

Oldest civilisation dug out

Road, fortified citadel, artefacts in Wari village date back to 450 BC

SHAMIM ASHRAF

The excavation of an ancient road suggests Narsingdi was part of a 2,450-year-old civilisation and formed the eastern fringe of Mauryan Empire.

A prime trade centre flourished in Narsingdi that maintained contacts with contemporary South Asian and Roman civilisations through waterways, archaeologists citing recent finds in Belabo upazila in Narsingdisaid.

The March 21 excavation of country's oldest road, a fortified citadel and a raft of artefacts dating back to 450 BC in Wari village promised to redefine history of eastern India and embolden the theory of the Brahmaputra civilisation.

Examination of charcoal samples from the site in 2001 by Netherlands' Centrum voor Isotopen Onderzoek also spoke of human habitation and industry in the area in 450 BC, dwarfing the ancient aura of Mahastangarh, which flourished 80 years later.

After finding rouletted and knobbed pottery from Wari and Bateashwar villages in 2000 and 2001, archaeologists suggested Buddhism dominated life in the urban centre.

FABLED ARTEFACTS
About three years ago, archaeologists found the pottery and other archaeological treasures

Part of Bangladesh's oldest road, dug out in Wari village in Narsingdi this month, promises to redefine Eastern Indian history. A team of Jahangirnagar University archaeologists found the 18/16-metre, 27-centimetre thick road dating back to 450 BC.



Hunt down criminals targeting traders

Over 5,000 ask govt, unfurl 1-km-long banner, form human chain

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over 5,000 traders from across the country unfurled a one-kilometre-long banner and formed a human chain for half an hour in Dhaka yesterday to demand tough actions against criminals targeting entrepreneurs.

The demonstration against rising murders and abductions of businessmen, corruption, hartals and political strife succeeded a wave of demonstrations including strikes by businesses in the past few days against the murders of two Old Dhaka fabrics traders -- a father and son -- the latest of 54 businessmen killed in a year.

Even as they were protesting, gunmen sprayed a security van with bullets in Chittagong, wounding five people before fleeing with Tk56 lakh. Representatives of over 250 business organisations carried the banner proclaiming a long list of

demands including a stop to harbouring criminals by political parties, harassment of businesspeople and bureaucratic corruption and 'guarantee of natural death' from Dainik Bangla Crossing to Shapla Chatter (roundabout) in the commercial hub of Motijheel.

Bangladesh Dokan Malik Samity (BDMS), which claims to represent 22 lakh traders, in collaboration with Dhaka Metropolitan Dokan Malik Samity organised the demonstration from 12:00 noon to 12:30pm.

Crime, especially killings, extortion and abductions of businesspeople, has turned into an explosive political issue in recent times.

"We urge both leading political parties to stop harbouring criminals regardless of their party strings," Amir Hossain Khan, BDMS chairman, told journalists on the sidelines of the human chain.

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AL takes an hour off April 7 hartal

JSD coincides strike with main opposition's

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday cut its April 7 dawn-to-dusk hartal by an hour to clear way for World Health Organisation (WHO) programmes marking International Health Day.

"We complied with a WHO request and decided to enforce the hartal from 6:00am to 5:00pm," said AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, emerging from a party presidium meeting, chaired by AL President Sheikh Hasina at Dhanmondi office.

Jalil confirmed that the 6:00am to 6:00pm shutdown scheduled for April 8 would remain unchanged.

The Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) of Hasanul Haq Inu also called hartal for April 7-8 in a simultaneous demonstration against the government.

The AL meeting also decided to

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Security van in Ctg ambushed

Tk 56 lakh looted, five injured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

An armed gang looted Tk 56 lakh from a security company van in an ambush that injured its driver and four security men in Chittagong yesterday.

The attackers struck at Kaptai Road crossing in Kalurghat industrial area of the port city shortly before noon and fled with the money belonging to Base Textile Mills.

Police said the van of security provider Group 4 was carrying the money withdrawn from Sonali Bank's KC Dey Road branch for salary payment to textile mills employees.

The armed men halted the vehicle in a hail of bullets close to the mills before they drove it to Madarssah area in Hathazari.

Police rescued the injured and retrieved the van. The injured were

admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

Managing Director of the textile mills SM Nurul Huda Chowdhury said the money was withdrawn from the bank in the presence of an authorised employee of the mills for payment of salary and wages of about 2,500 employees and workers. The Group 4 security men kept the money in a sealed trunk.

"I think information was leaked out. Police quizzed some of our employees and filed a general diary," he said.

Sources linked 'Gittu' Nasir, an Islamic Chhatra Shibir cadre, and some ruling alliance activists as involved in the incident. Alliance leaders denied the allegation.

The deputy commissioner (north) of Chittagong Metropolitan Police said law enforcers launched raids in places to recover the money and nab the criminals.

SPs taken out of Rab to defuse rank dispute

SHARIFUL ISLAM

The government took the superintendents of police (SPs) out of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) to quell a bitter dispute over precedence of ranks of military officials over those of police.

After a series of brainstorming sessions, the government finally decided to resolve the issue by transferring six SPs from Rab in Wednesday's major reshuffle of police administration, a top official of the home ministry said yesterday seeking anonymity.

