

Police gun down villager, beat protesters in Kushtia

UNB, Kushtia

Police allegedly beat up and shot dead a villager at Krittinagar village under Islami University Police Station early Friday.

The victim was identified as Abu Daud Hossain, 35. Local sources said the residents of Krittinagar village, hearing an alarm of a patrol police team alerting the villagers about robbers, came out of their houses with sticks in the early hours yesterday to catch the robbers.

But police instead of arresting the robbers caught three villagers-Azizul, Dabloo and Daud, they said.

The three identified themselves as innocent villagers and told police that they came out of their houses hearing the alarm. But police did not pay heed to them.

Following protest by the villagers, the law enforcers released Azizul and Dabloo, but beat up Daud, alleged the locals.

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NUKE ACCIDENTS

India, Pakistan to sign pact on risk reduction

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

In a major confidence-building step, India has agreed to sign an agreement with Pakistan to reduce the risk of accidents relating to nuclear weapons.

The agreement on "Reducing the Risk from Accidents" relating to nuclear weapons will be signed during the visit of Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri in February, External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee told reporters here after a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) on Thursday.

Kasuri will visit New Delhi next month to attend a meeting of India-Pakistan Joint Commission, the dates for which are being worked out.

The agreement is aimed at reducing the risk from any accidental strike on nuclear facilities in either country.

Mukherjee, who had undertaken

a three-day visit to Pakistan last week, said the two countries had been in talks on the agreement for sometime and are now ready to sign it.

The approval of the CCS was required to help the agreement become a law.

Since 1988, the two South Asian neighbours have an agreement under which they exchange lists of each other's nuclear facilities. They also share an arrangement since 1991 to inform each other about their nuclear installations and facilities to be insulated from any attack from the other.

India and Pakistan also have an agreement for prior notification of ballistic missile tests, which has been in force since 2005.

PTI adds: India yesterday said its relations with Pakistan cannot be "circumscribed" or "held hostage" by a single issue like Kashmir and the two countries should address together global challenges being faced by them.

"We would not want to see our relations with Pakistan, a very important neighbour, are circumscribed to one issue or held hostage," the Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan Satyabrata Pal told a media get-together at the South Asian Free Media Association Islamabad.

He said the two countries face "very serious and much broader global challenges" and they can work together.

Pal said the two countries made efforts to resolve "Kashmir which is self-evidently a very important issue".

"Discussions are taking place. ... We hope eventually through these discussions and others we will come to peaceful resolution of problems that confronted or bedevilled the bilateral relationship.

"While doing so the two countries meanwhile could collectively address global challenges faced by them," he added.

200 shanties gutted in Mirpur

Ten injured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 200 houses were gutted and 10 people injured, including an elderly woman who was seriously burnt, in a fire at Shialbari slum on Hazi Road of Mirpur in the capital yesterday.

The fire that originated at around 4:45pm soon engulfed around 200 densely set tin-shed bamboos-made houses, police said, adding that the fire spread so fast that the inmates could not save their household articles.

Shahar Banu, 60, who sustained serious injuries, said she was sleeping at her house but woke up feeling scorching heat. Fire fighters rescued her.

She is undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College hospital.

Seven units of fire brigade rushed to the spot and controlled the fire with the help of locals, fire brigade sources said.

Several people, who received minor injuries while trying to douse the fire, received first aid at local clinics.

The cause of the fire could not be known immediately.



PHOTO: STAR

Made homeless in yesterday's fire at Shialbari slum in Mirpur in the capital, a woman wails while others look bleakly.



PHOTO: STAR

Migratory birds flocking around the Kaptai Lake is an added attraction to the tourists and bird-lovers.

JMB man held in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

A team of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab)-5, Rangpur, arrested an activist of outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) in Lalbagh area of Rangpur town yesterday.

The arrestee, Saifur Rahman, is a student of Rangpur Carmichael College.

Rab arrested Saifur at Lalbagh railway crossing point in the afternoon and took him to their camp for quizzing.

Rab sources said Saifur, son of Abdullah Kafi of Chilarpara under Rangpur Sadar upazila, was assigned to send bomb-making materials to the JMB men in northern districts.

He used to distribute jihadi books among the students of Carmichael College, the sources added.

Guest birds chirp, flutter wings at Kaptai Lake

SHANTIMOY CHAKMA, Rangamati

Migratory birds of various species have been flocking together by the Kaptai Lake this mid-winter, much to the delight of the tourists and locals.

Although a huge number of local and foreign species throng the largest artificial lake in Southeast Asia in every winter, their number is declining due to environmental pollution and destruction of their natural habitat.

Several lakh migratory birds have already taken shelter in the

lake throughout Hazaribag, Balukhali, Longudu, Myene, Bogachatar, Betchhari, Hazachhara, Bilchhara, Barkai, Baranachhari, Kachalong and Sizak areas, locals said adding that their number is lesser than previous year.

Each year, more than 600 species of foreign birds migrate from Siberian region towards the South Asian countries, including Bangladesh. Of them, 11 species of foreign birds are found in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) alongside different local waterfowls in

the lake in this season, sources from Department of Forest said.

