

Didar shot dead

FROM PAGE 1
of his Mohammadpur apartment house.

"Three gunmen stopped my sir (Didar) and three of his staff in a microbus when they were just moving out of the apartment's gates at around 11:00am and shot him point blank at will," said security guard Mamun who witnessed the attack.

With the killers continuing firing, the driver raced the microbus to Bangladesh Medical College Hospital in Dhanmondi, where doctors declared the BJP leader dead.

"After the attack, the assailants, aged between 25 and 30, walked away towards the Deputy Commissioner of Traffic's (Dhaka North) Office through the footpath of the busy Awrangzeb Road," the security guard added.

Didar, also a contractor and general secretary of Bangladesh Roads and Highways Department Contractors' Association (BRHDC), suffered six bullets in his head, shoulder, back and chest.

Didar's business partners Harun and Sohrab, site engineer Akhter Hossain and the microbus driver, who were accompanying him in the microbus to one of his construction sites at Narsingdi, escaped the shooting unhurt.

Police held the three co-passengers and the security guard for interrogation.

Didar was buried at Mirpur Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard after a namaj-e-janaja in Kalabagan playground.

BJP Chairman Nazir Rahman Manjur and General Secretary Qazi Feroz Rashid in a joint statement yesterday condemned the murder and demanded immediate arrest and exemplary punishment of the killers. The BJP leaders also conveyed their sympathy to the family members of their departed colleague.

In another statement, Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad also condemned the killing and demanded immediate punishment of the killers. "The country's law and order situation has reached such a position that there is no guarantee of life for any one at all," he said in the statement.

SHADOWED BY TERRORISTS

Sources said, following continued threat from operatives of Joy, a 'dreaded criminal', Didar left his father's Bashiruddin Road house in Kalabagan for the Mohammadpur apartment house 'Pantha Need' four weeks ago.

The source also alleged Joy, now in India, ordered his associates to kill Didar, as he refused to share a huge Roads and Highways (R&H) construction work with Joy's people.

Following threat on his life, the sources said, Didar avoided going to the R&H office during the last few months. Fearing attack, he did not even give his new home address to

his close friends, they added.

Relatives of the slain BJP leader, on the other hand, alleged a top listed criminal of the city, Kala Jahangir, had also been threatening Didar for the last few months for refusing to pay Tk 1 crore in tolls.

Rivalry over the leadership of BRHDC might also be the reason of the killing, said a friend of Didar, seeking anonymity.

Officer-in-charge of Mohammadpur Police Station said rivalry over construction works might have led to Didar's killing.

No case was lodged until filing of this report at 9:00pm. But, Detective Branch of Police said they had already launched investigation into the incident last evening.

MURDER OF TRADER

At Mirpur-1, assailants ambushed Zakir Hossain Biplob, 30, in front of his shop 'Chowdhury Enterprise' at Ya Khajah Bhaban at 12:10pm.

As Zakir, a local leader of ruling BNP's student wing Jatiyatadbadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and president of local Jagoran Samabay Samity, stepped out of his shop, one of a group of three gunmen shot him in the head, said a witness.

Zakir's younger brother Mustafizur Rahman Maruf and his friend Aminul Islam rushed out of the shop to his aid. But the gunmen frightened them away by shooting at them. As they retreated, the killers left the scene, leaving Zakir in a pool of blood.

Victim's elder brother Mesbahur Rahman rushed him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) at around 1:30pm, where doctors declared him dead.

Relatives said criminals had been threatening Zakir since he had formed anti-extortion Lathi-Banshi Committee three months ago.

"Extortionists also shot my younger brother Tuhin, a JCD leader, at Mirpur-10 five months ago," Mesbahur told The Daily Star, adding, "In 1993, gunmen murdered my brother Janu inside Mirpur Bangla College." Janu, also a JCD leader, was vice president of Bangla College.

Mirpur police blamed a local extortionist gang led by Ahsiq-Babu group for the killing.

TRUCK DRIVER KILLING

At Gabtoli, apparent muggers caught truck driver Abdul Jalil, 45, in front of a petrol pump when he was taking tea there in the early hours yesterday.

