

Toll rises to 46

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in a clash after the police charged baton on several hundred demonstrators who were protesting the delay in rescue operation at the spot, 30 kilometres off Galachipa town.

The salvage ship Hamza reached the spot at about 1:00pm and started rescue operations at 5:00pm. Strong currents and high winds hampered rescue efforts but the operations ended at about 7:30pm, our correspondent reports from Patuakhali.

Earlier, TI Kadery, deputy director of BWTA and commander of the salvage ship Hamza, said the rescue operations would finish by Monday night.

The rescuers found 26 bodies inside the sunken vessel but feared that more bodies might be trapped inside it. A police officer at the spot said many bodies might have been washed away by strong currents.

Five of the bodies recovered yesterday were identified as Madhobi Rani, 40, Maleka Begum, 35, Shakil, 6, Ismail, 25, and Lizi, 11, rescuers and police said.

Several hundred people, including relatives of the passengers,

staged a demonstration at the spot yesterday morning, alleging "police in rescue operations." Police charged batons and fired five rounds of rubber bullets to disperse the protestors.

At least 20 people including three cops and one local journalist were injured during the clash between the police and protestors. The injured police constables were identified as Abdul Halim, Mizan and Sohag.

AKM Jahangir Hossain, MP along with officials of the district administration visited the spot where the overloaded single-decker launch sank at about 11:00am Sunday after sailing from Patuakhali for Char Montaj in Galachipa upazila.

The vessel was registered to carry 80 people but it was carrying more than 200 people and a huge number of sacks of potato during the accident, the survivors said.

Md Sahajahan Khan, owner of the launch, is vice president of BNP district unit.

In the last one decade, over 4,000 people died in major launch accidents in the country. The government however put the number at about 3,000.

Cabinet's go-ahead

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basic pay in July in the second phase. They will get house rent, medical and conveyance allowances and other benefits from July 1, 2006 in the third phase.

According to Sairfur, the government employees will also draw the increases in basic salary in arrears for five months together in June.

The pay hike will cost the government Tk 3975 crore. In the first year, the government will need Tk 567 crore, Tk 1,663 in the next fiscal year and Tk 1765 crore in the third.

Cabinet Secretary Dr Sa'adat Husain told the press after the cabinet meeting that 15.5 lakh civil and defence officials, staffs and teachers are under the MPO payroll, of whom 8.28 lakh are civil servants, 1.40 lakh defence staffs and 5.6 lakh teachers on the MPO payroll.

"The army, BDR, ansars and police have different allowances other than salary. These allowances will increase by 30 percent," Husain said.

"The new scale also raised some other facilities. For instance, offi-

cial on leave preparatory to retirement (LPR) will now get their salary for one full year at once instead of six months," he added.

"The house rental for officials in Dhaka will be different from that for officials living outside. The [allowance] for transport during transfer has been increased. Medical allowance has been raised to Tk 500 from Tk 400. Conveyance allowance has been increased to Tk 100 from Tk 80," he said.

Second class officers will get a 50 percent selection grade, while Bangladesh Civil Service cadre officials will get a 100 percent selection grade. The civil service has 20 different scales.

The BCS cadre entry-level officials will now get a basic salary of Tk 6,800.

The cabinet has decided that a similar formula will be applicable for the pay structure of defence officials and staffs.

Pensioners will also get a 25 percent pay rise, the cabinet secretary told the journalists.

According to the finance minister, the pay hike for teachers under the MPO scheme will not be staggered. "They will be able to draw their new salaries at one go," he added.

The teachers will draw salaries under the new scale from July 1.

The government had formed a five-member secretary-level committee headed by the cabinet secretary to evaluate the recommendations of the sixth Pay Commission and place a proposal before the government.

An additional Tk 6,712 crore in budgetary allocation was necessary to fully implement the recommendations made in the new pay scale. The current budget has earmarked Tk 13,477 crore in salaries of government employees.

REACTION
Chairman of the sixth Pay Commission Mujibul Haq yesterday said they had recommended the new pay keeping in mind the government's capabilities and wishes.

"We had advocated implementation of our recommendations in phases, but we did not suggest the size of the pay structure," he said in his reaction to The Daily Star on the new pay structure approval.

The new pay approved by the government is lower than the recommended pay structure.

"This (cabinet) decision came only after the realities and other priorities were considered. I have no comment on this."

"The government has to subsidise agriculture; it has to spend for poverty alleviation," he added.

