

Altaf blames AL for 'secret killings'

UNB, Mongla

Squarely blaming the Awami League (AL) for secret killings and terrorism across the country, Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury yesterday assured a rally of rounding up and exemplary punishment to the killers of BNP leader MA Baten.

Chowdhury arrived at the port town in the morning to assuage the party activists who have been enforcing hartal since Friday, following the murder of Baten, vice-president of local BNP, on Thursday night. Janojuddha faction of outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBPC) had claimed responsibility for the killing.

The hartal was withdrawn yesterday following the assurance of the home minister.

"Awami League cadres and its terrorist groups in a planned way are resorting to killing one after another.

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MOSQUITO MENACE

Discontent over DCC drive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Residents including ward commissioners yesterday expressed dissatisfaction at Dhaka City Corporation's mosquito control drive and said the DCC staffers were hardly seen spraying larvicide and adulticide in their wards.

The concern came to a head as a contrast to what DCC Chief Health Officer Noor-e-Alam Patwari told journalists after a meeting on Sunday -- "workers were carrying out a drive six days a week except for Friday to head off the mosquito menace."

"DCC's steps to control mosqui-

toes are not enough," Abul Khayer Bablu, a ward commissioner of Dhamondi, told The Daily Star.

"If workers go spraying in some parts of a ward leaving other areas out, the mosquito control will be all but impossible. The DCC should carry out anti-mosquito programmes in all areas without giving priority to some high-profile residential areas," he said.

Ward Commissioner Syeda Fatema Salam echoed his voice and said, "The DCC should involve us in anti-mosquito drives as we can identify the vulnerable areas more easily."

Shamim Ahmed, a resident of

Hazaribagh, said, "I saw DCC men spray adulticide in my area only once in the last 30 days and the drive was limited to main roads. The spray men don't want to spray in lanes and by-lanes."

Shamim alleged the DCC workers agreed on spraying adulticide in his home in exchange for Tk 20 in bribe.

"I didn't see anyone spraying anti-mosquito chemicals in the neighbourhood in the last 15 days," said Tahmina Tasir, a resident of Gandaria.

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Firefighters douse a fire at Mir Hazaribagh in Dhaka yesterday. The blaze reduced 50 shanties and three furniture shops to ashes.

PHOTO: STAR

50 shanties, 3 shops gutted in fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fifty shanties and three furniture shops were gutted in a fire at Mir Hazaribagh in the city's Postogola area yesterday.

Three firefighters were also injured while trying to extinguish the blaze that started at around 11.00am.

An earthen oven in a shanty sparked off the fire, causing an estimated loss of Tk 20 lakh.

Firefighters from Sadarghat, Postogola and their headquarters brought the fire under control after a struggle for about one and half hours.

On Sunday, another fire gutted an electronics shop, Max Electro Vision, at Madhubazar in Maghbazar.

An electrical short circuit sparked off the fire at the ground floor of a seven-storey building at around 5.00pm.



Palestinian mourners carry the coffins of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the spiritual leader of the radical Hamas movement, and others during their funeral in Gaza City yesterday. Sheikh Yassin was killed in an Israeli air strike as he left a mosque in the Sabra neighbourhood.

Student rescued in Kushtia

2 kidnappers held after gunfight with police

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Police Sunday recovered an abducted college student after a gunfight with his captors on the bank of Padma in Kushtia.

According to sources, police cordoned off Hatirpur area at around 8:30pm and arrested abductors Islam, 28, and Hasan, 26, with a sawn-off rifle and four bullets on a boat on Padma's shore after two hours gun battle with the gang. However, other gang members escaped.

On Saturday, a gang allegedly led by Jibon kidnapped Mir Al-Fahad, 17, a student of Kushtia Police Lines College, at gunpoint at about 10:00pm when was returning to their Mazampur house, police said.

They then demanded Tk 10 lakh in ransom from his father Mir Alfaz Uddin, a medical assistant of Kushtia General Hospital, they added.

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ADP IMPLEMENTATION

Ministries asked to follow new rule for better result

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

All the ministries have been asked to follow a new set of guidelines on efficient designing of Annual Development Programme (ADP) for the next fiscal for quick implementation of development programmes and getting more funds from donors.

The Planning Commission last week issued a set of 20 instructions, asking the ministries to send their project proposals according to the instructions.

The new guidelines suggest inclusion of only those projects which can be implemented within a maximum of three years.

New projects wholly on local resources should be avoided as much as possible. The ministries should keep in mind the lack of local resources in the context of globalisation and global economic recession.

