



Cop fires his gun accidentally, hurts three

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An accidental gunfire from a patrol team of Pallabi police left three people including a 14-month baby bullet-hit at Pallabi yesterday.

Sub Inspector (SI) Faridul Islam along with constables Delwar and Gour Chandra was sitting in riot gears inside a hired Maxi van at the Duaripara Bazar at 9:00am. Delwar pressed the trigger while checking a shotgun that injured housewife Khuki Begum, 30, her daughter Salma and Anwarul Haq, 25, a

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Vietnamese president leaves

AFP, Dhaka

Vietnamese President Tran Duc Luong left yesterday for Pakistan at the end of his three-day maiden visit to Bangladesh.

During the trip, Vietnam and Bangladesh signed agreements on avoiding double taxation, agricultural and cultural cooperation.

Luong said Hanoi would back Bangladesh's bid to join the Asean Regional Forum -- a first step to becoming a dialogue partner of the Southeast Asian bloc.

Bangladesh and Vietnam established diplomatic relations in 1973 and last year Vietnam reopened its mission in Dhaka after a gap of 22 years.

Luong was invited to Pakistan by President Pervez Musharraf, who visited Hanoi in May 2001.

Govt plans massive promotion to defuse admin commotion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government plans to promote several hundred lower- and mid-level officials to defuse frustration in the civil administration and an intelligence agency has started scanning their records to that end.

Secretariat sources said the establishment ministry prepared a list of 500 senior assistant secretaries from 1973 to 1984 batches for elevation to deputy secretary.

Most of them were dropped from promotion earlier and 100 are from the 1984 batch who did not

get elevation when around 500 senior assistant secretaries of their batch were made deputy secretary.

Of the officials on the promotion list, 260 fulfilled the promotion criteria.

The government took the pro

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PM has failed to keep election pledges: Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has failed to live up to her election pledges to curb terrorism and price spiral.

"The prevailing situation is such that foreign investors and donors alike are pulling out of the country," she said at a discussion organised by Bangabandhu Parishad at the Institute of Engineers on the eve of independence day.

The opposition leader called upon all to resist "the coalition

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WORLD TB DAY TB kills 1, catches 5 every 10 minutes

Experts emphasise awareness raising to combat the menace

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tuberculosis kills one every 10 minutes and infects a new one every two minutes in Bangladesh.

It means, every year an estimated 70,000 people die from the disease and about 300,000 people fall prey to it, speakers at a seminar said yesterday.

Worse, the presence of tuberculosis (TB) among children is under-diagnosed and under-reported. A large number of children live with and die from the disease, unknown and unrecorded.

"The statistics we present are mostly on the adult TB patients. As there's no study on childhood TB in Bangladesh, we've no clear picture of the disease burden of the children," said Dr Tahmeed Ahmed, a child health specialist of the

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DHAKA-10 BY-POLLS Dozen BNP aspirants lobby with leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About a dozen ruling BNP leaders are lobbying hard with top leaders for nomination for the by-polls in Dhaka-10 constituency.

Party insiders said these mid- and low-level leaders are out for party ticket to contest by-election to the seat that fell vacant due to resignation of Major (Retd) Abdul Mannan, who joined former president Badruddoza Chowdhury's alternative political stream. The number of nomination seekers is increasing every day.

Lobbying is also going on over nomination for Munshiganj-1 seat

that felt vacant with the resignation of Mahi B Chowdhury, son of Badruddoza Chowdhury.

A senior BNP leader said party policymakers, ministers and senior leaders have taken up the AL deadline and defection of party MPs with all seriousness but the nomination seekers are knocking at their doors day and night as if they have an issue much more important than those.

Besides lobbying for themselves, the nomination seekers are also engaged in mudslinging against each other that might lead to conflicts within the party, he added.

The party leadership should take

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A rally of Jamaat-e-Islami, a ruling coalition constituent, blocks a road near Baitul Mukarram National Mosque yesterday. The rally runs in counter to the government decision of not allowing rallies on roads in the capital.