Kenya arrestees

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said yesterday.

"The Bangladesh High Commissioner in Nairobi informed us that most of the arrested are Bangladeshi and Kenyan police did not find any proof of their link with terrorists and drug peddlers," said a spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Mofa).

The spokesman quoted Bangladesh envoy Major General Syeed Ahmed as saying the Bangladeshi nationals are in good condition and getting food under police custody.

Kenyan police arrested 69 people in the country's port city on Friday night and confirmed that the arrested were all Bangladeshi nationals.

"They are unfortunate victims and fell prey to unscrupulous manpower agents. The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment is finding the way to repatriate them," the spokesperson said.

He said the port city, Mombassa, is the launching pad used by the human traffickers where international rackets bring the fortune-seekers from different countries and try to send them to many developed countries. There are some nationals of other countries with the arrested Bangladeshis, he added.

"The Bangladesh mission in Nairobi is now in a close contact with the Kenyan government and trying to find out the real culprits," the spokesperson said, adding that Mofa asked the mission to send a detailed list of the victims with their full addresses.

Mombassa is around 1,000-km from capital Nairobi, the spokesperson said narrating the reason for delay in communication.

BALU KILLING CASE Court accepts charge sheet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

After hearing the journalist Humayun Kabir Balu murder case, the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Khulna, accepted the charge sheet in the case on Sunday.

The court has directed police to arrest the absconding accused in the case.

Humayun Kabir Balu, editor of Dainik Jamathumi, was killed in a bomb attack in front of his office-cum-residence at Haji Ismail Road in the city at noon on June 27 last year.

Two separate cases were recorded with Khulna Police Station in connection with the murder. Later, the cases were transferred to the Detective Branch of Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP).

Police arrested 17 people as suspects. Of them, 14 were taken on remand for questioning during investigation.

On April 26, charges were pressed against eight extremists. They are founder of outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-Janajuddho) Abdur Rashid Malitha alias Tapan, Shoiab, Sumon, Shadhin, Nazu, Masum, Rimon and Zahid.

Abdur Rashid Malitha alias Tapan, Shoiab, Shumon and Nazu are still at large.

Boy injured in bomb blast in Dinajpur

UNB, Dinajpur

A bomb explosion at Khanpur Bazaar on Sunday night left a boy injured.

Police said unknown miscreants lobbed the bomb from the rooftop of a shop, leaving a 12-year-old boy, Mukul, injured. He was admitted to Dinajpur Medical College and Hospital.

Police arrested two persons – Mofazzal Hossain and his son Golap – for their alleged involvement in the explosion. They were sent to jail after being produced before the court yesterday.

Galib denied

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Jamiatul Mujahideen and teacher of Rajshahi University, facing criminal charges under explosive act.

District and Sessions Judge ASM Zahurul Islam turned down the appeal when his lawyer moved the bail petition in the case filed on February 6 under the Explosive Act, 1908.

Earlier, his bail appeals were also refused in the same case on April 7 and May 9.

On tip-off that Jamiatul Mujahideen members were planning to carry out sabotage at the house of Joyal Sarker at Chaksud village in Gabtoli upazila, police raided the house on January 6 and recovered explosive-making materials.

The raid followed confessional statements made earlier by two arrested people – Safiqullah and Monwara Begum.

Muslims

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Faizullah, Mufti Mohammad Tayeb and Junayed Al Hafiz spoke at a rally chaired by Maolana Abul Kashem at the north gate of Baitul Mokarram National Mosque.

The rally was held to protest the desecration of the Holy Quran by the US troops at Guantanamo Bay detention centre in Cuba.

Mufti Fazlul Haque Amini and IOJ Secretary General Mufti Mohammad Tayeb said if the US authorities do not apologise in public, the Muslims will hit the US interests around the world.

Without naming Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer and Industries Minister Maolana Matiur Rahman Nizami, Tayeb criticised his (Nizami's) statement in this regard for its leniency in language.

Morcha Secretary Junayed Al Hafiz said, "Prime Minister Khaleda Zia should stand against the US boldly."

He demanded that a resolution be adopted by the Jatiya Sangsad condemning the incident of desecrating the Holy Quran.

Current political

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election reforms in Bangladesh.

The seminar observed that time has come to practise democracy within the political parties first and give it an institutional shape.

The speakers urged the politicians not to practise democracy only on the day of elections. They said democracy will be meaningful when democratic system and institution will get stronger.

