

Education system

FROM PAGE 16

pulsory," he said, adding that religious studies are not mandatory in any other country of the world excepting Afghanistan.

Referring to the marks distribution for the subjects under the new curriculum, he said the students will study science subject like physics or chemistry only for 37.50 marks whereas English-medium students will study the same subject for 200 marks. It will create more disparity in education standard of the two mediums.

"Without consulting the teachers, students, guardians, or educationists, the education ministry has initiated the steps to bring about such an extremely important change in the secondary education," said Prof Jaheda Ahmed, presenting the keynote paper.

Jaheda, also a history teacher at Dhaka University, said religious fanatics have been conspiring to turn the country into a fundamentalist state and the proposed system will only help them in reaching that target.

Prof Ajoy Roy said madrasa education should be improved but the government's plans, which will bring down the standard of secondary education, simply cannot be accepted.

Besides, neither the authorities have preparations for the new system nor the teachers have the training necessary to adjust to it, he said.

Secretary-general of Bangladesh Shikshak Samity Federation Kazi Faruk Ahmed called on the publishers not to print books for the new system. He asked the students of class nine and ten to keep their current textbooks.

"A teacher's authority to provide 30 percent marks will open a floodgate for commercialisation of education," he observed.

Prof Shahidul Islam of Rajshahi University said business studies has been made compulsory though half of the schools in the country do not have the teachers of that particular subject, and students of 1,500 schools, who cannot take science stream due to lack of teachers, now

BNP leader shot dead in Pabna

UNB, Pabna

A local leader of the ruling BNP was gunned down by unidentified assassins near Kazirhat ferry ghat under Bera upazila last night.

Police and witnesses said the assassins sprayed bullets on Abdul Matin, 30, general secretary of BNP's Kazirhat Union, at a shop at about 10:30pm and left the scene. Matin died instantly.

The motive behind the killing could not be known. Police recovered the body and sent it to Pabna General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Sylhet mayor

FROM PAGE 1

attack on an AL meeting in the city's Gulshan Hotel left office secretary of the city unit Mohammad Ibrahim killed and more than 30 injured.

Sylhet district and city units of the Awami League have called a half-day hartal in the city tomorrow protesting the grenade attack on the mayor. The AL units will also hold a protest rally today.

Ctg bomber

FROM PAGE 16

a cop, killed and eighteen others injured.

The suicide bomber was admitted to the CMCH with both the legs and one hand blown off. The doctors at the hospital declared him dead after the life supporting equipment was withdrawn at 12:20pm.

Our Tangail correspondent reported that the family of Hossain Ali refused to take his body on Thursday.

The police superintendent of Tangail went to the house of Hossain Ali at Taktarchala village under Sakhipur upazila and proposed to hand over the body of the suicide bomber to his family.

The family members refused to take the body, saying that Ali was a misguided member of their family.

Police custody

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locals said Shafi has been living at Sultanganj in Rayer Bazar for the last 25 years and has no criminal record. He was known as a gentle and honest man to his neighbours.

His landlady Momtaz Begum said, "Shafi did not pay the rent for the last four months. But I did not insist or demand the rent immediately, knowing well that he was a very honest person and will definitely pay me."

Shafi's wife Shahera Begum said her husband, who had resigned from his job just two weeks back, had three months' salary due. He went to the market to collect the dues on November 30. He was supposed to join a new job on December 1, she added.

The police said they arrested him on Wednesday evening as some shopkeepers at the Sobhanbagh New Super Market alleged his connection with the robbery of Prince Jewellers in the early hours of the day.

Mohammadpur police yesterday evening claimed Shafi admitted to his involvement in the robbery and said the gold was with one Jasim of Agragora. "We then took him with us to find Jasim. But, on the way he felt serious pain in his chest. So, we took him to the hospital, where he died," the duty officer at Mohammadpur Police Station said.

But DMCH morgue sources said serious injuries had been found in his legs and hands.

Marzina

FROM PAGE 1

love or want her. He said he loved a schoolgirl but married Marzina on his mother's insistence expecting some fast money as dowry with which to start a small business.

As Marzina refused to buzz off, Joyal started to beat her now and then. However, after three months, Joyal and his mother agreed to keep her only if her father paid them Tk 50,000 and a two-room house built by his in-laws.

As Marzina's father said he had no way to meet that demand, the physical and psychological torture on her worsened.

"Since the very beginning Joyal started to beat her mercilessly and asked for money on various pretexts. We were forced to pay him Tk 20,000 in the first year of the marriage, begging from our relatives and neighbours. But his demand for money never ceased," Nurjanah told The Daily Star.

