

Saifur slams auditor's office for tinkering with 'trivial matters'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday criticised the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) saying large audit reports on 'insignificant issues' dent the image of the country.

Asking the CAG's office to shun this practice, the minister said it should concentrate more on important issues. Insignificant reports are now highlighted in newspapers which publish those without proper scrutiny, he thought.

"Sitting at its headquarters in Berlin, the Transparency International (TI) later compiles these newspaper reports that form the basis of TI's list of most corrupt nations," Saifur said.

The minister was speaking at the inaugural ceremony of a high profile regional auditors general conference on 'Harmonising institutional efforts for promoting accountability in the public sector' in Dhaka.

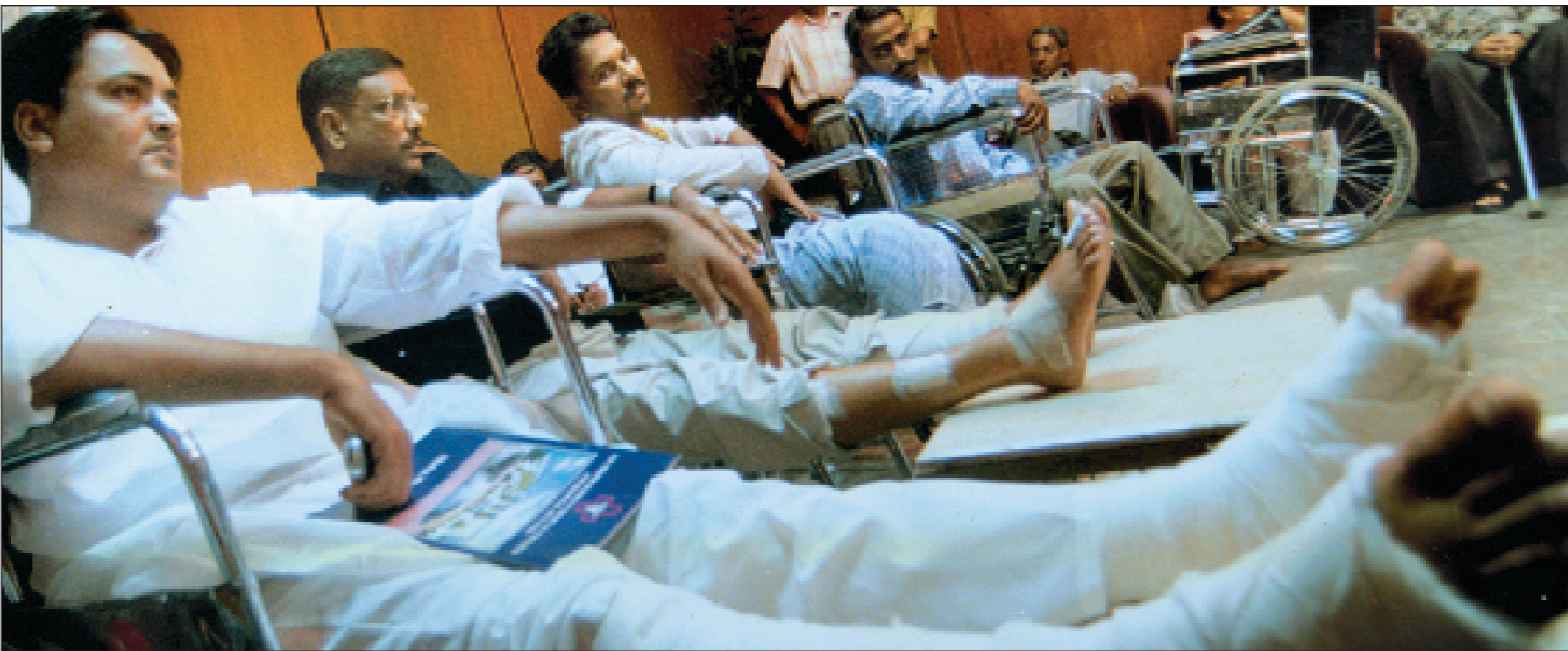
The office of the CAG in association with the World Bank and Canadian International Development Agency (Cida) organised the two-day conference being held at a local hotel.

Thirty delegates including a number of auditors general from the Saar and other countries in the region are attending the conference.

