

Abducted Ctg student yet to be rescued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong police are yet to rescue medical student of University of Science and Technology, Chittagong (USTC) after four days into his abduction from Muradpur in the port city.

Despite raids in different parts of the port city yesterday, police returned empty-handed. However, they have detected the cell phone number, which the captors of Nurul Azim used during contacting his family members, sources said.

"We have got the phone number and some other important clues. We are proceeding in line with the clues to rescue the victim," said Miah Lutfur Rahman, deputy police commissioner, Chittagong (north).

The kidnapers have stopped calling Azim's family members following massive police raids, he added.

Unknown criminals abducted Azim, a final year medical student, Sunday morning when he was going to the university. They later demanded Tk 20 lakh ransom for his release.

Twin blasts near US consulate in Karachi

At least 20 injured; Islamist militant link suspected

REUTERS, Karachi

At least 20 people have been wounded after two car bombs exploded outside the Pakistan-American Cultural Centre in the southern Pakistani city of Karachi.

The explosions, less than 15 minutes apart, took place yesterday about 100 metres (yards) from the residence of the US consul and about 200 metres from the US consulate, which was the scene of a bloody car bomb attack by Islamist militants in 2002.

Reuters Correspondent Aamir Ashraf arrived at the scene shortly after the first blast and just before the second.

The second blast was far stronger than the first and caused the most casualties.

"There was a loud explosion and we were all stunned," Ashraf said of the second explosion. "The car was engulfed in flames and the first car then also caught fire."

"Debris from the car hit people, and I saw people with head cuts and legs. A man standing next to me was hit in the arm and was bleeding."

"We couldn't hear anything afterwards, the blast had deafened us."

Ashraf said he saw no fatalities at the scene.

Another Reuters reporter saw 20 people admitted to hospital. They included eight policemen and six journalists. One policeman and a civilian were seriously hurt.

Pakistan's biggest city has been the scene of frequent acts of Islamist militant violence since President Pervez Musharraf joined the US-led war on terror in 2001.

Militants have been known to detonate a small bomb to draw police and others to the scene,

Ministry seeks four-fold rise in farm subsidy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The agriculture ministry has sought Tk 1,213 crore from the finance ministry for farm subsidy in the next fiscal year, proposing a more than four-fold rise in the allocation in the next budget.

Major portion of the subsidy will be spent on urea and phosphate fertilizers, a meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on the agriculture ministry was told yesterday.

Farm subsidy in the current fiscal year stands at Tk 300 crore.

"Subsidy on fertilizers, seeds and electricity will be provided while the issue of subsidy on diesel has yet to be decided," Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, state minister for agriculture, told The Daily Star yesterday.

But an opposition lawmaker demanded subsidy on all agricultural inputs.

The parliamentary body asked the ministry to place its plan before the committee, detailing how the subsidy would be allocated and



Police arrest four people allegedly of the Purbo Banglar Communist Party, a banned underground outfit, in a raid on Aziz Supermarket in Dhaka yesterday.

Gilman for tighter US watch on terrorism

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Visiting US president's special envoy to United Nations, Benjamin Gilman, yesterday said a communal feeling does exist in the country and, after the recent grenade attack on the British envoy and murder of lawmaker Ahsanullah Master, the US should keep a tight watch on terrorist activities here.

"There are things we should be watching closely to ensure that there is no major outbreak of terrorism here," Gilman said at a press briefing at the state guesthouse Padma in the city on the last day of his three-day trip to Bangladesh.

The former US congressman narrated how, during a visit to a local temple, some members of the Hindu community told him about the 'zero tolerance' which exists here. "A communal feeling exists here, rooted in the diverse ethnic and religious groups," he noted.

Gilman spoke strongly against the inter-river linking project proposed by the former BJP government of India. He said he has come



An open manhole threatens traffic movement on Abdul Ghani Road in front of the secretariat that houses most government offices.

BSF kills one in Chuadanga

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) yesterday allegedly gunned down a Bangladeshi in Chuadanga while the border force held another farmer in Meherpur.

BSF troops opened fire on five Bangladeshis near Jibonagar border in Chuadanga when they were smuggling palm oil and diesel, locals said.

Hafizur Rahman Biswas, 18, son of Azizur Rahman of Harinagar village under Jibonagar, died in the firing and BSF men took away his body, they added.

Sending a letter to its Indian counterpart, Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) demanded immediate handing over of the body, they added.

BSF men held Bangladeshi farmer Kawasar Ali, 35, near Khanpur border under Mujibnagar of Meherpur as he reportedly crossed borderline, sources said.

Despite a protest letter from the BDR, the BSF did not turn the farmer till 6:00 yesterday evening.

Evil forces within govt shelter terrors

Alleges Dr Kamal

UNB, Dhaka

National Unity Platform President Dr Kamal Hossain suspects 'evil forces within the government' are impeding investigations into the series of bomb blasts and arms hauls and protecting the terrorists.

He demanded an independent national enquiry commission comprising three retired chief justices and other experts acceptable to all to conduct impartial investigations into the incidents, including the Chittagong arms haul and the bomb attack on the British high commissioner.

Dr Kamal declared June 10 as 'Stop Violence and Terrorism Day' across the country and urged the people to stand united to end the sick politics which he said lies at the heart of the rot.

Addressing a news conference at the Jatiyo Press Club yesterday Dr Kamal said the government's failure in effective investigation into crimes and taking action against real perpetrators has created a



sense of deep insecurity among all citizens.

"Practically every divisional headquarters has experienced scenes of horrendous crimes followed by unfulfilled promises of proper investigation and law enforcement," said the jurist-cum-politician.

