

## USE AS CAMEL JOCKEY

# Five get life for bid to smuggle out child

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A tribunal in Dhaka yesterday sentenced five people to life for attempt to traffic a child to Dubai on February 9, 2002.

Judge Shamsul Arefin of the Special Tribunal for Prevention of Women and Children Repression-5 gave the verdict for trafficking the six-year-old baby Sohela alias Kamran.

The convicts are Mohammad Yunus Miah, Abul Kalam, Matiuir Rahman alias Motalab, Mostafa Kamal and Mahima Begum.

Of the convicts, Mohammad Yunus Miah and Abul Kamal were present in the court while Motalab, Mostafa and Mahima were tried in absentia.

The sentence on the fugitives will come into effect on the date of their arrest or surrender, the judgment said.

Earlier, the prosecution and the defence wrapped up their arguments and the court recorded statements of 18 prosecution witnesses.

In the case filed with Mirpur Police Station, it was alleged that Mohammad Yunus Miah kidnapped the child from the trade fair venue at Sher-e-Bangla

Nagar on February 9, 2002. He later sold the boy for Tk 3,000 to Abul Kamal and other accused, who confined the baby boy in a rented house of East Monipur in the city's Mirpur area. They were waiting to traffic him to Dubai to be employed as a camel jockey.

But acting on a tip off, Masud Parvez, a Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association official, with the help of Mirpur police rescued Sohela from the house the next day.

The investigation officer pressed charges against Yunus and the four others on May 4, 2002. He showed 20 people as prosecution witnesses. The tribunal framed charges against the five on January 19 last year.

The victim along with his mother Mosammat Fatema Khatun was present in the court during the delivery of the judgment. Fatema Khatun has expressed her satisfaction over the verdict.

Special Public Prosecutor Mohammad Rezaul Karim stood for the state while advocates AKM Rezaul Karim Khondaker and Shoib Miah defended the accused.

## South Asian

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project, a press release said.

Objectives of the consultation are to assess socio-political, economical and environmental impacts of structural intervention on common river systems and draw a common regional position of action and strategy against the Indian mega river-linking project.

## World Indigenous

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International Decade of the World's Indigenous People.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in a message on the eve of the day said this commemoration is an opportunity to celebrate the richness of indigenous culture and the contributions of the indigenous peoples to humanity.

"But more importantly, it's a chance for men and women everywhere to take stock of the situation of indigenous people in our world today, and of how much more needs to be done to improve their lives," Annan said.

He said indigenous peoples' land has for long been usurped, their culture denigrated or directly attacked, languages and customs suppressed, wisdom and traditional knowledge overlooked or exploited, and sustainable ways of developing natural resources dismissed. Moreover, some have even faced the threat of extinction, he added.

Indigenous people have been seeking for UN support for many years, Annan said, adding a dialogue and partnership with the UN has been launched in the context of the International Decade.

He called upon the governments, inter-governmental organisations and civil society to work to empower indigenous people and ensure their participation in decisions that affect their lives.

"On this day, let us remember the most fundamental principles of the UN Charter -- peace, development and human rights -- and reaffirm our determination to broaden the circle of solidarity for indigenous people," Annan asked the world community.

## Police to probe

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forces (BDR) and ansar. Coastguard will also be included in Rab.

Rab will run checks at three international airports to control trafficking in women and children and detect fake passports and visa, he said.

Pointing to shortage of arms and ammunition and modern transport, Iqbal said the force would be equipped with the arms from the biggest arms haul in Chittagong by August 20, adding Rab went four months back in transport purchase, as a cabinet committee cancelled a tender for vehicles.

"We don't have enough arms - we carry out drives with arms borrowed from the army or police," he told the journalists.

Rab arrested at least 646 people, including two who figured on the police list of top criminals and underground operatives.

"Rab will carry out its duty during the upcoming Saarc summit to ensure safety and security of dignitaries," Iqbal said.

