

ENCOUNTER WITH PIRATES

Rab member's body recovered from Pashur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

The rescue team recovered the body of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab)-6 Platoon Commander Kanchan Ali yesterday morning from Karamjol, seven miles off Pashur estuary near Mongla seaport.

Ali, along with two others, died in an encounter between the law enforcers and a gang of pirates in the Pashur estuary on Friday night.

Earlier, the dead bodies of Amirul Islam and MH Kabir, both members of Bangladesh Coast Guard, were recovered on Saturday and Sunday from the place of occurrence.

Ali is a son of Abdur Rashid Peyada and hailed from Auliapur village under Bakerganj upazila of Barisal.

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Mahfuz Anam granted bail in Mirza Abbas' defamation case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday granted bail to the Shaptahik 2000 publisher Mahfuz Anam in a defamation case filed by former housing and public works minister Mirza Abbas for running a "defamatory" report along with photographs on August 25.

On Sunday, another Dhaka court issued an arrest warrant against Mahfuz Anam, rejecting the defence lawyers' oral appeal as their client (Anam) could not appear before the court due to political unrest.

Metropolitan Magistrate ABM Abdul Fattah granted him bail after Mahfuz Anam along with his lawyers appeared before the court and sought the bail.

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Iraq violence worse than civil war: Annan

10 GIs, dozens of Iraqis killed in attacks

AFP, Baghdad/ New York

At least 30 Iraqis were killed Sunday and 50 bodies were found in Baghdad as UN chief Kofi Annan described the situation in Iraq as far worse than what was considered a civil war in Lebanon.

At least 30 Iraqis were killed Sunday -- a day after a deadly bomb attack in Baghdad -- as outgoing UN chief Kofi Annan said the bloodshed in the violence-wracked

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NON-BALLOTTEE ASPIRANTS

15,000 hajj pilgrims keep fingers crossed for flights

SURANJITH DEABNATH

Despite solving the problem of "Tasria" -- residential rental documents in Saudi Arabia -- hajj pilgrimage by intending non-ballottee pilgrims is still uncertain as Biman Bangladesh Airlines is unable to operate sufficient flights for them due to slot limitations at Jeddah airport.

Even after attaining their visas, around 15,000 non-ballottee pilgrims out of 48,000 will not be able to reach Saudi Arabia as Bangladesh Biman had to cancel 15 flights on the Dhaka-Jeddah route from November 31 to December 4 due to the Tasria

problem and will not operate additional hajj flights beyond its already declared schedule (November 26 to December 22).

"It will not be possible to carry more than 24,000 hajj pilgrims to Saudi Arabia even if the full capacity of Biman is utilised till December 22. There is no additional slot for landing of the airliners at Jeddah air port after the schedule," said Syed Ahsan Hossain Kazi, deputy general managers (public relations) of Bangladesh Biman Corporation.

Only around 2,680 non-ballottee pilgrims received Tasria before the Tasria issue was resolved on December 1 after Information and Religious Affairs Adviser Mahbubul

Alam and Textile and Jute Affairs Adviser Sultana Kamal flew to Saudi Arabia and settled the issue with the Saudi authority concerned.

Meanwhile, Biman Bangladesh Airlines had been compelled to cancel the flights from November 31 to December 4 and incurred a loss of Tk 29 crore since most of the non-ballottee pilgrims could not attain their visas from the Saudi embassy as they did not get Tasria in time. Tasria is the key document required by the Saudi embassy for issuing the visa, sources said.

However, Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh (Haab),

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Next election very crucial for Bangladesh's progress

Japan envoy says after meeting Hasina

BSS, *Dhaka*

Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Masayuki Inoue called on Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina at Sudha Sadan yesterday.

After the meeting, the envoy told newsmen that the upcoming national election is very crucial for development and progress of Bangladesh.

Inoue said he had elaborate discussion with Sheikh Hasina about holding of a free, fair and credible election in Bangladesh. "I urged the Awami League chief to

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Blind eye to urban poor to spell social disaster

Conference on the poor told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Experts and development activists in a conference yesterday warned of a social disaster in the coming decades if the issue of development programmes for the urban poor were not addressed.

Speakers at the conference also highlighted the often-ignored incapability of the poor to use money effectively and the rich people's power to prevent pro-poor taxation policies.

They were speaking on the second day of a three-day conference on: "What works for the poorest?" The conference was organised by Brac at its headquarters in

Dhaka in collaboration with the Brooks World Poverty Institute and the Chronic Poverty Research Centre at the University of Manchester.

Speaking at the first plenary session, Qaiser Khan, acting country director of World Bank, warned of a social disaster if the government and development agencies did not address the growing urban poverty rate.

"The government does not address urban poverty as it fears more people will migrate to the cities if it provided social protection to the urban poor," Khan explained at the session titled "Social protection and the poorest."

Noting that most of the development projects are focused on rural areas, Khan stressed the need for special development programmes for the urban poor in order to mitigate any possible disaster in the future.

He stated the problems would be exacerbated as 50 percent of the Bangladeshi population would be living in urban areas in the next 20 to 30 years.

In another plenary session, Tony Addison of the Brooks World Poverty Institute and the Chronic Poverty Research Centre at the University of Manchester observed

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PHOTO: STAR

Defying the blockade enforced by the 14-party combine, a large number of vehicles ply the streets in the capital yesterday. The photo was taken at Farmgate.