They also said formulation of a law is essential to prohibit participation of former bureaucrats, army officers and justices in active politics in five years of their retirement.

Transparency in selecting leaders is also a must, observed the seminar attended by a large number of distinguished persons.

The roundtable was also addressed by Advocate Enayet Ali, Prof Anwarul Kader, Jahangir Alam Sabuj, ward commissioner Ruma Khatoon, freedom fighter Abdul Jalil, Dr Kudrat-e-Khuda, Khalid Hossain, Selim Bulbul, Lokman Hakim, Monoranjan Mondol, Shaikh Abdul Kayum, Gazi Haider Runu, Advocate Feroze Ahmed.

One minute's silence was observed in memory of slain journalist Manik Chandra Saha.

Ctg experience

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Committee that wrested a resounding win of Mayor Mohiuddin Chowdhury, Hasina said the people of Chittagong showed how their vote and verdict could be protected overcoming all 'intimidation, machinations and manipulation'.

"It is the responsibility of the citizens to cast their vote and protect their verdict," she said. "Had we protected the vote in 2001 the way the people of Chittagong did, the alliance would not have dared to hijack people's verdict."

Hasina alleged that an evil move for manipulating the CEC polls results was made despite the massive popularity of Mohiuddin but the unity of people failed.

But in the national election it is not possible to do what the people of Chittagong did, she said. So, it has become imperative to reform caretaker government system and the Election Commission to ensure free, fair and impartial election, said the opposition leader.

Referring to the inauguration of a bridge on the river Arial Khan by the prime minister at Madaripur, Hasina said the present government is claiming credits inaugurating projects undertaken by others.

Construction of the bridge was initiated by the previous Awami League (AL) government, she said, adding the same thing happened in the case of Rupsha Bridge.

Mohiuddin said anti-liberation forces captured power through a conspiracy and is out to destroy the democratic order in the country.

He called upon all to forge a movement at ward level to resist them and help bring about development.

In reply to a proposal, Hasina advised formation of an advisory council comprising leaders of Nagarik Committee to help Mohiuddin implement his 40-point pledges for the development of Chittagong, and to create pressure on the government in this regard.

Nagarik Committee Vice-chairman Mahmudul Islam chaired the nearly two-hour meeting.

Earlier, committee leaders urged Hasina to take steps to maintain unity of people in the committee.

Others who addressed the meeting included AL Joint Secretary Obayedul Kader, Nagarik Committee Secretary General Abu Yusuf Alam, Gono Forum leader M Kafil Uddin, CPB leader Mrinal Chowdhury, Islami Front Bangladesh leader Mantaz Uddin Chowdhury and Prof Md Jahangir.

AL central leaders Motia Chowdhury, Abdul Mannan, former minister Mosharrar Hossain, local leader Moslem Uddin Ahmad and Maj Gen (ret'd) Tarique Ahmad Siddique attended the meeting.

EC to ask govt

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chaired by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Syed discussed the issues and agreed in principle to amend the rules for local government elections in a bid to hold the polls in a free and fair manner.

"If the rules are formulated giving us more legal power, the Election Commission will be more competent in conducting the local government elections," Election Commissioner AK Mohammad Ali told The Daily Star after the meeting.

The existing electoral rules empower the government to deploy army personnel only in the parliamentary elections. There is no provision for army deployment in the local government polls, the sources said.

The issues will be incorporated in the EC proposal on reforms to be submitted to the government soon. The CEC at yesterday's meeting said the reform proposal would be finalised at the next meeting, sources said.

The government however deploys army to maintain law and order in the city corporation elections, which has become a convention.

During the last Union Parishad (UP) elections in 2002, a rift developed between the government and the EC as the government refused to deploy army in the elections.

EC sources said the government does not extend all-out cooperation to the EC though the constitution says it will be the responsibility of the executive authorities to assist the EC in conducting any election. Against the backdrop the EC is for provisions that would make the EC recommendations obligatory.

At the meeting the election commissioners said the EC should have legal power to recommend army deployment in the local government elections.

"It is true that deployment of army personnel in each Union Parishad during the election is not possible. But the Election Commission can ask the government to deploy army in the union parishads considered as vulnerable," Mohammad Ali said.

"It is possible to deploy army personnel in the municipal elections," he added.

