

Pichchi Hannan

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and directed the authorities to treat him in jail for bullet wounds.

Law enforcers found the bullet-marked body of Iqbal Hossain Nitel in blue polythene, with a saline needle set on one hand, on the road near BG Press in Tejaogan in a discovery at about 5:30am.

Thirty-year-old Nitel took bullets in his leg as Hannan's gang engaged in Friday's fierce firefight with the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in Uttara, which was launched on April 14 to curb crime.

Nitel's ringleader Hannan and three others shot their way through a police dragnet, as the Rab team raided a house in Uttara, prompting the gang to storm out on the elite force injuring its two members.

The family of Nitel, accused in at least four criminal cases including the killings of war commissioner Saidur Rahman Newton in 2002 and sub-inspector Humayun Kabir in 2003, confirmed his identity at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Sources said Nitel was introduced to Hannan after he graduated in commerce from Shaheen College about 10 years ago and initiated into the crime world. Hannan tasked Nitel with drug peddling in Agargaon.

Relatives referred the body of Nitel, son of Abul Khair of Maddhya Payekpara in Mirpur, after an autopsy at the DMCH.

Police believe Nitel was treated in an unknown clinic for wounds and his body was dumped onto the road after death.

Earlier, Nitel's sister Nipa filed a petition with the CMM's Court for not carrying out a postmortem, but the court rejected her petition.

LYNCHPIN IN JAIL

Uttara Police took Hannan, one of the 23 most wanted criminals on the police list, to the CMM's Court with three forwarding reports to show him arrested in cases.

A Rab team that arrested Hannan in a clinic in Savar escorted him by microbus to the court at about 4:00pm to back up Uttara police. Rab handed Hannan over to Uttara Police Station on Saturday night.

During the hearing in court, Hannan was on the microbus, as he could not walk because of abdominal wounds.

In the forwarding reports, police linked him to killing, robbery, extortion, theft and a reign of terror he spread with his operatives.

"We are not seeking remand for Hannan now," said Lieutenant Colonel Chowdhury Fazlul Bari, commanding officer of Rab Battalion 1 that took part in its first frontal engagement with criminals since its launch.

He said Hannan gave important intelligence but refused to disclose it for the sake of investigation.

Earlier, the home ministry announced a Tk 1 lakh reward on him for arrest or information leading to his capture.

The investigation officer prayed for 10-day remand for Babul Mian, Mostafizur Rahman, Rafiqul Islam Tuku and Motalab -- all arrested in Uttara soon after the shootout and co-accused in the three cases.

The court scheduled July 1 for hearing on the prayer for remand in the presence of the arrestees, who were sent to jail.

IN MORGUE

A magistrate carried out an inquest into the death of Debashish Kumar Das, 32, who was taken to the DMCH a few hours after arrest in a Savar clinic along with Hannan.

Debashish was introduced to Hannan about eight years ago when he was running a fish depot at Karwan Bazar. "He (Debashish) would hardly go back home after his acquaintance with Hannan," said Debashish's father Gajendra Kumar Das, a resident of Badda.

Moulvibazar floods

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Chittagong probably will not adversely affect the flood situation.

Rain forecast in Sylhet for the next few days, however, is likely to worsen the flood situation in the already inundated Moulvibazar, Habiganj and Sylhet districts. These districts are more prone to flash floods as small rivers like Manu and Dholai swell and break the banks easily during heavy rain.

Our Moulvibazar correspondent reports that, low-lying areas of Kulaura, Rajnagar and Kamalganj are still under water as flash floods from the rivers Manu and Dholai intensified by water coming down from across the border upstream, have caused breaches in several embankments on Thursday and Friday.

Water level of the Manu river fell below danger mark yesterday, but those of Surma and Kushiara were above in Sylhet and normal in Sunamganj district.

Despite falls in water levels, residents of at least 60 villages from the inundated areas of those three upazillas are still stuck on the embankments, with most of their Aush crops destroyed by floodwater.