On several occasions, the marriage was on the verge of collapse. But each time interventions of the local union parishad chairman, members and other influential people saved it.

In the face of increasing violence, Marzina at last left her husband's house last year and filed the dowry case two months ago. Tuesday was the date for hearing of the case. But the terror strike has put the marriage of this hapless girl only in further jeopardy.

Her father reported that Joyal expressed delight at the news of his wife's predicament. "I will see how the chairman and members now persuade me to continue living with her. There is no way I will agree to keep a cripple as my wife," her father quoted the savage husband as saying.

A bleak future loomed ahead as he outweighed the girl's physical sufferings.

Saptarshi: Grandmother

FROM PAGE 16

the only eyewitness to the incident, succumbed.

In the prayer, Mamataz Begum said Saptarshi has been living with her since childhood and never wished to go to her maternal grandmother's house. If she is forced to live in the safe home or with her maternal grandmother's family, that might cause serious mental problem to the child.

After the hearing on November 30, Judge MA Halim granted the prayer and ordered the handover. The court also ordered to produce Saptarshi before the court on January 16, 2006.

Earlier on November 23, the same court following the prayer of Manzila Khatun, Saptarshi's maternal grandmother, had ordered the Barisal Kotwali Police Station to pick up Saptarshi from the house of Mamataz Begum and hand over to Manzila. Mamataz and Manzila are also sisters.

Sub-inspector Habibur Rahman took measures for the handover in presence of both the parties, human rights activists, advocates and journalists on Thursday night.

However, the handover could not take place as the girl refused to leave her paternal grandmother.

The police brought the matter to the notice of Sadar upazila Magistrate Munim Hassan and according to his decision sent Saptarshi to the safe home Friday evening.

Meanwhile, Advocate Manabendra Batobayal, former president of Barisal District Bar Association, alleged that failure to

hand over Saptarshi to her maternal grandmother and sending the child to a safe home instead are in clear violation of the court order.

The officials concerned should be deemed to have caused contempt of court as the emotion of a minor girl should not get preference over a court order, he said.

Murdered Papiya's mother and sister Mahbuba Huq Kunkum alleged that from the very beginning the police are acting biased and conspiring to destroy the evidence of the murder through the influence of political godfathers.

The life of Saptarshi, the only witness to the crime, may also be endangered or her accounts may be fabricated by the accused family, they added.

The police meanwhile refused to say anything about their findings in the three-day remand of Israt Jahan Swappa, 44, sister-in-law of Papiya and one of the two main accused in the case.

Advocate Papiya, 29, was murdered allegedly by her husband Tuhin and in-laws on November 3 and buried at the Barisal Muslim graveyard.

The police arrested Swappa on November 8 after the victim's sister lodged a case in this connection on November 7 night. Tuhin, however, has been absconding.

Marks of injury and torture were found on the dead body of Papiya at a post mortem after it was disinterred on November 8.

The next date for hearing of the Papiya murder case has been fixed on December 6, 2005.

WB finally okays

FROM PAGE 1

of the law and recommend modifications.

The subcommittee held a round of meetings on the draft and then sent it to the law ministry for vetting.

But the WB took a staunch stance on the issue and told the government if any fundamental change is made in the law it will not approve the DSC instalment. It also deferred tabling the matter in its board meeting on November 17 as scheduled.

A source said the government then assured the bank of making no major change in the law and getting it passed by parliament soon, which made the WB resume the approval process.

WHAT IS DSC

The DSC finds a core and sectoral governance reform programme, a WB news release said yesterday. It is designed to assist the government in addressing key governance constraints by strengthening public expenditure and budgetary management, improving public procurement, modernising tax administration and enhancing the delivery of public services, the release read. It also targets sectoral governance reforms in banking and energy sector and state-owned enterprises, and the government's trade liberalisation agenda.

The governance reforms supported by the DSC are "designed to improve social service delivery to the poor and improve the investment climate to enhance economic growth, exports, and jobs. Creating economic opportunity through sustainable growth and access to services is key to reducing poverty in Bangladesh, and the DSC supports both," said WB Country Director Christine

AL rejects dialogue

FROM PAGE 1

party's Dhanmondi office yesterday afternoon, Abdul Jalil said, "This proposal for dialogue is to mislead the international community and divert public attention at home. The AL working committee demands immediate resignation of the government in the greater interest of the people as there is no other option or alternative left to rescue the nation from the present crisis."

