Rangpur BNP leader Rahumuddin Bharasha, local BNP leader Salahuddin Ahmed Helal and former JCD president Habibun Nahi Sohel.

DU in stalemate

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The meeting, chaired by Vice-chancellor SMA Faiz, postponed all scheduled examinations at the DU till Thursday.

It requested Duta leaders and members to resume classes.

In related developments, many honours final examinees in Arts and Social Science faculties expressed deep concern that their examinations, which were scheduled to start early this month, have become uncertain.

About 50 examinees submitted a memorandum to the vice-chancellor demanding restoration of normal academic atmosphere on the campus and completion of honours examinations by April 20 so that they could sit for the 25th Bangladesh Civil Service examinations.

Earlier, they brought out a procession and held a rally on the campus to press their demands.

The ruling BNP's student wing Jatayatadhi Chhatra Dal (JCD) yesterday demanded immediate resumption of classes at the DU.

At a rally on the campus following a procession, JCD leaders called upon the university authorities and the Duta to ensure normalcy on the campus.

3,309 women

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The report said 575 women were killed and 54 women committed suicide, 206 tortured, 29 acid-burnt and six got divorces for dowry during the same time.

In 2003, 1,336 women were raped and 142 of them were killed and 17 committed suicide, while 1,350 women were raped in 2002 and of them, 114 were killed and 12 committed suicide, the report said.

In 2001, 623 women were raped, while 95 of them were murdered and three committed suicide.

The report went on to say that 870 women fell prey to dowry during the period. Of them, 261 were killed, 87 tortured, 15 acid-burnt and one was divorced in 2003, while 191 women were killed, 90 tortured, 14 acid-burnt and one was divorced in 2002.

Another 123 women were murdered, 31 tortured, three divorced for dowry in 2001. All the divorcees committed suicide, the report added.

procession from different parts of Dhaka and by 4:00pm, the gathering spilled over into adjacent roads, lanes and by-lanes.

Hasina reached the scene at 4:15pm.

The procession continued to grow every moment with the joining of people on its march to Russell Square in Dhanamdi where it terminated at 6:45pm.

The procession paraded through Noor Hossain Square, Paltan intersection, Bijoy Nagar Road, Kakrail, Matsya Bhaban, Shahbagh intersection, Elephant Road, Science Laboratory intersection and Kalabagan before reaching the square.

The AL chief, on an open jeep, waved to people lining both sides of the streets and many waved back.

The procession paralysed the city traffic, leaving all sorts of vehicles stranded in clogged streets.

Additional law-enforcers were deployed at different points to keep peace during the demonstration.

Virus writers use worms for war of words

REUTERS, San Francisco

The creators of the Netsky, MyDoom and Bagle e-mail viruses have taken to exchanging insults in what amounts to a war of words in computer code between rival hackers, anti-virus experts say.

On one side are the creators of MyDoom and Bagle, who are believed to be spammers or spam groups because many variants of the viruses leave backdoors on infected computers that can be used to turn them into spam zombies, said Chris Belthoff, senior security analyst at anti-virus company Sophos Inc.

On the other side is the person or group responsible for the Netsky virus, who do not have any profit motive, he said.

"It almost seems like they are playing a war of one-upmanship," Belthoff said. "They could be jealous over the media attention the others are getting."

Versions of the three computer viruses, all self-propagating e-mail worms, have wreaked havoc on computers across the Internet since early this year.

Updated anti-virus software can detect and block the viruses.

2 Khulna

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The slain outlaws were wanted in some criminal cases filed with the Sadar and Chitalmari police stations.

The superintendent of police, Bagerhat, said they have started a combat operation in Chitalmari, Mollahat and Fakirhat areas to track down the three other outlaws.

Earlier on February 10, three Janajuddha cadres were killed in mob beating at Raigram under Chitalmari upazila of Bagerhat district.

Hearing on Rajuk staff firing Wednesday

UNB, Dhaka

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday asked the government to come in open court on Wednesday for hearing on a petition on vacating a High Court (HC) order that stayed a Rajuk order dismissing its 372 employees.

Chamber Judge Tofazzal Islam of the SC passed the order after a brief hearing.

Earlier, following a writ filed by 240 of the discharged staff, a HC division bench yesterday also stayed the order of city development authority Rajuk (Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha).