Concerned authorities have not yet estimated the losses inflicted by the floods in Moulvibazar, Habiganj or Sylhet.

Sylhet Division Development Action Council will hold a rally in Sylhet today to demand of the government declare Moulvibazar,

Habiganj and Sylhet districts as a 'disaster prone area'.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief allocated around Tk 14 lakh and food aid for the flood affected people of Sylhet, Moulvibazar, Habiganj, Sunamganj and Comilla.

Bangla Bhai men

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Beshra, Raban Murmu, Sukumar Murmu, Abdus Salam, Nizam Uddin and Kalam to extort Tk 40,000.

"Ranga, Akhter and Firoz threatened to rape our daughters in public if we don't leave home," said Jaleshwari Murmu, who suffered injuries in the attack.

After the looting, the MJMB men forced other villagers to sign a piece of paper to brand the victims as outlaws, locals alleged.

Talking to The Daily Star, a villager said asking not to be named. "They wrote later in the paper that villagers attacked them (the victims) as they supported outlaws." Locals did not file any case fearing further attacks by the MJMB men.

Identifying himself a MJMB operative, retired police constable Enamul Haq told reporters that he had never found such anarchy created by outlaws in the area before.

"Many Juma'atul Mujahedin operatives who were active in the area a few months ago have worked with the MJMB and are now working with the peace committee," he said.

Ministers skirt army

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parliamentary rules of procedure. They, however, assured the opposition deputies of a free, fair by-election.

Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Law Minister Moudud Ahmed attempted to reply to the opposition lawmakers, but Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar overlooked Moudud and gave BNP lawmaker Mashiur Rahman the floor.

Bhuiyan, also ruling BNP secretary general, let BNP lawmakers Joyнал Abedin Faruk and Ilias Ali speak on the issue.

The main opposition AL lawmaker Shajahan Khan, rising on a point of order, demanded adequate security for voters in the by-elections to Ramna-Tejgaon seat. He said the AL has lent its support to Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh candidate Abdul Mannan and is campaigning for him.

He referred to last week's attack and manhandling of an opposition parliamentarian by BNP adherents during the election campaign and said: "Voters are scared... we're doubtful about free and fair election. Despite the demand for deployment of army apprehending violence and intimidation, the government has not responded to the Election Commission's request."

The AL lawmaker called for comprehensive steps to ensure fair vote in the by-election.

Rising on a point of order, AL lawmaker AKM Jahangir Hossain sought an explanation from the government for a lawmaker and a state minister's alleged involvement with the smuggling of Tk 3.50 crore in foreign currencies seized at Zia International Airport recently.

Opposition Chief Whip Abdus

Govt mulls land transport police, new road fund

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is considering formation of a 'land transport police' (LTP) force to ensure safety and security of the road traffic and creation of a fund to maintain the roads and bridges.

The LTP would be a force similar to the GRP assigned to the railways but, unlike GRP, which is supervised by the home ministry, it would be under direct command of the communications ministry, said Communications Minister Nazmul Huda at a press conference yesterday.

Nazmul said, in addition to maintaining traffic, the LTP would detect fake papers of vehicles and check reckless driving on roads and highways. He, however, did not go into details about other activities of the force or from where its funds would come.

The minister said the new road fund would be created with the money collected from bridges as toll and a separate body like the Bangladesh Land Port Authority would be formed to maintain it. The fund would be used to carry out repairs and maintenance of roads and bridges, without spending money from the revenue budge, Nazmul elaborated, adding donor agencies also suggested creating such a fund.

The minister also reiterated his ambition to develop a magnetic train service between Dhaka and Chittagong, which he said is still under the government's active consideration. "It is my dream and one day this dream would come true."

Magnetic train service, which is very cheap and cost-effective, is used in China, Nazmul said. He thinks it would enable people to shuttle between the capital and the port city in only an hour.