Dr Kamal, also the president of Gono Forum, said an in-depth probe must be carried out to identify who are those within the government that

3 Bangladeshis held in Japan for link with al-Qaeda

AGENCIES, Tokyo

Japanese police arrested three Bangladeshis along with two other foreign national after carrying out their first raids in a widening probe of suspected al-Qaeda activities centring on a French national who spent over a year in Japan.

A spokesman for the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department said a 26-year-old Bangladeshi identified as Ahmed Faishal, and Kane Yaya, a 41-year-old man from Mali were arrested on suspicion of violating immigration laws.

"We arrested two foreign national men today on suspicion of violation of the immigration law," the spokesman said.

"Both men overstayed in Japan without proper immigration documents."

Two other Bangladeshis and an Indian were also arrested, suspected of having had frequent contact with Lionel Dumont, 33, a Frenchman linked by the United States to al-Qaeda, Jiji Press and Kyodo News

Koreas meet, discuss military matters

AFP, Seoul

North Korea and South Korea discussed tension reduction on the world's last Cold War frontier at unprecedented talks between their military generals, officials said.

The meeting on Wednesday, the first of its kind since the Korean War over five decades ago, was under way at Mount Kumgang, a tourist enclave on North Korean eastern coast, they said.

South Korea, sending a navy general as chief delegate, hoped the day-long consultations would produce concrete measures to reduce the threat of clashes with North Korea off the west coast.

"The talks are proceeding as scheduled," said Oh Jeong-Hee, a defense ministry official in Seoul who is in contact with the South's delegation.

"Our delegates believe that the talks should be a first step towards reducing tension and building trust and most of all, work out measures to avoid accidental clashes in the West Sea (Yellow Sea)."

The talks are the first between top-level officers in uniform from the two sides since the 1950-1953 Korean War.

At the talks, Seoul will propose setting up a military hotline and shared radio frequencies and flag

Currents hobble launch salvation

Death count soars to 83, salvation tug reaches Chandpur, probe ordered

STAR REPORT

With the recovery of three more bodies, death toll from twin launch disasters in the Meghna near Chandpur rose to 83 yesterday as currents in the swift-flowing river halted efforts to salvage MV

Digonto, four days into its capsized.

Nannu Gazi, chairman of Kalyanpur union, said relatives of the missing passengers pinpointed the location of the Digonto on their own and tried to retrieve bodies feared trapped in the hull with the help of fishermen.

They tied the launch with an anchored trawler, but strong currents hobbled their efforts and carried the vessel towards downstream.

Caught by a storm, the Digonto, ferrying between Torki in Gournadi

Police foil Proshika's human chain protest

DU CORRESPONDENT

Ramna police yesterday foiled a human chain formed by the family members of the arrested staff of non-governmental organisation Proshika at the Central Shaheed Minar.

About 300 family members of the arrested officials and employees with banners and placards moved towards Shaheed Minar at about 10:00am to form a human chain to press home their demands for immediate release of the organisation's president, Qazi Faruque Ahmed and other detained Proshika staff.

Wives and offspring of the

Ageing F-28s join Biman fleet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman Bangladesh Airlines yesterday included two 26-year-old F-28 aircraft to its fleet, brushing aside all opposition and controversy over commercial viability of the obsolete planes.

The 1977-model planes arrived on Zia International Airport (ZIA) on Tuesday night. Biman bought the aircraft for \$2.91 million from Indonesian Hiebert Group Ltd, bringing five the number of planes in the F-28 fleet.

Biman pilots and some officials opposed the procurement considering the outdated model and fearing risk of incurring huge loss on account of heavy maintenance cost. Pilots of the F-28 fleet last month also refused to fly the old planes to Nepal, finding the planes not technically sound for hilly terrain.

Biman has already floated tender to buy a backup engine for the F-28s fearing mechanical glitch of throttling

HC stays RPCLMD's sacking

STAR REPORT

The High Court yesterday issued a stay order on a decision of the Rural Electrification Board (REB) to terminate Managing Director of the Rural Power Company Ltd. (RPCL) MD Abdus Sabur.

The High Court last month issued a show cause notice on the REB chairman and some officials to explain by May 1 why the dismissal of the RPCL chief will not be declared illegal. The REB instead of making a reply to the High Court

Sikri pushes for transit deal's execution

STAR REPORT

Indian High Commissioner in Bangladesh Veena Sikri has pushed for implementation of the road and rail transit agreement between the next-door neighbours to facilitate transportation of Indian goods to its northeastern states through Bangladesh.

"Water transit exists on a limited scale and it is necessary to implement the road and rail agreement. Bangladesh and India can have a bilateral transport agreement so that Bangladeshi vehicles can transport Indian goods from Benapole to Agartala," Sikri told a function.

The Indian envoy felt the need for regular dialogues on all trade issues in the joint working group to evolve a win-win situation. Northeastern Indian states are prospective markets for Bangladeshi products, she said, adding that India is fully prepared to work with Bangladesh to that end.

Sikri was speaking at the inauguration of Green Arrow Express City Bus Service at China-Bangladesh Friendship Conference Center in the capital on Tuesday.

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda, Forest and Environment Minister Tariqul Islam



Staff and relatives of arrested staff of Proshika, a leading NGO, form a human chain in Dhaka yesterday in protest against what they term harassment and torture on the organisation activists by the government.

Prayer Timing

May 27

| | Azan | Jamaat |
|---------|-------|--------|
| Fajr | 4-05 | 4-40 |
| Zohr | 12-45 | 1-15 |
| Asr | 5-00 | 5-15 |
| Maghrib | 6-40 | 6-45 |
| Esha | 8-00 | 8-30 |

Source: Islamic Foundation