The HC also issued rule upon the Rajuk to explain, in three weeks, why its dismissal order should not be declared illegal and void.

On February 19, Rajuk dismissed the staff engaged in different projects upon a suggestion from works ministry. They were working on 'no work no pay' basis, sources said.

Final report in Ruhul murder case accepted

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday accepted the final report in Ruhul Amin murder case against former Awami League lawmaker Haji Mohammad Selim and five others.

The court also acquitted all the six accused. Magistrate Khondaker Fatema Begum of the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) issued the order as per the direction of the Court of Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge.

Earlier, the Court of Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge set aside the CMM's court order for further investigation into the murder.

Judge Mohammad Motiur Rahman on January 26 issued the order following a criminal revision filed by four of the accused on January 13.

The judge in the order said the CMM's Court on December 30 last year directed the additional inspector general of police (CID) for further investigation without citing convincing grounds and reasons. "So the CMM's court order is set aside and the lower court is directed to dispose of the case in accordance with the law."

Mohammad Ruhul Amin, 30, a hide trader, was called out of his Hazaribagh residence by his business rivals Monir Hossain and Moin Hossain at about 10:30pm on March 20, 2002. The rivals then gunned down the victim in the city's Sher-e-Bangla Road under Hazaribagh thana the same day.

Following the incident, the victim's younger brother, Md. Mohammad Sohel, filed a murder case with Hazaribagh Police Station accusing Monir and Moin the next day.

But the Detective Branch (DB) of Police submitted a final report on August 23 last year as the allegations brought against the accused could not be proved.

Ex-FBCCI boss Haroon asked to stand trial in court

UNB, Dhaka

A High Court (HC) bench yesterday ordered an ex-president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), to surrender before a Comilla court to face trial in a criminal case.

The bench comprising Justice M Awarad Ali and Justice Abdul Awal directed Yousuf Abdullah Haroon, former president of the FBCCI, to appear before the Court of District and Sessions Judge, Comilla within four weeks to stand trial in a case lodged with Muradnagar Police Station two years ago.

The court also asked the government not to arrest the former FBCCI president within the given time.

Earlier, Haroon, who appeared before the bench, filed a petition seeking anticipatory bail to avert arrest.

Stop political

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corruption against the police forces, the committee said the sources of corruption must be detected and dismantled.

"A watchdog, if needed, might be formed to check the corruption of the police," said the committee chairman, who is also a ruling BNP lawmaker.

Asked to comment on the law and order, Mannan said the law-enforcers were trying to improve the situation, but the problems were remaining as they had been.

The committee reviewed the limitations of the police administration basing on the report of its sub-committee that came up with an 18-point set of recommendations including raising the salary, housing facility, logistic support and manpower of the force and equipping it with modern weapons.

Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury told the meeting that the ministry was considering a number of proposals submitted by the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme, United States, India, China and Pakistan to check 'regional' crimes and police efficiency.

AL threatens to stop Ctg port over property sale

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Leaders of the main opposition Awami League (AL) in Chittagong threatened to stop the operations of the Chittagong Port, if the government sells any more of the port's land property to any private body.

The warning came from a public rally at the Laldighi Maidan yesterday afternoon, jointly organised by Chittagong city north and south district units of Awami League to mark the historic 7th March and protest the repression against opposition leaders and the attack on noted academic Dr Humayun Azad.

South district president Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury Babu presided over the meeting, which expressed grave concern over the selling of government land properties at nominal price to the ruling party men in the name of private sector development and demanded immediate withdrawal of the allotment so far made.

Chittagong city Mayor and city

2 PCJSS

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clashes since 1997.

Protesting the rampage, Rangamati district unit of PCJSS took out a procession in the district headquarters yesterday evening, followed by a rally at Rajbari.

Presiding over the 20-minute rally, PCJSS Rangamati district unit President Gunendu Bikash Chakma alleged a section of the government was guiding and patronising the UPDF, although it was demanding full autonomy of the CHT (Chittagong Hill Tracts).

"But what does the government prefer, autonomy of the CHT or implementation of the peace accord?" he wondered.

PCJSS central leader Jolly Mong, district unit Secretary Palash Khisa and Paharhi Chhatra Parishad leader Uzal Chakma also spoke at the rally.

The PCJSS release says local police recovered the bodies.

