

# Schoolboy makes a narrow escape from kidnappers

Body of abducted youth recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushlia

A schoolboy yesterday made an escape ten minutes after he was kidnapped in Kushlia, while police in the adjacent district of Jhenidah found the dead body of a young man abducted last Sunday.

In the first incident, a gang of alleged kidnappers picked up Ramjan Ahmed alias Ali, 9, a student of class three of Batikamara Government Primary School, into a microbus from Masjid crossroads in Kumarkhali upazila around noon. Ali, son of Saker Ali of Tebaria, was on his way home after school, family sources said.

Police quoting witnesses said the kid jumped down from the Kushlia-bound microbus, which was then standing on the highway near the municipal fire service station. The boy ran across the road crying for help.

Seeing locals rushing to help, the witnesses said, one of the kidnappers, who was talking on his cell-phone, quickly climbed back into the microbus and fled the scene.

Locals took Ali to his school. The schoolteachers called his parents and handed him over to them.

In the second case, Jhenidah police yesterday recovered the body of Ziaul Haq Zia, 25, from Buri Bhairab river.

There were torture marks all over the body and police assume he might

## JCD LEADER'S THREAT Meghna Oil Co halts operation for 5 hours

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Meghna Petroleum Company suspended its operation at Fatulla in Narayanganj for five hours yesterday after a Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader allegedly threatened the state owned oil company staff to stop their work there.

Abdur Rashid, depot-in-charge of the company, alleged Riad Chowdhury, owner of Fatulla Oil Agency and leader of local JCD, demanded extra kerosene for his agency.

"Riad is entitled to get 9,000 ltrs of kerosene as per allocation rule, but he asked for 18,000 ltrs," Rashid said.

Being refused, the JCD leader got furious and said no staff at the depot would be allowed to work if his demand went unmet.

Employees at the state owned oil company stopped their work at about 8:00am following the threat and resumed their operation at 1:00pm only after Fatullah Police Station assured of their safety.

Brushing aside the allegation, Riad said, "I did not threaten them. I am entitled to get 18,000 ltrs of kerosene, but the depot-in-charge refused to supply my allocation."

"He sold the kerosene reducing my allocation. As I opposed his corruption, he brought the charge against me," he headed.

## Seven-day

FROM PAGE 1

followed by a weekly holiday on April 30 (Friday) and an official holiday on May Day (Saturday). With just one working day (May 2) in between, government offices and most private offices would remain closed on May 3 and 4 on account of Eid-e-Miladunnabi and Buddha Purnima.

Traders and businesspeople fear the prolonged holiday will make the economy suffer heavily in terms of lost business.

# Congress catches up

FROM PAGE 12

voting, Reuters reports.

"This is not bad news," said Prakash Javdekar, a BJP spokesman, referring to TV exit polls.

"These were phases where we were supposed to lose some seats," he said of the first three stages.

India's main political foes have shifted base to the desert state of Rajasthan in the hope that 25 parliamentary seats up for grabs there can avert a hung parliament, AFP adds.

Opposition Congress leader Sonia Gandhi toured the northern state's Dausa constituency yesterday, a day after Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee ended the first leg of his tour of Rajasthan with a call against fractured voting in India's ongoing election that began April 20.

"Your vote is valuable and don't fritter it away," Vajpayee said in Churu town.

Voting in Rajasthan and 58 more constituencies across six other states on the fourth leg of the elections is scheduled for May 5.

The 57-year-old Gandhi, emboldened by exit polls which predicted her Congress party faring

have been beaten to death. They have sent the body to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

Zia, son of Rabiul Islam of Ghoppara in Jhenidah town, had been missing since Sunday evening.

Before Ali, at least 13 teenagers have been abducted in Kushlia district since January 1. Of them, two were killed as their families failed to buy their freedom, police could recover three, four are still missing and the rest were freed for hefty ransoms ranging from Tk 50,000 to Tk 2 lakh.

The unabated spate of kidnapping and ransom demands has triggered off a widespread terror among the parents, guardians and teachers of school and college going kids.

Many of the panic-stricken guardians have stopped sending their children to school while some others are accompanying their wards to and from the schools and waiting at the school gates all day long.

Authorities of a number of schools have also issued notices of caution to students and their guardians against possible abductions and asked police to ensure students' safety.

## Four killed in Comilla bus crash

UNB, Comilla

Four people, including the driver of a bus, were killed and 25 others injured when the speeding vehicle overturned on the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway at Khadghar in Chandania upazila yesterday.