Nazmul informed the newsmen that the construction of Padma Bridge at Mawa would begin in late 2005 or early 2006. The cost of the 6.2-km bridge, the longest in the country, would be around Tk 7,000 crore, with Tk 5,000-crore foreign aid.

He also disclosed that the government is mulling over a sixth China-Bangladesh friendship bridge at Mokhtarpur.

The communications minister spoke of a number of steps his ministry has undertaken to modernise the country's railway system, among which a process is now underway to extend the broad-gauge rail-lines from Khulna and Rajshahi up to Dhaka. He also listed some future plans of his ministry to develop the country's communication structure, including a long-term programme to establish a multi-modal transport system.

6 steps suggested

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mostly use to smuggle out women and children.

Secretaries of home; expatriates welfare and overseas employment; law, justice and parliamentary affairs; women and children affairs and civil aviation and tourism and the inspector general of police were present in the meeting.

The US Department of State said Bangladesh is a country of origin and transit for women and children trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation, involuntary domestic servitude and debt bondage.

An estimated 10,000 to 20,000 women and young girls are trafficked annually to India, Pakistan, Bahrain, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from Bangladesh. A small number of women and girls are trafficked through Bangladesh from Myanmar to India.

Bangladeshi boys are also trafficked into the UAE and Qatar and forced to work as camel jockeys and beggars. Women and children from rural areas in Bangladesh are trafficked to urban centres for commercial sexual exploitation and domestic work.

The Bangladesh government does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so, the US report contended.

13 journos

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Apart from yesterday's murder of Humayun Kabir Balu, editor of Dainik Janmabhumii, all the four other killings in Khulna were carried out in the last three years. Nahor Ali of Dainik Anirban was killed in April, 2001, Shukur Hossain of Dainik Anirban in 2001, Sheikh Haroon-ar-Rashid of Dainik Purbanchal in March, 2002 and Manik Chandra Saha of The New Age on January 15, 2004.

In Jessore, Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury of Dainik Spulungur was murdered in 1994, Faruq Hossain of Dainik Runner in 1995, Saiful Alam Mukul of Dainik Runner on August 30, 1998, and Shamsur Rahman of Dainik Janakantha on July 16, 2000.

Criminals killed the correspondent of Jhenaidah's Dainik Birdarpan Rezaul Karim Reza in 1998 and the paper's Editor Mir Elias Hossain Dilip on January 15, 2000. Editor of Dainik Patradut SM Alauddin was killed in Satkhira on June 19, 1996 and Bazlur Rahman of Dainik Din Badal in Chuadanga in 1998.

Only the murder cases of Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury and Faruk Hossain saw verdict so far in which seven convicted got life term.

In the Patradut editor murder case, six are now on bail, two in jail and two others in hiding.

Besides, the chargesheet of sensational Manik Saha murder case was submitted against 13 accused recently.

Khulna editor

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outlaved Purbo Banglar Communist Party claimed responsibility for the killing by cellphone to a photojournalist at Khulna Press Club, but police could not confirm the claim.

His death was the second high-profile journalist killing after New Age's special correspondent Manik Saha on January 15 in the city, dubbed as the valley of death for bloodshed by outlaws.

Witnesses said a young man approached Balu when his car pulled in front the house from his mother's Iqbalnagar house and hurled at least two bombs from his peanut basket at him in the well-orchestrated attack, rocking the entire area and badly damaging the car.

His younger son and daughter, who were also in the car, survived the attack unscathed. The elder son, Asif, is being treated for splinter injuries at a city clinic.

As the news of Balu's death in the operating theatre of the KMCH broke, hundreds of shell-shocked people, including journalists, political leaders and other professionals gathered outside the hospital, disconsolate with grief at the fatal frequency of violence in the otherwise serene city.

According to his family, Balu, serving his third stint as Khulna Press Club president since last October, received several death threats from outlaws for espousing a bold stand against them in his mass-circulation local newspaper and fuelling anti-outlaw sentiment in the wake of Manik's killing.

His latest death threat came from the Janajuddha faction.