After stabbing Jalil all over the body, specially in the shoulder, the assailants reportedly frisked and took away Tk 6,000 from him and left the scene.

Locals rushed the victim to the DMCH at 4:30am, where he died at 10:30am.

Jalil, who hails from Char Sadaruddin of Shilaiddh, Faridpur, came to Gabtoli driving a goods truck.

New probe proves

FROM PAGE 12
supplier 80 percent (or Tk 1.67 crore) of non-equipment related price. The DG and the project director even made pre-shipment visit to Switzerland and indulged in irregularities.

The probe committee found that the audio equipment purchase project was too ambitious and that the DFP never had the necessary infrastructure and skilled manpower to own and operate such gadgets. Besides, the supplying company was guilty of delaying the project by a year and failing to provide the DFP with a licence to use the audio noise reduction Dolby technology.

The supplier also did not provide the Dolby digital camera processor and six headphones, hampering the installation of the audio equipment, the probe reveals. During their pre-shipment inspection visit to Switzerland, neither the DG nor the project director made any note of the suppliers' failure to provide Dolby equipment, the committee said.

The inquiry committee held the DG responsible for the irregularities along with Director (Film) Sardar Aminul Islam, Project Director BM Salahuddin and another official Shahid Abdullah.

The enquiry committee has held Salahuddin responsible for the faulty project design and not keeping the provision of skilled

manpower in it. The Dolby sound system was supposed to be installed at a theatre that never existed in his project design. And even if a new theatre were to be built, the Swiss Dolby authorities, according to the deal, would still have visited the DFP to examine whether the theatre was suitable for such installation and whether the licence would be issued.

In that event, the DFP would have borne the cost of the trip of the Dolby officials and pay fees to the Dolby authorities for screening a film.

The inquiry committee notes that the project was unnecessarily expensive for a poor country like Bangladesh.

DG of DFP Syed Mahbubur Rahman, when contacted, said that there was no corruption or irregularities in the purchase of the equipment of the project. "I see nothing to be inquired into because we have followed all procedural matters properly."

He claimed that 'a section of people' was deliberately spreading lies against him and his organisation.

Ctg Islamic

FROM PAGE 1
training, two tents, spears, a pair of binoculars and other equipment from the training centre in Alipur, 32 kilometres north of the port city of Chittagong.

Mohammad Iskander and Enamul Huq were arrested with suspected links to Harkatul Jihad, an Islamist outfit that allegedly patronised the training centre.

"One of the arrestees was a cook and the other worked as an assistant. They are quizzing them at Hathazari Police Station to find clues," Superintendent of Police in Chittagong Mahbubur Rahman told The Daily Star.

Apparently under pressure from political bigwigs, other police officials declined to give details on their aid.

Intelligence sources said at least 24 madrasa students in each batch trained in arms before they fanned out across the country to carry out subversive activities.

The sources quoted the arrestees as telling interrogators that Hannan with militant links was trained at the centre and has a role in the May 21 bomb blast at Hazrat Shahjalal Shrine in Sylhet.

The arrestees told presspersons that the madrasa students who arrived there were trained in Taliban style in the hilly areas, adding some trainees were to go abroad and many others went to Sylhet and Mymensingh. But police declined to comment on the issue.

Males flee homes on outlaw threat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Males of at least 25 families in three villages of Khajira union under Assasuni upazila are on the run after death threats by an outlawed outfit demanding tolls poured in.

During last week, local shrimp traders, mostly Hindus received letters from Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) cadres demanding toll that ranged from Tk one lakh to two lakh. In those letters, the PBCP cadres threatened to kill if anyone failed to comply with.

Meanwhile, some of the threatened have taken refuge at upazila sadar and at district sadar. Hardly any male member of those families dared to stay home in Tuar danga, Khajira, Jailpatna and adjacent villages.

In last week, locals saw so many letters carrying death threats and demand for tolls that it triggered a panic among them. Of the recipient families, some paid tolls after negotiation with the outlaws while the rest have deserted their homes.