Briefing newsmen on the outcomes of the nearly six-hour meeting staggered over two sessions from 10:00am to 1:00pm and from 3:00pm to 5:00pm, Jalil said, "We cannot sit down with a prime minister, whose hands are stained with bloods and who has killed thousands of our leaders and workers."

Criticising the government severely for being indifferent to preventing the rise of militancy, Jalil said it is frustrating that despite a prime ministerial order, militant kingpin Bangla Bhat has yet to be arrested.

Referring to Jamaat leader Mafur Rahman Nizami's comments that Bangla Bhat was a mere creation of the media, the AL general secretary said the government on the one hand speaks against terrorism and on the other, it encourages violence by sheltering the patrons of the militants.

The ALCWC meeting resolved that a dialogue with the government would not bear fruit, rather the ruling coalition's stepping aside, on accepting the opposition's proposal for reforms in electoral and caretaker government systems, would give a way out of the current situation.

The meeting noted that the state-sponsored terrorists made the grenade attacks on Sheikh Hasina's rally on August 21 last year and killed 24 of its leaders and workers including by Rahman. It also held the ruling coalition goons responsible for the killings of SAMS Kibria, Ahsanullah Master and some 30,000 party activists in last four years.

The ALCWC also condemned the government's failure to deal with Monga (near-famine situation) in the northern districts.

In a resolution, it expressed the resolve to graduate the ongoing movement against the government

Gazipur town of terror

FROM PAGE 1

In most cases, the police avoided coming too close to the people that looked suspicious to them. From a little distance, they first asked the suspects to show if anything was hidden under their clothes. The police also made them open their bags to make sure nothing unwanted was inside.

"Our duty is no longer protecting the people only. We also have to safeguard ourselves, as law enforcers are also being attacked," a constable told The Daily Star.

The local journalists also seemed to be a little reluctant to take any risk in carrying out their duties, as eight of them received death threats from the Islamist terrorist outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) on Wednesday.

"Previously, we would overlook any such threats. But, everything is changed now. We believe the Islamist militants may attack us at any moment," said a reporter, asking not to be named.

District Superintendent of Police (SP) Atiqur Rahman told The Daily Star they are taking every possible measure to ensure public security. Pointing out some limitations of the police force, the SP said with the existing resources they can take preventive steps only.

A lawyer said as the JMB has selected the judiciary as target the lawyers now feel the most vulnerable and do not gather anymore.

Since the first suicide attack on Tuesday, activities at the courts have remained suspended and the second attack on Thursday has made its resumption more uncertain.

JANAZA AND BURIAL

The Namaj-e-Janaza of Gazipur Sub-assistant Agricultural Officer Abul Kashem Ali Sarker, 40, killed in Thursday's suicide bombing, was held at his Surabari village under Kashempur in the district at 4:30pm yesterday. He was going to the DC office to collect his salary when the bomb blast claimed his life.

Thousands of people including lawmaker Jahid Hassan Russell and former minister Prof MA Munnan attended the burial service. Sarker

Lax security

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become a threat to independence and sovereignty of the country, he said.

"No militant operations should be allowed in the CHT and its problems should be resolved through dialogue. And the policy makers of the government have a key role to play in this regard," Dewan stressed.

Awami League (AL) leader Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir said if militancy gathers strength due to non-implementation of the peace accord, it must be taken up seriously.

Other speakers at the discussion included Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Huq Nui, Communist Party of Bangladesh leader Ruhin Hossain Prince, justice Golam Rabbani, Dhaka University teachers Mesbah Kamal, KHS Arefin and Robayet Ferdous, Dr Abidur Reza of Bangladesh Agriculture University, women's rights leaders Shirin Aktar, Rokeya Kabir and Adibasi leader Rabin Dranath Saren.

Indian Parliament

FROM PAGE 16

The ruling party members protested over this following which the opposition rushed to the speaker's podium and started raising slogans against Gandhi and the government.

Despite Speaker Somnath Chatterjee's repeated pleas they refused to calm down.

The speaker first adjourned the House till 12:30 p.m. and called a meeting in his chamber in a bid to resolve the impasse.

When the House resumed, Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee said Prime Minister Manmohan Singh would make a statement on the issue at 2 p.m.

Advani then made a rather startling remark: "Keeping in view the seriousness of the situation, I would request the government to make a statement on Monday."

This prompted a Congress MP to retort: "It seems they want to stall the House next week also."

The Rajya Sabha was adjourned till 2:30 p.m. on the issue.

Immediately after the Rajya Sabha assembled in the morning, Leader of Opposition Jaswant Singh raised the issue and sought a statement from Manmohan Singh.