The official said the SPs were highly aggrieved when the government designated them as deputy directors (DDs) of Rab, placing them under wing commanders and lieutenant colonels of the armed forces as directors or battalion commanders of Rab. The makeup of the elite anti-crime force made army officials of Major rank equal to SPs as DDs.

In the Rab hierarchy, director general (DG) is the top man, with additional DG, director, DD, assistant director (AD) and deputy as-

stant director following him. An additional inspector general of police (IGP) will be the DG of Rab, additional deputy IGP will be additional DG, officers of armed forces of lieutenant colonel, major and captains ranks will be battalion commanders or directors, DDs and ADs.

A police official said SPs held the commanding posts in the police force, but in Rab they were downgraded to the second-in-command position, with army officers in charge as battalion commanders. He said many of them felt that placing an SP under an army official of equivalent rank would undermine the dignity of the police rank.

The home ministry has dropped the SPs from Rab to maintain cohesiveness and integrity in inter-departmental ranking," said another official of the ministry. He said the government took the decision on its failure to reach an amicable solution.

The government in a gazette notification on February 17 appointed six SP-rank police officials to Rab. They are SM Ruhul

Amin, ex-SP of Rajbari, Rafiqul Islam, former SP of Sathkira, Helal Uddin Badri, ex-SP of Narayanganj, Mazharul Hoque, former deputy commissioner (DC) of Rapid Action Team (Rat), Delwar Hossain Mian, ex-SP of Special Branch, and Moinul Islam, former SP of Meherpur.

In Wednesday's reshuffle, Ruhul was transferred to Jhalkathi as SP. Rafiqul to the Police Headquarters as AIG Helal to the Special Branch (SB) in Dhaka as special SP Mazharul to Dhaka Metropolitan Police as deputy police commissioner, Delwar to the SB in Dhaka as special SP and Moinul to Rajbari as SP.

The Jatiya Sangsad passed the Armed Police Battalions (Amendment) Act 2003 in July last to pave way for formation of Rab. The over 5,000-men force draws its members from the armed forces, police and ansars.

Four Rab battalions will initially operate in Dhaka and one each in Chittagong, Rajshahi and Khulna.

Tk 402 crore is being spent on launching the elite force and the government will allocate Tk 80 crore a year to run it.

Police reshuffle to soup up security in Apr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Wednesday's decision for police reshuffle was made as a part of the government plan to tighten up security and anti-crime measures in response to the April-30 deadline set by Awami League for the BNP-led coalition to relinquish power, sources said.

The transfers of three additional deputy inspector generals (Add'l DIGs) and 28 superintendents of police (SP) followed an exclusive meeting between the prime minister and the state minister for home affairs Wednesday afternoon.

Police officials said the changes were made based on reports of different intelligence agencies and more changes were in the offing to tackle the country's political situation this month.

"We have received specific complaints against some of the officials from local lawmakers and leaders of the ruling alliance," said a home ministry official.

According to the intelligence reports, the opposition parties have already finished their preparations

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7 doctors, staff in Sirajganj suspended for duty neglect

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The director general of the directorate of health services yesterday instantaneously suspended seven doctors and staff, while on a surprise visit to an upazila health complex in Sirajganj district, he found them absent from the duties.

A health directorate source said that during his sudden visit to Chouhali upazila health complex from 10:30am to 11:30 am yesterday, the director general Prof Mizanur Rahman found Dr Lokman Hakim, Dr Harun-ur Rashid, Shariful Islam, office assistant, A K Shamsul Huq.

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BNP MP blasts ministry for power outage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A ruling BNP lawmaker yesterday came down hard on the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources for a 48-hour non-stop power outage in his constituency.

Habibul Islam Habib, elected from Sathkira, at a parliamentary standing committee meeting said incessant power failure caused suffering to the people and hindered irrigation.

The state minister for energy at the meeting resented Power Development Board (PDB) for not informing him of the incident.

The parliamentary standing

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India catch history

REUTERS, Multan

India sealed their first Test win on Pakistani soil, beating the hosts by an innings and 52 runs on Thursday.

Pakistan, 207 for nine overnight, were bowled out for 216 after facing just 12 balls on the fifth morning of the first Test as India took a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

The Indians had lost five and drawn 15 of their previous 20 Tests in Pakistan.

Pakistan's Yousuf Youhana struck a fighting 112, his 11th test century, but left-arm paceman Irfan Pathan had him mis-hit a pull shot to Rahul Dravid at mid-wicket to end the match.

Anil Kumble was the best bowler of India's second innings, grabbing

six wickets for 72, but Pathan's career-best four for 100 in the first had been instrumental in allowing the tourists to enforce the follow-on.

India had amassed 675 for five when they batted, with Virender Sehwag scoring a record 309 and Sachin Tendulkar 194 not out.

"It's fantastic to lead the side that won our first ever Test in Pakistan," said David, India's stand-in captain.

"Sehwag batted brilliantly, he's done a great job for us, and the bowlers bowled with a lot of heart and character on a wicket that didn't offer them very much."

It was only India's second innings victory over Pakistan. The first was the inaugural Test between

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BASHUNDHARA GROUP

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