

6 criminals killed

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the criminals fled the scene.

Accused in 22 criminal cases, including four for murder, Rezaul Talukder hails from Mallick Berh union under Rampal upazila of Bagerhat, police said. Taking advantage of general amnesty, he surrendered to former home minister Mohammad Nasim in 1999 laying down 11 firearms.

Shanu Daku of Kashipur village under the same upazila was accused in 13 criminal cases, including two for murder.

Our staff correspondent from Khulna also says: Moin Khan, 32, a cadre of the outlawed Purbas Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-Janauddho) is partly responsible for a shootout between the police and his cohorts at Bihari Colony under Khanjahan Ali Police Station of Khulnashahi.

He was arrested at Phulbari rail gate on Monday night.

The shootout took place at about 3:15am during an arms recovery drive, the police said.

Four shotgun bullets, two bombs, one dagger and huge bomb making ingredients were recovered from the spot, DB police sources said.

According to police, the slain outlaw of Gilatola in Khulna city was accused in 13 criminal cases, including three for murder, filed against him with different police stations of Khulnashahi.

Police also said that during interrogation, Moin confessed that four cadres of the Janauddho carried out the bomb attack on patrol police on Monday night near Phulbari rail gate in which four policemen were injured.

Our staff correspondent from Chittagong adds: Delwar Hossain alias killer Delu, a listed criminal, was killed in an encounter between his accomplices and members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in the early hours yesterday.

A team of Rab arrested him on Sunday night from city's Feroz Shah Colony under Pabartali Police Station. During interrogation at Rab-7 headquarters in Patenga, he confessed to have possessed sophisticated firearms, including four AK-47 rifles, Rab sources said.

Following his confession, the Rab team along with Delu went to Rubber Garden, a remote hilly area in Raozan, at around 12:45am to recover the firearms. As they reached the place, Delu's accomplices opened fire on them in a bid to snatch him against which the Rab also retaliated.

Delu got caught in the brief gun-battle and died on the spot, sources said.

One revolver, two LG, one country-made gun, four revolver bullets, three cartridges and a machete were recovered from the spot, but no AK-47.

The body was sent to Chittagong

Medical College Hospital (CMCH) for autopsy.

Sources said Delu was accused in 17 criminal cases, including six for murder. His elder brother Peyar Hossain alias Peru, also a top listed criminal, was killed in another encounter with Rab about six months ago. The two brothers had established a reign of terror in three unions of the upazila - Noapara, Guza and Dewanpur, the sources added.

Meanwhile, an alleged extortionist was killed during a gunfight between a local gang and Rab personnel at West Rampura last night.

Rab said the person killed in the gunfight is Raju, 16, who was a member of local Nasim gang of Khilgaon area.

Rab officials said eight to nine members of the gang went to an under construction building site in an ally opposite Athihee Community Centre around 8:30pm and started scolding Ripon, the owner of the building.

They said the gang members became annoyed with Ripon as he refused to pay them illegal tolls and because one of his construction workers had handed over one of the gang members to police earlier on the day when he came to collect the money.

"As I was informed of the incident I thought that the criminals will come again to take revenge and accordingly I deployed five of our members disguised as construction workers," said Maj Ataul Karim, acting director of Rab-3.

He said as per their assumption, the criminals came to the under-construction building and when the Rab men challenged them they opened fire on the law enforcers prompting them to retaliate, which led to a 15-minute gunfight leaving Raju dead.

Maj Ataul said the other members of the gang managed to flee in the dark taking advantage of a load shedding that began 30 seconds into the gun battle.

UNB reports, a listed criminal was killed in a gunfight between his cohorts and Rab at Mirpur in the capital early yesterday.

Jahangir alias Jakha Jahangir, 30, was arrested by Rab at Pteribagh on Monday with a loaded revolver. Following his confessional statement, the Rab took him to Ahmadnagar at Paikpara at about 3:00am to seize illegal firearms from his den, the Rab sources said.

Sensing trouble, Jahangir's accomplices opened fire on Rab, which the law enforcers returned. Jahangir received bullets during the shootout as he tried to flee, the Rab sources said adding that he died on his way to hospital.

Hailing from Sheurapara, Jahangir was accused in seven criminal cases, including two for murder.

Hannan shown arrested

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for 10 days yesterday.

The case was filed for bomb blasts on a rally of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) at Paltan Maidan on January 21, 2001. Five people were killed and 50 others injured in the incident.

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) accompanied by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) produced Hannan before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court, Dhaka at 1:30pm yesterday under a tight security and submitted a petition for showing him arrested in the case.

