

# Rab action kills

**FROM PAGE 1**  
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, Abul Kalam Azad, an activist of Rangpur Awami League and leader of a local transport workers' union, was killed in another 'crossfire' at Haragachh 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, Mokter 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 Rahman alias Naijya, 30, a top criminal on the Pallabi police list and accused in eight criminal cases including murder, at Bhulta in Roopganj 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 Falynya, 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 Buania 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, Joshna 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-

defence, leaving Shahabuddin bullet-hit in all parts of his body.

Rab said Shahabuddin died on way to hospital but sources said he was killed on the spot. The officer-in-charge of Tejgaon Police Station took him to the DMCH and three Rab men were injured during the shootout, Rab claimed.

The body of Shahabuddin was handed over to his family.

**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.

However, witnesses said the incident took place at the office of Karwan Bazar Pucca Arat Baboshayi Samity on the roof of the hotel. They said some 50 Rab men stormed into the office adjacent to the market's guards quarters.

As the Rab men knocked the door at the staircase on the roof, the Ansar members opened it. The Rab men then asked all the 16 Ansar members to keep quiet and not to open fire even if they hear any gunshots, said an Ansar.

"Then the Rab men entered Shahabuddin's office room and we heard around 40 gunshots," said the Ansar. More than two hours later they saw the Rab dragging a body out of the office without letting them see it.

Shahabuddin's brother Mohammad Dulal however rejected Rab's claim and told reporters that he (Shahabuddin) was not involved with any criminal activities.

Lt Col Fazlul Bari at the briefing termed Sunday's procession in Kawan Bazar against extortion as pretension. "We have prepared a list of those who joined the procession and we will take action against all of them," he said.

Rab also said following the death of Pichchi Hannan, extortion in the Kawan Bazar kitchen market stopped for two months. "But Shahabuddin and his gang tried to take control of the market filling the gap of Hannan."

**RANGPUR KILLING**  
Rab sources said leader of Rangpur Awami League and transport workers' union Abul Kalam Azad was killed when a Rab team encountered firing by his accomplices at Haragachh rail crossing at about 2:00am Tuesday.

Several bullets pierced the head of Azad. He was taken to Rangpur Medical College Hospital where the doctors on duty declared him dead.

One Rab member was also injured in the shootout, Rab claimed.

Rab arrested Azad on October 18 from Rangpur bus terminal with two pistols, one revolver and four rounds of bullets.

According to the police, Azad was a top listed criminal of the district and accused in more than two dozen cases including murder and arms cases, 22 of which were filed with Kotwali Police Station.

A tea-stall worker in his early life, Azad later became a transport leader. He was elected secretary of Rangpur District Transport Workers' Union thrice. Azad contested the last election to Rangpur municipality as chairman candidate from Awami League.

The body of Azad was handed over to his family members after autopsy.

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.

The Awami League lawmaker was shot dead at a Swechhasebak League rally at Tongi on May 7 this year. Omar Faruq Ratan, a school-boy, also died and five others were injured in the armed attack.

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 'Moitry Shipra'.

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

**FROM PAGE 1**  
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 UI Haq, Senior Pesh Imam of Baitul Mukarram Mosque Mufti Maulana M Nuruddin, Pesh Imam Muhibullahil Baki and Khatib of Nawabbari Jame Mosque Maulana Rezaul Karim Islambadi.



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.

## Dhaka bypass

FROM PAGE 12

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."

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."

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 public attention.

About the allotment of an extremely expensive piece of railway land to Manabdhikar Bastabayan Sangstha, of which he is the founder and his wife is general secretary, Huda said he considered the allotment was made for a noble cause.

"As I am linked to the organisation, I wanted the allotment to be approved by the prime minister. But later I had to make the allotment as the Prime Minister's Office sent back the proposal saying it was not a matter to be settled at the prime minister's level," the minister said.

The organisation that provides safe custody to human rights victims needs a 'protected and secure home and its own headquarters,' he thought.

"Previous communications ministers too had allotted railway land to different organisations," Huda said.

Appreciating the performance of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), he said, "Rab is wonderfully curbing crimes in the country."

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 each."

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."

He also said railway land has been leased out to CNG filling stations subject to various preconditions like depositing Tk 25 lakh as caution money and construction of the stations within six months.

Asked why the communications ministry found it justified to give additional Tk 99 crore to the contractor of Bhairab bridge despite rejection of the claim by Roads and Highways Department and the consultant, Halcrow, Huda said R&HD objected to the claim as it is a 'rival party' to the deal. "But communications ministry has to decide on the claim," he added.

Identifying rampant extortion in transport sector as one of the root causes of traffic mismanagement in the capital, he said his ministry is conducting studies to bring in traffic discipline.

The minister also said that on the eve of Eid-ul-Fitr, magistrates and police will be assigned to ease the home-bound people's journey. Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation too will increase the number of buses and frequency of trips.

## B Chy, Kamal

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"We are not afraid of such trouble-makers and will go ahead with dialogues to formulate a guideline in consultation with people across the country on how to root out terrorism, corruption and alleviate poverty," Mahi B Chowdhury, spokesman of the BDB, told The Daily Star.

He said the Oikya Mancha Convenor Dr Kamal Hossain and BDB President Badruddoza Chowdhury will sit shortly to finalise next venue of the mass dialogue and other programmes to formulate the People's Manifesto.

The BDB leader is hopeful to hold at least two such dialogues before the Eid-ul-Fitr.

The BDB and Oikya Mancha are scheduled to hold at least 25 dialogues. They held the first dialogue in Dinajpur on October 1 peacefully, but the pro-BNP men foiled mass dialogue programmes in Rangpur and Mymensingh.

