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BDR seizes arms, ammo in CHT

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) seized some arms, ammunition and foreign currency from a forest in Baghaichhari thana in Khagrachhari district in the early hours yesterday.

They seized one .22 rifle, one .22 bore revolver, one SMC, one pistol, nine bullets and Indian rupees 120, says a BDR press release.

Acting on a tip off, BDR personnel raided the forest area near Uglechhari Primary School at about 2:00am and made the seizure.

BDR is continuing a drive in the area.

Several changes made in army high-ups

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several changes were made in the high-ups of the Bangladesh Army with three brigadier generals being promoted major generals, said an Inter Service Public Relations (ISPR) press release yesterday.

General Officer Commanding (GOC) of 24 Infantry Division Maj Gen Iqbal Karim Bhuiyan has been appointed the chief of general staff. He was succeeded by Adjutant General (AG) Maj Gen Sina Ibn Jamal.

GOC of 33 Infantry Division Maj Gen Matiur Rahman has been made the AG.

Brigadier generals Abdul Hafiz, Anup Kumar Chakma and

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ANTI-AHMADIYYA DEMONSTRATION

Bigots clash with cops, 57 injured

Police stop marchers from reaching Ahmadiyya mosque; zealots vow fresh programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 57 people including seven policemen were injured in the city yesterday as anti-Ahmadiyya zealots locked in sporadic clashes with the police, turning the downtown area from the north gate of Baitul Mokarram to its south gate into a battlefield for over an hour.

The skirmishes erupted when the police barred a band of International Khatme Nabuwat Movement, Bangladesh (IKNMB) activists from marching towards Dhaka Central Jail to hold a 'voluntary imprisonment' programme in the afternoon demanding a law declaring the minority Ahmadiyyas non-Muslim. The IKNMB has been running a hate campaign for over two years to press home the demand.

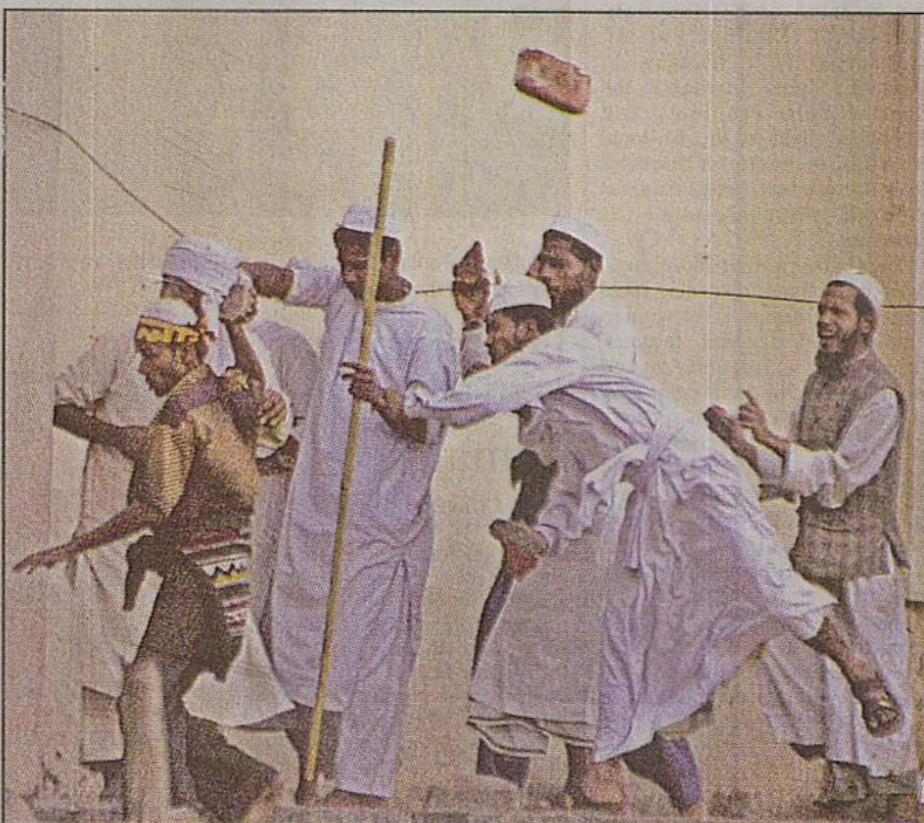
The agitators threatened to start from today branding all Ahmadiyya mosques as 'places of worship for Qadianis' and cautioning people not to 'mistake them as mosques'. They said they will also list and excommunicate the Ahmadiyyas across the country.

The law enforcers in the city yesterday also foiled the attempt of another anti-Ahmadiyya fanatic group, Khatme Nabuwat Andolon Bangladesh (Knab), to march to Bakshibazar to lay siege to Ahmadiyya headquarters there.

The police kept the Knab activists confined in front of the north gate of Baitul Mokarram National Mosque putting up barricades on the east and the west side of the gate.

The Knab demonstrators left the area after handing over a signboard they had intended to put up at the Bakshibazar Ahmadiyya mosque, branding it as a mere 'place of worship', to the

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Anti-Ahmadiyya bigots pelt law enforcers with bricks and mortars from Baitul Mukarram National Mosque in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

JRC to survey 3 rivers to demarcate border

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

The Joint River Commission (JRC) has decided to resume surveying three bordering rivers, the Surma, the Kushiara and the Barak, in January to demarcate the border line often changed by river erosion.

