

Kibria family warned not to demand trial of killers

Asma tells newsmen
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Asma Kibria, wife of slain Awami League leader Shah AMS Kibria, yesterday said her family feel insecure as some unidentified quarters threaten them not to demand trial of the killers.

"We don't feel safe as some unidentified men have been threatening us since we had demanded the arrest and trial of the killers of

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Ministry asked to revise Jatrabari flyover proposal

Cabinet body feels excess benefits being offered to contractor
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The approval to the Tk 670 crore Jatrabari flyover project was delayed again as the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs yesterday asked the local government ministry to make further revision of the project proposal.

After sitting on the proposal for more than a year, the ministry sought the cabinet committee's

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24 Iraqis, 2 GIs killed as violence flares up

AFP, Baquba

At least 24 Iraqis and two US soldiers were killed within 24 hours in attacks north of Baghdad, shattering a brief post-election lull in violence, security and medical sources said yesterday.

Three Iraqi soldiers were killed and three wounded in a bomb attack Thursday morning in Yathrib, 75km north of Baghdad.

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Saarc summit postponed on lame excuse

Says Saifur
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman is unhappy with India's role in postponing the 13th Saarc Summit, but he says the government will continue to try to improve bilateral relations by overcoming the frustrations caused by the big neighbour.

"The summit was postponed on a lame excuse [of India] which is very sad indeed," Saifur told journalists at the Secretariat yesterday.

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Negotiate or risk 'alternate steps'

Nepal's new govt asks Maoists

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's new government headed by King Gyanendra called on Maoist rebels to hold peace talks or risk "alternate steps," as the Himalayan nation entered its third day Thursday cut off from the outside world.

"We ask the Maoists once again to come to the negotiation table and help to solve the present political crisis," said Home Minister Dan Bahadur Shahi, one of the 10-member pro-royalist cabinet sworn in Wednesday.

"If the Maoists do not come forward, we may have to think of alternate steps," Shahi said in comments aired on state television.

Shahi did not elaborate on what action the government might take against the rebels, who have been

waging an increasingly deadly nine-year campaign to topple the monarchy and set up a communist republic.

In a move that has drawn worldwide condemnation, Gyanendra on Tuesday sacked a government he installed last June, saying it had not held elections and had failed to quell the revolt which has claimed 11,000 lives.

The rebels had refused to hold talks with the previous government led by Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, arguing that as it had been appointed rather than elected, only the king wielded executive power.

The new home minister said the rebels should now be able to come to the negotiating table, "since the present government is constituted under the chairmanship of King Gyanendra and the government represents the king who holds sovereign authority and executive

power."

There was no immediate rebel response to the ultimatum. But after the king's seizure of power, Maoist leader Prachanda denounced the monarch as a "national betrayer" and called on "the entire pro-people forces of the world to raise their voices against this autocratic step."

Prachanda, or "the fierce one", said the rebels were prepared to take part in "a broad (political) front with all that are against feudal autocracy."

The rebels have been demanding elections for a constituent assembly that would draft a new constitution aimed at establishing a communist state. Two sets of previous peace talks have collapsed over the monarch's future role.

The government's call came as telephone and mobile links and the

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Policemen are seen trying to douse the fire set by pickets to a jeep on Court House Street in the Old Dhaka during the dawn-to-dusk hartal yesterday.



PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia hold a meeting with the top leaders of the four-party alliance at her office yesterday.

Ctg port leader shot critically

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A leader of Bandar Samajtantrik Sramik Jote (BSJ) was shot in Port Colony area on Wednesday night.

Yar Ahmed Majumder, 47, was rushed to Chittagong Medical College and Hospital (CMCH) with two bullets in the head.

He was flown to Dhaka on a private helicopter and admitted to Combined Military Hospital (CMH) yesterday afternoon. Sources said he was in a coma until then.

Police and witnesses said Ahmed was returning home at Port Colony by a rickshaw at around 9:45pm. Five men in a CNG-run auto-rickshaw stopped him, shot him point blank and drove away.

Ahmed, an employee of Marine Department of Chittagong Port, is general secretary of the BSJ, a workers' organisation backed by Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD).

The BSJ blamed the attack on a pro-government workers' organisation, but police termed it a sequel to

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Eleven killed in road crashes

STAR DESK

Eleven people were killed and over 140 others injured in five road accidents in Moulvibazar, Habiganj, Dhaka, and Brahmanbaria yesterday.