The CID also submitted a petition for placing him on a ten-day remand for interrogation in connection with the blasts.

On completion of Hannan's eight-day remand in the Ramna Batumi Curnage case, CID Inspector Abu Hena Mohammad Yusuf, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, said Hannan gave important information about the carnage and should be confined in jail until the investigation completes.

In the forwarding report placed before the court, CID Assistant Superintendent of Police and IO of the CPB bomb blast case Syed Momin Hossain said Hannan might be involved in the incident. The Huij leader needs to be intensively interrogated to find out vital clues to the

bomb attack and the whereabouts of his accomplices responsible for it, the IO added.

After the hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate Shafiq Anwar granted the petition for showing Hannan arrested in the case and placed him on the remand.

Hannan was arrested at Madhya Badia in Dhaka on October 1 last year after several years of absconding. Later, he was shown arrested in different cases filed with different police stations in connection with the serial bomb blasts across the country last year.

Following the attack on the CPB rally, CPB President Monzurul Ahsan Khan filed a bomb blast case with Motijheel Police Station saying a group of anti-state conspirators made the attack.

Police arrested 12 people at that time but the CID submitted the final report on December 17, 2003 as correct, impartial and reliable pieces of evidence were not found to prove the charges against the arrestees.

The investigation officer (IO) said he will press charges if sufficient evidence is found against the arrestees.

The IO submitted a petition with the CMM Court for reinvestigation into the case on January 27 last year and the court directed him for fresh probe into the case after two days.

JS sees debate

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Rejecting the allegation and criticising the AL for trying to make a 'controversy', the BNP lawmakers said the election will be held as per constitution.

After the question-answer session, AL lawmaker Abdul Razzak on point of order said KM Hasan has no right to become the chief of caretaker government as he is still involved with the BNP and recently visited Comilla with party men.

Razzak also criticised the Election Commission (EC) and said, "The EC has prepared a voter roll with at least two crore fake voters."

Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, adviser to the PM on parliamentary affairs, said, "The election will be held as per constitution as the prime minister has said."

He, however, said, "The dialogue could still be held when we both parties will be at the same level during the caretaker government."

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed said, "Justice KM Hasan is a respectable person. So, it is not fair to create any controversy about him. His recent visit to Comilla was personal and he did not even inform the police."

The law minister said, "The constitution provides for a non-party caretaker government, which means the government will be non-party, but will not apply to a person."

State Minister for Sports Fazlur Rahman blasted AL President and

opposition leader Sheikh Hasina for her speech at the AL grand rally urging AL leaders and workers to come to Dhaka with sticks. He accused the AL of destroying the constitution and trying to establish a one-party system.

Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid said, "The nation has accepted Hasina's proposal for reforms without any controversy."

He said, "The Awami League has gifted the nation a model constitution after the liberation but the military rulers destroyed it. And now, the BNP government tried to reprint the constitution excluding the proclamation of independence."

Protesting Shahid's speech, Communication Minister Nazmul Huda said, "The Awami League has destroyed the freedom of newspapers and multi-party system but we revived it."

AL lawmaker AKM Jahangir yesterday placed his documents in support of his allegation that the EC issued letters to the district commissioners asking them to prepare lists of poll centres violating the law.

"The commission cannot do this; only the authorised officers will prepare such lists after announcing the election schedule," he said.

Moudud said, "The Election Commission may be working on possible polling centres but it will be finalised after announcing the election schedule."

Bush warns Iran

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suspend uranium enrichment "in which case the U.S. will come to the table."

But he also stressed that he and Chirac "share the same objective and we're going to continue to strategize together."

"Time is of the essence," the president said. "Now is the time for the Iranians to come to the table."

Both Bush and Chirac stressed they are working together, and the French president said twice that they see "eye to eye."

JRC meets

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neighbours. The official talks between the two countries will be followed by a joint press conference in the evening.

Prof Soz arrived in the capital yesterday. His trip follows the visit of Bangladesh Water Resources Minister Hafizuddin Ahmed to northeast India last week.

Various problems centring 13 cross-border rivers, riverbank protection works, minor lift-irrigation schemes, drinking water supply scheme and the dredging of the Ichamati River may come up for discussion.

Prof Soz and Hafiz, accompanied by their respective delegations, visited bordering riversides at Baghan Bazar of Fatikchhari in Chittagong and Shuvapur of Chhagalnaiya in Feni yesterday.

Butenis

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frustration level among the business people remains very high.

She also pointed out that the media could play a significant role in bringing the opposing political parties to the negotiating table.

