

Ministry dreads

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over establishing supremacy in the area," Khagrachhari Deputy Commissioner Gazi Mohammad Julhas was quoted as saying in the report.

The CHT affairs standing committee at yesterday's meeting also formed a five-member sub-committee to come up with recommendations on ways to maintain stability in the hill districts.

Besides, it asked the ministry to beef up the presence of BDR and other law enforcement agency members in the bordering areas, and continue the anti-crime drives.

About the longstanding conflict between PCJSS and UPDF, the report prepared by three deputy commissioners of the concerned districts said both the groups are desperately trying to establish dominance over the other.

It said that this year the PCJSS had filed seven cases against the UPDF for abducting its members. The UPDF does not file cases, as they do not operate overtly, the report continued.

It also observed that the PCJSS is running a campaign abroad saying that the peace accord is not being implemented while their opponent sticks to continuing the anti-peace accord activities.

The CHT affairs ministry in the report has acknowledged that some clauses of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord, 1997 have yet to be implemented, and that it has caused widespread resentment among the hills people.

Singling out land dispute between Bangalee settlers and indigenous people as one of the main reasons for communal tensions in CHT, the report has recommended strengthening the CHT Land Dispute Resolve Commission.

Committee Chairman Mosharraf

Hossain after the meeting told newsmen that the committee in its next meeting will table specific recommendations on ensuring peace in the hill districts.

Committee members Moni Swapon Dewan, Shahjahan Chowdhury, Syed Moazzem Hossain Alal, and Wadud Bhuiyan were also present at the meeting.

Arman

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of the case, prayed for a 10-day fresh remand on grounds that Arman is an underworld don who aids and abets his associates in killing, extortion and other criminal activities.

"Killing people in cold blood is his profession and habit," the IO told the court in his forwarding report.

Arman would be quizzed for information about the killing of an unidentified 22-year-old youth whose body Motjiheel police retrieved from the first lane of 119/1, Malibagh on April 17 this year.

Arman, produced before the court at about 2:15pm under a tight security, looked pale and concerned in the dock.

Rab arrested Arman from a flat at Dhanmondi on June 3 with two others and the following day he was taken on a seven-day remand in an arms case.

During quizzing at the Rab headquarters, Arman provided information about the August 21 carnage.

Following Arman's information, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of Police arrested AL leader Mokhlesur Rahman on Friday and remanded him for five days on Saturday.

However, CID officials remained tight-lipped about the interrogation.

Showcased sweetmeats

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expressed a combination of surprise and alarm. "The government should check the quality of those sweetmeats immediately. There should be a mechanism to monitor the process," said Bibhash Das, a resident of the Old Dhaka.

Some owners of high-end sweetmeat shops admitted that a portion of sweetmeat traders make their sweets with the adulterated ingredients.

"Some small traders may make their product with impure ingredients. But we have invested a lot in our business and we can not take that risk," said one sweetmeat trader, who has many shops in the city and claimed his products are made of fresh ingredients.

According to the pure food ordinance 1959, at least 10 percent milk fat is mandatory in sweetmeat. But in most cases, the percentage of milk fat is not more than five percent, the sources said.

Concerned sources added that most sweetmeats in the country, including Dhaka City, are made with adulterated posset, the main ingredient in sweetmeats - saccharin, flour and toxic colouring. Traders also use soybean oil and vegetable oil instead of milk fat.

In most cases, sweetmeat producers use toxic colouring instead of food colouring, which may cause diseases like cancer and kidney damages if regularly ingested.

Some sweetmeat makers from rural areas are unaware of the existence of food colouring and use only toxic colouring in their products, said one food officer.

In Dhaka City, famous sweetmeats brought from various parts of the country have been selling fast thanks to well-financed advertisement campaigns. Among these are Porabari Chamcham, curds from Bogra, Rosagolla from Jessore, monda from Muktagachha, and Rosomalai from Comilla.

Villagers clash

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Bazar area from Najjani of the district on a Bangladesh Road Transport and Corporation (BRTC) training bus at around 9:00am, where one side of the road was closed due to repair work.

The driver of the bus carrying Rab men entered into the single-lane where another bus of Soukhin Paribahanhad already coming through created a huge traffic jam at Bagher Bazar bus stand, said witnesses.

"As one side of the highway was closed due to repair work of the road, the vehicles were passing through another side," local police sources said. "When the Rab vehicle tried to cross the area, ignoring the passenger bus, the road got blocked as both the vehicles came face to face, occupying the entire space," he said.