Rab officials such as Lieutenant Colonel Chowdhury Fazlul Bari, Lt Col Hafizur Rahman, additional DIG Hasan Mahmood Khandker, Lt Col Aminul Islam, Lt Col Mirza Ejazur Rahman, Commander Saber Sharif, Major Rafiqul Islam and Captain Nasim were also present.

## HIV epidemic

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It showed 0.3 percent HIV infection among male sex workers, 1 percent among rickshawpullers in central Bangladesh and 0.8 percent among heroin abusers.

But the high-risk behaviours of the drug users, including blood donation and sex-buying from commercial sex workers, other active high-risk groups and people's close contact with high prevalence regions make the society vulnerable for the deadly disease.

The report showed 6.7 percent of the drug users donated blood in central Bangladesh, 5.9 percent in a northwestern and 4.2 percent in another northwestern survey area.

A significant number of them also buy sex from commercial sex workers, who run a HIV prevalence rate of 0.5 percent on average and 2 percent in northwestern region.

The study also showed syphilis, one of the sexually transmitted infections, ran as high as 35.5 percent and hepatitis C between 25 percent and 73 percent in its survey areas.

The study showed about 2 percent of sex workers in the northwestern region had HIV infection with 15 percent of the group tested positive for syphilis.

Twenty-eight percent truckers and 67 percent rickshawpullers bought sex while away from home last year, the study said.

The surveillance for the prevalence of HIV, hepatitis C and sexually transmitted infections (STI) was commissioned by the National AIDS /STD Programme.

"Several other factors suggest the risk of a devastating epidemic. Bangladesh is neighbor of major epidemics in India with a good deal of migration across the borders," an expert said.



PHOTO: PD

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia hands out relief materials to flood-hit people of Sarachar in Bajitpur Upazila of Kishoreganj yesterday.

# EC ready to relax

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trade facilities provided by the developed economies.

The EC envoy in this regard mentioned an Euro 10 million technical support provided by the European Union to Bangladesh to improve quality of its products.

Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury was the chief guest of the dialogue held at CIRDA auditorium and presided over by CPD Chairman Rahman Sobhan.

The commerce minister emphasised product diversification in agriculture and setting up more agro-based industries to increase the export volume and diversify the export basket. He said an increased export of agricultural products would have a direct impact on poverty alleviation.

Choudhury said a high-powered committee would be formed with representation of all stakeholders to identify areas and ways to increase exports to Europe and Japan.

Ambassador of Japan Motshihoro Horguchi said the Japanese consumers are very sensitive to product quality. For example, he said, "They are ready to pay much higher prices for safe food."

In his keynote paper, Professor Mostafizur Rahman pointed out that Bangladesh fails to make proper utilisation of the EU offer for duty- and quota-free access of goods under its Everything But Arms programme.

On behalf of the CPD, Rahman tabled a 21-point suggestion at the dialogue for boosting the country's export volume to European market, the largest destination of Bangladesh exports.

The suggestions include for providing credit, interest- and tax-support and other facilities to promote export oriented agro-processing industries, and

duty- and VAT-waiver to import equipment for horticultural product preservation.

Recommendations were also there for establishing a national body of exporters, reducing freight charge for regional exports, providing bonded warehouse facilities to agro-based industries, and strengthening testing capacities of laboratories.

The set of suggestions was prepared in consultation with all stakeholders, he told the dialogue.

Lawmakers Kazi Zafarullah and GM Kader, former secretaries Faruque Sobhan and Syed Rezaul Karim, BGMEA President Anisul Huq, Frozen Food Exporters' Association President Qazi Monirul Huque and Bangladesh Chamber of Industries President A K Azad also took part in the discussions.

Ananya Raihan of CPD presented another paper, prepared in collaboration with Prof Debapriya Bhattacharya and Prof Mostafizur Rahman, on the new Japanese generalised system of preference (GSP) for the least developed countries (LDCs) and Bangladesh's export opportunities.

The paper maintained, due to many supply-side constraints, the preferential market access often remains only in paper. "The system of standard compliance is very complicated and costly, which is often not possible for the LDCs to afford," it said.