30 pry teachers

FROM PAGE 12
Condition of several other striking teachers also deteriorated yesterday. At least 10 teachers were given intravenous fluid due to dehydration and other complications stemmed from starvation.

Sadeka Begum of Brahmanbaria, Shahidul Islam of Barisal and Siddiqui Rahman of Munshiganj were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) as their condition worsened.

Meanwhile, Sadeka reportedly refused to accept treatment and planned to fast unto death if the primary teachers' demands were not met. Doctors at DMCH said Sadeka has been suffering from malnutrition and dehydration.

Condition of Morjina, who was admitted to DMCH on Monday, remained unchanged, our DMCH correspondent said.

A leader of Bangladesh Non-government Primary Teachers Association said, "We won't break the fast till our demand is met, we'll continue our programme till the end." He said a fresh agitation programme will be announced at a rally tomorrow.

According to government statistics, there are about 75,500 teachers in 19,428 non-government registered primary schools.

Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil along with other central leaders went to Muktagong yesterday to express solidarity with the striking teachers. Leaders of Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) also expressed solidarity with the teachers and urged the government to meet the demand immediately.

Among others, Dr AAMS Arefin Siddique and Dr M Akhtaruzzaman, president and secretary of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA), expressed solidarity with the teachers.

20 killed

FROM PAGE 12
Political violence left 48 killed and 200 injured. Police arrested 47 for their alleged implication in the violence, Odhikar added.

The Odhikar report also said 101 children were tortured in May. Of them, 33 were killed, 21 raped, 17 abducted and 10 went missing, eight smuggled out, four suffered acid burns, and five committed suicide.

As many as 62 women were raped last month and of them four were killed after rape while two others committed suicide. At least 18 women were reportedly victimised for dowry and of them 15 were killed while two others were tortured and one abducted, the report mentioned.

At least 31 people received acid burns in the month of May, the Odhikar report said.

In a separate press release, Democracy Watch said that a union parishad chairman and a member were killed in May while four others were injured.

Mass-line Media Centre (MMC), another non-government organisation, in its press release said 374 people were killed in 295 incidents in May while 50 people committed suicide during the same time.

Manobadhikar, a human rights and social welfare activist, in a press release said on average as many as 11 people were killed every day in May.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad in its press release said 498 women were tortured in May while Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha's press release put it at 190 for the same month.

Cop's costly

FROM PAGE 12
The verdict followed allegations by his wife that Hoque married another woman without her permission. Earlier, a first class magistrate's court also handed down a similar verdict.

Hoque married his second wife on June 24, 1987 when Hossen was only eight years old.

The complainant, Fatema Begum, Hoque's first wife, in an affidavit at a magistrate's court in Rangpur however has admitted that the arrestee is not her husband. The magistrate has asked police to report by June 5 why they have arrested Hossen.

Police sources said they mistook Anwar Hossen, son of Mohammed Ali of the village Arajai Tampat under Kotwali thana, for Anwarul Hoque, son of Mohammed Hossen of the village Bagchi Dewan Tuli under the same police station because the names and addresses were almost identical.

Rumsfeld flies

FROM PAGE 1
after its sovereignty is restored on June 30, sources said.

The authorities however remained tight-lipped about the visit because of security reasons.

"We are not in a position to confirm any high-level visit at this time," an official of the US Embassy told The Daily Star.

Rumsfeld's visit coincides with a countrywide 24-hour hartal called by the main opposition Awami League on Saturday.

The visit by the defence secretary will be the second by a top US official after the Iraq war. Secretary of State Colin Powell made a brief stopover in Dhaka in June last year, two months after the war ended.

"As long as Pentagon does not officially announce Rumsfeld's Dhaka visit, it is not possible to confirm anything about it," a foreign ministry source said requesting anonymity.

"We are expecting his visit to Dhaka as part of his Asian trip. But the schedule has not been finalised yet and it can be changed any time," he added.

Sources said during his visit,

Rumsfeld will hold talks with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan. The discussions will focus mainly on mobilisation of troops from Muslim-majority countries in Iraq under the UN umbrella after the interim Iraqi government takes over on June 30.