EU fines Microsoft \$613m for monopoly

AGENCIES, Brussels

Software giant Microsoft must pay a fine of 497m euros (\$613m) for abusing its dominant market position, the EU has ordered.

EU Competition Commissioner Mario Monti also insisted Microsoft must reveal secrets of its Windows software, which sits on 90% of the world's PCs.

The European Commission approved Microsoft's punishment on Wednesday.

Microsoft has already said it will appeal, kicking off a legal battle that could last years.

Monti said he was confident "that we have produced here a decision that will stand before any appeal".

Microsoft has a cash pile of more than \$50bn, so even a fine on this scale - a record for the EU in an antitrust case - is unlikely to hurt it commercially.

Industry experts say that the non-financial penalties are likely to hurt Microsoft more by opening it to further challenges and altering the regulatory environment it operates in.

Monti has ordered Microsoft to reveal details of its Windows software codes within 120 days, to make it easier for rivals to design compatible products.

Microsoft must offer a stripped-down version of its Windows operating system minus the firm's MediaPlayer audiovisual software

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Dhaka, Delhi agree on draft for trade bill

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India and Bangladesh have agreed on a revised draft for the bilateral trade agreement (BTA), which is likely to be signed after the parliamentary polls in India.

It was decided during two-day joint secretary-level working group talks on trade that ended yesterday.

The two sides decided to take forward the revised text of the bilateral trade agreement which will have a five-year validity, official sources said.

The talks also paved the way for setting up of a roadmap for finalising testing requirement and

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Prayer Timings		
March 25		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-20	4-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-29	6-34
Esha	8-00	8-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Rod prices belie mill owners' claim

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prices of mild steel rod and steel products are still very high on the retail market in Dhaka while mills owners claim they are selling them at competitive rates from their factories.

The government has recently lifted the restriction on import of ship scraps by re-rolling mills and reduced duty on some other raw materials of rod and steel products to 7.5 percent from 15 percent but the steps are yet to have any impact on their prices.

In the last one year, rod prices shot up 50 to 80 percent. The prices of 60 grade rod and 40 grade rod were Tk 35,500 and Tk 42,000 a tonne in January this year against Tk 21,500 and Tk 23,500 in January 2003.

Bangladesh Steel Mills Owners Association claims they now sell 16ml rod (40 grade) at Tk 28,500, 12ml (40 grade) at Tk 29,000, 10ml (40 grade) at Tk 31,000 and 16 to 32 size (60 grade) at Tk 35,000 a tonne.

The association is advertising in newspapers the prices of different categories of rod.

But buyers complain retail sellers are charging Tk 2,000 to Tk 3,000 higher than the advertised prices.

Association President Badiul Alam said retail prices are higher due to 15 percent Vat (value-added tax) and labour and other costs.

"We are giving advertisements so that buyers can compare retail prices with factory prices and retail sellers cannot charge higher prices. Prices may be a bit high due to high demand and supply shortage," he said.

Meanwhile, leaders of the associations involved in steel and construction business yesterday had a joint meeting with Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury and Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas.

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Khulna OC's death threat to journo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The officer-in-charge (OC) of Khanjahan Ali Police Station in Khulna has allegedly threatened to kill the local journalist of a Jessore-based daily as he published two reports in his newspaper against the policeman.

Moslehuddin Ahmed, the OC, and some unidentified youths on Tuesday night stormed the office of Sheikh Sadruddin, city correspondent of Dainik Loksamaj owned by Information Minister Tariqul Islam, and threatened him with death, sources said.

"I will also file false arms and murder cases against any reporter who writes against me," the police officer threatened the journalist. "Other reporters must also stop writing against me or face dire consequences."

Sadruddin wrote a report on March 19 highlighting the OC's alleged physical abuse of local businessman Modassar Sardar. The report says Moslehuddin showed the businessman arrested in a 'false case' and tortured him in jail as he

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