

## Rab action kills

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 Khan Mohammad Shahabuddin, 38, president of Karwan Bazar Pucca Arat Baboshayi Samiti (wholesale traders association) was killed during an 'encounter' with the Rab members at Karwan Bazar at around 12:15am, they said.

Besides, Abdul Kalam Azad, an activist of Rangpur Awami League and leader of a local transport workers' union, was killed in another 'crossfire' at Haragachhi rail crossing in Rangpur at about 2:00am, our district correspondent reports.

Rab sources said three Rab members were injured in the firefight at Baunia and another in Rangpur. Rab, however, did not disclose their identities.

Rab said they arrested four accomplices of Karwan Bazar businessman Shahabuddin and seized a revolver with three bullets from the spot during the operation. The arrestees are Rion Khandaker, owner of a wholesale shop, Motker Hossain, Ramna thana correspondent of the Daily Janakantha, Shafiq Rahman and Bellal Hossain.

A writ petition was filed in the High Court on Monday challenging the formation of Rab and seeking an injunction on the activities of the elite force. Different rights groups are also criticising the Rab for deaths in their custody.

**BAUNIA KILLINGS**  
 A Rab team arrested Nazir Raham alias Naijya, 30, a top criminal on the Pallabi police list and accused in eight criminal cases including murder, at Bhulta in Rongganji upazila of Narayanganj district on Monday night.

Following his statement they nabbed alleged criminal Miraj from Keraniganj and another member of the gang, Faruq alias Falanya, an accused in 21 cases including murders, rape and extortion, from Khilgaon area in the capital.

Acting on their confessional statement, the Rab members raided Baunia embankment area in search of their accomplices and arrested Sekander, 30, an accused in 26 cases including one for killing, at about 6:00am on Monday.

A Rab official said when they went to Baunia slum with Naijya, Faruq and Sekander to arrest other members of the gang at around 1:00am Tuesday, armed criminals opened fire on the Rab members prompting them to retaliate.

"The three criminals tried to flee and died in the shootout," he said. The three bodies with numerous bullet wounds were sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morgue.

The Rab members seized one pistol, 14 bullets, one magazine, two homemade bombs and 250 grams heroin from the spot during the operations.

Meanwhile, Joshua Begum, wife of Faruq, went to the Rab office at Paikpara in Mirpur Monday noon to meet her husband and brother-in-law, but the Rab did not allow her. "One officer told me that a meeting was on. He asked me to go away saying they (Faruq and Naijya) would be tried at 12:01am tonight," she alleged.

**KARWAN BAZAR KILLING**  
 A joint team of Rab-1 and Rab-4, on information that Shahabuddin and his accomplices were holding a secret meeting at the city's biggest kitchen market Karwan Bazar, raided Hotel Khan in the area at around 11:50pm on Monday.

The Rab press release said when the anticrime force conducted the raid, the criminals opened fire to escape arrest. The Rab men then answered with bullets for self-

## AHSANULLAH KILLING Framing of charges tomorrow

**UNB, Dhaka**

The speedy trial tribunal is likely to frame charges against the accused in the Ahsanullah Master MP murder case tomorrow.

**WITNESSES VERSION**  
 Rab-1 Commanding Officer Lt Col Chowdhury Fazlul Bari at a briefing at his office yesterday morning said they had conducted the midnight raid on Hotel Khan where Shahabuddin was killed in an encounter with the criminals.

Police submitted charge sheet against 30 people, including Jubo Dal leader Nurul Islam, for their involvement in the murder. Eleven of them were present in the court yesterday.

Earlier, a petition seeking discharge from the case was filed on behalf of accused Kabir Hossain, Dulal and Monir.

### Irregularities

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The post of MLSS was handed over an interview card on October 25 in which she was asked to be present before the RMC director on October 18.

Denying the allegations, RMC Deputy Director Dr Rokeya Begum said, "Some mistakes might have taken place in typing the interview cards, but the recruitment process is going on following strict principles."

### Govt ups rice sale

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The handout said some 340 metric tons of rice were taken by the dealers in the capital for OMS from October 21 to 24 and of them, 244 metric tons have been sold.