The decision, taken for the second time after two and a half years, needs about 10 months to be implemented, said a Water Development Board official, who attended the two-day JRC regional level committee meeting at the Silchar in Assam in India on

December 20-21.

Amir Khoshru, chief engineer of WDB northeastern region (Sylhet-Comilla), headed the 10-member Bangladesh side comprising officials from Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), the WDB and River Research Institute. The Indian team was led by SR Swami, additional chief engineer of the Cachhar and Hills Water Resources Department.

This time, the survey will be conducted along the five kilometres of the Indian river Barak, 10 km of the Surma and five km of the Kushiara. A model study will be

carried out in January 2007 on completion of the survey.

Earlier, the committee conducted a model study and decided to go for further study at a meeting at the WDB rest house in Sylhet on May 5, 2003. Since then, JRC activities remained suspended.

The WDB official said the meeting discussed emergence of new pieces of land in the Indian territory due to devouring of huge land by the Surma and the Kushiara.

A three-member Indian team will visit these rivers in March 2006

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Environists slam Saifur's comment on guest birds

PINAKI ROY

The comment of Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman that there is no harm in killing migratory birds has surprised the country's environmentalists and birders.

Environmentalists said the minister, who had represented Bangladesh at a number of international conferences on environment, should not have made the comment without knowing the contributions of migratory birds to the country's ecosystem.

At the opening session of the international plastic fair in Dhaka on Thursday, Saifur dubbed the migratory birds "cause of havoc" as "they invade wetlands, crowd out local species, gobble up crops and insects, and then fly out of the country".

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Ship-breakers clear Sitakunda mangroves

BSS, Ctg

Existence of the mangrove forest in the Sitakunda coastal belt is at stake as a syndicate of land grabbers has been felling a large number of growing trees for establishing a ship-breaking yard.

Officials of the Chittagong Coastal Forest Department (CCFD) and local sources said the syndicate already grabbed a big portion of the mangrove forest at Bashbaria under Sitakunda upazila felling a huge number of trees last week.

The CCFD had turned the huge char (shoal) land on the bank of the Sonaichhari channel adjacent to the Sitakunda coast into a mangrove garden by planting trees during 1989-90 to create new forest areas and job opportunities for poor people, preserve biodiversity, and to protect lives and

properties of the inhabitants of the coastal belt from natural disasters.

A gang of miscreants under the patronisation of the land grabbers manhandled employees of the CCFD and threatened them with dire consequences when a team of the department went there to stop illegal felling of trees, officials alleged.

The Sitakunda range officer of the Forest Department filed two cases with the Sitakunda police station in this connection.

Nizam Uddin, co-owner of the under-construction ship-breaking yard, Sea Steal Yard, claimed that they had leased six acres of land at South Sonaichari village under Sitakunda upazila from the district administration about 5-6 months ago for establishing the yard. He denied the allegation of felling trees.

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PHOTO: STAR

Hundreds of students come out of Arts Faculty building at Dhaka University after taking part in the public medical college admission test yesterday. As many as 21,045 candidates contested for 1,960 seats at 13 institutions.

11 Indian MPs lose seats for graft

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Indian parliament yesterday expelled 11 lawmakers who were caught on camera taking money for raising questions in the House even as the Indian cabinet gave in-principle approval of state-funding of elections in a bid to curb influence of money power in politics.

This was the second time in the history of Indian parliament that lawmakers were expelled on charges of misconduct. Way back in 1954, H G Mudgal, member of Lok Sabha, the Lower House, was expelled for accepting money from a business firm for propagating its cause.

While a motion recommending expulsion of 10 Lok Sabha members was passed by a voice vote following a report by a parliamentary probe committee indicting them, the BJP Rajya Sabha member Chattrapal Singh Lodha was

expelled following a report by its Ethics Committee.

A motion moved by Ethics Committee Chairman Karan Singh expelling the member was adopted by a voice vote in the Rajya Sabha, the appointed Upper House.

Of the 10 Lok Sabha members expelled yesterday five belong to the main opposition BJP, three to the BSP and one each to Congress and the RJD. The historic decisions came on the last day of the winter session of the federal parliament.

Moving the resolution, Leader of the Lok Sabha and Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee said it was time "we rise to the occasion and take up the courage. Let us not compromise with the dignity and honour of the House."

"We may not be there (in this House as members in future) but there is a thing called continuity, continuity with the honour and

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No plan to probe 'militant' past of cop

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra

Police have no plan to probe the militancy links of a Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader, a listed militant, as he has been appointed sub-inspector (SI) of police allegedly with the blessings of the ruling BNP leaders.

Alamgir Jahan Rana, who is now receiving training at Sardar Police Academy in Rajshahi, is in the militants' list that police headquarters sent to the local police after August 17 countrywide blasts, said a top Bogra police official.

Hailing from Hindukandi village of Sariakandi upazila, Sariakandi JCD unit leader Alamgir went missing from the area immediately after August 17 blasts, said his family and locals.

After coming back to the area with a beard, he formed the organisation "Sariakandi Sachetan Jubo Parishad" (Sariakandi

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