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Hajis return with complaints of poor service by government

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first hajj flight returned to Dhaka yesterday with ballotee hajj pilgrims complaining of poor service provided by the government.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines' BG 302 flight with 274 ballotee hajj pilgrims from Jeddah landed at Zia International Airport at 02:45pm. Later at about 05:45pm, 274 more hajis were flown home by another special flight of Biman.

The hajis, who arrived in Dhaka yesterday, were mainly of Moulvibazar, Habiganj, Sunamganj, Brahmanbaria districts. They described the service of Biman as comparatively good and the service provided by Bangladesh Hajj Mission in Jeddah very poor.

The hajis said at Mina they were served food late at 03:00pm and many elderly hajis suffered due to the delay. Besides, the accommodation

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10 BCL, Jubo League men sentenced for torching Jamaat office

UNB, Gazipur

A court here yesterday sentenced ten activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Jubo League to three to five years imprisonment for setting fire to local Jamaat office following the murder of Ahsanullah Master MP of the Awami League last year.

The convicts are Anwar, Ranjit, Hafizullah, Khoka, Milton, Masud, Nurul Islam, Nazrul, Kakul and Alamgir.

Of them, Anwar and Ranjit were awarded five years imprisonment

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Prayer Timing

January 26

	Azhan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-35	6-10
Zohr	12-45	1-20
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-46	5-50
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation



PHOTO: STAR

The first batch of Hajis returns home yesterday many of whom complained of mismanagement by the government causing them sufferings.

Judge, 11 Iraqi cops killed in Baghdad

6 GIs die in road accident, blast

AP, AFP, Baghdad

Fierce clashes in eastern Baghdad left at least 11 Iraqi policemen dead yesterday, a hospital official said, and gunmen assassinated a senior

Iraqi judge in a series of slayings that highlight the grave security risks in the run-up to this weekend's elections.

Five US soldiers were killed in a road accident while another soldier

died from bomb blast injuries, the military said yesterday.

Fighting erupted in Baghdad's eastern Rashad neighborhood as Iraqi police fired on insurgents who were handing out leaflets warning people not to vote in Sunday's national elections.

About the same time and in the same neighborhood, insurgents opened fire on police who were checking out a report of a possible car bomb. Seven police died in the ambush, according to policeman Khazim Hussein.

Another bomb blew off the gate of a secondary school in the neighborhood and gunmen opened fire on Iraqi and US forces responding to the blast. A witness said two Iraqi policemen and an insurgent were killed.

Altogether, 11 policemen were killed in the various clashes, according to an official at Kindi Hospital.

Officials have warned of a surge in violence around Sunday's national elections.

The slain judge was identified as Qais Hashim Shameri, secretary general of the judges council in the Justice Ministry. Assassins sprayed

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Wetland development board fails to meet in four years

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The governing body of the Haor and Wetland Development Board headed by the prime minister has not met since its formation in 2001 for development of the country's haors and wetlands.

The executive committee of the board headed by the water resources minister on June 24 last year requested Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to convene a meeting of the governing body to finalise the organogram of the board and step up its activities, sources said.

Reviewing the existing problems in the haor areas, a parliamentary body yesterday decided to request the prime minister again to convene a meeting of the high powered body to expedite resolution of the major

problems.

The parliamentary standing committee on water resources ministry at a meeting pointed out that farmers in 423 haor areas were facing various problems in growing crops but no measures were initiated as yet to solve them permanently.

Lawmakers from the haor areas attending the meeting said the situation worsened as the floods and heavy rainfall last year damaged a large number of embankments.

They feared damage to crops again if the embankments are not repaired, and demanded a meeting of the governing body to initiate comprehensive measures to solve the problems.

"We resolved to request the prime minister to convene a meet-

ing of the governing body to take measures for the development of haor areas," standing committee Chairman MA Matin told The Daily Star after the meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

"We believe major problems including fund crisis will be solved if the governing body sits."

The committee also asked the water resources minister to communicate with the prime minister for holding a meeting, he said.

The 12-member body includes the ministers of finance, LG and cooperatives, water resources, forest and environment, agriculture, fisheries and livestock and land and its members. Three lawmakers elected from Sunamganj, Kishoreganj and Mymensingh are

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Hasina blames government for 'patronising' Bangla Bhai

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Sheikh Hasina yesterday blamed the government for 'patronising' Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), a religious extremist group in the northern region of the country.

"The extremist group was formed at the directive of government high-ups in a move to eliminate Awami League and other secular democratic forces from the northern region," Hasina, also president of the main opposition Awami League (AL), said in a statement.

The prime minister's orders last year to nab the JMJB chief, known as Bangla Bhai, was nothing but an 'eye-wash', she said.