Akbar Ali, deputy commissioner (South) of Khulna Metropolitan Police, blamed the outlaws operating in Khulna, the heart of restive southwest, for the killing. But he declined to give details.

Paramilitaries of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) were called in to assist armed police to maintain peace.

Police retrieved two live hand bombs from the peanut basket left behind in the UNO Park opposite the house of Balu by the killer before fleeing.

WAVE OF PROTEST

The killing of Balu, a valiant freedom fighter with an opulent past in student politics, triggered a wave of protest in Khulna and elsewhere.

The main opposition Awami League (AL) brought out a huge protest procession in Khulna, demanding immediate arrest and exemplary punishment to the killers and will stage demonstrations across Bangladesh tomorrow.

An emergency meeting of AL central working committee with party President Sheikh Hasina in the chair also decided to hold a

press conference on June 30 from where it will announce the next course of agitation programmes.

Hasina, also the leader of the opposition, is likely to visit Khulna today to protest the killing of Balu and express sympathy for the members of the bereaved family.

She is also likely to address a protest rally at Khulna Press Club.

BNP leaders including Mayor Tayebur Rahman condemned the killing.

Khulna-based journalists unveiled a seven-day mourning and protest programmes including a daylong hartal on June 29 and a mourning rally on July 1 in Khulna.

Other programmes include holding a protest rally, wearing black badges, hoisting black flags at the press club and all local newspaper offices, staging mourning procession and offering milad mahfil.

The leaders of Khulna Press Club, Khulna Union of Journalists (KUJ) and Metropolitan Union of Journalists (MUJ) and editors of local dailies in separate statements demanded exemplary punishment to the killers.

The coffin of Balu was kept at his house to enable people to pay their last respect to him before burial at Basupara graveyard today, after a namaz-e-Janaza at Shahid Hadis park at 11:00am and another at Iqbalnagar Mosque after Jehr prayers.

Balu, who was born in Itna village in Narail on October 4, 1947, participated in the movement against Hamidur Rahman Education Commission in 1962 long before doing his BA in 1974.

He became the joint convener of 'Swadhin Bangla Chhatra Sangram Parishad' during the Liberation War, the central committee vice-president of Chhatra League in 1970 and represented Bangladesh to a youth rally in Berlin in 1972.

He was elected publicity secretary of Khulna City Awami League in 1976.

Balu was elected president of Khulna Press Club in 1984, 1998 and 2003. He became the vice-president of Khulna Zonal Newspaper Editors' Association in 1990 and a member of Mongla Port Authority in 1998.

In 1992, he received the president's award and the gold medal of Dr Ashraf Siddiqui Foundation the next year for his contribution to journalism.

Balu is survived by his 80-year-old mother, two sons and a daughter. His first wife Akhtar Jahban Ruma died of cancer in 1981, leaving behind their son Asif. His second wife Ara Kabir, mother of son Ashik and daughter Tumpa, died of a stroke in 2001.

Abducted girl rescued in Munshiganj

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Locals yesterday freed a 5-year-old girl from Sreenagar in Munshiganj and held her captors, seven hours after she was abducted from the capital's Shyampur area.

Some unidentified men picked up Anika, daughter of Anwar Sikdar, from Gendaria at about 10:00am when she was playing in front of their house, sources said.

Anwar, owner of a rod-rolling factory in Shyampur, filed a general diary with Shyampur Police Station at noon after he failed to find his daughter.

Locals challenged Rajan and Shahidul in Sreenagar as they were roaming around suspiciously. They pounded the pair at around 5:00pm learning that they were abductors, sources said.

Both were turned over to police later. Upon their confession, Shyampur and Sreenagar police raided a house and rescued the girl, they added.

Police sent critically injured Rajan, 18, to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for treatment.

Rajan told our DMCH correspondent that he and his friend Shahidul picked up the girl and took her to Munshiganj in a taxi-cab.

He claimed Shahidul master-minded the whole incident.

