

## Khulna editor bombed to death by outlaws

Janajuddha claims responsibility; journalists in the southwestern city call hartal for tomorrow

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

Dainik Janmabhum Editor Humayun Kabir Balu was killed and his elder son injured in a bomb attack yesterday apparently by a leftist extremist posing as a peanut vendor in southwestern Khulna City, police and witnesses said.

Balu, 58, also president of Khulna Press Club, suffered critical injuries to his back and legs at 12:15pm in front of his house-cum-office on Islampur Road soon after getting down from his car and died at Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH) at 1:50pm, sparking protests.

The Janajuddha faction of

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## 13 journos killed in SW in 10 years

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Thirteen journalists including four editors were killed in the last 10 years in the south-western region, a safe haven for underground operations and criminals for decades.

Of the dead, five were in Khulna, four in Jessore, two in Jhenaidah, and one each in Chuadanga and Satkhira.

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## PM, Hasina condole Balu's death

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina have expressed their shock at the death of Khulna Press Club President Humayun Kabir Balu in a bomb attack in Khulna yesterday.

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PHOTO: STAR

Clockwise from top left, a file photo of Dainik Janmabhum Editor Humayun Kabir Balu, his elder son Asif Kabir receives treatment at a Khulna clinic for wounds and the family wails over his killing by leftist extremists in the southwestern city yesterday.

## Pichchi Hannan sent to jail

Co-gangster Nitel found dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday showed 'Pichchi' Hannan as an arrestee in three cases of assault on law enforcers and illegal arms and drugs possession, while another operative of the dreaded criminal died from wounds he suffered in a shootout with an elite force.

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM's) Court, Dhaka issuing an order for showing him arrested, sent Hannan to Dhaka Central Jail

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## Crisis-hit RMG exporters look to end hartal fallout

STAR REPORT

With a falling garment exports to the US and the major order placing season approaching for the first quota-free year, garment exporters are worrying about hartal that could further jeopardise the industry.

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) has planned to hold a meeting with the major

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## Transport strike begins in 16 N districts today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

North Bengal Road Transport Owners and Workers Association enforces an indefinite transport strike in 16 northern districts from today to press home their demands.

Abu Asgor Pintu, president of the association, said they called the indefinite strike as the government did not meet their demands.

Their seven-point demand include implementation of the tripartite agreement with the government, vehicle owners and workers of 16 northern districts and an end to traffic police harassment.

## Bangla Bhai men come back with abduction

8 families in Naogaon robbed, houses vandalised

ANWAR ALI, RAJSHAHI

Islamic militants tied to vigilante commander Bangla Bhai abducted two women and a child in Bagmara in the northwestern district of Rajshahi on Saturday morning in their latest violent activity that came after a one-month lull.

The abduction coincided with militants' announcement that Bangla Bhai, chief of Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), would break cover on July 1 after weeks of hiding.

The operatives kidnapped 33-year-old Safinun Nahar, her mother Shahida Begum and 3-year-old daughter Suborna from their Raipura village, as they came back from Rajshahi city to visit their

home that they left in fear of vigilante attacks.

Bangla Bhai's men demanded money in illegal tolls from Safinun's husband Abdul Barik and threatened him with death in failure, scaring him into leaving his village in April with his family to stay in the northwestern city.

The militant outfit is blamed for a series of killings and abductions in vigilante action in the northwest since April 1, the latest episode of atrocities that grabbed the media spotlight.

The JMJB cadres in their April operations demolished the house of Awami League leader Abdus Sobhan Chowdhury at Kalapara in Bagmara, who later left the village to stay in Rajshahi city.

TERRORISED NAOGAON

Bangla Bhai's operatives operating under cover of so-called peace committee looted valuables from eight families in an indigenous people-inhabited village in Raminagar in Naogaon Saturday before vandalising their houses. The looters announced that they would auction off the rest of the property.

Many indigenous and poor Muslim families in Lakkhikola village sent their daughters to other places after a threat from the JMJB operatives of raping young girls.