Underscoring good governance to ensure transparency and accountability at all levels of administration, Saifur said development work greatly suffers due to lack of good governance.

Bangladesh has one of the most transparent and accountable democratic orders in the world but it is not reflected in newspaper reports, he said.

World Bank Country Director in SEE PAGE 11 COL 6



Leaders of the AL and its front organisations, from left, Ajoy Kar Khokon, Obaidul Kader and Nazrul Islam Babu wait at Zia International Airport yesterday before they flew to India for treatment .



A policewoman arrests Awami League leader Nazma Rahman during yesterday's hartal, called to protest the August 21 grenade attack on an AL rally. She was released later.

Two youths first threw grenades from ground

Injured AL leader Zafarullah says

SHAMEEM MAHMUD

The August 21 grenade attacks on Awami League (AL) rally started with at least two youths throwing the first two grenades from the pavement between Ramna Bhaban and City Bhaban, a senior AL leader injured in the attacks said yesterday.

"I was standing on the rear left of the truck and saw a dark, tall youth throw something at the truck from the footpath between Ramna Bhaban and City Bhaban", AL Presidium Member Kazi Zafarullah MP said as he recalled the terrible scene.

Zafarullah received severe wounds in his left hand in the blasts that killed 19 and wounded over 200. The attacks began when Sheikh SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Grenades hurled from City Bhaban

Judicial probe body told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A victim and witness to the August 21 carnage on an Awami League (AL) rally told the Judicial Enquiry Commission yesterday that attackers hurled the grenades from City Bhaban, a building opposite the AL headquarters, and police fired back.

"I heard a bang and saw a thing coming down from City Bhaban that also went off, while something hit my right leg. Lying on the road, I saw policemen firing at the building," victim Monir Hossain told the enquiry commission at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Also a freedom fighter, Monir said the attack happened moments SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

Proposal for speedy purchase of fertiliser rejected

4 lakh MT urea to be bought

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Cabinet Committee on Purchase yesterday shot down an industries ministry proposal for speedy procurement of fertiliser.

While rejecting the proposal to relax the Public Procurement Regulations 2003 for import of fertiliser, the committee approved purchase of four lakh metric ton (MT) of urea fertiliser.

The committee at a meeting yesterday chaired by Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman approved the purchase that has to be consistent with the procurement guidelines. The ministry proposed SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Injured AL leaders off to India

Harassment at ZIA alleged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eighteen of the Awami League (AL) and its front organisation leaders, who were injured in the August 21 grenade blasts, left the capital yesterday for advanced treatment in India.

Of them, 11 went to New Delhi while the others to Kolkata.

Meanwhile, AL leaders present at ZIA to see off their fellows alleged that Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight, which carried the injured AL leaders and workers to New Delhi, was three hours late for 'unnecessary harassment' by the on duty immigration officials at the Zia International Airport (ZIA).

Eleven AL leaders who had been referred to advanced treatment in New SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Delhi, were asked to produce referral letters for their treatment, government clearance and some other documents that the AL leaders termed irrelevant. They said all these were intended only to harass the opposition leaders.

"The immigration officers at the airport out of the blue asked the injured leaders to produce documents that were completely irrelevant and unnecessary. They unnecessarily kept them (leaders) waiting for hours," said Abdus Shahid, opposition chief whip.

He said, "The airport authorities had been informed earlier about the sick AL leaders and their scheduled flight. Still the immigration officers continued interrogating the leaders and ultimately delayed the flight for three hours."

The flight, which was originally scheduled to depart at 11:00am, left at 2:00pm.

Asked about the flight delay, Farida Yasmin, the ZIA immigration officer in charge, said, "I can't comment on what happened during the previous shift."

Officials, who were on duty in the previous shift, could not be reached for comments.

The group that went to New Delhi included Presidium Member Suranjit Sen Gupta, Joint Secretary General Obaidul Kader, special aide to the AL president Mamtaz Hossain, AL president's Personal Security Chief Major General (retired) Tareq Siddiqui, President SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

EMAIL THREAT

Suspected sender tortured, remanded

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Intelligence agents physically and mentally tortured a youth after he was arrested on suspicion of e-mailing the Prothom Alo on August 23 with threats to kill Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina, his defence lawyer told court yesterday.