Both the drivers asked the other to move back but none agreed, and the two locked in an altercation. At one point, the BRTC driver beat the driver of the passenger-carrying bus and the Rab men joined them, said witnesses.

The passengers and the locals became agitated and attacked the BRTC bus with sticks, iron-rods and bricks.

Seeing the situation, the Rab members, who were in plainclothes,

identified themselves, which angered the locals more. They vandalised the bus and beat the Rab members, who also fought against the locals.

At least 15 people were injured during the battle, including four Rab members sepoy Kamal, Murad, Monju and Nazrul, who were admitted to the Combined Military Hospital at Rajendrapur.

Sepoy Kamal was injured under the left eye, Murad had a fracture in the right hand while Manju received injuries in the neck.

Hearing the news, a contingent of Joydevpur police and Rab officials from its headquarters at Uttara rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Panic gripped the area until evening as the Rab members were patrolling the locality after the incident. Youths of the area left their houses to avoid arrest and torture by the Rab, police sources said.

Operation Instructor Nazrul Islam of BRTC filed a case with Joydevpur Police Station, said Second Officer Badrul Alam Talukdar.

Joydevpur police admitted the incident, saying that RAB was preparing to lodge a case against the unruly people of the area.

US envoy

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not Bangladesh," Saifur told reporters at his office after the meeting.

Thomas also said democracy would be jeopardised if press freedom was not ensured.

The US envoy said the prevailing US-Bangladesh relations are very well and will be brighter in the coming days.

Thomas lauded the Bangladesh finance minister and said Saifur is a visionary finance minister and Bangladesh has developed much on its economic front under his leadership.

On the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), a new debt programme of the US, Thomas could not say anything for sure. But he said discussions are going on.

Asked about it, Saifur said the government is now discussing the issue with the US authorities and it has progressed much. "The release of this fund depends on some indicators," he said without mentioning any of them.

Appreciating the US ambassador, Saifur said Thomas was a popular ambassador and had become a friend of Bangladesh during his stay in the last two years.

The minister said he does not know where Thomas is going to be placed. "I have learnt he will be working with Condoleezza Rice in the State Department."

Saifur hoped Thomas could help Bangladesh more from his new position.

Thai delegation

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The first phase of the elevated expressway will start from Gulistan to link with the newly-built Mohakhali flyover. It will have exit points at Golapshah Mazar, Nilkhet, New Market and Sonargaon crossing.

The Thai delegation will discuss the issue with officials of the Roads and Highways Department. The members today also call on Communications Minister Nazmul Huda in the afternoon, said the sources.

The government and the delegation are likely to sign an agreement in this regard during the visit.

The decision of constructing the elevated expressway to ease the city's traffic congestion was taken during Thai premier Thaksin Shinawatra's visit to Dhaka in August 2002. The issue was also discussed during Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's return visit to Thailand last year.

The sources said the Thai government sees the project as a symbol of friendship between the two nations.

Thailand will bear 20 percent cost of the project as technical support, while Bangladesh will provide the remaining 20 percent.

Essentials prices

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The price of ginger has also increased by Tk 10 and is selling at Tk 70 per kg. Indian onion is selling at Tk 15 per kg after increasing Tk three within the last three days, the salesmen said.

The price of garlic has also marked a sharp rise as it has been selling at Tk 56 per kg, which was Tk 32 just 15 days ago.

The price of soybean oil has risen by Tk four and is selling at Tk 56. The price of sugar has increased by Tk 4, salt by Tk one, and baby milk powder from Tk 12 to 15 for a one-kilogram packet.

The price of rice has increased by Tk two-three for per kg. But the gross rice seems to have disappeared from the market as nobody wants to buy it at such a high price, said a salesman in the market.

Now good quality miniket rice has been selling at Tk 26 per kilogram, and Nagirishail, another fine quality rice, at Tk 24. The minimum price of rice in Karwan Bazar was seen at Tk 18.

"See, within the last 10 years the price of rice has almost doubled. How can we survive?" said one buyer in the Hatirpool market. The government should always monitor the price of the kitchen market, but they never do it, he said.

The price of fish also marked a sharp rise. The price of local catfish rose to Tk 500 yesterday, when it was not more than Tk 350. Local ruhi was selling at Tk 160-170 per kilogram, up from Tk 140-150 two weeks earlier and Tk 100-120 just before. The price of all other fish has increased by Tk 20 to 30 for one kilogram.