Chairperson Bhairon Singh Shekhawat said a statement would be made after question hour because the prime minister was not present in the House.

With the opposition insisting on a statement amid din, the House was adjourned till 12 noon. This was then extended till 3:30 p.m.

The Congress and Natwar Singh have been named as "non contractual beneficiaries" in the \$64 billion Iraq Oil-for-Food programme in the probe report by former US federal reserve chief Paul Volcker. Natwar Singh was removed as external affairs minister to facilitate a judicial probe by former chief justice RS Pathak.

In a sensational disclosure, Mathrani claimed that Natwar Singh, who was stripped off the External Affairs Ministry portfolio after being named in the Volcker committee report on Iraq's Oil-for-Food scam, had received oil allotment from Saddam Hussein's regime for his "personal services".

Mathrani, who worked closely with Singh in the AICC Foreign Affairs Cell before Congress came to power, told Aaj Tak news channel that both the allottees of oil coupons - Singh and the Congress -- are "exactly the same."

"The fact of the matter is that both allottees... in my view are exactly the same... One has been to Natwar and the other one to the Congress Party. One for Natwar's personal services. Don't forget that he has been the one who has been exposing Iraq's cause," he said.

The report was based on a long tape-recorded interview of Mathrani who has complete knowledge about the visits of Natwar Singh to Baghdad and had a series of meetings with top Ba'ath party officials of Iraq including Tariq Aziz and the then President of Iraq Saddam Hussein who had been allowed to sell oil for food by the United Nations to keep its economy afloat.

Mathrani said Jagat Singh and Andaleeb Sehgal travelled together and stayed in the same hotel. Andy was made part of the Congress delegation and the manner in which Natwar and Jagat Singh operated it was clear that they were looking for business in oil.

Seaport security

FROM PAGE 1

attacks on Tuesday and Thursday, the security level was not raised due to absence of the director general and for failure to realise the gravity of the situation on the part of those who were in charge, sources said.

Loading and unloading at the seaports continued during yesterday's hartal hours but the loaded trucks did not leave the jetty.

Balu murder

FROM PAGE 16

party in 2003 following a split in the PBCP Marxist-Leninist faction.

He along with nine of his armed cadres attempted to snatch Abdur Rashid Malitha alias Dada Tapan, the founder of Janajuddho faction, from the custody of police at Khulna Judges' Court on January 26, 2002.

He had long been on the run from police and even in hiding, he used to maintain a stranglehold on parts of the Sundarbans. He had recently dissociated himself from Janajuddho and set up a party named Gono Fouz.

Asian Highway

FROM PAGE 1

giving it an alternative.

It wants to integrate the proposed direct road link between Dhaka and Yangon into the Asian Highway.

Although Bangladesh extended a helping hand to Yangon by promising to take part in developing a portion of the road, Myanmar is yet to show any indication that it would support Dhaka in its bid to bring changes in the route of the Asian Highway, the sources said.

Meanwhile, Beijing in a letter to Dhaka declined to raise the issue of a route change in the next working committee meeting of the UN-Escap on December 14-15.

An inter-ministerial meeting in October had decided to approach three friendly nations for raising the issue on behalf of Dhaka. The other two countries are Thailand and Myanmar.

Former director (transport) of Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (Escap) Dr Rahmatullah, however, does not see much importance in China's rejection.

He said China has nothing to do on this subject because it is not directly involved with Bangladesh in establishing the highway. Rather, Myanmar is much more important

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Maoists extend Nepal ceasefire by a month

AFP, Kathmandu

Maoist insurgents said Friday they had extended a unilateral ceasefire by one month after joining political efforts to restore democracy in Nepal following a power grab by King Gyanendra.

"Despite the provocative attitude of the government forces, our party has decided to extend the ceasefire by one month, taking into account the demands of the national and international communities for democracy," said rebel leader Prachanda in a statement sent to AFP.

A three-month unilateral ceasefire called by the Maoists, who have been fighting for a communist republic since 1996, was due to end on Friday.

Security forces were bracing for a major democracy protest planned by leftists in Kathmandu later Friday.

"We believe this decision will pave the way to strengthen the movement of democracy and peace against the autocratic rule and give new direction to find a political way out," Prachanda said.

There have been isolated clashes between the Maoists and the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) during the ceasefire which the Maoist leader blamed on the army.

"The security forces tried hard to break the ceasefire," Prachanda said. Human rights activists welcomed

9 powerful bombs

FROM PAGE 1

Thursday night, reports our Sirajganj Correspondent.