80 Taliban killed in Nato raid

AFP, Kandahar

About 80 Taliban fighters were believed killed in a clash with Nato-led troops and Afghan security forces in insurgency-hit southern Afghanistan at the weekend, a Nato spokesman said yesterday.

The fighting in southern Helmand province's Musa Qala district at dawn Sunday was the heaviest since September, when local tribal chiefs had agreed to push the Taliban out of the area.

Some "70 to 80 insurgents were killed" after they attacked a Nato-led International Security Assistance

Force (Isaf) patrol in the area, Isaf spokesman Major Luke Knittig told AFP.

The toll was an estimated number reported by military commanders in the fighting zone, located between Musa Qala and neighbouring Nawzad district, Knittig said.

He said Nato warplanes were also called in to support ground troops.

"It's an estimation. The ground commanders reported through reports from troops engaging the enemy," he said.

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Chavez clinches a cakewalk re-election

REUTERS, Caracas

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez stormed to a re-election victory in Sunday's vote, handing him an ample mandate to broaden his promised socialist revolution and challenge Washington's influence in Latin America.

Dressed in his signature red shirt, Chavez told cheering supporters at his presidential palace

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2 Rab members hurt as criminals hurl bombs

6 held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members were injured at the city's Lalbagh on Sunday when criminals hurled bombs at the law enforcers during a raid that yielded arrest of six.

The Rab team also seized two firearms, two bullets and a few homemade bombs from the spot during the raid, said a Rab press release.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-10 conducted the raid at 8 No Daroga Bari at Shahidnagar in Lalbagh at around 5:30pm where

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Prayer Timing		
December 5		
	Azan	
Fajr	5-15	5-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-19	5-22
Esha	7-00	7-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Tk 66 LAKH ARREAR PHONE BILL Dhaka court summons Ershad, 18 ex-MPs

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday directed Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad and 18 former BNP, Awami League (AL) and JP lawmakers to appear before it on December 27 in connection with criminal cases filed against them to realise pending telephone bills totalling Tk 66 lakh from them.

Metropolitan Magistrate Syed Mohammad Mujibul Haq passed the order after an accounts officer (North) of Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) filed the cases against them on different dates last month with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court, Dhaka.

The ex-lawmakers who have been sued are -- Engineer Monzurul Ahsan Munshi of Comilla, Nazim Uddin Alam of Bhola, Advocate Mahbubur Rahman of Noakhali, Lutfur Rahman Khan Azad of Tangail, Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yousuf of Faridpur, ANM Ehsanul Haque Milon of Chandpur, Gazi Mohammad Shahjahan of Chittagong, Dr HBM Iqbal of Dhaka, Captain AB Tajul Islam, Razia Matin Chowdhury, Mohammad Ali Zinnah of Chittagong, Kazi Zafar Ahmed of

Comilla, Begum Farida Hassan of Satkhira, Syed Masud Reza of Barisal, Joyнал Abedin Faruq of Noakhali, Mosharraf Hossain of Feni, KM Obaidur Rahman of Faridpur and Dr Abdul Moin Khan of Narsingdi.

Ershad owes the board Tk 27,464, while Monzurul Tk15,54,049, Alam Tk 5,95,018, Mahbubur Tk 65,967, Azad Tk 38,632, Yousuf Tk 23,596, Milon Tk 21,869, Shahjahan Tk 21,573, Iqbal Tk 1,64,556, Razia Tk 12,324, Tajul Tk 4,03,910, Zinnah Tk 14,68,506, Zafar Tk 9,13,855, Faruk Tk 7,23,259, Farida Tk 99,280, Mosharraf Tk 88,474, Obaidur Tk 3,03,000, Reza Tk 1,89,688 and Moin Tk 65,279.

In the complaint of the cases, the accounts officer mentioned that the lawmakers did not pay the amount of money from 1996 to 2001 as revenue.

They did not clear their dues even after they were served notices. As such, the accounts officer prayed to the CMM for realising the fine from the amount of revenue under section 7(A) of the provisions of Telegraph Act 1985.

KIDNAPPING Outraged villagers torch 100 houses in Kishoreganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kishoreganj*

Outraged by frequent kidnapping, people of Hossainpur upazila in Kishoreganj district and Nandail upazila in Mymensingh district yesterday set fire to over 100 houses of the suspected kidnappers at Tekpara and Mesera villages in Hossainpur upazila.

Police and locals said about 20,000 agitated people from 16 villages of Hossainpur upazila and six villages in Nandail upazila simultaneously attacked the houses after an anti-abduction meeting attended by two superintendents of police (S P) and seven

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Man standing idle during clash faces quizzing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday started interrogating an Awami League (AL) supporter in connection with a murder case as he was spotted in a photograph standing idle at a corner at Paltan in the city during the October 28 clashes between 14-party and Jamaat-e-Islami activists that left seven people dead.

The photograph, provided by

public relations office of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, (printed on page 15) shows people around Roy Mohan Sheel fighting among themselves while he stands at a corner between two police barricades.

The Detective and Crime Intelligence unit of police picked up Mohan, a hairdresser, in front of his shop at Kaula Bazar area near

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