

BANGLA BHAI

Naogaon SP denies arrest order

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Law enforcers could not capture vigilante operations commander Bangla Bhai, as they did not have any arrest order from high-ups, Naogaon Superintendent of Police (SP) Fazlur Rahman said in reply to a showcase notice the government served on him Saturday.

Rahman was among the three senior police officials in the north-western district, including Additional SP Harun-ur-Rashid and Assistant SP (circle A) Yakur Ali, who were asked to explain their roles in the failure to arrest Bangla Bhai, militant chief of Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB).

The JMJB, an Islamic militant outfit, is blamed for killing at least nine suspected outlaws in its vigilante action in the northwest since April 1 that prompted sharp attention from the media and protest

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40 feared dead in Indian boat capsized

AP, Patna, India

A boat crowded mainly with women and children capsized in a river in eastern India yesterday, with at least 40 people feared dead, district officials said.

The boat, ferrying people from Dubaghat village in Bihar state to another nearby village, sank in the Bhagmati River, said Navin Kumar Sinha, a magistrate in the state's Sheohar district.

Twenty people swam ashore or

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MILITANT CAMPS

7 implicated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police yesterday implicated three arrestees and other suspected members of the two militant camps in Hathazari and Rangunia in two separate cases of anti-state activities and unlawful assembly.

In the case filed with Hathazari Police Station, arrestees Md Iskander and Enamul Huq, alleged masterminds Mir Anis and Kaderi Hujur and trainers Abdus Sattar and Md Kasemi were implicated, p o l i c e

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PHOTO: STAR

Members of the dance troupe Nrityanchal perform a traditional number of ancient Goud at the Shishu Academy auditorium yesterday.

Outstanding issues with Dhaka to be resolved

Indian president talks of greater regional cooperation

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Indian President APJ Abdul Kalam yesterday emphasised that his country would seek to resolve all outstanding issues with Bangladesh that he described as an important neighbour.

The priority will be given to building closer political and economic ties with neighbouring countries in South Asia and strengthening Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation). Kalam told the first joint session of the upper and lower houses of parliament since the stunning victory of Congress in general elections.

"Particular attention will be paid to regional projects relating to water resources, power and ecological conservation," he said.

Kalam mentioned the rivers interlinking project and said: "The environmental, ecological and

techno-economic feasibility of linking the rivers of the country will be carefully examined."

"Dialogue with Pakistan on all outstanding issues will be pursued on a sustained basis within the framework of the Shimla Agreement and all subsequent agreements between the two governments including the Joint Statement of January 6, 2004," the president said.

The Joint Statement was signed when the then prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee travelled to Islamabad for the Saarc summit.

India, he said in his 50-minute speech, supported the peace initiative in Sri Lanka "for a life full of dignity and self-respect and meets the legitimate aspirations of all linguistic and religious minorities while respecting the territorial integrity and solidarity of Sri Lanka."

Underscoring that the outcome

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PM asks cops to maintain order

UNB, Sardah, Rajshahi

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday asked police officers to maintain law and order and ensure security of life and property of the people.

She also advised the officers to be careful so that nobody in this sphere of activity misbehaves with any innocent person.

"Police are the caretakers, friends and helping partners of the people -- you have to establish this image by your work," the prime minister said while addressing a function marking the passing-out parade of the 21st batch of BCS (Police) cadre at Sardah Police Academy in the morning.

A total of 43 assistant superintendents of police, including six women, passed out a one-year training course from the academy.

The prime minister said the government is continuing its efforts to build up a powerful, skilled, disciplined and corruption-free police administration.

She said the new officers will have to enhance their theoretical and practical skills through working against odds and challenges in the field.

On her arrival at the parade ground, the prime minister was

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Default loans creep up during Jan-Mar

REJAU KARIM BYRON

The amount of default loans has seen a sharp rise of 0.39 percentage point or Tk 689 crore in the first three months of the current year.

The total default loans stood at Tk 21,008 crore on March 31 from Tk 20,319 crore on December 31.

The foreign banks have been able to further cut their classified portfolio but the nationalised commercial banks (NCBs), private banks and the government-owned Development Financial Institutions (DFIs) loosened their grip on loan quality, according to the central bank.

The NCBs now have a total of Tk 10,923 crore in default loans as they have added another 0.77

percentage point or Tk 255 crore in bad loans to their portfolio in the three months.

Default loans grew by 0.2 percentage point or Tk 217 crore for the private banks which now have Tk 5,078 crore in classified loans. Some old private banks performed negatively while some of them managed to reduce default loans.

Default loans rose by 0.66 percentage point or Tk 78 crore with the DFIs which have been left with a total of Tk 4,805 crore in classified portfolio.

Default loans fell by 0.46 percentage point or Tk 31 crore in the foreign banks. They have Tk 140 crore in classified loans.

Despite this, most of the banks excepting the four NCBs suc-

ceeded in reducing their provision shortfall.

The aggregate provision shortfall reduced by Tk 1,114 crore and stands at Tk 5,512 crore. But it grew by Tk 136 crore to Tk 5,116 crore for the NCBs.

Banking sources said the banks allowed some defaulters to repay by rescheduling loans in December.

"But this ultimately did not work well as many defaulters who rescheduled loans again failed in their instalments," said a banker.