Witnesses said an armed gang of 30 led allegedly by Alamgir Hossain Ranga, Akhter and Firoz launched the attack on the houses of Ananda Marandi, Ramdulal Marandi, Anil

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## WOMEN, CHILD TRAFFICKING

## 6 steps suggested to curb crime

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An inter-ministerial meeting yesterday suggested six steps to significantly reduce the crimes related to trafficking in the wake of a possible US sanction if Dhaka fails to stop trafficking in women and children.

The six suggested steps aimed to reduce the rate of trafficking in women and children include revival of the police anti-trafficking unit, appointment of a special prosecutor for dealing with trafficking cases in "speedy court" and institution of a referral mechanism for the victims to avail services offered by NGOs.

US State Department on June 15 blacklisted Bangladesh and warned it of economic sanctions if it fails to improve the situation within 60 days from that date.

The meeting, held at the home ministry and chaired by State Minister for Home Affairs

Lutfozzaman Babar, discussed ways to prevent trafficking in children and women. The state minister ordered quick disposal of 17 cases relating to trafficking in children and women.

A five-member committee headed by the joint secretary of the home ministry was formed to submit a report in 15 days.

"We are serious about the problems, and trying to solve it," Babar told newsmen after the meeting.

He said police are trying to prepare a list of the people behind the illegal trade and action would be taken soon according to the list.

The meeting ordered mounting watch and prompt action on six trafficking routes namely Dhaka-Barisal, Dhaka-Benapole, Dhaka-Satkhira, Dhaka-Chapainawabganj, Dhaka-Darshana and Dhaka-Dinajpur that the human traffickers

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## Shujaat interim Pak PM

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's parliament will elect a new leader of the house tomorrow following prime minister Zafarullah Jamali's surprise resignation, officials said.

President Pervez Musharraf accepted Jamali's resignation and summoned a special session of the National Assembly (lower house) on June 29 to elect a new leader of the house to replace the premier who also held the post, they said.

Jamali announced his resignation on Saturday in the wake of persistent rumours that Musharraf wants to bring in a new figure to carry out his political agenda.

He said his cabinet had been dissolved and Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, president of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League (PML), has been nominated as his caretaker successor.

Hussain said he would hold the post for two months before handing over to Shaoukat Aziz who served as finance minister in Jamali's cabinet.

Aziz, a former Citibank official, is architect of the country's economic

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## Bruised body of 6-year-old girl found in Mirpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The body of an unidentified girl of about 6 was retrieved from a sack at West Shewrapara in Mirpur yesterday.

Mirpur police found the body in a plastic fertiliser bag, which was covered with a cloth, at about 12:00pm, sources said.

The inquest report said some bones of the victim's hands and legs were broken while the body bore bruises all over.

The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy at 3:30pm, police said.

Morgue sources suspect the girl died due to severe beating.

## MR Akhter Mukul laid to rest

BSS, Dhaka

Eminent journalist and freedom fighter MR Akhter Mukul was laid to rest at the Martyred Intellectuals Graveyard in capital's Mirpur yesterday.

Mukul, famed for his radio programme 'Charampatra' during the country's liberation war, died of cancer at Birdem hospital on Saturday at the age of 75.

Earlier, his body was taken to his Baily Road home from Birdem mortuary at 8:00am where the first namaz-e-janaza was held. The second janaza was held at the Jatiya Press Club and the third at Mukti Juddha Sangsad office in New Eskaton.

The body was taken to the Central Shahed Minar where people from all strata including Awami League President and Leader of Opposition in parliament Sheikh Hasina, journalists, writers, intellectuals and politicians paid last respect to the valiant freedom fighter who inspired countrymen during the liberation war in 1971.

His last janaza was held at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque after Zohr prayers.

## DHAKA-10 BY-POLLS Mannan again files writ petition for army deployment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abdul Mannan of Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) and three other candidates for July 1 Dhaka-10 by-election yesterday filed a writ petition again with the High Court (HC) seeking a directive on the government for army deployment in each polling centre.

The latest petition sought the directive in light of the Election Commission (EC) decision to ask the government for deployment of troops to ensure a free and fair vote.