Police said two passengers of the Comilla-bound bus from Dhaka died

on the spot, one at the upazila health complex and another on the way to Comilla Sadar Hospital.

Three of the dead were identified as bus driver Shambhu, 40, Ziaul Hasan, 21, of Biruli village in Nangolkot upazila and Din Bandhu Sarkar, 28 of Ullapara upazila, Sirajganj. Identity of another could not be known.

The injured people were admitted to the upazila health complex and different clinics.

## Politics rife

FROM PAGE 12

against the government in parliament and efforts to mount international community's pressure on the government to agree to snap polls.

Meanwhile, the AL general secretary and some other senior party leaders had a series of meetings with American and European diplomats in Dhaka. They were thought to have discussed the latest political situation in the country but details could not be known.

In another development, some politicians and former bureaucrats floated four 'national platforms' recently with the goal of putting an end to 'conventional politics' to free people from all sorts of repression and corruption.

Political analysts are cautiously watching their efforts to bring about changes in politics.

The analysts however noted there is a need for a change in the prevailing political culture as the parliamentary government's functioning is being greatly impeded due to persisting absence of the opposition from parliament.

In recent months, former president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, Gonoforum President Dr Kamal Hossain, former Jatiya Samaitantrik Dal president ASM Rob and former director general of Bangladesh Rifles ALM Fazlur Rahman floated different political platforms.

better than it did in the 1999 elections, appeared in a fighting mood and launched a blistering attack on Vajpayee's BJP.

"The BJP and its allies made tall promises of bringing economic reform, eradicating poverty and corruption ..., but these all turned out to be hollow promises because none of them has been fulfilled," said Gandhi in the Congress bastion of Dausa.

But Vajpayee, seeking to hold the premiership for a fourth term since 1996, scoffed at the polls, saying that the BJP's ouster of Congress in December's provincial balloting in Rajasthan had proven previous polls wrong.

"No one said the BJP will get 120 of the 200 seats in the recent assembly polls in Rajasthan but many were surprised when the results came out," he said.

## JCD men

FROM PAGE 12

The OC however denied the allegation. The association leaders came to file a GD and wanted an amicable solution to the matter, he said.

## Lawyer fined for contempt of court

UNB, Pirojpur

A magistrate's court in Pirojpur yesterday fined a lawyer for contempt of court.

Magistrate Anupam Kumar Barua slapped Tk 100 fine or three days imprisonment on Advocate Farooq Sarder, general secretary of Pirojpur District Bar Association, for failing to comply with an order to appear before the court.

The court ordered police to investigate a dowry case moved by the lawyer. Farooq misbehaved with the court saying the magistrate had earlier summoned an accused in a similar case, witnesses said.

Anupam served showcause notice on the lawyer and directed him to appear before the court in five minutes, but Farooq defied the order. The court immediately charged him of contempt of court, they added.

## Students block

FROM PAGE 12

Adviser Prof Zahid Hassan Milky to press home their 11-point demand including freeing the campus from session backlog, improved medical facilities at the university.

RU teachers earlier went on an indefinite strike demanding cancellation of the controversial appointment of the staff.

## JS body slams

FROM PAGE 12

that prohibits foreign missions from interfering in the internal affairs of the any country.

"Nobody should be allowed to violate the convention. We condemn it in the strongest possible terms," said Barrister Ziaur Rahman Khan, chairman of the standing committee.

However, another BNP lawmaker on the committee took a strong exception to the view. "Why should we protect a corrupt minister who has a large number of graft allegations against him," meeting sources quoted ruling BNP lawmaker AKM Abu Taher as saying.

The parliamentary body nonetheless dismissed his remarks and resolved that the statement of the Danish embassy is unwanted, unfortunate, undiplomatic, out of state protocol and violation of the Vienna Convention.

The committee also asked the Danish embassy to refrain from making further such comments.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan also criticised the Danish embassy for putting out a press release, saying the matter should rather have been addressed through the proper channel. "We have already protested the embassy's statement," he said.

Held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, the parliamentary committee meeting also discussed activities of Bangladesh missions in different countries.

## Govt plans

FROM PAGE 1

Name of more than one non-governmental organisation has also been included in the intelligence reports.

"We have specific information about direct involvement of many people and NGOs, who conspired with the Awami League to unseat the government. We have got enough documents on hand and are considering to take legal action against them," said a frontline BNP leader, asking not to be named.

He said the government plans to cancel registration of an NGO and actions against some others are also being mullied over as they were found to have violated the rules by directly getting involved with politics and anti-government activities.

