

HAJJ AIRFARE CRISIS

Govt sits with Saudi today to carry pilgrims at \$1,050

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Following foreign airlines' refusal to fly Bangladeshi Hajj pilgrims to Saudi Arabia at the Bangladesh Biman-set fare rate of \$1,050, civil aviation ministry will sit in a dialogue with Saudi Arabian Airlines today, where the ministry will request the latter to carry the pilgrims at the rate.

As the craft-crunched Biman will not be able to fly more than 18,000 out of a prospective 45,000 pilgrims to Saudi Arabia, an inter-ministerial meeting at the religious

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Outlaw killed in Rab 'crossfire'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A regional leader of the Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) M-L faction was killed in a 'crossfire' between Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and his accomplices yesterday.

According to a press release issued by Rab, PBCP leader Mohammad Idris Ali Khan alias Arif, 32, was found dead at Amdabad in Rupsha upazila following his attempt to escape during the twenty-minute encounter. He was arrested at Khulna on Sunday noon.

Rab recovered two pipe guns, five live gun cartridges, three live shot gun shells and three used

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SSB recommends promotion of 42 joint secys

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Superior Selection Board (SSB) at a meeting yesterday recommended promotion of 42 joint secretaries to the post of additional secretary.

A meeting source said the SSB selected the officials from 1973, '77, '79 and '81 batches for promotion on the basis of their annual confidential reports (ACR).

However, promotion was due for 97 joint secretary-level officials, the source said after the SSB meeting chaired by Cabinet Secretary Dr Saadat Hossain.

The last time joint secretaries were promoted to the rank of additional secretary was in August 2003, when a record 97 officials were awarded promotion.

Bodies of 2 new-born girls found

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dead bodies of two newly-born babies have been recovered from dustbins yesterday in the city.

Local people of West Tejuri Bazar in Tejgaon found the body of a baby girl in a dustbin and informed the police at about 9:00am.

Another dead infant girl was found in a dustbin at the Post Office Lane in the city's Badda area.

Police recovered the bodies and sent those to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morgue for autopsy.

Prayer Timing		
November 22		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-05	5-40
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-21	5-24
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Sharon asks president to dissolve parliament

Quits Likud party

AGENCIES, Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon asked President Moshe Katsav to dissolve parliament yesterday, paving the way for an election early next year.

Sharon, taking the biggest gamble of his political career, quit the ruling Likud yesterday to lead a new centrist party into the early elections.

Sharon's dramatic move, after the right-wing Likud faction he helped found nearly 30 years ago rebelled against him over a Gaza pullout completed in September, seemed likely to reshape Israeli politics for years to come.

Victory in an election widely expected in March could free Sharon of far-right constraints in pursuing a land-for-peace agreement with the Palestinians.

But he gave no immediate sign he

intended to change his tough policy toward the Palestinians while seeking to tap into mainstream support for what was the first removal of Jewish settlements from occupied land Palestinians want for state.

"I am resigning from the party and forming a new one," Sharon wrote in a letter to Likud's chairman, a party official said.

Several hours earlier, Sharon asked President Moshe Katsav to dissolve parliament and order a new election.

"I believe the election should be held as early as possible," Katsav said after meeting Sharon, who was expected to announce at a news conference at 7:30 p.m. (1730 GMT) formation of the "National Responsibility" party.

Katsav said he would begin consultations immediately with political leaders on moving up an election

originally due by November 2006 and disclose his decision on Sharon's request soon. Sharon made no comment after the meeting.

Katsav must first examine whether any legislator can muster a parliamentary majority and form a new government. But Israeli political analysts said chances were nil.

If Katsav dissolves parliament, Sharon, 77, would remain prime minister until a new one is elected.

In the West Bank city of Ramallah, Palestinian Deputy Prime Minister Nabil said the Palestinian leadership was "watching carefully the unfolding political developments (in Israel) to see its consequences on the peace process."

Opinion polls indicate it is uncertain Sharon can turn the popularity of the pullout from Gaza -- where

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PM pledges to stand by war heroes

Armed Forces Day observed

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said the government is committed to stand by the valiant freedom fighters anytime of their needs.

"As a nation, we are proud of the heroic freedom fighters -- the architects of our Independence. We are always active to place them at the highest seat of dignity as a mark of gratefulness," the prime minister told the gallantry award winning freedom fighters at a reception at the Armed Forces Division at Dhaka Cantonment on the occasion of the Armed Forces Day.

The prime minister hosted the reception and met the nearest ones and family members of Bir Shreshtho and other gallantry award winning freedom fighters.

Khaleda, who is also in charge of the defence ministry, said after assuming power her government had introduced a separate ministry

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Prime Minister Khaleda Zia distributes awards among the families of Bir Shreshthas and freedom fighters at the office of the Armed Forces Division in Dhaka Cantonment yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Stringent security measures have been taken in and around Paltan Maidan in Dhaka on the eve of the 14-party's rally today. The photo was taken yesterday.

3 children among 5 of an Iraqi family killed by GIs

AGENCIES, Baquba Baghdad

Five members of an Iraqi family, three of them children, were shot dead yesterday when US forces opened fire on their car outside a military base northeast of Baghdad, police and hospital sources said.

Three other family members were wounded in the incident, which took place near Baquba at around 0630 am (0330 GMT) as they were returning from a funeral, the sources said.

Ahmed Kamel al-Sawamara, a 22-year-old student who was driving the car but escaped serious injury, said that he suddenly saw US military vehicles just ahead of him.

"The soldiers started shooting at us from all over. I slowed down and pulled off the road, but they continued firing," he told reporters.

"I saw my family killed, one after the other, and then the car caught fire. I dragged their bodies out."

