

BDR, BSF trade heavy

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said the BSF opened fire at about 3:15pm when BDR personnel opposed the attempt of fencing off the border.

BDR jawans retaliated under the command of 19 Battalion Commanding Officer Lt Col Ahad, the reports said.

In the first hour of firing until 4:15pm, the two sides traded some 3,000 rounds of shots, leaving a Bangladeshi peasant injured.

"Bangladeshi villagers fled homes from around the trouble spot at pillar No. 872 and took shelter in Hatibandha upazila headquarters," according to an initial report from the far-flung area.

On Monday, a BDR-BSF flag meeting decided that India would cease from constructing the barbed-wire fence until a DIG-Sector Commander level meeting set for March 17 takes a decision on the issue.

But since Tuesday, BSF men have piled up construction materials at the border and tried to start construction along the no man's land yesterday afternoon in transgression of the truce.

"BDR jawans first hoisted red flag opposing the BSF move and then green flag for flag meeting. But BSF ignored the signals and fired the first shot," says one account of the encounter.

The Indian border force has made a number of such fencing attempts at different points of the over 4000-km border between the

two countries in recent days, triggering a number of such skirmishes.

RAMGARH

The BDR and BSF traded fresh gunfire for three hours at Ramgarh border in Khagrachari after four days of full since Friday last.

Sources in the BDR headquarters said the fight ensued when BSF was piling up materials to fence off the border at the noon.

Situation in Ramgarh has been tense since a meeting between BDR and BSF at Suburn in India ended inconclusively on Saturday.

However tension mounted again following the escalation of yesterday's gunfire.

BURUNGAMARI

Another UNB report said: Forcible attempt by BSF to construct a pucca road across Bangladeshi enclave Kachua heightened the tension in Burungamari border yesterday.

The road on Indian side from Dighalbari BSF outpost to its sub-divisional town Dinhata passes one kilometre through the Kachua enclave.

Indians use to pass through the enclave without any hindrance. But BSF yesterday brought in construction materials to the enclave to make the road wide and pucca. The BSF members started the construction work ignoring BDR objection.

The intransigent attitude of BSF brought the situation to a state of confrontation. Both sides were seen massing troops and artilleries, heightening tension in the area.

AL, allies may form human wall around capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) and its left allies are considering to form a human wall around the capital on March 13 to demonstrate no-confidence in the BNP-Jamaat coalition.

The hour-long demonstration will also be held at all other divisional and district headquarters as part of the opposition's simultaneous movement to bring down the ruling alliance.

"We are planning to form the human chain encircling the entire Dhaka city and its 22 thanas during the 4:00pm to 5:00pm agitation," said a senior AL leader, adding that the matter will be discussed with AL's left allies today.

Meanwhile, a meeting of Awami League Central Working Committee (ALCWC) yesterday discussed party preparations to make the March 13 no-confidence human wall a success.

AL presidium member Abdur Razzak presided over the meeting held at party's Dhamondi office yesterday evening. He also chaired another meeting with top leaders of the party's front organisations yesterday afternoon and directed party leaders to mobilise common people to join the human wall programme.

The AL parties under the left party alliance, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) and National Awami Party (NAP) announced the programmes from separate rallies on March 2.

Three accused

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the court to stay the bail prayers until March 22, the possible hearing date for charge framing.

Sources said the three accused are members of a smuggling syndicate, which controls the jetty of Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Limited (CUFL).

Ten truckloads of smuggled arms were hauled from the CUFL jetty on the Kamaphuli riverbank.

Eleven of the 43 accused in the case are now behind the bar. Police arrested 22 accused but 14 of them are out on bail.

Govt

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Muhammad Giasuddin, the prime minister also said the government is going to enact fresh law to prevent encroachment of riverbanks.

Khaleda said the government is going to formulate national dredging policy guidelines to re-excavate rivers and canals in a planned way to ensure navigability of the rivers.

On canal-digging, the premier said, "Had the project launched by late president Ziaur Rahman not been stopped, it would not face the problems of irrigation and waterlogging.

"That is why we emphasise on continuity of our government for smooth implementation of development projects," she added.

If the continuity of the BNP government was maintained, the rivers and canals would not be silted, she added.