"Authorities concerned are now checking the intelligence reports and carrying further investigation into the activities of the persons and organisations," said a key official at the home ministry.

Intelligence agencies have kept a close eye on the persons and organisations and regularly monitoring their movement and activities. There are also reports against a dozen of journalists, but the government is not thinking about taking action against them.

## Pilots refuse

FROM PAGE 1

operating the hazardous flights to Nepal.

However, Captain Kamal Mahmood, director of Biman's flight operations, said the F28s are airworthy. "We have got clearance from engineers that the planes are safe, but pilots are still refusing to fly. Currently, there is a shortage of captains for the F28s, but we have eight cadet pilots now undergoing training."

Sources said the pilots' boycott is a protest against Biman's move to procure two obsolete F28s from Indonesia, adding such a move shows poor business strategy on the part of Biman given that other airlines are phasing out the outdated planes.

Biman operates four weekly flights to the Himalayan kingdom and plans to raise the number to seven from next month.

Apart from the F28s, two leased Boeing 737s are also being used to service the Dhaka-Katmandu route. But the national carrier will likely find it hard to maintain flight schedule as the 737s will no longer be available from April 30 on expiry of the lease agreement.

# Full use of WTO

FROM PAGE 12

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries would sharply expand, to 30 to 40 percent, creating a huge shortfall of labour.

Again, up to 2050, the European Union (EU) countries would need an additional 46 million migrant labour to keep their workforce strength constant. And up to 2025, the Central and Eastern Europe would require a net inflow of eight million people to stabilise their working age population.

Other developed countries will also face the same crisis, the paper added. "In the long term (up to 2050), without mass immigration, nearly all European countries will experience a decline of between 10 and 50 percent in their active population aged 15 to 65. This will almost inevitably lead to the systematic recruitment of both skilled, semi skilled and unskilled foreign labour on a scale that is much larger than what is the case at present."

In this context, to take the fullest advantage offered by the TMNP, the paper prepared by CPD Research

Fellow Ananya Raihan and Research Associate Mabroor Mahmood, advised the government to request the potential countries to open their markets under the GATS negotiation.

The paper also underscores linking skill development plan with identification of markets and negotiations for market access. As, "Otherwise the opportunities will remain unrealised."

Through the TMNP, if Bangladesh increase the number of professionals going abroad by 200,000 a year, it would gain an additional yearly income of \$11.57 billion.

An export of additional 200,000 unskilled workers would fetch \$3.5 billion and the same number of skilled workers \$381 million extra, the study projected.

CPD Executive Director Debapriya Bhattacharya presented the paper. CPD Research Director Mustafizur Rahman was also present.

# Govt clinically dead

FROM PAGE 1

adjoining areas. Uniformed and plainclothes police also closed the entrances of nearby markets and offices.

Police baton-charged and chased away AL activists who tried to get through police barricades in their bid to go to the rally. Even chanting of slogans sparked police action on the activists as they tried to assemble.

"We have orders to allow only top AL leaders, lawmakers and journalists," a police officer stationed at the AL office told The Daily Star.

Some 20 AL activists led by Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid, Mohammad Nasim and Tanjim Ahmed Sohel MP removed some of the barbed wire barricades at 4:40pm.

At around 5:15pm, police picked up four people from outside a barricade, but AL leaders Suranjit Sengupta, Mohammad Hanif, Abdus Shahid, Rahmat Ali, Tanjim Ahmed Sohel MP and some others managed to free three of them.

About 30 minutes later, police

chased away about 250 AL workers as they chanted slogans near the lane leading to the AL Office.

When the rally ended at 6:00pm, some AL leaders and workers tried to take out a procession but failed as police neither removed the barricade nor allowed any vehicles to get near the office.

AL leaders were forced to leave the office on foot and later regrouped at a distance to form a 500-strong procession led by AL leader Tofail Ahmed that marched to the Zero Point chanting slogans in favour of the two-day hartals beginning today.

But police again baton-charged the procession from behind and picked up an unspecified number of AL activists. At this point, senior AL leaders got into a heated argument with police before leaving the scene.

## Mass arrests

FROM PAGE 1

said the government would reply to the court order in time after preparing explanations.

Under Section 86 of the DMP ordinance, individuals may be sentenced to one-year imprisonment for aimless roaming in streets.

Advocates Salauddin Ahmed, Sara Hossain, Shahdeen Malik, Faustina Pereira, Tanjib-ul Alam and Shanaz Babil assisted Dr Zahir in moving the petition.

Deputy Attorney General Adilur Rahman Khan appeared for the respondents.

