

Two killed in 'shootout' with Rab, police

UNB, Dhaka

An absconding convict was killed in a "shootout" with police in Savar early yesterday and a dacoit was killed in a "crossfire" between the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and his accomplices in Gazipur on Friday night.

Police on secret information waylaid Insu, 32, near a mosque and signalled to halt his motorbike.

Ignoring the signal Insu and his two accomplices fired at the police and tried to run away. The police returned the fire that killed Insu, but his associates managed to flee.

Police recovered a revolver loaded with bullets from Insu.

Insu was a dreaded criminal in the area engaged in extortion, mugging, murder and anti-social activities. A drug peddler, he was recently sentenced to three years' imprisonment in absentia under the

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No fair polls minus free EC secretariat

Says CEC placing 6-point reform proposal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The outgoing Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Syed yesterday submitted to president a six-point reform proposal, including the all-important proposal for an independent secretariat for the Election Commission.

"If the Election Commission is not allowed an independent secretariat with financial autonomy, it would not be possible for it in future to conduct elections freely and fairly," the CEC told journalists at his office yesterday morning before placing the proposal to the president.

Asked whether the absence of a

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PHOTO: STAR

CEC MA Syed walks out of the Election Commission secretariat yesterday on completion of his tenure.

Sangsad goes into budget session June 7

UNB, Dhaka

Parliament goes into budget session on June 7, two days ahead of a tentative time for placing of the national budget in the House.

President. Iazuddin Ahmed yesterday summoned the parliament into session at 5:15pm on the day.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman is likely to place the budget for 2005-06 financial year on June 9.

The last session (16th session of the 8th Parliament) was prorogued on May 17. It was one of the briefest sessions of parliament that started on May 12.

That session had transacted business only for four working days, with the main opposition party, Awami League, staying away in continuation of a long boycott of the House.

The session had little legislative

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Cops, pickets clash on hartal day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Clashes between police and pro-hartal activists and damage of a number of vehicles by pickets in the capital marked the dawn-to-dusk hartal across the country yesterday, enforced by main opposition Awami League (AL).

Police fired rubber bullets, tear-gas shells and charged batons on pro-hartal processions and picked up at least 77 activists, 32 of them women, from different places in the city during the 6:00am to 6:00pm shutdown.

At least 30 women activists of Jubo Mahila League, a front organisation of the AL, were picked up from a pro-hartal rally and beaten up by police at Dhanmondi Police Station. Journalists were not allowed



PHOTO: STAR

Police club a Jubo Mahila League worker at Dhanmondi yesterday during hartal.

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RUN-UP TO BUDGET FY06

ADP remains uncut on political exigency

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government has decided not to reduce the size of this year's Tk 22,000 crore Annual Development Programme (ADP) mainly because of political exigency, planning ministry sources said.

However, the foreign currency

component of the ADP will be slashed by Tk 1,000 crore, which will be supplanted by increasing the local currency component by an equivalent amount.

The local currency component of the ADP was originally set at Tk 14,575 crore and the foreign currency component Tk 7,425 crore.

The local component has been increased in view of demands from lawmakers who want more allocations ahead of the general elections. Flood rehabilitation needs also increased the outlay.

The decision not to reduce the ADP size was taken at a meeting of

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JAMUNA LAUNCH DISASTER

Relatives protest delay in rescue

5 more bodies retrieved, pushing death toll to 55

STAR REPORT

Five more decomposed bodies were found yesterday floating on the Jamuna far downstream from the accident point at Aricha, where exasperated relatives and locals

burst into intense agitation against the persistent delay in salvage operation four days into the launch disaster.

Angry shouts and wails of frustration reverberated along the river

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PM opens bridge over Rupsha

UNB, Khulna

Opening another major bridge in the country's highway network, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said building the Khanjahan Ali Bridge is yet another example of politics of development as the BNP-led coalition believes in work, not in words.

She stressed the need for strengthening the politics of development to increase opportunities for the people through implementing development works like this, one after another, shunning sensationalism in politics.

With the opening of the 1.36-km-long bridge, constructed over the river Rupsha at a cost of Tk 726.15 crore with financial assistance of Japanese government, operations in the country's second largest seaport at Mongla are likely to get a boost alongside the development of communications in the region.

"We advanced one step more on the highway of road communications and national development through the opening of the bridge today," the prime minister told the inaugural function.

Direct communications between northwestern and south and southwestern regions of the country have now been established, she noted.

"I inaugurated the construction work of Kanchon Bridge on the river Shitalakhya in less than a month of assuming power. Later, we have constructed numerous roads, highways, bridges and culverts in the last three and a half years," Khaleda told her audience.

She mentioned the construction of 2,400-km of roads and about 8,000 metres of large bridges at a

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Pickets' delight, driver's plight

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Whims of some hartal pickets posing as passengers in the city appear to have plunged the future of a CNG-run three-wheeler driver's family into uncertainty.

Ameer Hossain, 40, the sole bread earner for his four-member family, suffered severe burns during yesterday's hartal, and is now under treatment at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH).

He took his three-wheeler out of the garage in Khilgaon at about 10:30am. A couple of minutes later, as he was just picking up speed along the road in city's Tilpapa area, he heard a call. He slowed down, hoping for the first trip of the day.

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PHOTO: STAR

Badly-burned three-wheeler driver Amir Hossain.