"The banks failed to keep up the momentum they gathered in December against defaulters," a top central bank official said. "We have noticed that the banks lost grip on the situation during the beginning of the year."

Canadian, EC envoys urge govt for medical help to Faruque, David

DU CORRESPONDENT

The acting Canadian high commissioner, European Commission (EC) envoy and acting chief of the DFID, Bangladesh have urged the government to shift detained Proshika president and vice-president to an appropriate hospital for proper medical attention.

On behalf of Proshika Donors Consortium, Philippe de Varennes, acting high commissioner of Canada, Esko Kentrschynskyj, EC delegation ambassador to Dhaka, and Mehtab Currey, acting head of the DFID (Department for International Development), Bangladesh, sent a letter to State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babor on June 3 and asked him to take immediate measure in this regard.

The letter expressed deep con

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PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

The communications ministry this time goes for expensive steel bar railing to beautify the road to the airport near Banani rail crossing.



PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia hands over an award for excellence to an unidentified assistant superintendent of police on completion of the passing-out parade of the 21st batch of BCS (police) cadre at Sardah Police Academy yesterday.

BBC cameraman slain, journalist wounded in Saudi terror attack

AFP, Riyadh

An Irish cameraman was shot dead and a British BBC correspondent wounded in the latest attack by suspected Islamist extremists trying to chase Western "infidels" from Saudi Arabia.

Barely a week after gunmen killed 22 people, including several Westerners, in a shooting rampage and hostage-taking drama in the eastern oil city of Al-Khobar, the pair came under fire on Sunday on the streets of the capital Riyadh near the home of a top wanted militant.

The BBC said Simon Cumbers, 36, was killed in the Al-Suwaidi district while security correspondent Frank Gardner, 42, was being treated in hospital for injuries.

Gardner, "is a leading expert on al-Qaeda and works full-time reporting on the war on terror," the

British broadcaster said in a statement.

The extremists' campaign which has left more than 85 people dead and hundreds injured in Saudi Arabia since May 2003 is blamed on al-Qaeda gunmen.

Cumbers was "a freelance journalist and cameraman who has worked throughout the world filming international news stories for the BBC and for (other) news organizations," the corporation said.

Hospital sources said Gardner was out of danger after undergoing surgery at Al-Iman hospital. He was to be moved to the capital's King Faisal Specialist Hospital.

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw condemned the attack and expressed admiration for Gardner.

"I utterly condemn the attack on BBC journalists in Riyadh today," Straw said in a statement.

Outlaws kill 4 in Pabna

UNB, Pabna

Underground operatives killed four young men in separate incidents in Ataikula upazila of Pabna district yesterday.

Witnesses and police said a gang of 15 raising slogans for the outlawed PBCP (Lal Potaka) picked up Abdul Baten, 30, at gunpoint from his house at Durgapur village and Alamgir Molla, 28, from adjacent Panchampur village at around 4:00am.

As the victims cried for help,

villagers came out and chased the outlaws. But they (outlaws) opened fire to scare the villagers away. They took Baten and Alamgir to a field, shot them point blank and slit their throats.

In separate incident, two bodies were recovered from a field in Sujanagar upazila yesterday. One was identified as Niamatullah, 20, of Ulad village. The other victim could not be identified.

Police said the underground operatives strangled the two. But the motive could not be known.

25 BRTC buses damaged during alliance rule

Corporation boss tells

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) authorities yesterday claimed hartal pickets set ablaze 25 buses in its fleet during the coalition government rule, causing the state-run organisation over Tk2 crore loss.

BRTC Chairman Taimur Alam Khandoker told a press conference that pickets set fire to 19 BRTC buses in the capital and six elsewhere since October 2001. Of those, 13 are Ashok Leyland double-decker buses, eight Tata buses and four Volvo double-

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DUTCH COURT FINE

Govt to form body for working out a plan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government decided only yesterday to form a committee for working out a plan to counter a Dutch court verdict that asked Bangladesh early this year to comply with its order to avoid possible confiscation of national flag carriers in European Union (EU) countries.

Airliners and ships carrying

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Prayer Timing		
June 8		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-05	4-40
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-45	6-50
Esha	8-15	8-45
Source: Islamic Foundation		

9 Iraq militias 'to disband'

Sadr's men stay out of new PM's offer; US soldier, 3 civilians killed in attacks

AGENCIES, Baghdad

Nine of Iraq's militias, constituting more than 100,000 armed men, have agreed to disband as part of a rewards and retraining programme, but the deal does not cover rebel cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's fighters.

Interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi yesterday announced the deal, which will see most of the militia fighters reintegrated into Iraq's new security forces while others are retrained for jobs in civilian life or go into retirement with a pension.

"I am happy to announce today the successful completion of negotiations on the nationwide transition and reintegration of militias and other armed forces previously outside of state control," the prime

minister said in a statement.

The deal includes all of Iraq's largest private political armies, including the peshmerga fighters of the country's two Kurdish parties, the main Shia militia and several smaller ones, but pointedly does not include Sadr's Mehdi Army group.

The Mehdi Army launched an uprising against occupying troops across southern Iraq two months ago. Last week US forces agreed a truce with the militia after weeks of skirmishing.

One US soldiers and three Iraqis were killed in attacks.

One US soldier was killed and another wounded in a mortar attack near Baghdad, the US military said.

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