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka yesterday placed 24-year-old Saibal Saha Partha on a four-day remand after he was taken to court -- visibly shaken -- at 4:00pm under tight security, five days into his arrest.

Defence lawyer Gyanendra Biswas appealed to Metropolitan Magistrate Shamsul Alam to bring Partha into the courtroom to prove intelligence agencies tortured him in custody.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Republicans gather to back Bush

REUTERS, New York

Republicans have opened their national convention to nominate President George W. Bush for a second term with plans for four days of tributes to his wartime leadership and his response to the September 11, 2001, attacks.

The opening session will be highlighted by a tribute to victims of the September 11 attacks and a salute to Bush by two party leaders who appeal to moderates, former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Arizona Senator John McCain.

"He has been tested and has risen to the most important challenge of our time, and I salute him," McCain said of Bush in prepared excerpts of his speech released by the campaign on Monday.

Republicans start the convention in an upbeat mood after several new polls showed Bush gaining ground and slightly leading his Democratic challenger, Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts.

The gathering is in New York, less than four miles (7 km) from the gaping hole where the World Trade Centre once stood, in part to remind voters of Bush's leadership after the attacks.

Three victims' relatives will SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia presides over a meeting with leaders of different business organisations at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday.

State minister's bodyguard stabbed

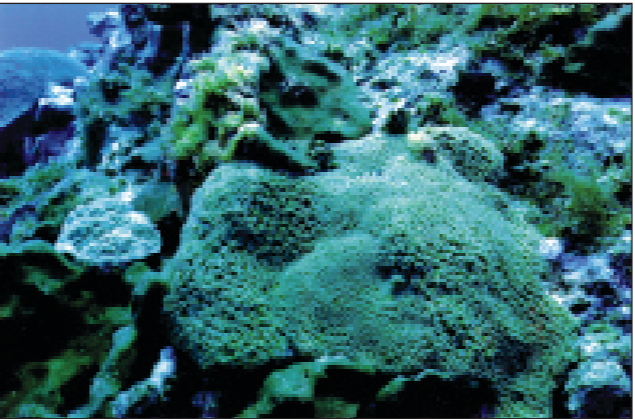
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Muggers stabbed the bodyguard of a state minister and snatched away his gun and ammunition in Ramna in the early hours of yesterday.

Habibur Rahman, 32, bodyguard of State Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Ziaul Haque Zia, was returning to police barrack from the minister's house on Mintoo Road.

The muggers stopped Habibur, constable of Special Branch of Police, at Baily Road and Shantinagar crossing at 12:25am. They stabbed on his left shoulder and took away his revolver, eight bullets and a wireless set.

Prayer Timing		
August 31		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-30	5-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-23	6-26
Esha	7-45	8-15
Source: Islamic Foundation		



Will organisms be able to adapt as conditions change rapidly?

Acid oceans spell doom for coral

BBC ONLINE

The increasing acidity of the world's oceans could banish all coral by 2065, a leading marine expert has warned.

Professor Katherine Richardson said sea organisms that produced calcareous structures would struggle to function in the coming decades as pH levels fell.

The Danish expert told the EuroScience Open Forum 2004 that human-produced carbon dioxide was radically changing the marine environment.

CO2 levels are now said to be at their highest level for 55 million years.

Most of it will eventually be absorbed by seawater, where it will react to form carbonic acid.

The normal acidity of the ocean is around pH 8, but experts predict this could drop to pH 7.4.

Scientists fear this increasing acidification could have a particularly detrimental effect on corals and other marine organisms, because it reduces the availability of carbonate ions in the water for them to make their hard parts.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Student strike may end Saturday

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), student wing of Awami League (AL) might withdraw from Saturday the indefinite countrywide student strike enforced earlier demanding international and impartial probe into the August 21 grenade attack on AL rally.

"We received a letter for discussion from university authorities yesterday about withdrawal of the strike," BCL President of Dhaka University (DU) unit Delwar Hossain told The Daily Star yesterday adding that there is a possibility of withdrawal of strike soon.

"We will sit with the authorities on strike issue today or tomorrow after discussing with our party high ups-- if the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) tries to do anything forcibly, we will be compelled to go for long strike," Delwar said.

"The general students of the educational institutions were not responsible for the grenade attack on AL rally so why should they suffer?" Sahabuddin L a l t u , J C D

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