Raihan too presented another set of suggestions, but this was for overcoming the supply-side constraints. The suggestions include establishing institutes of food technology research, packaging technology and product specification, building capacity of the entrepreneurs, and organising regular export fairs in Europe and Japan.

# Vessel puts ocean floor in reach

AP, Washington

A new deep-sea research vessel will be able to carry people to 99 percent of the ocean floor, diving deeper than the famed Alvin that pioneered the study of seafloor vents, plate tectonics and deep ocean creatures over the past 40 years.

The new American submersible will provide the tools to reach "not for the stars but for the depths," Robert Gagosian, president of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, said Friday at a briefing at the National Science Foundation.

France, Russia and Japan also operate deep sea research vessels and China is building one, officials said. The new ship will have similar capabilities.

It will dive thousands of feet deeper than Alvin, carry more scientific instruments, communicate more quickly and stay down longer.

Alvin "has been a trusted trouper for four decades and a good friend, but science advances and so does technology," said Arden Bement, acting director of NSF.

Design for the Alvin Replacement Vessel is under way with launch expected in 2008, officials said.

The vessel is expected to be able to descend more than 21,000 feet into the ocean. Alvin dives to just short of 15,000 feet. The new capability will still remain short of the deepest spot in the oceans, more than 36,000 feet in the Mariana Trench.

Only the bathyscaphe Trieste -- in 1960 -- has carried people to that depth, taking just two people there, a fraction of the 12 who have walked on the moon.

## HC asks BB

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challenging the legality of the existing board of directors formed in annual general meeting on June 14.

The petitioner submitted that the chairman had chosen and picked up the directors violating the banking rules. Bangladesh Bank, responsible for overseeing proper application of banking rules, kept its eyes shut and allowed a powerful AL leader to flout the rules.

Mercantile Bank was launched in 1999 when Awami League was in power.

Advocate M Abdus Samad appeared for the petitioner.

## Tk 1,600cr

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and the road-sections from Arong to Baily Bridge, Baily Bridge to Gulshan-1, Saidabad to Rampura, Shapla Square to Fakirapool Intersection, Dainik Bangla to Fakirapool Intersection, Gulshan-1 to Amtoli, Malibagh to Rajarbagh, Rajarbagh to Kamalapur, Kamalapur to Motijheel, and Shantinagar to AGB Colony.

The board also discussed the progress and status of various projects on roads, traffic signals, bus terminals, flyovers, strategic transport planning, and phasing out manual vehicles from some city roads.

A meeting source said the Mohakhali flyover would be completed by June 30. But he expressed concern over the structures built by squatters on Bangladesh Railway land adjacent to the flyover.

The condition of Airport Road under the flyover is in so bad a shape that it wears the vehicles as well as increases fuel and maintenance costs, he added.

Most of the traffic signals on Mirpur Road are in disorder, reported the Traffic Police representative in the meeting, which makes it tough for them to control traffic. It also raises the danger of accidents, he added.

The DTCC last year launched a Tk 14-crore project to install automatic traffic signalling system at 59 points on the city streets.

Sources said the DTCCB is now in the process of developing long-term in Dhaka City transport plans for the next five, 10 and 20 years.

# Canadian senator

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with the Canadian company, SNC-Lavalin.

"I... solicit your support to ensure that SNC-Lavalin... as one of the two bidders qualified for this project whose financial offer has been made public, be given the opportunity to negotiate with BPDB [Bangladesh Power Development Board], as dictated by their own rules, and in accordance with acceptable norms for such commercial transactions which are publicly tendered," Harb wrote.

He expressed dismay to see that, even though an independent committee had mandated to review the evaluation process and the lowest bid, the government is considering re-tendering the project.

"Bangladesh's power needs are critical, and another re-tender would not only [make an negative] impact on the country's economic health but raise serious concerns regarding the credibility of BPDB's evaluation process," he added.