Rumsfeld also might discuss activities of Islamic extremist groups operating inside Bangladesh and their possible links to international terrorist groups, the sources said.

US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Christina Rocca also took up the issue during her recent visit to Bangladesh.

An advance team to help ensure the US secretary's security arrives in the capital tomorrow.

Rumsfeld's entourage will include his personal and defence attaches but details could not be known as yet.

He is also likely to meet the press after his talks with the prime minister and foreign minister.

Rumsfeld is due to leave Dhaka early Sunday morning.

AL leader

FROM PAGE 12
Security was tightened in and around Noapara and armed guards have been deployed to the AL leader's house.

Wahab escaped the first attempt on his life by extremists on March 2, 2000. The AL leaders said the second attack came two months after the withdrawal of armed police sanctioned for his security.

His wife alleged the officer-in-charge of Abhoynagar Police Station took away a licensed gun from her husband last month without showing reason.

The shocked family linked the attack to the extremists' death threats to him for his stand against crime in Abhoynagar.

3 Bangla Bhai men

FROM PAGE 12
Sources in Naogaon however said there are allegations of women repression against the leaders. At least a dozen women from different villages were taken to Bhati camp and tortured to give the whereabouts of their husbands, whom the JMB identified as outlaws, they mentioned.

Hemayet, also a former outlaw, allegedly played a major role in JMB operations in Naogaon. He was also allegedly involved with the murders of Awami League leader Idris Ali Kheir, whose body was found near Bhati camp on May 28, and Badsha, whose body was found hanging from a tree at Gabtali in Bogra on May 19.

Locals said Hemayet was also the chief of Atrgam JMB camp, which conducted extortion in Naogaon villages. His accomplices included Abdul Salam, Humayun, Abul Master and Habibur Rahman. They used to collect money from villagers on the plea of buying arms for resisting outlaws.

Sources said JMB operatives are still living in different villages, helped by their local leaders. "Many JMB cadres offered Juma prayers at Bhabanipur mosque on Friday and one of the Bangla Bhai associates declared after the prayers that JMB operation will

begin from June 1 in a new style", one source said.

Journalists met three women at Naidighi village in Atrai after their release from Bhati camp on May 23. They had fled their own village Sharia fearing further harassment by JMB operatives.

All the three had marks of torture and said 15 women were taken to Bhati camp and tortured.

Meanwhile, reports received here said three outlaws were arrested from Gaibandha yesterday in connection with the killing of two JMB operatives at Sharia village in Atrai of Naogaon on May 17.

The arrestees are Faruk, Emran and Emran's father Abdur Rahman.

"The arrested persons are accused in the case of double murder in Sharia village," said Rajshahi Deputy Inspector General of Police Noor Muhammad.

The outlaws slaughtered JMB operatives Abdur Rashid and Nazrul Fakir inside a mosque, injured six others and set three houses on fire in Sharia village.

The incident followed killing of five outlaws in the northwestern region since April 1 in vigilante attacks blamed on the JMB.

New pay scale

FROM PAGE 1
announced, sources said. "Before deciding the figure, the ministry is scrutinising whether the new pay scale will be implemented at once or in phases spread over several years.

The last pay scale for government employees was announced in 1997, implemented in phases over three years.

The Public Expenditure Review Commission (Perc) in its December 2003 report stood for a new pay structure. The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), a leading non-government think-tank, also made a similar suggestion.

According to the CPD, in the last seven years, the value of income has eroded by about 39.4 percent.

While the government services should pay more, the Perc believed the size of the government should

be reduced to make it more efficient and cost effective. It also suggested forming a permanent pay commission.

The Perc found 20 different scales in government service, and observed, "Whatever the nature of the job, one has to accept a certain scale." For instance, an administration officer at the Secretariat gets Tk 3,400 while a police inspector gets the same scale. A typist gets Tk 1,875-scale and a police naik also gets the same scale. Yet the nature of these jobs are very different.

Since independence, five pay scales have been introduced for government employees. The first scale announced in 1973 put the lowest scale at Tk 130 and the highest at Tk 2000, and the latest in 1997 put the lowest at Tk 1,500 and the highest at Tk 15,000.