The price of eggs also rose Tk 10 for one hundred eggs within the last two days due to the budget effect.

The price of broiler chickens has been selling at Tk 75 for one kilogram when it was Tk 64 just last week, the traders said.

Listed criminal

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As police reached near Majumderkhil School, Salim's accomplices opened fire on the law enforcers, triggering a gunfight.

Trying to flee, Karate Salim fell in the line of fire and received bullets.

He was rushed to the local upazila health complex where the on-duty doctor declared him dead, police said, adding that Constable Wahiduzzaman was also bullet-hit during the incident.

Police seized a local made gun, one LG and seven bullets from the spot.

Karate Salim was accused in over 13 criminal cases.

Another shady case

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the roadside tea-stalls, some 150 yards from the spot, or walking in front of the mill-gates where they work.

"Nazmul was talking to two motorbikers-Dulal and Sohel-at around 3:00pm when a few Rab men came there in plainclothes," an employee of one of the mills at the BSCIC, who was walking to a tea-stall, said on condition of anonymity.

"Nazmul did not recognise them as Rab men and engaged into an altercation with them," said a shopkeeper in the locality, adding that Nazmul traded heated words with them and at one point pushed one of the Rab members.

The Rab men then put on their Rab jackets and identified themselves to the youths, the witnesses said. Realising the mistake, Nazmul got down on his knees and begged the Rab men for his life, said another witness who was standing some 100 yards from the spot.

"The Rab members then held the three youths and dragged Nazmul to a nearby crop field," said the mill-employee. "The Rab men first fired into the air and then shot Nazmul pinning him to the ground with a foot on his chest," he added.

Another witness expressed his surprise to this correspondent,

saying, "Is this thing called 'crossfire'? They [Rab] shot him as if killing a bird or an animal!"

Rab threat

The Rab members then cordoned off the whole area and did not let anyone go near Nazmul's body, which lay in the field, the witnesses said. "For the next couple of days, the Rab randomly patrolled the area, threatened us not to tell what we had seen, and ordered us to tell that Nazmul died in 'crossfire'," said a shopkeeper.

The FIR

The following day, Subedar Sarwar Jahan of the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) filed a case with the Shibpur PS and handed over Dulal and Sohel along with a pistol and their motorbike.

In the FIR (first information report) Sarwar said that, acting on a tip-off, he along with Sub-Inspector (SI) Jahangir Uddin, Corporals Khairul, Anwar Hossain, Ershaduzzaman and Mosharrif, Lance Nayek Harun, Sepoys Nur Mohammad and Javed Ali went to the spot at around 2:30pm.

The Rab members were informed that some armed youths had gathered at the BSCIC area to commit some criminal activities, he said in the FIR.

As the Rab men reached the spot, the youths, sensing their presence, opened fire indiscriminately from the water tank, prompting the Rab members to counter with bullets, the FIR said.

During the shootout, the Rab men held three youths, one Nazmul-bullet-wounded with a pistol in his hand, it said.

Nazmul was taken to Narsingdi Sadar Hospital where the doctors

declared him dead.

The FIR also said the Rab members picked three shopkeepers who saw the seizure of the pistol from Nazmul. The two arrested youths also confessed in front of the Rab witnesses that they gathered there with arms intending to commit crimes.

"We were inside our shop and heard a couple of gunshots," said one of the FIR witnesses. "After the firing, some Rab men came to me and asked me to go with them," he said, adding, "Going to the field, I saw a youth lying dead and the Rab men showed us a pistol saying they had recovered it from him."

Another FIR witness also said the same while the third one went to his village home during the investigation.

Police investigation

The Shibpur police have already given the charge-sheet in one of the three cases--arms case, murder case and one for barring government officials from duty--filed with them.

SI Rafiqul Islam, the Investigation officer (IO) of the case, told The Daily Star that he had submitted the charge-sheet in the arms case stating that a pistol was found in the possession of the youths.

He also said that he brought the two arrestees, who are now in Narsingdi jail, on remand and made an investigation in the locality. He, however, refused to reveal his findings but hinted that those are similar to that in the FIR.

When asked about the findings of The Daily Star investigation, Major Anis, in-charge of Rab-3 at the Adamjee camp which conducts operations in the Narsingdi area, said he does not have anything to say beyond what has been said in the FIR.

Nazmul's past records

Both Palash and Shibpur police stations admitted that they did not have any criminal records against Nazmul, who was also the vice-president of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal Charsindur union unit.