TWO MORE CADET COLLEGES

Khaleda yesterday also informed the House that two more cadet colleges will be set up -- one in Feni and the other in Joypurhat. "One of the two cadet colleges will be exclusively for girls," she said.

She also detailed the government programmes to increase women literacy rate that include programmes for free education and stipend for girls at secondary level.

"It has raised to 53 percent the enrolment of girl students at the secondary level," she said, adding that stipend programme for girls of higher secondary level, which started in January 2002, has upped their enrolment to 40 percent.

Bus terminal

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operators, they pay no heed to the remainder of the DCC, the sources said adding that they plunder most of the money.

A former Ward Commissioner and BCL leader of Demra thana is controlling the Sayedabad terminal, while a sitting Ward Commissioner of Gulshan area and several transport leaders are dominating Mohakhali terminal, and two ward commissioners are controlling the Gabtoli terminal, DCC sources said.

Besides, another high-level committee was formed with the secretary of the power division as its head to monitor the power-generation and supply situation across the country.

Besides failing better management from the very beginning, the private operators have also failed in assuring minimum service for the passengers.

The terminals were handed over to the private operators at the prescription of the World Bank in order to acquire the funds of Tk 44 crore for terminal improvement.

About 800 buses leave from Mohakhali bus terminal, 1200 from Sayedabad and 1400 from Gabtoli terminal daily.

Outlaw, JCD cadre

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Kumarkhali police raided the village on information that outlawed New Biplobi Communist Party was preparing to attack Jashod Gono Bahini at about 4:30am.

Police reached the village and chased Gono Bahini men, who opened fire on police, triggering an hour-long shootout.

After the gunfire police found Aiyub dead, while his accomplices fled, police said, adding that two police constables were also injured in the incident.

Police seized one revolver and 13 bullets from the spot.

UNB adds: A young man, said to be a JCD cadre, was killed in an encounter between police and his accomplices at Khatibnagar in Rangunia upazila yesterday.

Police said Jasimuddin alias Alu

Jasim, 27, who was arrested from the city's Bayejid Bostami area Tuesday evening, was taken to Khatibnagar to recover arms at about 5:00am.

As police reached the spot, Jasim's accomplices opened fire on the law enforcers in a bid to snatch him, triggering an encounter.

Jasim, receiving bullets during the 'crossfire', died on the spot, police said.

After the shootout, police seized a homemade LG, five rifle bullets and gun-making materials from the spot.

Jasim, who hailed from Islampur of Rangunia, was wanted in seven cases, including murder and robbery, police said, adding that he was on the run for a long time.

His body was sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

Govt is killing people in crossfire

Says Dr Kamal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent lawyer and Jatiya Oikya Mancha President Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday said the government is killing people in the name of crossfire in a show of improving law and order.

He also demanded of the government to punish those, who harbour petty criminals, at a joining ceremony of about 100 professionals from the wards No. 56 and 52.

Dr Kamal, also Gono Forum president, said a section of people is diverting the young generation from their regular path through black money.

He said the general public now want to get rid of crime and live in peace.

"The vital institutions of the state are on the verge of destruction due to nasty politicisation of the successive ruling parties," he added.

Regarding the scenario of the country's educational institutions, he said students at the public universities are held hostages to a few criminals.

"The government is wasting a lot of money in the non-productive sector and the educational institutions are also suffering from financial crisis," said Dr Kamal.

He urged all political parties to be united to root out crime from the public universities.

Our brother Karim ibn al-Karim bin al-Karim, along with a group of mujahideen, targeted ... what should be called the hotel of the Jews because it is their safe haven and stronghold," Al Qaeda Organization for Holy War in Iraq said in a statement posted on an Islamist Web site.

The mujahideen opened fire on the police and guards protecting the Jews and when the entrance was clear, the hero ... blew up the infidels," the group said, adding that the attack was timed to avoid harming any Muslim passers-by.

Huge plumes of thick smoke blackened the Baghdad sky as police, ambulances and fire engines rushed to the scene, their sirens piercing the early morning calm.

Hospital officials said two policemen were killed and dozens of others taken to hospital for treatment.

