

Arms brought in to kill 50,000 people: Hasina

UNB, Jhalakathi

Leader of the Opposition in parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday alleged that the huge amount of arms ammunition, hauled in Chittagong on Friday, were brought in to kill 50,000 people of the country.

"People wants to know who ordered unloading of the arms at the government-owned Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Limited (CUFL) jetty," she said addressing a public meeting at the local stadium on the fourth day of her five-day tour of the south-ern districts.

The meeting was organised by district Awami League protesting, killing, corruption and price hike of essentials and demanding resignation of the coalition government.

Hasina wondered how the illegal arms and ammunition could be brought in and unloaded at a govern-ment-owned jetty in Chittagong.

"Who has given the order?" she asked, saying that either the prime minister, or her son Tarique Rahman, or Industries Minister Motiur Rahman Nizami or Prime Minister's Adviser Salahuddin

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Imam beaten to death

UNB, Habiganj

Assailants beat up an imam to death at Farhadpur village in Madhabpur upazila yesterday.

Locals said the criminals swooped on the bedroom of Kazi Osman Gani, 26, imam of Farhadpur Jam-e-Mosque, at dawn and took him to a nearby place. The gang beat up the imam, severed his private part and left him dead on the spot.

Police arrested four people -- Tazul Islam, Humayun Kabir, Shaheed Miah and Firoy Miah -- but could not tell the motive behind the killing. The superintendent of police of the district visited the spot.

FUND, MANPOWER CRISES

Archaeological sites in disarray

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Country's archaeological sites are poorly maintained as the Department of Archaeology under the Ministry of Cultural Affairs is limping due to fund crisis and man-power shortage.

Important archaeological sites and monuments such as Mount of Raja Harishchandra in Savar and Roelbari in Netrokona are left with-out conservation although digging was done there more than 10 years ago.

The department also failed to conserve the largest bronze statue

of Buddha found at Bhoj Raja's house in Mainamati. Famous archaeological sites in the capital like Bara Katara and Chhoto Katara and Sat Gombuj Mosque also lack proper maintenance.

Sources in the department said government fund flow dried up over the last 10 years although the num-ber of monuments to be conserved by the department increased at the same time. Presently, the depart-ment gets a yearly fund of Tk 1.20 crore against around Tk 1.60 crore a decade ago. The department also receives a separate fund from the government for its Civil Works

Conservation, which has been reduced to Tk 25 lakh from Tk 60 lakh.

The number of archaeological monuments under the department, which was only 186 10 years ago, has risen to at least 355 over the years. Moreover, there are 14 muse-ums across the country that the department has to look after. Insiders in the department said they found it difficult to maintain so many monuments and heritage sites with such a low budget.

Shortage of manpower is another obstacle affecting the department's

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Tamil Tigers warn of war again

Chandrika struggles to form coalition

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels warned yesterday they would return to war unless they were granted self-rule as President Chandrika Kumaratunga struggled to cobble together a coalition in a hung parliam-ent.

The rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) issued the threat even before Kumaratunga could form a government to replace that of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe who is expected to

step down later Monday.

Wickremesinghe warned fragile peace talks with Tamil Tiger rebels were in "serious trouble" as no party had won a majority to form a stable government after the latest elec-tions.

He said Friday's election had created instability and the lack of a majority for any government would pose "serious problems for the peace process as well as everything else."

"At the moment we don't have a stable government and that itself

can be a serious problem for the peace process," he told reporters. "There is no way a new government can move forward on the peace process and the economy."

Kumaratunga called the election after dismissing the parliament controlled by her rival, Wickremesinghe, but the results gave her party only 105 seats, or eight short of an absolute majority in the 225-member legislature.

The Tigers who won 22 seats through their proxies, the Tamil

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PHOTO: STAR

Wooden poles demarcate land claimed by encroachers who have filled huge chunks of the lake between Gulshan and Tejgaon. Years of earth-filling have all but dried up the water body.

Youth shot dead in Lalmatia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unknown assailants gunned down a youth near Lalmatia Club at Mohammadpur yesterday.

Minutes before he died, Russell Ahmed Sony, 27, said that while he was going to Lalmatia Club on a rickshaw after drawing Tk 18,000 from a bank, about seven youths waylaid him at about 3:00pm and tried to snatch the money. As he resisted, the gang shot him in the forehead and chest.