Projects with confirmed foreign aid will get priority, but those with zero allocation will not be included in the ADP.

Self-reliant projects in agriculture and non-agriculture sectors in rural areas, projects to supplement small and medium industries, power and energy, roads and infrastructure, information and communication and environment-friendly programmes will get more government attention.

Besides, the projects stressed by the prime minister will get priority although the ADP should have limited number of projects.

Due to lack of donor funding this year, the government is already considering cutting down its ADP by nearly Tk 2,500 crore from its total allocation of Tk 20,300 crore.

Project aid accounts for Tk 8,484

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Youth beaten dead in Demra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mob yesterday lynched a youth, suspecting him a mugger at Golapbagh in Demra.

Demra police rescued Mohammad Khokon, son of Alauddin of Dholaijor in the capital, from a frenzied crowd and later admitted him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where he died at 9:45am.

Locals chased the youths in their twenties at around 6:00am when they were riding through Golapbagh a motorbike, police said.

Khokon's companion dodged the enraged crowd, but locals caught Khokon and pounded him till police rescued him at about 8:00am, they added.

However, no case was filed till the writing of this report at 6:40 last evening.

SC confirms Ershad Shikdar's death penalty

UNB, Dhaka

Ershad Shikdar of Khulna is to walk to the gallows as the Supreme Court (SC) yesterday dismissed his appeal to review its verdict upholding the High Court order that confirmed his death sentence four years ago.

A three-member bench of the Appellate Division comprising Justice Mohammad Fazlul Karim, Justice Mohammad M M Ruhul Ameen and Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury passed the order.

Ershad Shikdar, a notorious criminal was awarded death sentence in seven murder cases and life imprisonment in 15 other murder cases by the lower court.

The Supreme Court confirmed his death penalty for the murder of Khalid Hossain, who was bludgeoned to death in May 1999.

Additional Attorney General Abdur Rezzak Khan appeared for the state while senior advocate M A Malek stood for Shikdar.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nineteen seventy-one is the setting, you are a freedom fighter and your mission is to liberate your motherland by fighting the Pakistani occupation, but there's a catch -- it's only in the cyber-world.

In an effort to engage the generation that had not experienced the War of Liberation and imbue them with the spirit of 1971, a group of young software experts from Rajshahi launched on Sunday Bangladeshi's first liberation-war based 3-D (dimensional) video game.

The game works with the unique objective of the gamer as a student, farmer or an adolescent freedom fighter who either has to capture a flag from a Pakistani camp or dominate a Pakistani-occupied area in an

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Liberation War-based 3D video game launched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abdullah Abu Sayeed, director of Biswa Sahitya Kendra, unveiled the video game named "Arunodoyer Agnishikha" or "Flame of Sunrise" (FS), in the presence of other liberation war heroes and luminaries of the IT industry at a press conference organised by the producers of the video game, Shom Computers Ltd., at the Jatiya Press Club the same day.

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US soldier killed in Iraq blast

GIdies in live-firing accident

AFP, Baghdad

A US soldier and an Iraqi interpreter were killed by a roadside bomb in Baghdad overnight, and nine soldiers were wounded in attacks in the Iraqi capital, the military said yesterday.

"A Task Force 1st Armoured Division Soldier and an Iraqi interpreter were killed and three other soldiers were wounded during an IED (improvised explosive device) attack March 21," a statement said.

"The incident is under investigation."

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BDR personnel wave a bus down on the road in front of Baitul Mukarram Mosque yesterday, as joint forces launched anti-crime crackdowns in Dhaka.

PHOTO: STAR

Fish farming in JU lakes upsets ecology

Thousands of migratory birds driven out of leased-out water bodies

JU CORRESPONDENT

Ecology of the outlying Jahangirnagar University (JU) area is under threat from commercial fish cultivation as JU authorities have leased out 10 of the university's 19 lakes for the purpose.

Four more lakes are also in the process of being leased out by the authorities, who are apparently oblivious to the loss of bio-diversity entailed by their ecologically unfriendly venture, sources said.

The number of migratory birds flocking to the lakes every year has

already gone down to about 3,000-5,000 from the previous 7,000-10,000. Now the birds, which have used the lake area as a resting ground, have been restricted to the few remaining lakes.

Fertilisers such as TSP, urea and lime used for fish cultivation increases the ratio of nitrogen and decreases oxygen dissolved in the water. Coupled with the failure to dredge the lakes for years, the process contributes to severe pollution of the stagnant water.

"Some species of fish like the carp dig up the lakebed causing

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