"Besides holding dialogues, we will collect written suggestions of people from different walks of life on ways to fight against terrorism and corruption from the next week," Mahi said.

The BDB lawmaker said he would also raise the issue in the 14th session of the Jatiya Sangsad which begins tomorrow.

"In the House, I will protest creating hindrance to holding peaceful political programmes and attacks on the national leaders by the pro-government men," he said.

## Tension in Barisal

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Mehedi, general secretary of city Jubo Dal, youth front of the ruling BNP, and commissioner of ward no 14 of Barisal City Corporation (BCC), was performed under heavy police guard.

Hundreds of fellow party workers including Advocate BCC Mayor Majibur Rahman Sarwar MP attended Mehdi's namaj-e-jaanza at Nuria School Mosque after Zohr prayers.

Mehedi was buried in Barisal Muslim graveyard.

Early yesterday, when the district BNP leadership went to Mehdi's house to offer condolences, the agitated followers of Mehedi assaulted them.

Meanwhile, family members of Mehedi have rejected the explanation by Rab for the death and claimed that he was killed cold-bloodedly.

Mehedi died in the shootout at about 8:30pm at his Bangla Bazar house in Barisal, said Rab sources.

## TIB says

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Institute for Management Development, Freedom House, European Bank for Reconstruction and World Bank.

Corruption data on Bangladesh was derived from eight sources including Columbia University, a multilateral development bank and World Economic Forum, he mentioned.

Asked why the perception of policymakers in Bangladesh on corruption don't change, Ifthekar said it is very difficult for him to answer this question. But he thought politicians in Bangladesh are very much aware of corruption as they always speak against corruption. That is why they should take the TIB report as supportive to checking corruption.

## 6 die

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Our Pabna correspondent adds: Two persons died on Monday night after drinking spirits at Bypass area of the district town.

Bodies of the dead, Noren, 25 and Rashid, 32, had been handed over to their families after autopsy.

The district hospital and local sources said both came home sick after taking spirits. Rashid died at home while Noren died at a hospital.

A case was filed but police could not arrest anyone.

Locals alleged that some homeopathic medicine dispensaries with the connivance of the local administration sell poisonous spirits.

# 84 Muslims killed

FROM PAGE 1

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," Mani Sutaphorn 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 Rojansunan told a press conference in Pattani 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 RosaAree.

"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".

"We are concerned that the situation will get worse as families of people who died and were injured may not understand the actions of the authorities," said Amporn Meesuk.

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.

During the Monday clashes more than 1,000 troops or police were brought in to confront angry crowds.

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.

# Musharraf offers

FROM PAGE 12

Tensions over Kashmir sent the nuclear-armed nations to the brink of war again in 2002, when about one millions troops from both sides massed along their borders.

The then-Indian prime minister Atal Bahari Vajpayee kickstarted the new peace process in April last year when he offered a symbolic "hand of friendship" to Pakistan in a speech while visiting Kashmir.

Musharraf said on Monday dramatic progress had been made since then, particularly when he met Vajpayee's successor Manmohan Singh on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York last month.

"I strongly believe there are options and there is a solution," he said. "For the first time we see light at the end of the tunnel."

Musharraf said his proposals were "food for thought" for Pakistan.

"I have never spoken like this before to anyone. I will request you to debate on these lines," he said.

His comments dominated the front pages of newspapers, led television news bulletins and provoked a mixed reaction that ranged

from applause and uncertainty to calls for jihad, or holy war.

Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), the powerful Islamist alliance that is one of two major opposition groups in the federal parliament, immediately rejected the proposals.

"Its a U-turn, a rollback to Pakistan's policy on Kashmir since its independence," MMA vice president Hafiz Hussain Ahmed told AFP.

An activist from the outlawed Jaish-e-Mohammad militant group said: "For us nothing short of jihad (holy war) on Kashmir is acceptable".

Veteran Kashmiri leader Amanullah Khan welcomed the prospect of independence but rejected the notion of joint Pakistani-Indian control.

"The good aspect is that for the first time independence of Kashmir has been mentioned as one of several options," said Khan, the leader of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front.

The Indian government was yet to react to Musharraf's comments.

# NZ in driving seat

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the pre-lunch period providing some cheers.

Around ten thousand spectators turned up at the MA Aziz Stadium quashing doubts before the match about attendance. They were greeted with some encouraging work by the Tigers in the field early on.

After openers Mark Richardson and Matthew Sinclair had shown no respect to the Bangladesh new-ball duo of Tapash Baisya and Mushfiqur Rahman, spin was introduced as early as in the 11th over. The change paid instant dividend as veteran Mohammad Rafique struck in his second over.

Sinclair was going merrily along at 23 (34 balls, 3x4) and had put on 49 with Richardson when Rafique drew him forward with a slightly flighted delivery. The ball pitched on off and middle, went past the bat and took the off stump.

Enamul, playing in only his third Test and into after a year, then got into the act. Left-hander Richardson had reached a chancy 28 when he tried to sweep only to get a top edge and Mushfiq ran to short fine leg to catch a skier.

New Zealand were 61 for two but Fleming and Scot Styris dug in despite the spinners enjoying good early on.

While Fleming looked in no trouble, Styris led a charmed life. They went to lunch on 103 for two.

But after the break Styris survived two close calls.

First, wicketkeeper Khaled Mashud failed to gather an edge off

# Losing out in battle

FROM PAGE 1

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 Rushidan 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.

"If 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 1997.

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 see another round of price hike that affects all consumers.

## Monga

**FROM PAGE 12**  
Tk 15,000; 40:60 percent in Tk 15,001 to Tk 20,000; and 50:50 percent in packages of more than Tk 20,000.

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.