

Shibir cadre killed in 'crossfire'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A listed criminal was killed in 'crossfire' between Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and his accomplices in the early hours yesterday at Mirerkhil of Hathazari upazila.

Hossain Ahmad alias Foyez Munna, who hailed from Panchlaish in Chittagong, was a cadre of ruling coalition partner Jamaat-e-Islami's student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir, said sources.

With his death, the toll in crossfire rises to 231.

Earlier on Friday morning, a four-member team of Rab-7 with assistance of Rab-2 men arrested Munna at Motijheel Shapla Crossing area of Dhaka, sources said. He was brought to Rab-7 headquarters at Patenga on Friday evening. He under interrogation said that Gittu Nasir, Sajjad Khan, Gias Hajarika, Taleban Sohel, and other

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Shias sweep Iraqi polls

Shia coalition bags 48.1pc of 59pc votes cast

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq's long-oppressed Shia majority swept to a resounding victory in the country's first free elections in half a century, winning almost half the vote, according to final results released yesterday.

"Today marks the birth of a new Iraq and a free people," election commission official Farid Ayar told reporters.

The main Shia coalition list, which had the blessing of Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, won 48.1 percent of the votes for the new 275-member National Assembly, according to election commission results.

The ticket grouping the two main Kurdish parties also made a strong showing, winning 25.7 percent of the vote, but interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi's list came a distant third with 13.8 percent.

Turnout was about 59 percent,

with a total of 8,456,266 people voting on January 30 in the first election since the downfall of Saddam Hussein after the US-led invasion of March 2003.

Sunday's results are "final but uncertified" and will only become definitive and official if no challenges are lodged over the next three days.

Despite threats of a bloodbath by extremist Sunni Arab insurgents, election day passed without any major attacks and was internationally hailed as a success.

But officials and observers fear that Sunni marginalisation could further fuel an insurgency which has resulted in thousands of deaths and crippled the country's economy since the March 2003 US-led invasion.

And negotiations have already begun for the minority community of the ruling elite under Saddam to be included in the political process.

A government line-up is not expected immediately as officials have warned that it could take up to several weeks to reach an ethnic and religious balance acceptable to all parties.

All key posts are due to be announced at the same time.

The members of parliament will have to select a president and his two deputies, who in turn will have to unanimously pick a prime minister.

The new premier will then be tasked with choosing a cabinet that has to be approved by a majority in parliament.

According to the interim constitution, the new National Assembly has to write a permanent one by August 15, but the parliament speaker and a majority of the chamber can decide on a non-renewable six-month extension.

If the initial deadline is met, the

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India halts military aid to Nepal

AP, New Delhi

India has suspended indefinitely military aid to Nepal's fight against Maoist insurgents in a bid to pressure the monarch of the Himalayan nation to restore democracy, a news report said yesterday.

India harshly criticized Nepal's King Gyanendra after he dismissed the government and declared a state of emergency on Feb. 1. But analysts initially expressed doubt that New Delhi would withdraw military aid, fearing a Maoist victory would encourage communist rebels in India.

However, the Tribune newspaper quoted unidentified Indian foreign ministry officials as saying New Delhi decided Saturday to stop helping the Royal Nepalese Army and summoned its ambassador in Katmandu to discuss the situation.

India's foreign ministry spokesman Navtej Sarna declined to comment on the report when contacted

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Asma Kibria seeks police protection

Telephone threat continues

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Asma Kibria, wife of slain Awami League lawmaker SAMS Kibria, yesterday sought police protection, as her family feel insecure in the face of repeated threats over telephone.

"We feel insecure and we want police protection. The government did not provide us any protection after such an incident. No high official of the police even answers our phone call," said Asma Kibria at the press conference at her Dhanmondi residence.

"The government failed to ensure security for my husband. Now they should show us how much security they can provide to my family members," she added.

She regretted that when people from all walks of life as well as the foreign envoys in Bangladesh

offered condolences to us, the prime minister and the speaker did not bother to turn up and express sympathy.

Asma asked the government to inform them of the current status of investigations into the Habiganj carnage.

Referring to the arrests of three people at Khilgaon area during their Saturday's demonstration, Asma said the government is trying to push them towards confrontation, but people will give them a befitting reply. "It seems as if I don't have even the right to peacefully protest my husband's killing," she added.

Asma at the press conference announced three-day candle-and-black-flag demonstrations in the city for Feb 16, 17 and 18. The programmes would start at 4:00pm

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Curriculum of madrasa goes under NU

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The government has decided to affiliate the curriculum of Kamil and Fazil levels under the Madrasa Education Board with the National University curriculum.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the cabinet committee on amending the Islami University Act 1980 and madrasa education act 1978, held in Dhaka with committee

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Open sale of rice from Feb 17

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a bid to rein in spiralling prices of rice throughout the country, the government is going to start open market sale (OMS) from February 17.

Deputy Minister for Food, Disaster Management and Relief Asadul Habib Dulu yesterday told the Jatiya Sangsad that rice will be sold in the open market across the country through 11,888 dealers.

During the question-answer

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Imam rapes 8yr-old girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

An eight-year-old girl was raped by an imam in Razapur in Fatullah yesterday.

The victim, a grade-four student at Razapur Government Primary School, went to the house of Saiful Islam, pesh imam of Razapur Pashchimpara Mosque, for Arabic lessons at around 11:00am.

Hearing her cry, locals rushed to the house and held the imam, said witnesses. A mob beat up and handed him over to police.

Saiful admitted to raping the girl at local police station in presence of reporters.



PHOTO: STAR

A minibus set ablaze in the city's Arambagh yesterday by alleged supporters of the 36-hour hartal called by opposition parties from today.

\$60m IDB loan for submarine cable signed

BSS, Jeddah

Bangladesh will receive US\$ 60 million from Islamic Development Bank (IDB) under an agreement signed between the two sides on Saturday for linking the country to the Submarine Telecommunication cable.

Chairman of Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTB) Nurul Islam and Vice President (Operations) of IDB Dr Amadou Boubacar Cisse signed the agreement on behalf of their respective sides, said a press release.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman was present on the occasion.

The IDB assistance to be provided under a purchase leaseback arrangement will be used for part payment of Bangladesh's share of financing SEA-ME-WE 4 (South-East Asia-Middle East-West Europe) Submarine Telecommunication Cable. The Bangladesh government will bear the rest of the total project cost of US\$ 109 million.

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PREMIER BANK IPO SCAM

SEC team starts probing, BB to join in today

STAR REPORT

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) yesterday sent a team to probe into the Premier Bank public floating scam, while the central bank decided to check if there was any irregularity in opening a huge number of bank accounts for share subscription.

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) investigators, likely to start working today, will verify whether there was any violation of the Anti-Money Laundering Act in opening the bank accounts with Premier Bank Ltd.

Sources said a two-member team of the capital market regulator went to inspect some Premier Bank branches in the city. The team will send a letter to the BB passing on the findings of this preliminary investigation, they added.

Acting on the letter, the BB will send its own vigilance team to check whether these accounts were opened properly, including having photographs and addresses and following other guidelines.

"We have received allegations of opening thousands of fake bank accounts with Premier Bank," said a top official of the BB, adding, "The central bank is closely watching the progress of the SEC probe into the matter."

The SEC on Saturday suspended a Tk 55 crore initial public offering (IPO) of Premier Bank after around 25,000 beneficiary owners' (BO) accounts suspected to be fakes had been found in an investigation.

The bank allegedly used a single

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Prayer Timing		
February 14		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-52	5-56
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