Hasina asked the government to immediately arrest Bangla Bhai, stop activities of communal militants and punish them.

Quoting reports from different national dailies, Hasina said JMJB

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Resistance to Bangla Bhai hailed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different political, social and cultural organisations yesterday hailed the people of Rajshahi for forming resistance to the cadre of outlawed Bangla Bhai and called upon the people to be united against the outlaws to safeguard the country from the fanatics.

A mob lynched three cadres of Bangla Bhai-led Jagrata Muslim Janata, Bangladesh (JMJB) at Bhabaniganj in Bagmara on Saturday night in retaliation to killing one and injuring another by JMJB men.

Praising the people of Rajshahi, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) President Hasanul Haq Inu and General Secretary Syed Jafar Sajjad said JMJB was formed to serve the interests of some ministers and lawmakers of the ruling parties.

They also demanded the arrest and exemplary punishment of the ministers and lawmakers who are involved with Bangla Bhai.

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MALAYSIAN PM'S VISIT IN FEBRUARY
Dhaka to press for manpower export resumption

RAFIQ HASAN

Dhaka is likely to seek resumption of manpower export and Kuala Lumpur might explore the possibility of its involvement in various infrastructure development projects in Bangladesh during the visit of Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmed Badawi in the last week of February.

Badawi is expected to pay an official visit to Bangladesh on February 27-28. He will be accompanied by a high level business delegation, sources said.

This would be the first visit by a head of government of Malaysia to Bangladesh after Mahathir Mohamad stepped down in October 2003.

Prior to the visit, Bangladesh-Malaysia joint economic council would meet in Dhaka on February 17-18. Foreign minister of Malaysia is likely to lead his side at the meeting, the sources added.

Malaysia-Bangladesh private sector business forum first met in December last year. At the meeting, the Malaysian businessmen showed keen interest in investing in Bangladesh's telecommunication, information communication technology (ICT) and infrastructure development sectors.

The Malaysian entrepreneurs also showed interest in involvement in big projects like building bridges and highways.

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Criminal killed in 'crossfire'

BSS, Munshiganj

A listed criminal was killed in 'crossfire' between his accomplices and police in the town early yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, police arrested Abul Kalam alias Kalam Master, 28, at a slum in Binodpur area of the town on Monday night. He was an accused in seven criminal cases including two for murder.

Following his confession, a team of Munshiganj police along with Kalam went to Hudpara area of the town to recover firearms at about 2:00am. When police reached the area, the accomplices of the arrested criminal opened fire on police and tried to take him away.

Police retaliated resulting in a gunfight in which Kalam was fatally injured. He was declared dead on arrival at Munshiganj Sadar Hospital.

During the shootout, three constables-Nazmul Islam, Subed Das and Shawkat Ali-received injuries. They are undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Police recovered one rifle and 15 bullets from the spot.

BDR, BSF meet on Feb 1

BSS, Rangpur

The deputy director general (DDG) level meeting between Bangladesh Rifles (BDR)

and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) will begin at Parjatan motel in Rangpur from February 1.

The authorities have completed all formalities and made necessary arrangements for holding the five-day meeting.

According to senior government officials, DDG of BDR Brigadier General Golam Rabbani will lead the Bangladesh side. He will be assisted by sector commanders of Khulna, Kushtia, Rajshahi, Dhanpur and

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Blindfolded, taped, home help dumped after torture

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A housewife and his brother on Monday evening allegedly dumped a home help at Hazaribagh with her eyes blindfolded and mouth taped after seven-months of inhuman torture at their Salimullah Road house in Mohammadpur.

The victim Fancy Begum, 15, is struggling for life at the Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) with wounds all over the body.

Her employer Shayesta Shajid, 35, and his brother Miraj, 25, on Monday bound Fancy's eyes with cloth and taped her mouth with a scotch-tape and took her out of their Salimullah Road house by a rickshaw to Hazaribagh at around 3:00pm.

"Making me sit in between them and bending my head down on the

rickshaw, they roamed different places until it got dark," Fancy told reporters at the DMCH, adding, "They dumped me at the end of a Hazaribagh road by the side of the river Buriganga."

The rickshawpuller, who claimed to have ridden the three of us there, came back to the dumping place after a couple of minutes and unfasted her eyes, said Fancy.

Local police rescued her from the area and handed her over to the Mohammadpur Police Station. With the help of a relative of Fancy, police took her to a slum where her parents live.

After Fancy's father Fazlur Hoque filed a case with the police station, police arrested Shayesta Shajid, her husband SM Shajid, 41, an employee of a private firm, and Miraj from their Salimullah Road house.

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