Burglars take away pistol, cash from OC's house

UNB, Rajbari

Burglars made away with a loaded pistol, cash and other valuables from the house of the officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station in Rajbari on Saturday.

According to Abul Khayer Fakir, some unknown people broke into his police station compound flat at around 3:00am and took away a pistol with nine bullets, two cell phone sets and Tk 6,000 when he was sleeping.

The intruders cut the toilet window grills for their business, he added.

"I fell asleep at about 1:00am, but woke up sensing something wrong," Fakir said.

As he searched the house, the police official found his belongings, all kept on the table, missing.

Local police held two persons yesterday morning suspecting their alleged link to the stealing. However, police declined to disclose their name.

Controversial RU

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following a case filed by lawyer Abu Aslam challenging the recruitment.

The employees also held a rally at Amtala near RU Library. Local units of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Jamaat-e-Islami leaders spoke at the rally and called for a movement against the authorities and those who opposed the recruitment.

The employees besieged the offices of pro vice chancellor and chairman of the recruitment committee on Saturday and demanded confirmation of their services.

RU Pro VC Prof KHM Shahadat Hossain Mondol told The Daily Star that he had heard about the court order but was yet to receive it. "We will appeal to the higher court as we believe the recruitment was legal and essential for the university," he added.

RU authorities on April 17 appointed 327 third class and 217 fourth class staff on daily basis against 270 vacant posts allegedly without following proper appointment procedure and advertisements. It raised a storm of protest among teachers and students of the university. They went on a series of demonstrations against the recruitment decision and a highly volatile situation prevailed on the campus over the last two months.

Shujaat Pak PM

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policy and is considered a close confidant of Musharraf.

The election Tuesday is seen as a formality to ascertain Hussain has the support of the house before he is sworn in as prime minister. Nominations will be received until 2:00 pm Monday and the session to elect the new leader of the house will start at 4:00 pm Thursday, Assembly Speaker Chaudhry Amir Hussain said Sunday.

"I shall continue as prime minister till Aziz is elected member of the National Assembly" to meet constitutional requirements, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain told reporters Saturday.

"For the last many days, there was a confusion in the parliament about the prime ministership," he said. "With this peaceful change of power, the confusion has ended."

Jamali said he was quitting to save the party and to let the system function.

"I always tried my best to give comfort to the people, without hurting them."

He said his intentions were pious and his conscience was clear. "There was no allegation on me or my cabinet."

Mannan again files

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July 1 from its scheduled date of June 6 due to legal bindings, the government is yet to say in clear terms whether it will deploy troops in the polling centres of the constituency.

A May 24 home ministry circular still stands valid, which said two companies of army alongside other law-enforcement agencies will remain on guard during the Munshiganj-1, held in June 6, and Dhaka-10 by-polls.

The EC at a meeting on June 13 decided to ask the government to deploy army personnel in each polling centre of the Ramna-Tejgaon seat and Chief Election Commissioner MA Syed on June 15 sent a letter to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia conveying the decision.

Advocate MK Rahman, the counsel for the petitioners, said the petitioners yesterday checked with the EC if army personnel would be deployed in accordance with the decision. But the EC officials said they have not received any response or orders from the government.

The three other contesting candidates, who filed writ with Abdul Mannan, are Abu Saleh Mohammad Kibria, Mazharul Islam and Abu Hamidur Reza Khan.

Israel

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could stimulate peace efforts by building confidence in the region.

Asked if he thought the Israelis would be open to such an idea, he said: "I don't know. That's the purpose of my visit."

ElBaradei said he would not be lecturing the Israelis on whether or not they should acknowledge having atom bombs.

Under a policy of so-called "strategic ambiguity," Israel neither admits nor denies having nuclear weapons but is widely believed to have from 100 to 200 nuclear weapons.

"I think everybody takes it as a given that Israel has a nuclear capability, if not nuclear weapons. So whether they would like to come in the open, whether they maintain ... ambiguity, it's for them to decide," ElBaradei said.