The minister also directed the authorities concerned to increase the number of rice selling centres in the capital.

Deputy Minister for Food and Disaster Management Asadul Habib Dulal and high officials of the ministry were present in the meeting.

### Barisal hospital

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authorities yesterday declaring cancellation of the total appointment procedure over allegations of irregularities and gross corruption found by an inquiry committee.

Mustafizur Rahman, leader of the pro-government striking staff, said their strike will continue until they were informed about the cancellation officially.

The health administration and treatment system in the SBMCH has collapsed due to the strike, sources said. The SBMCH authorities and the staff will sit an emergency meeting today to review and normalise the situation.

### PM launches

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the plague and went round its different sections. She also visited the disabled-run plastic goods manufacturing unit 'Moity Shilpa'.

Social Welfare Minister Ali Ahsan Mujahid, Secretary of the Ministry Kazi Monwarul Huq and Director General of the Department of Social Service Hafizul Islam also addressed the function.

Referring to the social obligation towards the physically challenged and constitutional commitment to ensure their rights, the prime minister said the government has implemented various programmes as per the commitment.

She said disability is not a curse. This mineral water plant will prove that the disabled can contribute to productive activities if they get proper education, training and other facilities, she added.

The prime minister told the physically challenged not to consider themselves hapless and helpless and assured them that the government would always stand by them to ensure their welfare.

She said the government has also reserved one percent quota for the disabled in the jobs of class one officers through BCS examinations.

Microcredit programmes have been introduced for the disabled and the allocation for National Foundation for Development of the Disabled has been raised by 20 percent, she said.

The prime minister said training and rehabilitation centres for the disabled girls have been set up in six divisions and eight schools opened for the disabled children at the district level.

### Fitra

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Foundation yesterday with its Director General AZM Shamsul Alam in the chair, said a press release.

The meeting was attended, among others, by Khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque Maulana Obaidul Haq, former director of the Islamic Foundation Maulana Mufazzal Hossain Khan, Maulana Shah Mohammad Nesar Ul Haq, Senior Pesh Imam of Baitul Mukarram Mosque Mufti Maulana M Nuruddin, Pesh Imam Muhibullah Baki and Khatib of Nawabbari Jame Mosque Maulana Rezaul Karim Islambadi.

The loan portion of the assistance will have to be repaid in two years time with 5 percent interest.

The draft policy proposes the money to be disbursed either through a ministerial committee or Bangladesh Rural Development Board or non-governmental organisations.

## Losing out in battle

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 of aubergine rose to Tk 100 and green chilli to Tk 160 when the fasting month began. The prices are yet to ease to a tolerable level.

The Centre for Policy Dialogue -- an independent think tank -- in a report said the recent price hike is hitting the poor, particularly those who spend relatively more on food.

Abu Yussuf, 34, an officer of Bangladesh Krishi Bank, said his monthly salary has increased Tk 275 as he got an increment this year. "But my monthly expenditure has gone up by more than Tk 1,000 compared to that of last year."

"I cannot keep pace with the rising expenditure. Now I have to look for an alternative source of income," Yussuf added.

"When people desperately look for an alternative source of income, it may not be always a pleasant experience. The hardship pushes many people to corruption and forces them to find illegal sources of income," he observed.

The rate of inflation is on sharp rise and is likely to shoot further on the back of this year's devastating floods. Inflation was 5.88 percent in July this year and the Planning Commission forecast an alarming 6 to 6.5 percent at the end of this fiscal year (FY).

The annual inflation rate on an average basis has risen to 5.83 percent in FY04 from 4.38 percent in FY03 and only 2.79 percent the year before.

"Specially hard hit by high inflation are the fixed income people," Dr Rushdan Islam Rahman, research director of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) said.

Inflation cannot be totally eliminated because low inflation rate can help economic growth and employment generation, she said noting the evils of inflation can be offset if economic growth induced by inflation is participated by the low-income groups.

"Small producers and workers benefit from economic growth, their income growth could keep pace with the inflation. But unfortunately it is not happening at the expected rate," she added.

The government has announced to implement a new pay scale for public servants from the next year in line with recommendations from the Pay Commission now working to formulate a new scale. The last pay scale was made effective from September.