Nazmul went to Saudi Arabia and came back in 2001. Since then, he was working in a factory near the Ghorasal fertiliser factory and has also been a contractor in the locality.

At his village, this correspondent found Nazmul was regarded as an amicable and friendly person.

Mother's urge

"I want justice," said Nazmul's wailing mother, adding, "You wouldn't find such a charming, gentle and lively youth in the village."

"We have been traumatised for almost a week since we heard the news and received his body the following day," she said.

The family did not even file any case, fearing the Rab may harm them.

One gets 30yr

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absence of the convict, Reaz Uddin.

The punishment of the fugitive will be effective from the day of his arrest or surrender, the court order said.

The court acquitted Reaz's wife Parveen, another accused in the case as charges against her were not proved.

Reaz took out victim Mintu alias Rajib from his house at Shaildhar Char of Gafargaon upazila in Mymensingh on June 2, 2000 promising his mother Halima Begum to give her son a job at a shop in Dhaka with Tk 2,000 as monthly salary.

But Reaz sent Mintu to Dubai for being used as a camel jockey. He, however, used to send Tk 2,000 to Mintu's mother every month.

Mintu's mother came to know of the incident after about two years when Reaz told her that her son would return home from Dubai.

After Mintu's return from Dubai, Halima filed an abduction case against Reaz and his wife Parveen with the Airport Police Station on June 4, 2002.

PM to meet

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issues of interest at the proposed meeting. He was talking to reporters at Zia International Airport before leaving for Doha as an entourage member and leader of Ministerial Meeting of Group of 77.

He said the prime minister is also scheduled to hold bilateral talks with Emir of Qatar Hamad Bin Khalifa al-Thani during the summit in Doha on June 12-16.

On Khaleda's meeting with Hamad Bin Khalifa, he said the Emir has shown a good gesture through his recent visit to Dhaka.

The minister said Bangladesh will seize the opportunity for further strengthening the existing ties with Qatar during the bilateral meet.

Responding to questions on the possibility of meetings with other heads of government or state, he said the Bangladesh mission in Qatar is working to that end.

Probe team

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whole episode and managed to pull at least three customs officials from preventive services into their act.

The inquiry committee in its report submitted a few days ago suggested departmental actions against Mohammad Idris, superintendent of preventive services (SPS), and his two fellow preventive officers, Akbar Hossain and Shahjahan Sikder, for gross violation of service rules. The committee also suggested proper actions 'as per licensing rules' against the shipping agent, sources said.

When contacted yesterday afternoon, Customs Commissioner AM Masroor Ahmad said the three customs officials have already been asked to show cause.

Sources said the importer, allegedly in collusion with the shipping agent and the three customs officials, secretly unloaded 10,150-MT of wheat worth around Tk 12 crore. The wheat was later sold at local markets, and no customs duty paid.

Accusing the three customs officials, the report said, SPS Idris failed to monitor the duties of his two preventive officers Akbar and Shahjahan. They also failed to check whether the customs duties were paid or not before giving the shipping agent the second permission to unload the goods. "This is a serious negligence of duty,"

Saifur

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might go to some unproductive sectors to remain idle and encourage smuggling.

Praising the budget proposal particularly for its focus on measures relating to development of the capital market, the DSE delegation proposed some modifications, but got poor response from the minister.

"I'll consider (a tax waiver for the stock brokers) it after two to three years when economy becomes stronger and revenue increases," said the finance minister.

He however assured the delegation of a provision, under which the finance ministry will not allow foreign direct investment unless investors offload a chunk of shares in the local capital market.

The delegation asked the minister to make an arrangement so that foreign investors offer a number of shares in the local market.

On the off-loading of the government-held shares of companies, Saifur said he had taken initiatives, but the ministries gave cold shoulder so far.

DSE Vice-president Ahmed Rashid Lali, Chief Executive Officer Salahuddin Ahmed Khan and Finance Secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan were present.

HC rejects

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petition the same day.

An expatriate in Japan, Ferdous submitted his nomination paper to the returning officer (RO) on May 28. But the RO's office identified him as a loan defaulter and cancelled the nomination paper the following day.

He lodged an appeal with the RO against the cancellation. But that too was rejected. Then he had appealed to the Election Commission and the matter is now pending.

The petitioner filed the writ petition seeking a stay on holding the by-election until the EC disposes of his appeal.

Another High Court bench had rejected another writ petition filed by Belal Hossain, an aspirant to the same parliamentary seat. The petition challenged the validity of cancellation of Hossain's nomination paper.