These are -- Bar-headed Goose (Rajhans), Pintail (Lenjahans), Common Teal (Patarihans), Northern Shoveler (Khuntehans), Tufted Poachard (Khopahans), Ruddy Shelduck (Chokha), Black-tailed Godwit (Zorali), Western Curlew (Baragulinda), White Wagtail (Sada Khanjan), Oystercatcher (Shaktivoji) and Common Snipe (Kandakhocha).

The local migratory birds that

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Remove partisan people from edn sector

Non-govt teachers urge caretaker govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Teachers of non-government high schools, colleges and madrasas yesterday urged the chief adviser of the caretaker government to immediately remove partisan people from the education sector.

National Front of Teachers and Employees (NFTE), a platform of eleven teachers' and employees' organisations, in a statement asked the removal of partisan people from the education ministry, Shikha Bhaban, National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), Bangladesh National University, Open University and managing bodies of schools and colleges.

They claimed pro-BNP and pro-Jamaat officials still make their presence felt in the education sector.

The NFTE said former education minister Osman Faruk and state minister Ehsanul Haq Milon introduced January 19 as the National Teachers' Day since it was the birthday of Ziaur Rahman, the founder of BNP.

The statement, signed by NFTE Chief Coordinator and Convenor Quazi Farruque, also said Bangladesh Television (BTV) yesterday telecast a programme marking the "controversial teachers' day" where pro-BNP and

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Prayer Timing		
January 20		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-43	5-47
Esha	7-15	7-45
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Lanka takes key rebel stronghold

376 killed in weeks of fighting

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lankan troops captured the main rebel stronghold in the island's east yesterday after weeks of heavy clashes, which killed at least 376 combatants, the defence ministry said.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) pulled out of Vakarai, their main bastion in the Batticaloa district, in the face of the military advance, the ministry said in a statement.

After weeks of fighting, at least 45 security forces and 331 Tiger rebels were killed in the battle for Vakarai, the coastal town where the guerrillas had run their own police and civil administration, the defence ministry said.

"Since the start of this operation, 45 Sri Lankan army soldiers were killed in action and 180 wounded," the ministry said, adding at least 331 Tiger cadres were also killed.

"Following an hour-long effort (Friday) the Sri Lanka army troops finally liberated the Vakarai town and hospital which was used as an

artillery launching pad by the terrorists," the statement said.

It accused the Tigers of having used civilians as human shields.

There was no immediate reaction from the LTTE to the rebel casualty claims or the ministry's statement that the Tigers fled Vakarai.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said 10,000 to 15,000 civilians trapped in the combat zone began fleeing Friday morning.

"Early this morning, these people started fleeing south towards Batticaloa," the ICRC said. Vakarai is 65km north of Batticaloa, capital of the district of the same name.

The ICRC said they were concerned about the Vakarai hospital, its staff and patients.

"The ICRC is increasingly worried about the shelling and fighting in the Vakarai area where a hospital is located around which thousands of civilians have gathered," the ICRC said.

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Student asked to leave Monnujan Hall 'for feud with JCD'

RU CORRESPONDENT

Rajshahi University (RU) authorities asked a resident student of Monnujan Hall to leave the dormitory after Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leaders filed a petition to the authorities claiming she had behavioural issues.

Upama Sarker, a third year student of Genetics and Breeding Department, was asked to leave the dormitory by January 27 following a feud with JCD leaders of the house.

Dormitory sources said Upama stays at room-411, which is three-bed room. They said JCD Monnujan Hall unit convener Shumana Haque and joint convener Hasina sent one of their activists to Upama's room to stay, as there was prospect of a seat becoming vacant.

Upama protested and requested the dormitory provost not to allocate any political activists to her room, as there were no vacant seats.

The JCD leaders filed a petition to the house authorities asking Upama to be evicted from the house

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Devastating storm across Europe claims 44 lives

AFP, Berlin

Countries across Europe counted the cost yesterday of a devastating storm that killed at least 44 people, brought transport systems to a standstill and disrupted crucial energy supplies.

Winds of up to 216 kilometres an hour swept off the Atlantic and cut a swathe of destruction across Britain, northern France, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Poland, Belgium, the Czech Republic and into Russia.

Thirteen people were killed in storm related incidents in Britain, at least 11 in Germany, six in the Netherlands, six in Poland, three in the Czech Republic, two in Belgium and three in France. Children were among those killed by falling debris or in traffic accidents.

Hundreds of thousands of

homes in several countries had power cut as the hurricane force winds ripped up trees and power lines.

The Druzhba pipeline carrying Russian oil to the European Union via Ukraine was shut off after high winds caused power problems and forced the closure of a pumping station, an official for the operators said.

Rescue helicopters saved the 26 crew of a container ship that started to sink in the Channel and German rail services were halted for the first time ever. Hundreds of flights were cancelled and many were still disrupted Friday.

In Germany, gusts of up to 200km an hour were recorded. Winds reached 216 kilometres an hour at Snezka, in the north of the Czech Republic.

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