The BIDS researcher said government servants get a new pay scale after every six to seven years but as soon as the pay hike is announced, the essentials market sees another round of price hike that affects all consumers.

### Monga

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Tk 15,000; 40:60 percent in Tk 15,000; Tk 20,000; and 50:50 percent in packages of more than Tk 20,000.

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PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia receives a pack of mineral water from a staff after inaugurating the government-financed mineral water plant operated by the physically handicapped in Tongi, Gazipur yesterday.

## 84 Muslims killed

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 as they were taken away in the trucks for questioning, according to officials.

"After we brought people who were arrested into detention, we found that another 78 people were dead," Manit Suthaporn of the justice ministry told reporters.

He said the detainees were piled on top of each other in the back of the trucks. "According to the investigation of the dead bodies, they died because of suffocation," he said.

Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, speaking before the announcement of the extra 78 deaths, said the protesters were weak because of fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, which started on October 15.

"It is normal that their bodies could not handle it. It is not about someone attacking them," Thaksin told reporters.

The protests were sparked by the arrest of six Muslim men accused of handing guns to rebels in Muslim-majority southern Thailand, where an insurgency has left 414 dead this year. Police said some of the crowd on Monday tried to storm the police station.

Rights activists have previously accused the authorities of heavy-handed tactics in the south, including the storming of a mosque that left 32 Muslim militants dead during a one-day uprising in April.

The insurgency in the south of mainly Buddhist Thailand has continued sporadically for decades and sparked into life again in January with a raid on an army depot.

Thai forensic scientist Pornthip Rojansun told a press conference in Pattaya that 80 percent of the victims died because they could not breathe.

"We didn't find any dead bodies with broken arms or legs, but between two or three of them had broken necks which may have been caused from the transportation," she said.

Government spokesman Jakrapob Penkair said earlier that "fasting and possible drug consumption" was the major factors behind the deaths.

Abdul Rahman Abdul Samed, the top Muslim official in

Narathiwat, told AFP he feared the incident could spark a violent reaction.

"I am concerned that the incident yesterday will escalate the tension in the south and some groups may try to do something about taking revenge," he said.

His deputy condemned the government's comments about the effect of fasting for Ramadan. "They are youths, they should not have any problem," said Abdul Rosa Aree.

"I think the government is too fast to conclude what caused their deaths."

A member of Thailand's state-backed human rights commission also warned earlier of worsening violence and said the break up of the demonstration was "clearly a violation of people's rights".

Police said the situation was under control on Tuesday morning after the biggest clash between authorities and disaffected Muslims since a day-long uprising in April left 113 people dead.

Soldiers were ordered to fire above the heads of demonstrators as some tried to storm the police station. Police said some of the protesters had used weapons.

Interior Minister Bhokin Bhalakula told reporters in Bangkok early Tuesday the demonstrators were Thai Muslims who "don't respect the law and their religion. They made trouble while authorities tried to do everything to stop it".

Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid said in Kuala Lumpur that the flare-up across the border in Thailand was a "matter of concern".

Authorities have bolstered security on the borders to prevent suspected militants crossing the border into Malaysia.

## Dhaka bypass

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communications minister said, "media efforts to portray me as a corrupt minister" have failed as "no-one in the country now believes that I am a corrupt minister."

Asked whether 'crossfire' killings are violation of human rights, Huda said, "Those who have died in crossfire were listed criminals with 20 more murder cases against me."

On the reported shady deals in introducing CNG (compressed natural gas) three-wheelers in the capital, the minister claimed, "There was no scam in the procurement of CNG three-wheelers as I did not do any favour to anybody nor I resorted to irregularities."

On various irregularities and scams in his ministry sometimes pointed out by his ruling alliance colleagues and reported in the media, Huda said it is an 'adventure' for certain politicians to raise 'some juicy issues' for media consumption and grab publicity.

Speaking at a 'meet the reporters' organised by Dhaka Reporters' Unity at its auditorium, he said, "Though I always intend to do good work in the communications sector, I cannot do so at times because of political influence, persuasion and lobbying."

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