

Murdered before her wedding

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A young woman was killed only days before her wedding allegedly by a Jatiyabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) cadre in the port city as her family turned down his proposal to marry her.

The tragic incident occurred at Baraipara in Chandgaon on Thursday night.

Police recovered the body of Ismat Ara Chowdhury Shampa, 24, a resident of Khwaza Road in Bakolia, from a drain at Baraipara yesterday morning.

The victim's family alleged that notorious criminal and JCD cadre Ekramul Haq Liton killed Shampa having failed to marry her. He threatened her repeatedly following her engagement last month.

They said Shampa took master's final examination in accounting from Hazi Mohammad Mohsin College recently and was engaged to the chief of a private firm in Dhaka.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

Delhi wants to revamp ties with Pakistan along China model

AFP, New Delhi

India's new foreign minister has said he wants a multi-speed dialogue with Pakistan where major disputes such as Kashmir do not hold up progress on other matters, according to an interview published yesterday.

Natwar Singh, in his first major interview since being sworn in as foreign minister of the left-leaning United Progressive Alliance this week, said he wanted to revamp ties with Pakistan along with lines of New Delhi's relationship with Beijing.

"Pakistan is close to China and so is India. So why don't we follow the same example? We're saying don't forget Kashmir (but) keep it aside for faster progress on other issues," he told The Hindustan Times newspaper.

Singh said India's differences with China about their border over which they fought a brief war in 1962 had not impeded "relations in other areas."



Natwar Singh

But he said he was not asking Islamabad to put the issue of Kashmir, where a deadly Islamic revolt against Indian rule has raged since 1989, on a backburner.

"But if you make Kashmir the only agenda, then it will be difficult. Let's have progress on other issues as we discuss Kashmir through a

high-level mechanism of the kind we have with China."

The border war between India and China left their relations in shreds. But growing trade between the giant economies in the 1990s led to warming ties and they have played down their territorial dispute to focus on improving commercial and other relations.

In June, India and China appointed special envoys to solve the border issue.

Singh said India and Pakistan needed to get over their obsession with Kashmir, which both countries hold in part but claim in full.

"If our diplomats spend 30 per cent of their time on Kashmir, their (Pakistani) diplomats spend 85 per cent. This must stop," he said.

The new communist-backed Congress coalition led by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh government has begun work on a "definite roadmap" to build relations with Islamabad and other nations in

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Cong victory a victory of secularism, says Kuldip

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The recent Congress victory is a victory of secularism in Indian election. It is a lesson to governments in the region that ordinary citizens' needs should be addressed and politics based on religious fundamentalism is futile, prominent Indian political commentator Kuldip Nayar said yesterday.

"Any party who will be there (in power) tomorrow will have to think about people's problems of living," said Nayar, a former member of the Rajya Sabha, speaking as the keynote speaker at a seminar on "Indian Parliamentary Elections 2004," organised by Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs at its auditorium.

Nayar observed that restricting the economic benefit only to the upper 10 to 15 percent of the population and not solving the problems of unemployment, poor infrastructure and lack of basic needs such as water and food triggered the downfall of the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party).

"If India was shining, it was shining for 10 to 15 percent of the population, but the economy is

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

THE STRENGTH WITHIN



PHOTO: STAR

WINDOW ON THE WORLD: Visually disabled students listen to taped books at a 'talking library' in Mirpur in Dhaka that houses thousands of books in Braille and audio tapes.

Undaunted resilience

ASHFAQ WARES KHAN

Shammi's hands felt around the desk, put on her headphones, located the cassette player and inserted the audiotape.

The tape played her story -- a story of her resilience and strength that gave heart to her spirit through the ordeal as a visually disabled student trying to study in Bangladesh.

But the education system, which, like most people in the country, take for granted the deprivation of the visually-challenged who cannot use printed materials, offered her little support.

Blind from birth, Shammi's impairment did not stop her from flying through primary school in Barisal.

"It was easy through primary school, since they (the government) had given us Braille textbooks," Shammi recalls. "But from high school onwards we did it ourselves."

The "it" Shammi refers to is the arduous task of extracting the required chapters from the textbooks to transfer them on to either an audio cassette or Braille, a writing system read with the fingers by people who don't see.

She, like the majority of the visually disabled in Bangladesh who seek secondary education or higher, had to pay a hefty sum to hire someone to record the chapters onto an audio cassette or have the chapters read out so she could put them on Braille format.