The HC division bench of Justice MA Matin and Justice Tarik Ul Hakim will hear the petition today.

The High Court in an order on

June 20 on a similar writ petition said the earlier petition was premature and that no-one had declined troops deployment in the constituency. The court however expected of the government to take necessary steps, including the deployment of army, to hold the vote in a free and fair manner.

But after the High Court order, BDB candidate Mannan and three others apprehended that the authorities would not provide sufficient security and deploy army personnel in the constituency in line with the EC decision.

With only three days to the crucial voting, which was deferred to

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## Ministers skirt army deployment demand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Senior ministers in parliament yesterday skirted round the issue of security measures for the July 1 Dhaka-10 by-election when an opposition lawmaker demanded assurance from the government of army deployment in line with an Election Commission (EC) decision.

Rather, ruling BNP's young deputies were allowed to speak on the issue, who accused the past Awami League (AL) government of vote rigging, triggering tension in the Jatiya Sangsad.

Chief Election Commissioner MA Syed in a letter to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on June 15 conveyed the June 13 EC decision to ask authorities for deployment of army personnel for the by-polls.

The BNP lawmakers accused their AL counterparts of raising points of order in violation of the

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## RIISING DEBT BURDEN

## Interest payment gobbles up 20pc of revenue spending

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Interest payment on government borrowings lately has turned into a major burden on the economy, as it alone consumes around one-fifth of the revenue budget.

The proposed budget for fiscal year (FY) 2004-05 has allocated Tk 6,533 crore or 19 percent of the revenue budget for interest payment on government borrowings, compared to Tk 5,832 crore or 21 percent in current year's revised budget and Tk 5,574 crore or 19 percent in FY 2001-02.

Back in FY 1990-91, the nation spent only Tk 662 crore or 11.68 percent of the revenue budget for

the same purpose. Until FY 1994-95, the government had to pay roughly equal amounts of interest for domestic and foreign loans. But now, domestic borrowing claims 83 percent of the total interest paid.

Economists fear this trend is pushing the nation into a 'debt trap' that, if the issue is not addressed immediately, will become a major impediment to its development.

"If we fail to implement the appropriate reforms, this will turn into a debt trap for the government," says M Hafizuddin, chairman of the Public Expenditure Review Commission (Perc).

On implementation of reforms, a

high official of finance ministry says, "It is not possible to execute reforms overnight. They are being implemented slowly. Like, in recent times, several ministries have been merged with the view to gradually reduce the loan burden."

On the country's debt burden, economist Zaid Bakht notes, "The level of borrowing had increased at the lag end of the previous government, when it introduced some populist moves into the budget. After the present government had taken over, it tried to streamline the borrowing. But now, once again, the elections are coming and so possibilities of undertaking populist