About the electoral enquiry committee, the EC observed that in absence of such committees the EC cannot take stern actions against irregularities in the local govern-

ment elections. The enquiry committees can play a vital role in checking electoral irregularities in the parliamentary election.

"If the rules are amended and the EC is provided with power of forming electoral enquiry committees while conducting local government elections, it will be helpful to hold the polls in a free and fair manner," Mohammad Ali said.

Contempt rule

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bond of Tk 1 lakh with four guarantors. The PP did not oppose the bail petition despite being the prosecuting lawyer since the case was filed on January 24 last year.

During hearing on the bail petition, PP Hassan had told the court that he would have no objection to the bail move since the court grants the accused bail with proper guarantors.

On April 2, the same court rejected the bail petition of the accused on the ground that the charges brought against him had been primarily proved. The prosecution had also opposed the bail petition, saying Shoaib through his activities had offended the religious sentiments of Muslims.

On March 28, the HC bench in a rule ordered the government to show reasons within 10 days as to why Shoaib would not be granted bail.

The law stipulates that no lower court pass any orders on a matter if any rule on the same matter is pending with the higher court.

Shoaib's getting bail in the lower court drew the attention of the HC bench that viewed the matter tantamount to contempt of court.

Police arrested Shoaib from Zia International Airport on November 29, 2003 for his alleged ties to Mossad, Israel's counter-intelligence agency. Mohammad Abdul Hanif, officer-in-charge (OC) of Airport Police Station, filed a seditious case against Shoaib with the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka on January 24 last year.

Shoaib was scheduled to present a paper at a Tel Aviv seminar, and faxes and e-mails seized from his possession proved that he had passed sensitive information out, stated the complaint.

A project profile seeking a fund of Tk 12 crore from the Jews in Israel was also found on him. The fund was sought to publish three dailies, namely the Dainik Sonali Din, Dainik Rupantar and Dainik Paribartan, the complaint added.

Govt sits on community

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selected CCs mostly in remote areas.

A total of 73 CCs were commissioned to provide Essential Services Package (ESP) particularly for the hardcore poor and most vulnerable population.

Five NGOs (Brac, TMSS, PAPAN, DUS and JAKAS) were partners in the PPP for running 43 CCs under DFID and NICARE funding and the rest 30 CCs were run by PLAN, NSDP and BPHC/PHD partner NGOs under projects funded by CIDA and other development partners.

The health ministry appreciated the PPP approach to run the CCs at the final dissemination workshop and launch of NGO network for the PPP in December 2004.

Earlier, a national workshop report titled 'Community clinics and community mobilisation for ESP delivery' prepared in May 1999 praised primary healthcare delivery from the CCs by village health volunteers (VHV) under thana functional improvement pilot project (TFIPP). A remarkable increase of patient attendance was observed in CC approach, it said.

The CCs were built to serve an estimated 6,000 people in every union with the aim of replacing traditional home visits by FP workers and weekly satellite clinics so as to provide both healthcare and FP services under a single roof termed, 'one-stop-shopping'.

But the government is now going for more piloting on the use of CCs by NGOs or private sector, which some policy makers term unnecessary, sources said.

Removed CMP commissioner made DIG

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) Amzad Hossain, removed before the city corporation elections, has been made deputy inspector general (DIG) of Chittagong range.

Police headquarters removed him on May 2 after the Election Commission ordered for his removal on his failure to discharge duties impartially in the run-up to elections.

In a major reshuffle yesterday in police top positions, the government also gave MA Mazed, additional DIG of Chittagong range, the charge of the CMP commissioner, sources said.

The former superintendent of police (SP) of Sherpur, Nivas Chandra Majhi, has been transferred to Sarda Police Training Academy.

Rowshan Ara Begum, commanding officer (CO) of Armed Police Battalion (APBn)-8 of Dhaka, has been made the CO of APBn-9 of Dhaka, while CO Zia Morsheed of APBn-9 (Dhaka) has been transferred to the Sylhet APBn.

Rangpur Additional SP Harun-Rashid, who was on deputation to Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), and Pabna ASP Kazi Fazul Karim have been promoted SP and transferred to Chandpur and Sherpur.

Khokon admits to taking photos of staged minority persecution

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Mizanur Rahman Khokon yesterday gave confessional statement to the magistrate court that he and other associates of Sanjoy Gosh fabricated a minority persecution drama and took photographs of it with a view to seeking political asylum in France on grounds that were actually false.