Morshed, Natwar

FROM PAGE 1
his Bangladesh counterpart Morshed Khan.

After an hour-long meeting with Morshed who has brought greetings from Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia for the new Indian leadership, Singh said, "We will make a comprehensive assessment of nitty-gritty of linking rivers. We are awaiting their response."

"Every aspect of our relations figured in the discussions held in a spirit of cordiality, warmth and mutual understanding," Singh said adding: "We have decided to call each other by our first names."

Removal of non-tariff barriers, transit questions, issuance of visa which is now five lakh annually, insurgency, arms seizure in Chittagong and interlinking of rivers came up during the parleys, he said.

"Whatever differences there are -- whether it relates to terrorists, whether on interlinking of rivers or on separatist activities going on in Bangladesh and here... both agreed that if any mishap occurs, we will immediately get on telephone and

talk to each other," Singh said.

He made it clear that political rhetoric and differences would not be allowed to impact bilateral ties.

"Questions are bound to be raised in parliament," he said. "These will be answered fully bearing in mind the importance of not adversely impacting bilateral relations without in any way sacrificing our mutual vital national interests."

Morshed described India as an "old and tested friend" of the region and said the two countries have decided that bilateral ties would not "fall victim to political intricacies" and not pursued in the "normal, old fashioned diplomatic manner of note verbal and writing long letters. We will catch the bull by the horns as it comes".

"We will not shy away from any issue and have decided not to keep any issue under the carpet," he said.

Morshed cautioned against expecting quick results. "One may not get the results overnight." "Without excluding the media, we have agreed to play the game in total harmony."

Family worried over Proshika VP David's health in jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The dragged out bail granting proceedings for Proshika Vice President (VP) David William Biswas, who is partially paralysed since 1998, has virtually put him at death risk, fears his family.

The left side of David's body was paralysed in a cerebral stroke in 1998.

Police arrested him at his mother's house in Savar on May 22 on charge of fund misappropriation.

"We don't understand the reason for not granting him bail as there is no criminal charge against him," David's wife Ashalata Biswas said. "This is how he is getting rewarded for his lifelong work for people," she added with sarcasm.

After his arrest, when David was produced before a judge court on 23 May, he was not granted bail and placed on remand. His family then filed a writ petition with the High Court against his remand order. The High Court cancelled the remand order and asked David's attorney to get the bail from the lower court.

But, on May 27, without granting the bail, the lower court shifted the date of hearing to June 5.

"Last Sunday, we obtained a special permission from the court and jail super which allowed us to visit him. Two policemen brought him to us, holding him by his arms, as he can't walk. His only appeal to us was to take him out of the jail. I believe, he's suffering too much there," Ashalata said.

According to his family, David cannot move without a wheel chair and needs high commode and others' help to fulfil his physical needs and to carry out other day to day works. Everyday, he needs seven different medicines including insulin and physiotherapy.

"Now, we've to wait another five days and aren't even sure whether he's going to get bail that day at all. We don't know how he is spending his days in the jail hospital," said David's daughter Liza Dorin Biswas.

Meanwhile, Amnesty International (AI) sent a statement to the prime minister on May 24 expressing serious concern about the arrest and incommunicado detention of Proshika leaders Qazi Faruque and David Biswas. The AI also urged the authorities to ensure that the prisoners have access to their lawyers, family members and any medical attention they require.

Employees see

FROM PAGE 1
Dialogue (CPD) in its independent review of Bangladesh's development.

"In other words, anybody joining the civil service in 2004 will be getting Tk 2,573 less in current prices in comparison to his/her colleagues who started off in 1997," says the review, which is to be released soon.

In term of US dollar, an entry point officer in Bangladesh gets about 45 percent of what is paid to a comparable Indian administrative service officer.

The government announced a 10 percent dearness allowance last year. Even when one accounts for this ad hoc benefit, the said income level remains 30.8 percent lower in real terms in 2004.

"One cannot expect the government officers to service the new demands of managing a market economy without being paid an adequate compensation which ensures standard living conditions as well as provides for higher incentives in comparison to other jobs including those in the private sector," observes CPD.