"It would be very rare for me to find a good friend or a relative to regularly record the book or read it out very patiently to us. I think it was and still is the same for many of us," said Shammi. Some of her friends, who also happened to be visually-challenged, nodded in agreement.

These days, Shammi, a second year student of Bangla at a college in Dhaka, and her friends congregate at a small building in Mirpur, on the outskirts of Dhaka, which acts as their portal into the world of knowledge and discovery. The small building houses the "Talking Library", which holds over a thousand books in Braille and audio tapes.

An initiative of the Blind Education and Rehabilitation Development Organisation (Berdo), the library, with over 150 members and many others frequently using its resources, has taped textbooks on grammar, training, training manuals, general knowledge and literature and typed largely textbooks on Braille.

Most records held by organisations working with the visually impaired suggest that such students usually dropped out after primary school and at best after high school, because of a lack of education resources.

"I would not be confident of continuing my education if I knew that I might not get this support of resources," says Shammi. "I do not stand a chance against other students unless I get access to the books and I cannot afford to pay other people to record all the books required at this level," adds Shammi, who like most of the students also comes from insolvent families.

The bringing of visually-challenged students together, Shammi says, gives them a rare opportunity to share notes and more importantly, experience of how to cope with common problems.

Shammi giggles and continues, "We had never read a novel, even when for Bangla at school we had to analyse the characters and the plots, we never actually knew the book."

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Police still to trace school student

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police are yet to find the whereabouts of the school student Ishtiaq Rizvi alias Rushu, 17, abducted on Tuesday night.

Armed criminals abducted Rushu, a secondary school student from Hamzerbag High School, of Bibirhat in the city and asked Rushu's father Golam Rabbani, deputy manager of Hafiz Jute Mills, to pay them Tk 10 lakh for his son's release.

Police suspect the abduction might be a sequel to a love affair. They have so far arrested five people, mostly in their teens, from Bibirhat in the early hours of yesterday.

Police said they will produce the arrestees -- Riad Mahmud Chowdhury Pavel, Zobaer Hossain, Md Mizanur Rahman Ziku, Harunur Rashid and Shakawat Hossain Rahul -- before court for their remand.

One of the arrestees is reportedly a relative of Nurul Azim Shikder, the abducted medical student who allegedly bought his freedom on Thursday.



PHOTO: STAR

Stick-brandishing Khatme Nabuyat activists assemble to besiege the Ahmadyya mosque at Chawkbazar in Chittagong yesterday.

Class III govt employees demand DA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Third Class Government Employees Samity (BTGGS) yesterday reiterated that allocation for their dearness allowance be made in the upcoming budget.

Leaders of BTGGS at a press conference held at Dhaka Reporters Unity office yesterday voiced the demand.

They said the cost of living has soared to 35 percent because of price spiral leading the limited-income employees to troubled times. The upcoming budget must allocate a sum to help the employees rid themselves of the acute financial hardship, they observed.

Harun ur Rashid, president of BTGGS at the conference reminded the government of their six-point demand that included declaration of the dearness allowance, a permanent job commission and a permanent pay commission.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Religious bigots push nation toward crisis: AL

UNB, Dhaka

Main opposition Awami League (AL) has said the nation is facing serious crisis with the "rise of religious extremists under government patronage."

The concern was voiced at a joint meeting of the leaders of the front organisations and assistant secretaries of different sub-committees of the party at its headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday.

The meeting observed that the country was passing through a

"chaotic situation with the misrule of the alliance government on one hand and the dual rule of Hawa Bhaban on the other."

The meeting alleged the country has been pushed towards graver crisis with the rule of Bangla Bhai, dreaded operations commander of Islamist outfit Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), in different parts of the northern region, domination of the outlaws in

K h u l n a

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Outlaw shot dead by Khulna cops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Fakhrul Islam Babul alias Swapan, 30, secretary of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) Khulna divisional unit, was shot dead allegedly by police early yesterday at Sonakhali village under Fakirhat upazilla of Bagerhat district.

Khulna police arrested PBCP leader Swapan and three other activists of the outlawed party at Mirpur in Dhaka on Tuesday.

According to witnesses, Swapan was shot dead by plainclothes policemen. But police said the outlaw died in crossfire.