Bidisha plotted

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treasury bench colleagues and wondered why Bidisha was charged with theft, not sedition, if that was the case.

Siddiqui said the pace at which the case against Bidisha is moving has created confusion in the public mind and many are now raising questions about whether the government is pulling strings behind the scenes.

He pointed out that the law stipulates that a husband cannot file a theft case against his wife.

The opposition lawmaker noted that the police's mistreating Bidisha in custody would bring no good for the government as the past Awami League government had also badly treated Ulamas (pious people) and bore the brunt later.

Sister suits

cops

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Forkan and Tayeb Ali of the Khulna PS and their informant Akramuzzaman.

In the petition she said her brothers Munna (25) and Amir (22) were picked up by the accused on August 31 last year. The police demanded Tk 1 lakh from her brothers as bribe for letting them off from the Khulna PS custody.

Fatema Begum further mentioned that the accused tortured her brothers mercilessly for refusing to pay the amount and threatened to kill them in crossfire.

Her brothers fell sick and later succumbed to their injuries in the prison cell of the Khulna Medical College Hospital at 11:45pm on August 31 last year, she said.

SI Ranjit Kumar Das filed a case with the Khulna PS on September 1 naming some unidentified men for the "murders" of the two. In the FIR (first information report), he stated that Munna and Amir were "lynched" by angry mob. SI Shah Alam of Khulna was made the investigation officer of the case.

Fatema's petition further said she was not allowed to lodge any FIR with the Khulna PS in connection with the murder of her brothers. The accused rather threatened to kill her for making further attempts to go to the court or higher authorities of the Khulna Metropolitan Police, she said.

Sis Anisur Rahman and Shah Alam are still serving at the Khulna PS while SI Ranjit Kumar Das is working at the CMM court.

Kala-azar

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But locals said they are facing an acute crisis of the rare vaccines for the disease, which is attacking mostly children.

The Dinajpur Medical College duty physician told The Daily Star sand flies help spread the disease, which destroys the immune system. He said kala-azar is curable in 15 to 20 days if proper treatment is taken.

Panic is prevailing among the villagers, who are on the verge of leaving their houses, sources said.

US air strikes kill 40

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Body parts littered the compound near the Interior Ministry which houses the Wolf Brigade. One officer was hurt. al-Qaeda in Iraq, responsible for dozens of suicide bombings, named the attacker as Abu Mohammed al-Dulaimi, apparently a Sunni Iraqi.

The force, set up by Qureishi last year under formal Interior Ministry control, comprises hundreds of commandos drawn mainly from poor Shia districts of the capital. With their distinctive wolf's head insignia, they have become folk heroes to some Shias but an object of fear and mistrust for Sunnis.

The US Council on Foreign Relations suggested last week it was "the most feared and effective commando unit in Iraq."

In a separate statement, al-Qaeda's wing in Iraq said its leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi supervised a series of raids in the country on Saturday in response to operations by Iraqi security forces and US troops and in revenge for "aggressions... against our Sunni brothers in the Sunni area."

"Your brothers in al-Qaeda Organisation launched important operations and attacks today and under the direct supervision of our sheikh Abu Musab al-Zarqawi ...," the group said in a statement posted on an Islamist Web site.

After reports Zarqawi had been wounded in a US missile attack, the al-Qaeda Organisation for Holy War in Iraq confirmed last month he had been hurt but was in good health and leading operations.

Qureishi denies accusations his men have attacked innocent members of the Sunni Muslim minority that dominated the Shias under Saddam Hussein. He denies killing Sunni clerics.

Some Sunnis compare the Wolf Brigade to sectarian militias.

The Shia-led government has recently called for a continuing role for militias such as the Kurdish peshmarga in the north of Iraq and the Badr Brigade, the armed wing of the Shia party to which Interior Minister Jabr belongs.

The US-led occupying forces are uneasy about that but officials say the fighting readiness of such militias make them useful elements in the fledgling government's armoury. Sunni leaders are negotiating

His remarks prompted a number of back-benchers of the ruling BNP to raise hands for a floor to discuss the matter despite a futile attempt by the front-line lawmakers to bury the issue. Ministers Khandaker Mosharrif Hossain and Moudud Ahmed urged the party deputies not to discuss the issue.

But, State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman, taking the floor, claimed Bidisha plotted to topple the BNP-Jammat-led coalition government. "She (Bidisha) gathered about Tk