Rangamati Superintendent of Police Humayun Kabir said he was ignorant of the incident, having no contact with Naniarchar Police Station because of radio network breakdown.

Outlaws slaughter

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Zahangir, who accompanied Halim, has been evading arrest since the murder.

Saidur Rahman Mantu, Durgapur municipal chairman and general secretary of the local BNP unit, blamed the killing on the AL without further details.

But BNP lawmaker Nadim Mustaf told The Daily Star that the killing bore the hallmarks of an attack by outlaws, adding: "Investi-

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announce our national committee at this place (former president office)"

He criticised the government for not allocating them Paltan Maidan, Muktangan or Ramna Green on March 9, saying, "Such attitude proves that the government would not hesitate to gag different political opinion."

Prof. Mannan said that the government's behaviour towards opposition violated political opinion of others and the rights of the citizens. "We condemn such attitude," he said.

Israeli hit on Gaza

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on the Israeli side.

The Palestinians were all killed by live Israeli fire, the medical sources said. Those injured were either hit by live bullets or shrapnel.

The nearby hospital at Deir al-Balah was soon overrun with casualties and victims had to be packed up to four at a time into ambulances sent from Gaza City's Al-Shifa hospital some 12 kilometers (more than seven miles) north.

Appeals for blood were made over loudspeaker in both camps.

The Israeli military's chief of staff, General Moshe Yaalon, said that "other offensive operations" would be launched as part of a recent decision to intensify operations against armed groups.

"Our troops are carrying out a combat operation against terrorists at Bureij and we intend to launch other operations in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) and Gaza as long as the terrorists continue their attacks," Yaalon told p u b l i c r a d i o .

The operation follows an abortive twin attack using mock Israeli jeeps on the Erez crossing point between Israel and the Gaza Strip on Saturday in which four bombers and two Palestinian policemen were killed.

The three main Palestinian armed factions -- Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades -- claimed responsibility for the attack in a joint statement Sunday which they said was partly in response to an Israeli air raid just south of Gaza City on Thursday in which three Hamas leaders were killed.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel

AL General Secretary ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury said, "We surely would resist such ill moves and stop the operational activities of Chittagong Port, if necessary, for the greater interest of the country."

Presidium member Ataur Rahman Khan Kaiser, north district president and former minister Mosharraf Hossain, lawmaker Rafiqul Anwar, former lawmaker Ishaque Meah, president of Chittagong District Bar Association advocate Ibrahim Hossain Chowdhury Babul also spoke at the meeting.

Polls in 144 municipalities in May

BSS, Dhaka

Elections to 144 municipalities in the country will be held between the first and second weeks of May this year, sources in the Election Commission (EC) said yesterday.

The sources said the EC will announce the election schedule by March 20. Elections in 64 municipalities were held since the BNP-Jamaat led four-party alliance came to office in 2002.

There are 286 municipalities in the country, of which 130 were formed by the Awami League government, while the present government formed 38 municipalities.

Lalmoni Express

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Dhaka at 10:30am from Lalmonirhat and reach Kamalapur station at 8:20pm. It would leave Kamalapur at 9:20pm and arrive at the northern town at 7:15am the next day.

The train with first class, chair coach and 'shovon' class seats would charge its commuters between Tk 200 and Tk 575.

Among others, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda, Disaster Management and Relief Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Asadul Habib Dulu, deputy minister for disaster management and relief, Mosaddek Ali, political secretary to the PM, and top Bangladesh Railway officials attended the opening ceremony.

gators should look into whether the outlaws were hired."

Talking to a group of journalists at Durgapur Police Station, Superintendent of Police Masud Mia said the killers were hired. "We came to know Anwar was one of the bidders for tender on Durgapur Bazaar. We are investigating it."

The upazila BNP vice-president, Belal Hossain, linked the killing to death threats to 15 BNP leaders including Anwar.

Ward Commissioner Ashraf Ali believes the murder was the result of a case Anwar filed against a local gang for illegal logging two months ago.

Underground operatives gunned down Abdul Hamid, a district BNP leader, in an attack that also left two of his relatives injured at Ghospara in Rajshahi city on November 9 last year.

The 52-year-old vice-president of the district BNP took five bullets in his chest, abdomen and head and fell down before an operative slit his throat in a desperate bid to confirm his death.

The PBPC operatives shot dead Afzar Ali, local BNP leader and union parishad member, in Baghmara on September 29.