"Therefore, in the best interest of the long-standing relationship established between our two countries from the time Canada officially recognised Bangladesh immediately following its independence and of our mutual goal to further develop trade in a framework of transparency and fairness, I strongly suggest that the recent decision... be reviewed and that the evaluation follow its due course," Harb advocated.

The senator said he is prepared to visit Dhaka in late August in this connection.

The controversy arose out of the

power board's tilt to award the contract to Japanese company Sumitomo, which submitted the lowest but allegedly a faulty bid. Sumitomo, which quoted \$83 million to set up the plant, was selected as the lowest bidder in March last. However, soon after it had been selected, Sumitomo amended and hiked its tender price to \$85 million. Besides, there are allegations of several irregularities in its offer.

The second lowest bidder, Lavalin, which made a \$89-million offer, objected to the tender process saying Sumitomo severely breached the bidding terms. Soon, the Canadian government officially protested what it said was procedural violation in the bidding.

In the face of protest from a powerful country like Canada, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in June formed a committee with experts from the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET). The committee found seven flaws in Sumitomo's tender.

But the BPDB in a report on July 14 claimed that the committee's observations were wrong and there was no flaw in the Sumitomo offer, and advocated awarding the contract to it.

As per bidding rules, when the lowest offer is found flawed, the second lowest bidder is supposed to be invited for negotiations. But, allegedly under pressure from lobbyists, the PMO said the project should rather be re-tendered.

# Iranian consul

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their weapons and return to the rule of order and law."

Pictures were shown of the Iran diplomat's passport, identity and business cards along with what appeared to be footage of him speaking, without sound, against a black backdrop.

The group warned Iran against its "blatant interference in Iraqi internal affairs," the station said.

It added that the diplomat warned "all states against violating internationally recognized diplomatic duties."

A group with the same name kidnapped two Pakistanis in Iraq last month and subsequently executed them for cooperating with the US-led multinational forces.

Allawi went straight into talks with the governor of Najaf, the holiest Shia city in Iraq. He was accompanied by his interior and defense ministers and other top officials.

Despite the order from Allawi, fighters roamed the streets of Najaf and fortified their positions with mines around the crypts and mausoleums of the city's ancient cemetery, one of the oldest in the Middle East and scene of the worst fighting.

In Baghdad, an American OH-58 Delta helicopter made a "precautionary landing" northwest of Sadr City, but US military officials said initial reports indicated it had mechanical trouble.

Major General Peter Chiarelli of the 1st Cavalry Division said both pilots were safe. Militiamen from Sadr's Mehdi Army claimed the aircraft was shot down.

In Sadr City, a stronghold for the young firebrand cleric, hundreds of militiamen armed with AK-47 assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades manned checkpoints.

The Health Ministry said 22 people had died in clashes in Sadr City and other parts of the capital from 9 a.m. (0500 GMT) Saturday to 9 a.m. Sunday.

At least 21 people were killed in

similar clashes in Najaf during the same period. "The figure from Najaf is initial because there are still bodies that could not be collected due to the ongoing fighting," an official said.

The US marines said Friday they had killed 300 militiamen in Najaf. A militia spokesman put losses at 36 dead.

Speaking at a base near Najaf late Saturday, Lieutenant Colonel John Mayer, battalion commander of the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, said a two-month old truce between US forces had the Mehdi Army had been torn up and that "all bets are off." He did not elaborate.

Allawi has gone out of his way to bring Sadr into the political fold despite the worst fighting since April. Tension had been rising in Najaf since Iraqi security forces surrounded Sadr's house a week ago.

Allawi insisted Saturday that the Najaf unrest was being fomented by criminals hiding behind Sadr's name. The cleric has been the most vocal critic of the US presence in Iraq and he has many followers among Iraq's downtrodden Shia youth.

An aide to the cleric said Saturday that Sadr wanted a negotiated settlement to end the fighting.