Quoting the US envoy, DSE Vice-president Ahmad Rashid Lali said the upcoming election is a major challenge for the country.

"We need a peaceful resolution of differences between the political parties in order to have a long-term economic benefit," he added.

The DSE authorities sought her assistance in organising a road show in New York to attract the non-resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) to the local stock market.

In reply, she assured the stock exchange management of her support in drawing NRB investments in Bangladesh.

She stressed the need for infrastructure development and more foreign direct investment for a sustainable economic growth of the country.

"We talked about some challenges that the investors currently face and we all agreed that the development of infrastructure needs to continue and the foreign investors must not be scared away," she said.

DSE Chief Executive Officer Salahuddin Ahmed Khan said the premier bourse, which lacks NRB participation in trading, plans to hold a number of programmes in the Middle East, the UK and US to encourage the NRBs to join the market.

"The expatriate Bangladeshis remit billions of dollar every year but most of their remittance is spent on consumption. We'll request them to invest in real sectors through the stock market and take part in the economic progress of the country," added Salahuddin.

Remittance flow registered US\$ 890 million during the first two months of the current fiscal year.

Opposition

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take part in the parliamentary election in 2007 under a caretaker government. "The coming general election is very important for the nation," she said.

Alleging that national and international conspiracies are on to foil the democratic dispensation and make the country a satellite state, Khaleda said Awami League had killed democracy, introduced one-party rule and denied freedom of the press and the judiciary.

Responding to opposition leader Sheikh Hasina's call to the people to build up a resistance with sticks, she said, "anybody who possesses a sound mind cannot make such statements or announce such programmes."

Khaleda said such programmes will create chaos, constitutional vacuum in the country and foil democracy, which people do not want at all. "People want peace and democracy to continue."

* The prime minister said, "We too want fair elections. Whenever there had been fair elections BNP emerged victorious. The future elections will also be fair and peaceful."

She said democracy was restored in the country through a long struggle and no one will be able to disrupt it.

Chaired by local BNP lawmaker Delwar Hossain Dulu, the meeting was addressed, among others, by Health Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Prime Minister's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury and AKM Mosharraf Hossain MP.

Earlier, the prime minister inaugurated newly constructed Adalat Bhaban, Mother and Child Health Hospital, Shaheed Ziaur Rahman auditorium at Mymensingh Medical College and laid the foundation stone to upgrade the 500-bed Mymensingh Medical College Hospital to a 1000-bed one.

Country reels

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Chankharpu, said, "Electricity was available in my factory only for three hours a day in the last three days. All orders from the customers are pending...I could not even pay the last week's salary of my workers," he said.

Workers of another factory in the same area said the factory remains open from 9:00am to 9:00pm, but they can hardly work for two or three hours a day because of power failure. "How will the owner pay us if there is no output from the factory?" they said.

Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) President Fazlul Haq told The Daily Star, "We are facing 12 hours' load shedding a day. How can we run our factories in this situation?"

Exports might fall if the situation lasts long, he said, adding that some machines have gone out of order due to tremendous fluctuation in voltage.

A salesperson of an electronic shop at Motaleb Plaza in the capital said they cannot display the electronic products for the customers due to load shedding.

Businessmen at the shopping complex claimed that electricity is available for hardly four hours and that too not at a stretch.

The cyber café business is also facing acute problems due to severe load shedding. "Customers do not agree to pay if the electricity goes during their work," said the proprietor of Speed Cyber Café at Hatirpul.

Hospitals are also not out of load shedding. Delwar Hossain, assistant director of Brighton Hospital, told The Daily Star, "We have been facing four- to five-hour load shedding daily for the last four days. We bought 120 litres of diesel for the generator on September 17."

There has also been a severe crisis of compressed natural gas (CNG) at filling stations due to the ongoing power crisis. Long queues of CNG-run vehicles at the filling stations in the capital are a regular sight.

State Minister for Power Anwarul Kabir Talukder admitted to the BBC Bangla Service last night that load shedding has been quite severe for the last few days. "But this has happened due to the irregularities before my taking over the office," he said.

"It is unfortunate that no technical audit has yet been done, so, we do not know the exact condition of machines at different power plants," Talukder added.

Meanwhile, sources at the Power Development Board (PDB) said 18 of the 61 power plants are out of production at present.

The country has a daily

police, 400 BDR personnel, 500 APBn personnel, and 80 Ansars will be engaged. Among the officials, 13 deputy commissioners (DCs), 17 assistant DCs, 33 assistant commissioners, 36 inspectors, 18 sergeants and 425 sub-inspectors will be on duty during the programme.