"In place of ad hoc and arbitrary benefits, pay adjustment needs to be implemented through the awards of a permanent Pay Commission for government employees."

The present government promised to set up such a commission in its election manifesto of 2001.

Explosions kill

FROM PAGE 12
hanging over the city. Coalition aircraft could be heard flying over Baghdad.

In Beiji, a roadside bomb exploded near the US military base, killing 11 Iraqis -- including seven members of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps -- and wounding 23. Two US 1st Infantry Division soldiers were wounded and evacuated to a combat hospital, together with 16 Iraqis who were hurt.

The Beiji blast occurred around 9 a.m. outside the gates of the 1st Infantry Division's forward operating base, Summerall, about 155 miles north of Baghdad, Capt. Bill Coppennoll said.

The Baghdad blast ripped through the building in the early afternoon, shortly after a party attended by hundreds of people. The event was intended to celebrate the founding of the PUK, which is seen as being close to the Americans.

Under the leadership of Jalal Talabani, the party represented one of the main anti-Saddam forces on Iraqi soil after the Gulf War. Fighters from the party backed American forces in last year's invasion.

Talabani, who holds a seat on the Governing Council, was not in the offices when the blast occurred, a party spokesman said.

Most of the injured were outside the offices and were struck by flying glass, said Lt. Col. Robert Campbell of the 38th Cavalry Unit in the 1st Cavalry Division.

Lawyers question

FROM PAGE 1
Court headed by Chief Justice Syed JR Modassir Husain sits again today to hear the appeal.

Without referring to ruling four-party alliance candidate Moadsak Ali Falu, also a former political secretary to the prime minister, Barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud stated that had an influential candidate of a particular party not contested the ensuing by-election, would the Supreme Court still have formed a special bench and full bench to hear the matter during vacation?

And would the court have allowed a hearing of the CMP without the Vokalatnama (warrant of attorney), that too filed after the court hour? Rakan continued. Would the officials of the Office of Attorney General have played the messenger's role to collect the Vokalatnama, Rakanuddin also questioned.

The court however told him that it certainly would have formed a special bench or a full bench in any important case and that such a move was not unprecedented as events like these happened in the past.

Another lawyer of BDB candidate, Barrister Rafique-UI Haq, however differed with the court's observation and said there was no such instance in the history of Bangladesh although such examples are there in Pakistan.

He said if any order of the High Court goes against the government, it files CMP against the order and the court allows the government to file CMP in nine out of 10 cases. As many as 311 CMPs have already been filed this year, he told the court.

Referring to Bhola-1 by-election that could not be held during the tenure of the seventh parliament after the High Court stayed the voting, Rakan asked why similar efforts were not made as it is being made now?

He alleged that all these are being done for a particular candidate.

Rakan urged the full bench to let the stay order be disposed of in the High Court. If the Appellate Division wants to maintain sanctity of the constitution, then the High Court Division should be allowed to exercise its jurisdiction as enshrined in the constitution.

He added that the Appellate Division should not interfere with

Anti-govt leaflet

FROM PAGE 12
any possible agitation.

According to home ministry sources, intelligence agencies assigned to ascertain the identity of the Officials' and Employees' Parishad of the Republic in whose name the leaflets were distributed however have failed to make any headway so far.

Since the four-party alliance government came to power in 2001, unidentified people distributed leaflets at the Secretariat on four occasions, all in this year, containing various demands and anti-government propaganda. Three of these leaflets, distributed on February 24 and 25 and April 15 last, decreed what they said was the plight of government employees.

The Sunday's leaflet was focussed on the corruption and politicisation of the government officials. Bearing the letterhead of Officials' and Employees' Parishad of the Republic, the latest leaflet copies were distributed from the flower garden point near Building No. Six on the Secretariat campus at around 1:30pm Sunday.

The two-page leaflet alleged hundreds of crores of taka were being smuggled out of the country by some people in power and urged the Secretariat staff to fight against the government to end its misuse.

New Iraqi president

FROM PAGE 12
Adnan Pachachi, a former foreign