# Unite to unseat

FROM PAGE 12

by arresting and punishing people without producing them before a magistrate.

"There is no such instance in the world that people are punished without producing them before a magistrate," he added.

Former vice chancellor of Dhaka University Prof AK Azad Chowdhury underscored united efforts to free the country from the misrule of this government that failed to curb corruption and disorder.

President of Dhaka University Teachers Association AAMS Arefin Siddique blamed the government for 'corruption' in education sector.

He alleged the government is ignoring the stalemate at Rajshahi University due to teachers' strike protesting appointment of teachers in violation of law.

Former vice president of Swadhinata Chikitsash Parishad Dr Badiuzzaman Bhuiyan said the government is out to change the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University since it is named after the father of the nation.

Prof Sultana Shafi said people's

sufferings have climaxed due to failure of the government to ensure law and order.

Other speakers included Barrister Shawkat Ali Khan, President of Dhaka Union of Journalists Altar Mahmood, journalist Shafiqul Kabir, General Secretary of Sammilita Sangskritik Jute Golam Kuddus, Engineers' Unity Council leader Mohammad Shahjahan Kabir and General Secretary of the Bar Bashir Ahmed.

Chaired by Mohammad Sirajul Huq, vice president of the Bar, the meeting was held at the Bar library.

Meanwhile, professionals will hold a joint meeting on Thursday to press the demand for unseating the government, meeting sources said.

## Pourashabha polls

FROM PAGE 12

army deployment considering the bitter experience it had during the Union Parishad (UP) elections last year. The EC had asked the government for army deployment during the UP polls, but the proposal was turned down.

# Reduced call rates

FROM PAGE 1

accessible and economically beneficial to the public."

The new tariff has slashed the NWD call charges by about 55 percent and ISD 31 percent. A subscriber will now be able to call anywhere in Bangladesh at Tk 4.50 instead of the previous Tk 10 a minute during peak hours and at Tk 3 instead of Tk 7.50 during off-peak hours.

A call within a district will now cost Tk 1.5 instead of Tk 3.0.

The ministry has also redefined the peak hours from 8:00am to 10:00pm.

Following a proposal of the BTBB, the telecom ministry has also changed the air distance categories from three to two slabs -- one up to 100 kilometres and the second over that.

The call tariff for the first slab is fixed at Tk 3 a minute, which was Tk 3 to Tk 6 previously, during peak hours. And during off-peak hours, the charge will now be Tk 1.50 a minute.

The call charges for the second slab are cut to Tk 4.5 a minute from Tk 10 during peak hours and to Tk 3 from Tk 7.50 during off-peak hours.

The ministry has also rearranged the ISD call zones into four groups in place of the previous three.

Asian countries including India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and Kuwait are in Zone-I and the call charges will now be Tk 18 a minute during peak hours and Tk 15 during off-peak hours. The charges were Tk 20 and Tk 15 a minute during peak and off-peak hours for Saarc countries and Myanmar, and Tk 30 and Tk 22.50 for middle-eastern countries.

Call charges for the Zone-II comprising European and some frequently called countries including Australia, USA and Canada are fixed at Tk 24 and Tk 18 a minute during peak and off-peak hours. These were Tk 40 and Tk 30 previously.

For the Zone-III comprising Pacific countries and those European, Australian and North American countries that do not fall in Zone-II, ISD call charges will now be at Tk 27 and Tk 21 a minute during peak and off-peak hours.

Call charges for the Zone-IV comprising South American and African countries and all the countries not included in the other three zones are fixed at Tk 30 and Tk 24 a minute during peak and off-peak hours.

## 2 labs set up in Faridpur to find cause of Nipah outbreak

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Experts from the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP), Atlanta, US has set up two laboratories in Faridpur to assess initial cause of Nipah virus outbreak there.

The CDCP team is currently working in Faridpur to confirm the cause of the viral infection, believed to be responsible for claiming 18 lives in the district between February and March this year.

"A human lab and animal lab have already been set up at Faridpur Medical College Hospital," Prof Abul Kalam Azad, director of Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research, International Centre for Health and Population Research (ICDDR,B), Bangladesh, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Both laboratories are engaged in sample collection to identify the cause and transmission of the virus," he added.

Meanwhile, two expert teams to control and identify the cause of virus outbreak are arriving in the capital within next week, health directorate officials said.

Heinrich Ulrich, Allen Ronald Grolla and Markus Rudolf, three experts on infection control, are expected to arrive by the end of this week with a machine to readily identify the virus known as polymerase chain-reaction or TCR.

Another World Health Organisation team led by Dr CT Tan from Malaysia is also due next week.