The law enforcers will be deployed at 20 exit and entry points of the capital that the opposition intends to block. Besides 20 teams will also be videotaping opposition activities at the spots.

In a meeting at Rajarbagh Police Lines yesterday, DMP higher officials instructed the police to be alert to resist the blockade.

The 33 officers-in-charge (OCs) will be responsible to order the police into action if any untoward incident occurs in their respective jurisdictions, said a meeting source.

Police personnel were quite harsh during September 6 and 12 opposition demonstrations when some senior AL leaders were severely beaten by police.

POINTS OF BLOCKADE IN CAPITAL

Senior leaders of the opposition coalition yesterday at a meeting disclosed that they will block at least 20 spots in the capital.

The spots are Gabtali inter-district bus terminal, Mirpur 10 intersection, No12 bus stand in Pallabi, Russel Square in Dhanmondi, Hajiribagh in Mohammadpur, Azampur in Uttara, Kuril Rail Crossing in Badda, Mohakhali, Moghbazar, Jurain Rail Gate in

Shyampur, Jatrabari intersection in Demra, Dayaganj bus stand and Raysahebazar intersection in Sutrapur, Sadarghat, Babubazar Bridge under Kotwali police station, Shapla Chattar and Shajahanpur Rail Crossing in Motijheel, Nur Hossain Square, Shabagh intersection, Kamapur Railway Junction and Lalbagh Kella intersection.

demanded for over 5,000MW electricity while the production deficit is more than 1,500MW, the state minister told the BBC.

However, sources claimed the deficit has exceeded the 2,200MW mark.

UNB reports: Over 1,000 workers, who turned violent due to erratic power supply to their factories, stormed into the Palli Bidyut Samiti in Narsingdi building at about 4:00pm and damaged documents and furniture on its ground and first floors.

They also set fire to 12 motor-cycles of the office, two transformers worth Tk 2.5 crore and a special circuit breaker of the control room.

Palli Bidyut Samiti employees took shelter on the top floor of the three-storey building to escape the public wrath.

On information, police rushed to the spot and fired rubber-bullets and charged baton on the workers. They also fired five teargas shells to bring the situation under control.

In Munshiganj, hundreds of people gathered in front of the Super Market in the town and spontaneously took part in the five-minute work-abstention programme called by the Bidyut Unnayan Sangram Committee.

The committee leaders alleged that they get electricity for hardly six hours a day.

They threatened to go for tougher movement if the situation does not improve within the next 24 hours.

Whether AL leaders Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Mohammad Nasim or Asaduzzaman Noor were accused of burglary or violence, he replied, "Obviously, they have violated the law by breaking through the barricades."

In his concluding remark, Anwar said the elections will be held in due time. AL is a mature party and the largest opposition party with 40 percent votes in its bag. It will surely participate in the elections and thus continue the constitutional process.

He claimed that his ministry achieved remarkable success in increasing agricultural production and in making products available in the market at 'cheap rate'.

Amid an uproar from the journalists, he said people should pay more as it assists the farmers. He, however, admitted that the price of production materials and the minimum price of agricultural goods have increased.

Food security has been ensured, people do not have to starve as they did during the famine of 1974, he said citing his experience that he had bought a kilogram of bitter melon with Tk 4 from a kitchen market in Narsingdi two weeks ago.

BNP will invite

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reforms, rather she insisted on the constitutional process. If it's needed, the constitution could be amended, provision for amendment is there in the constitution," he said, adding that the AL can tell people whether they would sit for dialogue or not and they do not have to formally tell BNP what they have decided.

During an hour-long discussion meeting yesterday on 'Face-to-Face: Women Journalists' at Bangladesh Centre for Development, Journalism and Communication (BCDJC) auditorium, he repeatedly blasted the opposition.

"The way Sheikh Hasina asked people to come to Dhaka with 'whatever they can grab in hands' is really unfortunate. Such offensive words from the chief of the largest opposition party in the country were undesirable," he said.

He said the BNP does not practice the politics of violence, but if compelled, they would launch a 'tit-for-tat' campaign.

Replying to a query whether Tarique Rahman had the wisdom to negotiate with veteran politician and AL Secretary General Abdul Jalil, he said question might be raised on the capabilities of Jalil as well.

Anwar told a TV channel earlier that Mannan Bhuiyan was sick and Tarique Rahman may sit for the dialogues with the opposition.

Over the recent police atrocities on high-profile AL leaders, he said, "The police had to perform their duties, they have to catch thieves and resist those who create violence."

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