

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. Janojuddho faction of outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) 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The hartal was withdrawn yesterday following the assurance of the home minister.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 mosquito

toes are not enough," Abul Khayer Bablu, a ward commissioner of Dhanmondi, 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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PHOTO: STAR

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

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 Madhubagh in Maghubazar.

An electrical short circuit sparked off the fire at the ground floor of a seven-storey building at around 5:00pm.



PHOTO: AFP

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.

Saarc chamber supports FBCCI move on politics

UNB, Dhaka

Saarc Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) endorses the proactive stand of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) on current political situation in the country, as its chief says such a move is imperative for investment and business.

"Politics and politicians are different segments. They have their own interests and we'll have to protect ours," said visiting SCCI President Macky Hashim here yesterday praising the role of the Bangladesh business federation.

"Role of each federation in each country is very important. Your federation is performing it very well. Your president has made definitely a proactive statement," he said.

Hashim, the former president of Sri Lankan Chamber of Commerce and Industry who has been playing a role in restoring peace in the island, said: We must have the right to say something if something goes wrong.

"We don't want to blame the politicians. But in protecting the interests of business and investment, we don't need to know who is the prime minister or president or which party is in power," he said.

The SCCI president said: "Who makes investment, who pays tax, who helps in GDP growth, who helps in development, who takes a ll

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Prayer Timings		
March 23		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-55	5-
30 Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-16	6-20
Esha	7-45	8-15
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Erratic power supply hits boro irrigation

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Power disruption and loadshedding during the peak boro cultivation season have affected irrigation in the crop-rich northern districts.

Reeling under erratic power supply at the start of summer, growers who were suffering from diesel crisis since mid-February are now worried about the growth of their boro plants.

More than 90 percent of 7,000 irrigation pumps in the hardest-hit Barind region comprising Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj and Naogaon districts run on electricity

but loadshedding for hours on end keep many deep tubewells inoperative for most of the time.

Besides, thousands of the 4.5 lakh irrigation machines in the 16 northern districts, 85 percent of which run on diesel, remain idle due to shortage of the fuel oil.

"I need to irrigate my nine acres of boro land for two hours in every three alternate days, but the deep tubewell cannot run a full half hour due to erratic supply and loadshedding," said Abdur Rahman of Basantapur village in Godagari upazila.

"There has not been a drop of rain in the region over the last

several weeks making the boro lands so dry that hours of irrigation often fail to keep the fields wet enough," said a field supervisor of the Agriculture Extension Department.

The national power grid supplies on average only 190 mw (megawatt) power a day against a demand of 300 mw in the entire northern region, according to sources in Rajshahi Power Development Board.

In Rajshahi, the daily average supply is 26 mw against a demand of 52 mw, causing widespread loadshedding, explained a source.

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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

land erosion, said Ali Reza, assistant professor of Zoology, adding the lakebed thus loses its capacity to absorb dirt and other water pollutants.

The whole process is seriously harming the natural surroundings that would otherwise serve as a resting ground for the migratory birds. Students and teachers fear endangered species of birds like the stork-billed kingfisher, pintail knife and open-billed stork that still throng the campus area will no longer do so in two to three years.

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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 river 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.

Two commit 'suicide'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A lecturer and a housewife allegedly committed suicide in the city.

Masudur Rahman, 38, a lecturer of the Department of Accountancy at Jagannath university college, hanged himself from the ceiling at his home at 5/1 Satmasjid Road in Mohammadpur in the morning yesterday, his brother-in-law Emdad told newsmen.

Emdad rushed Masud, son of Afzalur Rahman, to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) at 12:45 pm, where doctors declared him dead.

Masud's family members could not say why he committed suicide, Mohammadpur police said.

In Khilgaon, police recovered the body of one Nasima Begum, 25, wife of Mojibur Rahman, from her apartment at 3/8, Khilgaon government quarters at 10:00pm Sunday.

Nasima hanged herself from a ceiling fan at around 5:45pm, as learnt from the unnatural death (UD) case filed with the Khilgaon Police Station by her (Nasima) neighbour Nazrul Islam.

Police could not find any reason behind the suicide.

US soldier killed in Iraq blast

GI dies 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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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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Liberation War-based 3D video game launched

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 Bangladesh's first liberation-war based 3-D (dimensional) video game.

Abdullah Abu Sayeed, director of Biswa Sahitya Kendra, unveiled the video game named "Arunodayer 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.

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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PHOTO: STAR

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