On information, police recovered the bombs wrapped in red adhesive tape and hidden in sands around 9:00pm.

Meantime, Ullapara police arrested three JMB members including a madrasa teacher and recovered some Islamic books and leaflets from a Mosque at Kayrchar village in Ullapara upazila on Thursday night and early yesterday.

The arrestees are Abdul Jalil, 40, a teacher of Bakua Qawmi Madrasa, Ziaur Rahman, 25, of Natore, and Maksud Rahman Masud, 28, of Bogra.

The police said the arrestees took shelter at Kayrchar mosque for the last two weeks and were preparing to conduct a bomb attack on the Sirajganj court.

RAJSHAHI

Residents of Meherhandi in the city yesterday held five top militants of Hizbut Tawheed, a still ignored fanatic outfit linked to the JMB, when they were distributing leaflets calling for jihad after Juma prayers, reports our staff correspondent in Rajshahi.

Tara Mia of Kalihati in Tangail, Momtunul Islam of Mohadevpur in Naogaon, Mizanur Rahman Mintu of Raniganj, Piarul Islam of Talaimari in the city, and Yasin Ali of Charghat upazila -- all in their late 20s -- were handed over to police.

The leaflets read, "Get united, listen to leaders, obey directives, go for Hizrat (migration) and join jihad for establishing Islam in the world."

Hizbut Tawheed, despite having a track record of militancy stretching back to 2003, has been allowed to operate freely.

The arrestees admitted that they were organised in Rajshahi under the leadership of Rabihul Islam of Kalia to collect members and they sometimes work for the JMB.

They said their chief leader is Muhammad Bayazid Khan Panni of Tangail and his deputy is Monwar Hossain.

They claimed their top leaders' networks extend to extremists in India, Pakistan and the United States, and many rich people in Bangladesh fund their cause.

MEHERPUR

Meherpur police yesterday arrested three madrasa students in Kurigram for suspiciously wandering in a local bus stand, reports our Kushtia correspondent.

The police suspect the arrestees - Imran Khandakar, Shahidul Islam and Fakhirul Islam -- to be JMB activists. They are Dakhil examinees of Panchpeeri Aliya Madrasa at Durgapur village in Uilpur upazila in Kurigram.

The arrestees said they came to Kushtia on Wednesday and went to Meherpur yesterday to visit the district.

SYLHET

Police arrested three madrasa students believed to have links to the JMB at a residential hotel in the city in the early hours yesterday, writes our Staff Correspondent in Sylhet.

The arrestees - Shahjamun, 18, Jobayer, 20, and Nesar Ahmed, 20, of Sunamganj checked in to the hotel with fake identities, police said.

Police seized a VCD player, six VCDs, one phone book and one Islamic book from them. They are students of Dhakadakhin Jamea Islamiya Madrasa of Golapganj upazila in Sylhet.

NATORE

Police arrested the brother-in-law of JMB leader Mahtab Khamaru in Basila village under Naldanga Police station on Thursday, UNB reports.

Bagmara police of Rajshahi raided the village and arrested Saiful, suspecting him a JMB cadre.

Khamaru was released a few days ago after he was arrested and since then drives are on to hold him again.

MOULVIBAZAR

Police on Thursday night arrested four people in different villages in Kulaura upazila, suspecting their links to the JMB, writes our Moulvibazar Correspondent.

The arrestees are Najmul Haque Mohsin, Basir Ali and his son Waris Ali, and Mojir Uddin.

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Police arrested three madrasa students believed to have links to the JMB at a residential hotel in the city in the early hours yesterday, writes our Staff Correspondent in Sylhet.

The arrestees - Shahjamun, 18, Jobayer, 20, and Nesar Ahmed, 20, of Sunamganj checked in to the hotel with fake identities, police said.

Police seized a VCD player, six VCDs, one phone book and one Islamic book from them. They are students of Dhakadakhin Jamea Islamiya Madrasa of Golapganj upazila in Sylhet.

NATORE

Police arrested the brother-in-law of JMB leader Mahtab Khamaru in Basila village under Naldanga Police station on Thursday, UNB reports.

Bagmara police of Rajshahi raided the village and arrested Saiful, suspecting him a JMB cadre.

Khamaru was released a few days ago after he was arrested and since then drives are on to hold him again.

MOULVIBAZAR

Police on Thursday night arrested four people in different villages in Kulaura upazila, suspecting their links to the JMB, writes our Moulvibazar Correspondent.

The arrestees are Najmul Haque Mohsin, Basir Ali and his son Waris Ali, and Mojir Uddin.