Police arrested Mizanur Rahman Khokon, 29, and Sanjoy Gosh, 28, on May 12 on charge of staging a sequence of minority persecution and took them on a three-day remand for interrogation.

Meanwhile, the magistrate court granted a prayer for seven-day remand to interrogate Sanjoy by Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC) in Dhaka.

Barisal district police administration formed a three-member enquiry committee headed by Additional Superintendent of Police Manirul Islam and directed to submit report as early as possible.

The team visited the Barisal Kotwali Police Station and interrogated the arrestees on Sunday.

Sanjib, Niranjana, Palsh, Khokon Mamun, Ashok, Mizan and other associates of Sanjoy participated in the staged minority persecution, activities of Islamic fundamentalists in the field adjacent to a local community clinic and Buniadi High School.

Tax gain

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bigger Annual Development Programme. The inflation is on the rise and private sector credit is on the rise too," he noted.

"If this pay increase took place a year ago, it would have been better. It's best for any elected government to announce new pay structure during its mid-term."

"The government may have to borrow from banks for the new pay and the ADP implementation will demand huge money. If inflation rate increases due to these factors, it may offset the benefit of the pay increase," Prof Mahmud observed.

"Whether there will be adverse impact of the new pay scale on the economy, ultimately depends on how efficiently the government handles its budget and manages financial sector," he said.

Criminal

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Shibchar Police Station were injured.

Police recovered a homemade pipe gun and 12 bullets from the scene.

In Beribandh area of Mohammadpur, the two 'muggers' were injured when a shooting broke out between the members of Rab-4 and a gang in the early hours yesterday.

The injured identified as Mohammad Nadim, 28, and Md Mizarun Rahman, hailed from Shekhetek of Mohammadpur. They were admitted to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH).

Rab-4 Commander Saber Sharif told BDNews that they arrested the two with a pistol and four bullets at Mohammadpur on Sunday evening.

Following leads extracted from them, a Rab team took the arrestees out between the members of Rab-4 and a gang in the early hours yesterday.

He said the 'criminals' left a shotgun and three cartridges on the scene.

PM goes to Vietnam

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a 34-member official delegation including State Minister for Agriculture Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir and Adviser for the Foreign Ministry Reaz Rahman, as well as a 13-member high-powered business delegation.

She will depart from Zia International Airport on a special aircraft of Biman Bangladesh Airlines at 1:20pm.

The deputy head of the government office and vice minister for Foreign Affairs of Vietnam will receive Khaleda at Noi Bai Airport in Hanoi.

The Bangladesh PM will stay at the Hotel Daewoo during her visit.

In the evening today, Khaleda Zia will attend a reception of Bangladeshi expatriates and businesspersons and high officials of Vietnam to be hosted by the Bangladesh ambassador in Vietnam. There are around 100 Bangladeshis employed in the garment industry and UN organisations there.

During the visit, Bangladesh and Vietnam will sign an "Agreement on Promotion and Reciprocal Protection of Investments" to enhance the scope of reciprocal

investments. The two sides will discuss specific areas for promotion of trade between the two countries.

Following an official reception at the Presidential palace in Hanoi on May 18, Khaleda Zia will lead the Bangladesh delegation in bilateral talks with the Vietnam delegation, led by her counterpart, Phan Van Khai.

Khaleda will meet the Vietnam president in the evening and attend a banquet in her honour hosted by the Vietnam premier.

On May 19, Khaleda will visit the monument of heroes and martyrs and the mausoleum of late president Ho Chi Minh at the Ba Dinh Square before her flight to Dhaka. She is expected to arrive in Dhaka at 11:00pm.

Robbery

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Elephant Road in Dhanmudi when armed robbers entered the flat of Khandaker Abul Masud and looted Tk 26,000 at 10:30pm.

Rupa Hasan of East Rampura in Khilgaon lost cash and gold worth Tk 2 lakh to robbers when they entered her flat at midnight.

Ministries asked

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India and pursue a corridor facility in exporting goods to Nepal and Bhutan.

The meeting, chaired by the commerce minister Ataf Hossain Chowdhury, asked all the ministries concerned to finalise their positions within the next week before striking a final deal with India.

The meeting, held at the Energy Ministry, was also attended by State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources AKM Mosharrar Hossain and State Minister for Power Iqbal Hassan Mahmood.

Secretaries of the Commerce and Power ministries, an additional secretary of the Foreign Ministry and a joint secretary of the Home ministry also attended the meeting.