As Sony collapsed, the locals chased the attackers, who managed to flee the scene on a CNG-run three-wheeler after intercepting it with its passenger, a student of Lalmatia Girl's College, on, a witness said.

Suman and Akbar, reportedly a player and an employee of the Lalmatia Club, rushed out of the club to take profusely bleeding Sony

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Five Star group shot Jugantor journo

UNB, Dhaka

Journalist Delwar Hossain, injured with bullets in the city's malibagh area on Sunday, has said 'Five Star' group of Keraniganj headed by Haji Shamsul Haq attempted to kill him.

Talking to newsmen at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday Delwar, Keraniganj correspondent of Daily Jugantor, said members of 'Five Star' group had earlier threatened him for exposing their criminal activities.

Keraniganj, a business centre across the river Buriganga, is an identified crime zone where murder, extortion, rape take place every day.

Delwar was shot and wounded by two youths into the office of advertising firm, Cimax Sign, on DIT Avenue at around 4:00pm when he was talking to Selim Khan, managing director of the firm.

Three separate police teams have been formed to investigate the attempt on the life of Delwar.

Meanwhile, Members of Keraniganj Press Club yesterday staged a demonstration demanding immediate arrest of the criminals involved.

Govt to be removed by constitutional means by April 30

Reiterates Jilil

UNB, Dinajpur

Awami League (AL) General Secretary Abdul Jilil yesterday said the present government will be removed by constitutional means by April 30

to clear the way for a midterm election.

Speaking at the biennial council of Dinajpur district Awami League at

the local municipal hall, he called for unity of pro-liberation forces to launch a united movement for midterm election.

He said the country has been passing through a critical juncture and if necessary, the opposition parties will form a coalition government to put an end to the politics of anti-liberation elements.

Describing the BNP secretary

DU to name dorm after Khaleda, not Sufia Kamal

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) authorities have decided to construct a hall for female students after the name of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, brushing aside a committee's suggestion that it be named after poet Begum Sufia Kamal.

At a syndicate meeting with Vice-chancellor Prof SMA Faiz in the chair, the university authorities recently took the decision, but the date for the start of construction works was not finalised.

In 2001, former prime minister and now Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina announced to build a 500-seat hall for female students of the DU on a piece of Bangladesh Railway land behind Curzon Hall.

The authorities then formed a

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Sharon renews his threat to kill Arafat

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon renewed his threats against Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat yesterday, risking more international criticism, as security forces went on high alert for Passover.

Sharon was slapped down last week by his allies in Washington after giving an interview in which he warned that Arafat was a "marked man".

Striking a note of defiance on Monday he told public radio that his long-time nemesis was to blame for "the murder of Jews for decades".

Sharon, whose army last month assassinated the founder of the radical Palestinian group Hamas, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, said earlier in the interview that "all those who kill Jews or push for the killing of Jews or Israeli citizens deserve to die."

He also brushed off US criticism over his comments, insisting that "every country which respects itself, faced with assassins, must defend itself, like the United States does".

Sharon's threats towards Arafat

are widely seen as an attempt to prove that he has not "gone soft" as he prepares to evacuate most if not all of the Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip.

In a separate interview to army radio, Sharon said there was no intention to demolish Gaza settle-ments when a withdrawal takes place but added that he was seeking financial compensation for them.

"We have no intention of destroy-ing the houses in the Gaza Strip, we are hoping for contact with interna-tional organisations which can take responsibility for these buildings in exchange for financial compensa-tion," he said.

As defence minister in the early 1980s, Sharon oversaw the demoli-tion of settlements in the Sinai as the territory was handed back to Egypt.

But it now appears that settlers' homes and infrastructure in Gaza will be handed over to the Palestinians intact.

In February, when he first announced his intention to withdraw from Gaza as part of a wider

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UP member murdered in Chuadanga

UNB, Chuadanga

A union parishad (UP) member was murdered by unidentified assailants at Kayetpara village in Alamdanga upazila of the frontier district on Sunday night.

The victim, Motiur Rahman Nantu, 35, member of Doulatpur Union Parishad in Harinakunda upazila of the neighbouring Jhenidah district, was also a local Awami League leader.

Police said the assailants picked up Nantu from a tea stall at Fatepur in Harinakunda upazila at gunpoint at about 10:00pm.

