

Businesses in Old Dhaka stop, protest killings

Unnamed callers threaten family of murdered trader, son

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over 10,000 shops closed yesterday, as Old Dhaka businesspeople went on strike in anger at the brutal beheading of Shamsul Haq and his son Russell Sheikh that sent shockwaves through the city.

"We will continue our agitation until we see any move by the government to arrest the killers," said Abdur Rouf Molla, vice-president of Sadarghat Sammita Baboshayee Samity, an association of businesspeople representing 42 markets in Sadarghat.

Hundreds of demonstrators took out a procession at about 11:00am, shouting slogans -- "Hang the

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Shops in Old Dhaka remain closed as thousands of businesspeople went on strike yesterday in outrage at the grisly killings of Shamsul Haq and his son Russell Sheikh and targeting of the corporate community by criminals.

PHOTO: STAR

Criminals Joseph, Mamun to die

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka tribunal yesterday sentenced two men to death and four to life term for killing Abu Morshed, a Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader, in the city in 1995.

Police-listed criminals Tofael Ahmed alias Joseph and Tareq Saif alias Mamun are to walk the gallows, while Haris Ahmed alias Haris, Mohammad Islam alias Munna, SM Ahsanuzzaman alias Paris and Shahin Mahmud alias Shahin are to serve out their life term.

The court acquitted four others -- Tapan, Sayeed, Badal and Bidi -- as charges brought against them could not be proved conclusively.

Joseph, Mamun and Shahin were present on the dock yesterday but Haris, Munna and Paris were tried in

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Move to bring back 16 stranded in Iran

RAFIQ HASAN

The government is moving to bring back 36 Bangladeshis now in Iran after their recruiting agent stranded them in Jordan and Iraq.

Actions including cancellation of licence will be taken against the recruiting agency that sent them abroad, sources in the Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment said yesterday.

According to information received from Bangladesh Embassy in Tehran, a local recruiting agency -- Grand Overseas Business Limited -- had sent them to Jordan to work in garments factories. But immediately after

their arrival in Amman, they were sent to Iraq.

The Bangladeshis then took shelter at the Mazar of Hazrat Abdul Kader Zilani (RA) in Baghdad to save their lives as fighting continued between Iraqi guerrillas and American troops. Later, they crossed over to Iran and approached Bangladesh embassy there on Saturday.

The embassy gave them shelter and contacted the expatriate welfare ministry immediately.

The ministry then started arranging air tickets and money from wage earners' welfare fund of the

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JAYANTI MURDER Mimi, Shampa dropped from charge sheet

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Detective Branch (DB) yesterday indicted Azam Reza for killing his wife Jayanti Munsif alias Jayanti Reza, while dropped television performers Shampa Reza and Afsana Mimi from the charge sheet stating the allegations against them could not be proved.

Investigation officer (IO) DB inspector Ruhul Quddus submitted the charge sheet to the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka after 82 days since the incident.

Azam Reza's lawyers, meanwhile, placed a bail petition for him before Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court yesterday, but the court turned down the prayer as charges were pressed against him.

IO Ruhul Quddus said, in the charge sheet, primary investigation

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BAGHDAD UN OFFICE BLAST Annan spares deputy, sacks security chief

AFP, United Nations

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan spared his deputy but sacked his security chief as a new report Monday said negligence added to the death toll in the August bombing of the UN's office in Baghdad.

Deputy Secretary General Louise Frechette of Canada, the number two in the worldwide organisation, tendered her resignation after the scathing report was presented internally but Annan declined it, spokesman Fred Eckhard announced.

"She was acknowledging the criticism," Eckhard said. "The secretary general said 'It wasn't your individual responsibility, it was the collective responsibility.'"

UN staff failed to follow security procedures, properly review the risks or understand the extent to which the United Nations would be a target in post-war Iraq, according to the report.

The August 19 suicide bombing

left 22 people dead including the top UN envoy in Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello, and wounded more than 200, many of them seriously.

Instead of sacking Frechette or other members of the Steering Group for Iraq, who approved the UN's return to Iraq last May, Annan sent a letter expressing his "disappointment and regret" over the incident.

But Annan asked for and received the resignation of UN global security chief Tun Myat of Myanmar, the only senior official to be released despite the report's emphasis on errors up and down the chain of command.

Vieira de Mello's deputy Ramiro Lopes da Silva of Portugal, responsible for security on site at the Baghdad hotel where the UN staff were based, will be reassigned elsewhere with no security duties, Eckhard said.

An official from the UN staff

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Separate land commission sought for ethnic people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A separate land commission should be set up to ensure land rights of the plain land indigenous people in the country.

Speakers expressed this view at a workshop on "the necessity of separate land commission for plain land indigenous people" in the capital yesterday.

The existing laws cannot protect their land rights, the speakers felt.

Samata, a development organisation, organised the workshop to exchange views with journalists on various problems of the indigenous people.

Participants at the workshop included Prof Mesbah Kamal of Dhaka University, Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Indigenous People's Forum and M Abdul Kader, executive director of Samata.

Mesbah Kamal said the plain land indigenous people are becoming

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Dhaka's human dev status goes up

Symposium feels reducing rich-poor gap vital to sustain progress

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The yawning income gap between the rich and the poor has to be minimised to sustain the marginal success Bangladesh has achieved in some areas like poverty reduction, population control and education.

Leading economists expressed this view at the opening session of a two-day symposium in the capital yesterday.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Population Science department of Dhaka University jointly organised it.

Binayek Sen, senior research fellow of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, said Bangladesh has made a silent stride from low to medium human development in the global ranking in the last one decade.

"Lowering of population

growth rate would not be sustained if the extreme poor people were not brought under this process," he said.

The economist noted that lowering of population growth rate contributes to improvement of the quality of child, which leads to poverty reduction in the long run.

Professor MM Akash of economics department at Dhaka University said there has been a marginal decrease in overall poverty in the last two decades.

"If we fail to improve education and health sectors we will not be able to sustain the achievement in lowering population growth," he said.

Akash said the average marriage age in Bangladesh has increased, contributing to lowering population growth and the increase of women

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Extortionists gun down sweetmeat shop employee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gunmen shot dead an employee of a sweetmeat shop at Mirpur yesterday morning for the shopowner's refusal to pay them money.

The victim was identified as Afsar Uddin, 18, an employee of Banaful and Company at Mirpur's Muktabangla Shopping Complex.

Witnesses said four youths went to the shop at around 7:30am and asked for one kilogram of sweets. As an employee began to weigh out the sweets, two of the gunmen stuck their pistols on the heads of Afsar and Jamal, another employee.

"They told us not to turn around or shout. Suddenly, one of the gunmen fired a blank shot and just as Afsar turned his head, he shot him in the back," said Sohel, one of three employees of the shop who witnessed the murder.

Afterwards, the youths walked

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Students in procession at Chittagong University yesterday demand ouster of a JCD leader and resignation of the proctor and a hall provost in the wake of an attack by ruling BNP's student front.

PHOTO: STAR

CU students under attack from JCD men, 20 wounded

Indefinite strike called

CU CORRESPONDENT

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) cadres of Chittagong University (CU) in a series of attacks on general students injured at least 20 yesterday.

Violence continued on the campus sporadically until 2:00pm and five of the injured including CU correspondent of daily Bhorer Kagoj Pradyut Barua Russell were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

The campus turned into a virtual battlefield when JCD activists with rods and sticks swooped on students under the banner of General Students Action Council (GSAC) before Registrar's building at around 11:30am.

At least 10 students were

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Prayer Timings		
March 31		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-45	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