Our Sylhet correspondent reports: Five people were killed and over 80 others injured, 12 of them critically, when a passenger bus lost its control and fell into a roadside ditch near Kanakpur village under Sadar upazila of Moulvibazar district on the Dhaka-Sylhet highway early yesterday.

The driver was recklessly driving the Sylhet-bound overloaded bus from Netrokona, injured passengers said.

The dead are Mujibur Rahman, 45, a palli chikitsak (rural medical practitioner) hailing from Jagannathpur upazila of Sunamganj district, Kuddus

Miah, 45, son of Ashrab Ali, Ratan Miah, 32, son of Babar Ali, and Tanjir Miah, 22, son of Siddique Miah, all from village Mubarakpur in Atpara upazila of Netrokona district and another unidentified person.

Twelve critically injured people were sent to MAG Osmani Medical College and Hospital in Sylhet and forty-six were admitted to Moulvibazar Sadar Hospital.

Fire service people from Moulvibazar and Srimongol and ambulance from Moulvibazar Sadar Hospital rushed to the spot to rescue the victims.

Moulvibazar Municipality Chairman Foyzul Karim arranged sending the bodies to their village homes in Netrokona and distributed Tk 6000 to the injured people, most of whom are labourers.

Two young men were killed and

over 30 injured as a passenger bus collided head-on with a truck near Madhabpur upazila headquarters under Habiganj district on the Dhaka-Sylhet highway at about 3:40am. Both the vehicles skidded off the road and fell into a 20 feet deep canal.

The dead are Hanif Miah, son of Kalim Uddin of village Kalikaprasad in Bhairab Upazila of Kishoreganj district and Ersad Miah, 20, son of Imarat Miah of Nagarkanda upazila of Faridpur district.

Fayez Uddin, 80, and Faruque Miah, 35, were rushed to MAG Osmani Medical College and Hospital in Sylhet while 28 others were admitted into the Madhabpur Upazila Health Complex.

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Robbers poison Sangu river, loot Tk 50 fish fry

MONIRUL ISLAM MONU

Fish fry, including shrimp worth about Tk 50 lakh, have been destroyed in the Sangu river in Bandarban because of poisoning, official sources here said yesterday.

According to various sources, at around 3:00am on Thursday a group of fishermen, hoping to catch

a large yield of fish, collaborated with intruders to pour herbal poison in the middle of the river at Betchhara point under Rowangchhan upazila, some 11km from the Bandarban township. They then fled with an estimated 50 tons of fish fry grown over 400 enclaves, locally known as gheres.

Sheikh Alauddin, the deputy

commissioner of Bandarban, acknowledged the incident, saying, "We are aware of the incident and I have asked relevant department officials to immediately investigate the devastating incident and submit a report to me."

According to traditional ancestral practice, local people have bred,

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Georgian PM found dead

AP, TBILISI, Georgia

Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania, who helped lead the revolution that toppled the corruption-tainted regime of Eduard Shevardnadze, was killed early Thursday by an apparent natural gas leak, the ex-Soviet republic's interior minister said.

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Saarc holidays cancelled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Educational institutions in the capital will remain open as usual on February 5-7 as the 13th Saarc Summit scheduled to be held in Dhaka has been postponed.

Earlier, the government had decided to keep all the educational institutions closed from February 5 to 7 on the occasion of the seven-nation meet.

Prayer Timing

February 4

	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-30	6-05
Juma	12-15	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Magrib	5-52	5-56
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Palestinian state 'within reach'

Bush observes, presses for democratic reforms in Saudi Arabia, Egypt

AFP, Washington

US President George W. Bush said Wednesday the goal of a Palestinian state living at peace with Israel was "within reach" and proposed a new 350 million dollar aid package to promote Palestinian reforms.

In his State of the Union address, Bush singled out Syria and Iran as threats to Middle East stability and vowed to "confront" regimes that continue to harbor terrorists and pursue weapons of mass murder."

He also issued a rare rebuke to two of the United States' main allies in the region, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, challenging them to accelerate their democratic reforms.

Bush delivered his annual speech to Congress at a time when hopes were rising for a revival of the US-backed "road map" for ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that has claimed more than 4,700 lives

since September 2000. "The goal of two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace is within reach, and America will help them achieve that goal," the president said.

Bush said his new secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, would discuss prospects for furthering the peace process and developing a Palestinian state when she visits the region early next week in the middle of a European tour.

"To promote this democracy, I will ask Congress for 350 million dollars to support Palestinian political, economic, and security reforms," Bush said. The administration late last year had already promised some 60 million dollars.

The White House, which had pulled back from the peace process as efforts to implement the road map faltered last year, has raised its

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