He said he would like Israel, as well as everyone else in the Middle East, to open up its nuclear facilities to IAEA inspections.

ElBaradei said it was unsustainable that some countries had nuclear weapons and others did not.

"As long as you continue to have countries dangling a cigarette from their mouth, you cannot tell everybody not to smoke with a high degree of credibility," ElBaradei said.

Indo-Pak talks off

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sides, who have fought three wars, two of them over Kashmir.

"Clearly the aim was ... to carry this process forward," he said.

Masood Khan, Pakistan's foreign ministry spokesman, was equally upbeat.

"The atmospherics were positive," Khan told a press conference at the Pakistani High Commission here shortly after Sarna had briefed the media.

"The talks were held in a conducive atmosphere. Both sides engaged each other intensely, fully and professionally. There were no difficulties and there was a free flow of communication and exchange of ideas and views."

The discussions were the first between the nuclear-armed neighbours on Kashmir, their number one cause of disagreement, since a peace initiative collapsed in 2001.

The two delegations will tackle today the more complex issue of resolving the dispute over Kashmir, which is divided between

Khan. The petition quoting press reports said the BNP secretary general, senior joint secretary general and other leaders, accompanied by some ministers, at meetings in the constituency have been speaking against army deployment. They also reportedly said the government would not deploy army in each polling centre despite the EC decision and expectation of the court.

BSF guns down

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Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and police sources said the BSF opened fire on three Bangladeshi citizens and nabbed them from Gobra-kura village at around 8:00pm. Of the three, Moni Sangma died of his injuries.

The identity of the others could not be known immediately and they were not handed over to the BDR until yesterday afternoon.

The BSF, however, returned the body of Moni, son of Khabush Resil of Madhupur in Tangail, to the BDR. Moni went to visit his relative's house.

The BDR, meanwhile, arrested Rajesh on suspicion from Gobra-kura yesterday.

PM, Hasina

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In separate condolence messages, both conveyed their deep sympathy to the bereaved family members and prayed for peace of the departed soul.

The premier also ordered the authorities concerned to arrest the assailants.

Hasina in her message denounced the killing of Balu, also editor of Khulna-based daily Janmabhumii.

She also demanded immediate arrest and punishment of all killers including those of journalist Balu.

Car bomb blast

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newspaper.

"The government will make a clear distinction between those Iraqis who have acted against the occupation out of a sense of desperation, and those foreign terrorist fundamentalists and criminals whose sole objective is to kill and maim innocent people and to see Iraq fail," he added.

With a rising crescendo of murders and bombings of civilians as well as peacekeepers and officials across the country, and a threat on his own life, Alawi said national security was the top priority.

(AFP and Reuters)

India and Pakistan and claimed in full by both.

"There will be talks tomorrow on Kashmir. The attempt is to find a solution. Khan said.

"Now we are focused on dialogue ... the political leadership on both sides is trying to come up with solutions acceptable to the people of India, Pakistan and Kashmir."

He said Sunday's talks had focused on confidence-building measures such as lowering of troop numbers along the borders in Kashmir.

They also discussed the question of soldiers missing in previous conflicts and the repatriation of errant civilians, especially fishermen who had strayed into each other's waters.

According to India's Sarna, also on the table are issues such as a bus service linking the two zones of divided Kashmir, another connecting Sindh in Pakistan with Rajasthan in India and the opening of consulates in Bombay and Karachi.

Interest payment

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projects and further increasing the loan burden reappear. The government therefore should be watchful to avoid such traps."

Central bank statistics show, in March last, the government's outstanding domestic borrowing stood at Tk 52,886 crore, which was Tk 48,494 crore a year ago and Tk 24,084 crore five years back. The government obtains these loans from banks as well as the public through issuing savings certificates.

Next year, the government intends to borrow a total of Tk 7,099 crore from banks and through savings certificates, which is 19 percent higher than that of the outgoing budget.