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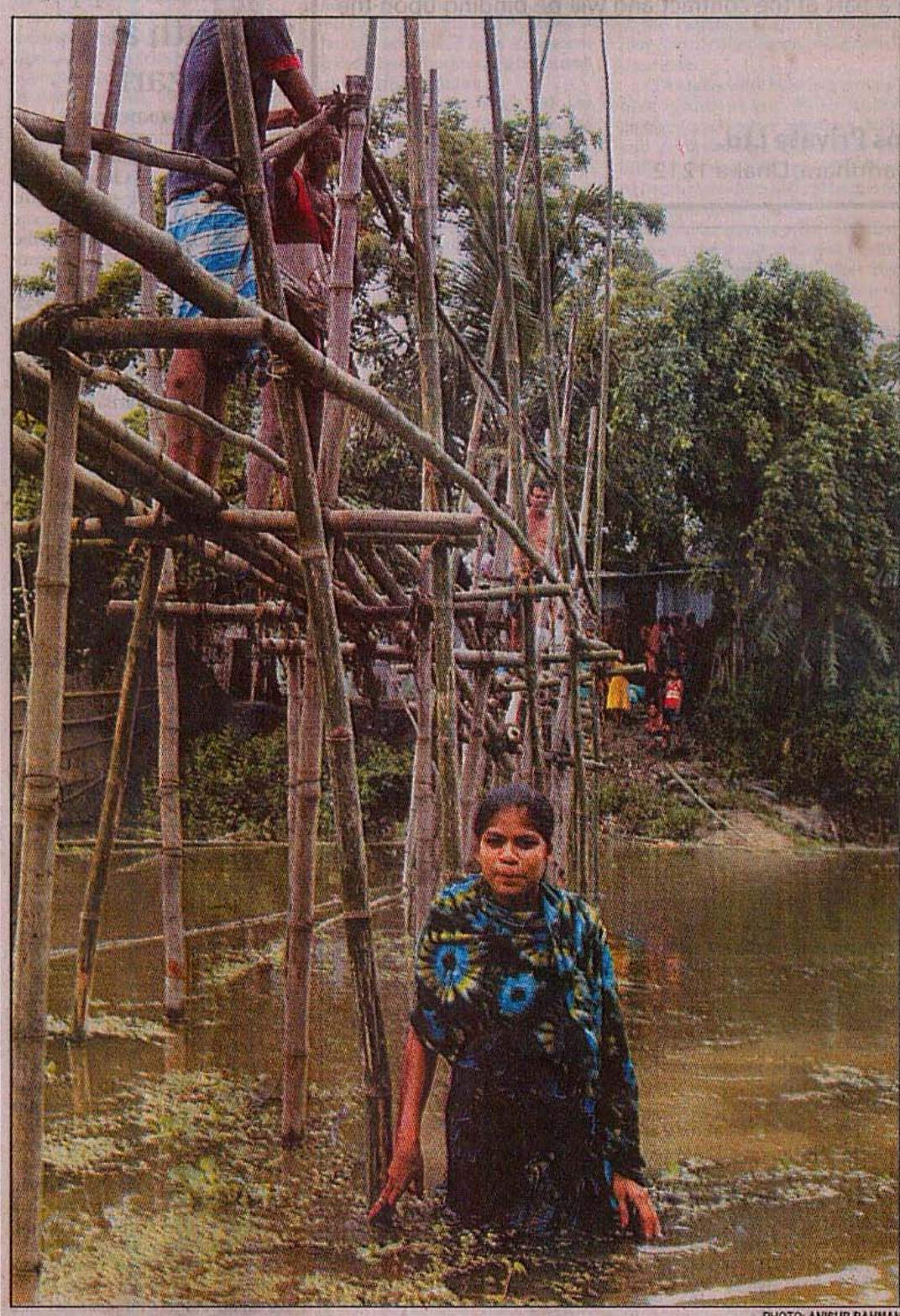


PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

A woman wades through floodwaters yesterday in the wake of monsoon rains for the past few days that submerged roads in Dhaka's Matoail, forcing local residents to build a bamboo bridge to skirt swamped road.

## German FM arrives on July 16

BSS, Dhaka

German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer will arrive on July 16 for a two-day official visit at the invitation of his Bangladesh counterpart M Morshed Khan.

Foreign Secretary Shamsheer M Choudhury will receive him at Zia International Airport.

The two foreign ministers will hold talks in the morning at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on July 17, an official source said yesterday. Bilateral issues and regional and international matters of common interest are expected to be discussed at the talks.

Joschka is likely to meet the press briefly after the talks with the foreign minister.

He will make a courtesy call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at the Prime Minister's Office in the afternoon.

Leader of Opposition in Parliament and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to call on the German foreign minister.

## Controversial RU recruits threaten VC for job confirmation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Controversially recruited employees of Rajshahi University (RU) yesterday stormed the office of vice chancellor and threatened him with dire consequences if the authorities did not confirm their jobs immediately.

Hundreds of illegally appointed employees have been agitating for the last two days after the authorities in compliance with a court order asked them to refrain from reporting for duty. In a notice on Saturday, the authorities asked all its departments and offices not to assign the 544 employees anyway.

Earlier on June 23, a Rajshahi court cancelled the recruitment of 544 employees and termed it illegal

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