Two men and three children, aged one, two and three, were killed, and two women and a child were wounded, Iraqi police said.

A US military spokesman confirmed the shooting, but put the toll at

three dead and two wounded.

US troops had set up a makeshift roadblock to allow some military vehicles to turn off a highway into a base when the civilian car approached, said Major Steven Warren.

"The Iraqi car wouldn't slow down and warning shots were fired," he said.

The car failed to stop and came under machine-gun fire, Warren added. Medics travelling with the patrol immediately gave first aid after the incident.

US forces, who regularly face attack by suicide car bombers trying to ram their vehicles before setting off their explosives, have repeatedly been involved in shooting incidents in which civilians have been killed by mistake.

US patrols carry warning signs telling people to keep at a distance and drive down the middle of highways forcing oncoming traffic off the road.

Earlier US forces sealed off a house in the northern city of Mosul

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KIBRIA KILLING HC rejects petition for re-probe

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday rejected a writ petition seeking reinvestigation into Awami League leader Shah AMS Kibria murder case.

A division bench of the High Court comprising Justice Sharifuddin Chaklader and Justice AFM Ali Asgar also discharged the rule earlier issued by the court upon the government.

The High Court, in its observation, said as the case is in the trial court, it has no jurisdiction to order for further investigation into the case.

"The trial court, if it feels necessary, can reinvestigate the case," it observed.

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ATTACK ON JUDGE

Charge sheet accuses JMB man, 4 others

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The Sylhet police on Sunday afternoon submitted the charge sheet accusing five people in one of the two cases filed for the bomb attack on Judge Biplob Goswami.

The accused are Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) operatives Akhtar Hossain and Obayedulla Prodhania, Maolana Saifuddin Ahmed, imam of the city's Bhangatikor Jame Mosque, Md Jamal Uddin, muazzin of the city's Baitul Falah Jame Mosque and Md Habibur Rahman, a madrassa student.

The investigating officer (IO) Bazlar Rahman submitted the charge sheet accusing the five of the attack on Sylhet divisional speedy trial tribunal judge on October 18.

Akhtar was caught by the mob within minutes after the attack as

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AUG 17 EXPLOSIONS

26 Islamists accused of blasts in 4 dists

Charge sheets submitted

STAR REPORT

Police pressed charges against 26 Islamist militants in connection with the August 17 serial blasts in Jhenidah, Jessore, Naogaon and Kurigram in the last two days.

Jessore police yesterday submitted charge sheets in all the nine cases against JMB chief Abdur Rahman, Bangla Bhai, Tokai Sagar, Tuhin and Mamun, reports our Jessore Correspondent.

Of the nine charge sheets, Criminal Investigation Department ASP Moula Boksh submitted two, CID inspectors Nurul Islam four and Abul Bashar two, and the officer-in-charge of Khulna GRP Station submitted one

chargesheet.

All the charge sheets accused the same people and showed 28 people as witnesses.

JHENIDAH

Jhenidah police yesterday submitted charge sheets against 14 militants including the chiefs of Allahr Dal, a brigade of outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) for blasting bombs in the district.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) Azizul Haq of Sadar Police Station submitted the charge sheet to a first class magistrate's court in Jhenidah, reports our Kushtia Correspondent.

The accused are Allahr Dal chiefs Babul Ansari, an official of the parlia-

ment secretariat from Gaibandha, and Matin Mehedi, Amirul Islam of Kangsha village, Sabuj, Mojam, Nasrullah, Manirul and Rokunuzzaman of Magarkhali, Tuhin of Sikarpur, Mohon of Kanchanpur, Mamun alias Mithun of Hamdaha, Muhit of Bharuapara in sadar upazila, Faruk of Kasimpur in Saikupa upazila, and Tarikul Islam alias Rinku of Rupshain Khulna.

Babul and Mehedi are two of the masterminds behind the August 17 blasts, the charge sheet mentioned.

The OC, also the investigation officer (IO), said police had arrested two Allahr Dal members Rinku and Mithun.

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Citigroup, UNCDF give GMA award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three micro entrepreneurs and a micro credit-providing organisation yesterday received the Global Microentrepreneurship Award (GMA) 2005 for their success in microentrepreneurship.

Citigroup Foundation in collaboration with the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) gave the awards in four categories.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman handed over the awards to the recipients at a city hotel.

Thengamara Mohila Sabuj Sangha (TMSS) received award as the best microfinance institution of the year for its immense contribution to self-employment of

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PHOTO: STAR

Global Microentrepreneurship Award 2005 winners are seen (from left) with Citigroup Bangladesh Country Officer Mamun Rashid, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, former advisor to caretaker government Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud and former Bangladesh Bank governor Fakhruddin Ahmed at the award giving ceremony at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel yesterday.

Khulna cops list 24 potential bombers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) has prepared a list of 24 bombers, most of whom are believed to be hiding in college hostels, slum areas, mess and rented houses in different city areas, using the name of the ruling parties.

According to a highly placed source in KMP, fresh combing operation has been launched to arrest these criminals after the recent bomb attacks on police.

"We are deeply concerned at the sudden rise in bomb attacks on police," the source said adding, "Time is now ripe to take action against the bombers whoever they may be."

In addition to having open connection with the ruling and opposition parties, these bombers are also

linked with various underground organisations, the source added.

Contacted, Commissioner of KMP Khan Saeed Hasan said that the bomb attacks on police at Daulatpur and Picture Palace Square are meant for creating panic among the people. "I have already asked my men to wear bullet-proof jacket and helmet while on duty," he said adding that the police will conduct continuous block raids, particularly in slum areas and student hostels in the city to arrest the criminals.

Another senior officer of KMP told this correspondent that since the extremists have changed the tactics for committing the crimes, the police are also bringing changes in their operations for

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