According to the police superintendent of Bagerhat, joint forces

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

No clue yet to shrine blast

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Different agencies investigating the May 21 grenade blast at the shrine of Hajrat Shahjalal (RA) are yet to find any clue to the attack and its perpetrators.

An intelligence official yesterday said it would take more time as they were interrogating people from different corners for any possible lead to the blast.

"The agencies are working on their own while a cell is there to coordinate," the official added.

The task of monitoring the activities of the cell is entrusted to Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of

Sylhet Range Ali Imam Chowdhury.

Meanwhile, a leaflet was distributed among the people returning from the Juma prayer yesterday. It read the May 21 blast had tarnished Bangladesh's image at home and abroad. Assist in detecting the culprits involved with the heinous act by providing information. You are earnestly requested to give information about any important or unnatural scene during your presence in the shrine area that day.

The leaflet pledged to treat the informant with confidentiality.

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and police keep a round-the-clock vigil

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Killing fallout hits Gazipur companies

RAFIQ HASAN, back from Gazipur

Tusuca Jeans Limited at Konabari in Gazipur had no links to the killing of lawmaker Ahsanullah Master on May 7, but the factory suffered a loss of Tk 40 lakh as a mob protesting the killing set fire to its van carrying over 18,000 pieces of jeans trousers en route to Chittagong port for export.

The fire burnt Tusuca's van to ashes near Board Bazar, around 15km from the factory, before it could reach Kamalapur Inland Container Depot (ICD) in Dhaka. The van left the factory before the news of the killing spread.

Even after getting information about the attack, the company could not take steps to recover the goods as the road became all but off-limits to traffic in the wake of the killing of the Awami League (AL) legislator, company sources said.

In the following three days also, the company did not send export cargo for shipment or bring in raw materials for production.

"Production at the factory went almost 50 percent down -- from more than 2,200 pieces of trousers a day to about 1,200 pieces -- in four days of political violence in the district," said Sheikh Mohammad Ashiq-uz-zaman, factory manager.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Prayer Timing		
May 29		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-05	4-40
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-43	6-47
Esha	8-05	8-35

Source: Islamic Foundation

PCJSS postpones programme till tomorrow

UNB, Khagrachhari

Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) has postponed its indefinite road and waterway blockade programme in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) until tomorrow.

The PCJSS leaders agreed to postpone their programme after reviewing situation at a meeting of the law and order committee held at the deputy commissioner's office here yesterday with Chairman of the CHT Development Board Wadud Bhuiyan MP in the chair.

The PCJSS enforced the indefinite blockade programme in three hill districts -- Rangamati,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

2 Japanese journalists, son of Iraq Governing Council member killed

AFP, Mahmudiya

Two Japanese journalists and their Iraqi translator were killed when their car was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade south of Baghdad Thursday, hospital and family sources said yesterday.

"One Japanese and his Iraqi translator are in the morgue but the police told me they had the body of a second Japanese," said Imad al-Malaki, a senior administrator at Mahmudiya hospital.

"According to my information, the incident happened at 6:00 pm (1400 GMT) between Mahmudiya

and Latifiya. A rocket was fired at their car. The vehicle was incinerated and their corpses charred," he added.

"One of them is my brother. He was their translator. I recognised his nose, his belt and his jeans. He was Mohammed. He was 48," said Sabah Sabah Najmedin.

Another hospital source said the driver of the car was wounded, but that his relatives had taken him to Baghdad. The attack happened some 30km south of the capital.

Sources at the Japanese embassy said only that they were investigating reports that the report-

ers had been killed.

Early Friday, Tokyo's top government spokesman said that two Japanese journalists had been attacked in Iraq south of Baghdad.

He identified the two men as Shinsuke Hashida, a 61-year-old freelance journalist and veteran of war-zone reporting based in Bangkok, and his nephew Kotaro Ogawa, 33, from the western Japan city of Totтори.

In a separate incident Thursday, the son of the Iraqi Governing Council's only woman member, Salama al-Khufaji, was also killed when her convoy was attacked at

Yusufiyah, 20 kilometres south of Baghdad, a council spokesman said yesterday.

Khufaji was not hurt in the attack but her son, Ahmed, was killed when the car he was travelling came under fire Thursday and crashed into a river, said Dr Mahmoud Othman.

"The son died in the shooting. Two or three of her bodyguards died as well," he said. Two other people were hurt and were being treated at

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6