Allawi's order for the fighters to leave Najaf came a day after he announced a limited amnesty for Iraqi insurgents that lasts for 30 days. It only applies to those who have committed minor crimes, not murderers, rapists or looters.

His interim government also shut down the Baghdad office of Qatar-based Al Jazeera television for one month.

Allawi said a commission had been monitoring Al Jazeera to see whether it was inciting violence and hatred, and the decision was taken "to protect the people of Iraq."

The station denied the charges.

Sunday, an Iraqi National Guard was killed and another wounded when a roadside bomb ripped through their patrol north of Baghdad. In the town of Kifl to the south, three police officers were killed and two wounded when gunmen fired assault rifles and rockets at a police station.

A US military helicopter made an emergency landing yesterday northwest of Baghdad near the Sadr City district where clashes have raged over the past three days between US troops and militia loyal to radical Shia cleric Moqtada Sadr, according to the military.

## Revenue

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dubbed the target a 'challenge' one, but noted it is achievable through reforms to the tax administration and an appropriate rationalisation of tariff and tax rates.

The NBR officials, however, observed the revenue earning target for this fiscal year is elusive if the past records are anything to go by. The field-level officers of the NBR have termed the target 'ambitious', which is next to impossible to achieve, said an NBR official, who spoke on condition that he not be named.

Other NBR high officials said the industrial production has slumped because of the monsoon flooding, which will have an adverse impact on import that accounts for the bulk of the revenue income. "That's why the revenue earning deficit will widen in August," said the NBR official.

A high official of the NBR said the growth rate in July was 11.80 percent, which was 10.25 percent in the same month last year. The deficit in revenue collection from income tax was Tk 61 crore and import, VAT and others at Tk 94 crore.

# Bomb spectre haunts

FROM PAGE 1

Badaruddin Ahmed Kamran, apparently the prime target of the attackers, received repeated death threats from one of the groups.

Some of them were also examining the intra-party conflict in the main opposition party.

In a little headway into the probe, police yesterday found out the owner of a jeep damaged by the bomb.

Bangladeshi immigrant to the UK and AL leader SM Nunu Miah used the jeep as a privileged client of the First Security Bank Limited, private news agency UNB said of police finds. The bank manager called in by the police at midnight told investigators that Miah was allowed to use the vehicle, as he is a client of his bank.

The explosion comes in the wake of a blast at the shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal on January 12 that killed five people and a second bomb attack on May 21 that killed three people and injured many others including British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Anwar Choudhury.

AL adherents who will enforce a daylong hartal in the northeastern district today brought out a procession yesterday to mourn Ibrahim, Sylhet city AL publicity secretary.

The driver of the jeep, who was arrested earlier, was set free. Another jeep blown up in the explosion is also owned by Miah, arrested near a hotel.

## PM promises

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Sarachar Runway at Bajitpur in Kishoreganj before distributing relief.

On arrival at Shaldigha spot in Khaliyari, a Haor area surrounded by floodwaters, by helicopter, Khaleda went close to the people who were in boats and waved to them responding to their welcoming slogans.

Thousands of people thronged the Gopal Gopinath High School venue, coming in boats from far and near, to meet the prime minister. After 1978, she was the first head of government to come to this backwater area of Khaliyari, where boat is the only transport following the devastating flooding.

The prime minister said deputy commissioners have been given the responsibility of assessing the flood losses and damages in addition to foreign agencies.

She said foreign aid is necessary particularly for rebuilding the wrecked infrastructures, assuring that her government's relief and food assistance would continue until new harvest.

At Khaliyari, she said special farm credits would be arranged for the farmers of this region as crops have been washed away thrice there. She also promised to provide all assistance in various farming vocations, including fisheries and livestock.

Khaleda said she did not come to hold public meetings and deliver speech but to see the sufferings of people, help them and tell that BNP and alliance government are with them at the time of their hardship.

## Rab nabs 3

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hoodlums forcibly left the firearms with him. He alleged they used to take the firearms and return those to him again. Whenever he refused, the hoodlums threatened to kill him, Rubel said.