However, experts are yet unsure if the virus transmit from human to human.

## Hoodlums

FROM PAGE 12

his purse.

The SI got hold of one of the hoodlums but others hit him in the head with iron rods. As one of the criminals pulled out a revolver to shoot him, Siraj jumped on to the bus.

The hoodlums left the spot with the motorcycle. A case has been filed but none could be arrested till 8:00 last night.

Hoodlums on April 23 killed a staff of Jatiya Party MP Moshir Rahman Ranga and took away his car at Bhuighar on Dhaka-Narayanganj link road. The hoodlums also assaulted his teenage boy and the driver.

## Record security

FROM PAGE 1

activists trying to launch street agitation.

The number of law enforcers will be about 8,000 in the latest two-day 6:00am to 6:00pm hartal, up from about 5,000 deployed on previous hartal days, an official said.

Teams of law enforcers, including Rapid Action Battalion and Armed Police Battalion, have been put on alert and asked not to allow any hartal-hour procession. The Paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles will be on nighttime patrol, police said.

"Police will seriously deal with hartal-hour processions," said a police officer, who attended the pre-hartal meeting at Rajarbagh Police Lines.

The main opposition party, now close to its April 30 deadline for unseating the ruling BNP-led coalition government, announced the call for general strikes from a news conference on March 24 to demand snap polls and protest mass arrests.

Police halted a crackdown on political activists on Monday after more than 15,000 people were arrested in an eight-day dragnet.

The AL enforced another round of back-to-back hartal on April 7-8 across the country and vowed to press ahead with the latest general strikes that came after a 'no-confidence' programme on April 24-26 and yesterday's agitation amid police reinforcements.

## Scientists

FROM PAGE 1

Replying to a question, Alam said it is very hard to predict how long it will take to produce substitutes for blood. If everything goes fine, it might take 8-10 years here in US to complete the process from research in laboratory to clinical trial in hospitals. But some modern technologies might shorten that time considerably, he added.

Alam also said his team thought they would find haemoglobin in the protein of the "last universal common ancestor," from which all life evolved.

The primitive proteins, called protoglobins, were identified in two species of archaea.

"We will know how the protein formed, what its property is and how we can modify and use it for different biological applications," the Bangladeshi scientist said. "Intriguing connections" might exist between the "last universal common ancestor" and the evolution of mechanisms that sense oxygen, carbon monoxide, nitric oxide and hydrogen sulphide, he observed.

University of Texas Southwestern Medical Centre scientists also contributed to the research.

Alam, son of martyred freedom fighter Daliluddin Ahmed and late Lirian Ahmed, had his schooling at Government Laboratory School in the capital and then studied at Dhaka College. He obtained doctorates from Moscow State University and from Max Planck Institute of Germany.

# 64 killed as US forces

FROM PAGE 1

He said there were no casualties in the incident which occurred late Monday after an "engine malfunction". The crew was able to get out of the helicopter "with their equipment" before it exploded, he said.

As the United Nations prepares to discuss the form of a caretaker government due to take power June 30, US-appointed Iraqi leaders complained that the administration won't have real sovereignty as promised by American administrators for months.

The battles in the south Monday evening took place on the east side of the Euphrates River, across from Kufa and Najaf, Kimmitt said.

The first came in the afternoon, when Shia militiamen opened fire on a US patrol, and seven insurgents were killed. Hours later, a M1 tank was attacked with rocket-propelled grenades, triggering a heavy battle in which warplanes destroyed an anti-aircraft gun belonging to the militia, and 57 gunmen were killed, Kimmitt said.

Night video taken by the Associated Press Television News between Najaf and the nearby town of Kufa showed US army helicopters flying low over smoke rising from an area in the distance amid flashes of gunfire.

In Fallujah, one Marine was killed Monday, and tank fire toppled the mosque's minaret, which commanders said was being used by gunmen. The violence, in which eight Iraqi insurgents were killed,

tested the US decision to continue a political track in resolving the Fallujah standoff.

The battle north of Najaf broke out Monday night and lasted several hours, with helicopter gunships called in for support, a military spokesman said.

An al-Sadr aide in Najaf, Mustaq al-Khafaji, accused Americans of trying to advance toward Kufa. "We will face the Americans whenever they show up," he said.

About 2,000 troops are deployed outside Najaf, but the military is having to tread carefully. Any action that even brings the possibility of harm to the sacred Imam Ali Shrine at its heart could turn the limited al-Sadr revolt into a widespread uprising against Iraq's Shia majority.

Top administrator