"They took the UP member to a mango orchard at Kayetpara, beat him up and slit the throat," they added.

Police recovered the body and sent it to hospital morgue yesterday for autopsy. A case was filed with Alamdanga Police Station.

Tk 20 lakh cellphones seized

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs officials at Zia International Airport yesterday seized 384 cell phone sets report-edly worth Tk 20 lakh from two passengers.

Tipped-off, custom officials searched the luggage of Emirates flight No. EK-582 passengers Sayeed MA Wajed and M Imran at 8:40am and found the phone sets.

There were 228 pieces of Nokia-3310 and 156 Nokia-2100 sets in Wajed's bag while Imran was carry-ing casings, batteries and chargers for those.

However, the officials released them since the communication tools were importable and taxable items.

Turag fish die as mills dump waste

ABDUL KADER,

back from Kaliakoir, Gazipur

Indiscriminate disposal of toxic waste by about 200 surrounding mills and factories in the fish sanctuaries of the river Turag and adjoining beels, is critically endangering freshwater fish species.

Despite repeated appeals from the locals and NGOs, working with these fish sanctuaries in Kaliakoir upazila of Gazipur district, the disposal of wastes originating from knitting, dyeing, finishing and tannery industries, goes unabated, said the locals and NGO workers.

Bangladesh government in 1998 undertook a project named the

Management of Aquatic Ecosystems through Community Husbandry (MACH), supported by USAID, to manage the wetland resources centering around the river Turag and Mokosh and Awala beel in Kaliakoir upazila of Gazipur district.

Four NGOs, such as, Winrock International, Bangladesh Center for Advanced Studies (BCAS), Center for Natural Resource Studies (CNRS) and CARITAS Bangladesh, are implementing the project, involving the communities of the respective areas they work on.

So far, a total of five sanctuaries-three in the river Tungi and the other two in the beels, have been estab-lished to preserve the endangered

fish species like Ruhit, Chital, Meni, Pabda, Foli, Sharputi and Kalibaas. Fishermen are strictly prohibited from fishing in those areas for three months usually when the fishes lay eggs.

With the support of NGOs, the local communities have been striving hard to preserve the endangered fish species for about five years. But the ceaseless release of toxic waste by the mills and factories, has been greatly undermining their concerted efforts, said Abdul Karim Pakhi, a local leader of a community based Resource (fishes) Management Organisation in Mouchak union under Kaliakoir upazila.

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Key Unicef-run project ends in June

UNB, Dhaka

The Intensive District Approach to Education for All (Ideal), an exclusive Unicef-supported government project, comes to a close in June after running for eight years.

After June, the project will run under the umbrella of Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-II), a major national sub-sectoral programme of Directorate of Primary Education, with the support of other develop-ment partners.

"We have done lot under the Ideal project," said James Jennings, chief of Child Development and Education Section of Unicef, admit-ting that many things could not be

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Slain Old Dhaka trader's family gets threats

Prime suspect Kajal still on the loose

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Slain businessman Shamsul Haq's family continues to receive threats over phone after filing a case against Jubodal leader Rafiqul Islam Kajal, the prime suspect in the gruesome murders of the businessman, his son and his driver, and evading arrest for 11 days.

Haq's widow Sufia Begum told The Daily Star about an anonymous phone call her sister-in-law received two days ago. "You people have to pay for filing the case against Kajal. Don't you have other school-going

children in the family?" she quoted the caller as saying.

"I'm feeling very insecure. On the one hand, Kajal is still on the loose and on the other, these phone threats keep coming. I have four school- and college-going children," Sufia Begum said.

She expressed her willingness to meet the prime minister to apprise her of the family's predicament and also to seek her help in getting back the property her husband bought from Kajal.

Haq paid Tk 30 lakh to Kajal about two and a half months ago as per an

agreement in connection with the purchase of SH Mansion, an eight-storey building in Sadarghat, but Kajal never handed the building's ownership over to him.

The Jubodal leader went into hiding after remains of Haq and his son Russell Sheikh were found in 200 pieces two days after their disappear-ance on March 26. Haq's driver Moazzem was earlier found hacked to death on the outskirts of Dhaka.

Investigators said a manhunt is on to arrest Kajal and different places in the capital and other

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