In Qaim, near the Syrian border and 500 km west of Baghdad, the bodies of 26 people, including one woman, were found, police said. A hospital doctor said the victims, in civilian clothes, had been shot two days ago.

Each of the bodies was riddled with bullets and found wearing civilian clothes, they said.

Fifteen other bodies -- some shot, others beheaded -- were found just south of Baghdad in the Sunnis-dominated area now known as the "triangle of death," Iraqi army sources said.

The decapitated corpses were found inside an abandoned base of the former Iraqi army, Defense Ministry Capt. Sabah Yassin said. The bodies included 10 men, three

Suicide bomb rattles Baghdad

41 bullet-riddled bodies found

AGENCIES, Baghdad

women and two children.

Yassin said the bodies had no identification on them. But some of the dead men were thought to have been part of a group of Iraqi soldiers who were kidnapped by insurgents in the area two weeks ago, Yassin said.

In the southern city of Basra, a roadside bomb in the southern city of Basra killed one policeman, police said.

Insurgents have vowed to push their campaign until US forces have left, trying to capitalise on the anger of many Iraqis who have become frustrated at what they say is daily harassment by US soldiers.

An American general said Tuesday the US military was investigating procedures at the often tense military checkpoints as part of a probe into the intelligence officer's killing.

Italy's Foreign Minister Gianfranco Fini earlier rejected a US account of how its forces killed an agent last Friday after he rescued a journalist held hostage in Iraq.

Agent Nicola Calipari died shielding reporter Giuliana Sgrena from US gunfire as they drove to Baghdad airport.

The US military has said its soldiers fired after the Italians' car approached a checkpoint at speed and failed to heed signals to slow down. But Fini said the team had been driving slowly and received no warning.

Bulgaria, a US ally which has 430 troops in Iraq, has also accused US troops of accidentally killing a Bulgarian soldier and demanded a full investigation.

Exports

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competitive," Mustafiz said.

Bangladesh's exports to the US market have been in a declining trend in the last few years because of stiff competition from Chinese products and that is continuing, he said. "It is difficult to say how much the quota phase out will affect our exports on the basis of one-month statistics," he added.

According to EPB statistics, exports fetched US\$730 million in January 2004 while in January 2005 that amount dropped to US\$642.59 million, recording 11.94 percent of negative growth.

"Our export growth was 21.84 percent in the first quarter of the current fiscal year. The growth is coming down alarmingly and in January growth was negative, which made us concerned with the present situation," said a highly placed source at the commerce ministry.

BB for action against

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Company Act," the investigator pointed out.

Sources said, the investigators did not pinpoint the mastermind who has backed the MD in implementing the scam. "But we know there is a powerful person behind the MD. The central bank may file a case against the civil court and follow-up investigations will unearth this powerful person's involvement," quipped a high official of the BB.

The bank will scrutinise the investigation report after it is submitted to the governor and then go for action, he added.

Apart from the Dhaka Stock Exchange, many small as well as big investors suspect that the Premier Bank might have tried to manipulate the initial public offering (IPO) process.

\$7.5m WB loan

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and Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation (PKSF), an NGO, are planning the mitigation project under the WB framework.

The project aims at rehabilitating the rickshaw-pullers either in Dhaka or in their villages by providing them with micro-credit and vocational training on their choices, Hossain said.

Petrobangla

asked to take

action against

Bapex MD

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Petrobangla has been asked to take administrative action against Managing Director (MD) of Bapex MA-Based for Tangatia blowout.

Officials said the Energy and Mineral Resources Division (EMRD)

gave the instruction in a letter to the chairman of Petrobangla, the state-run oil, gas and mineral corporation.

The letter said an enquiry commit-

tee formed with the approval of the prime minister found operational mistake and faulty casing design responsible for the January 7 accident while Canadian Niko Resources (Bangladesh) Limited was drilling at Tangatia gas field in Chhata.

Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company Limited (Bapex), a company under Petrobangla, was responsible for monitoring the drilling but it failed to do so, the letter said.

Speaking as the chief guest, eminent economist Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud said the problems faced by the rickshaw-

pullers are not isolated phenomena but a part of the overall poverty situation.

"The rickshaw-pullers