

DCC ward commissioner held during protest

UNB, Dhaka

Woman ward commissioner of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and Awami League leader Shaheeda Tarek Deepti was arrested during protest against eviction drive in the city's Pallabi area yesterday afternoon.

Police said Deepti, commissioner in the reserved seat for Ward no 6, 7 & 8, was arrested on charges of "assault on police and preventing government officials from discharging their duties". When contacted, a police official told the news agency that a police team, led Rajuk officials, went to Pallabi for demolishing illegal structures when the ward commissioner, also general secretary Dhaka north Awami League, led a violent protest.

Commissioner Deepti, along with others, was preventing the policemen from conducting the

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CLEAN-UP DRIVE

Railway land freed from grabbers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Railway, Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) and Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) authorities conducted eviction drive yesterday, knocking down illegal structures and boundary walls, to recover lands that have been grabbed and to ease urban life in the capital.

Bangladesh Railway authorities with the help of the army, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and police recovered 23 decimals of land in Shajahanpur area that local influential people grabbed years ago.

Sources working with the railway department claimed Aolad Hossain grabbed the land and sold it to a local resident MA Bashar in 1994. Bashar made demarcation

walls and a one-storey building on the land.

Bashar, however, was able to produce papers before the law enforcers that show Aolad Hossain had received the land from Ministry of Housing and Public Works as compensation before selling it to Bashar.

Railway sources said they verified the papers from the ministry and found the documents to be forged.

"The Ministry of Public Works can not allocate railway property to anybody even if the papers are original," said a railway official requesting anonymity.

The workers of railway department yesterday knocked down the demarcation walls and the walls of the one-storey building in presence

of law enforcers.

The department had knocked down the demarcation walls two moths ago but it was rebuilt.

Meanwhile Rajuk authorities during their drive led by Magistrate ASM Emdadud Dastagir knocked down a market built on the land of Joy Kali temple in the city.

The caretakers of the temple built the market with the help of local influential people without any approval from the authorities, said a Rajuk official.

"We knocked down the market as it was illegal," Nurul Islam, a Rajuk official, said.

Meanwhile, DCC authorities yesterday knocked down the corrugated-tin walls of Shinepukur Holdings Ltd at Shahbagh as it was

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Saraswati Puja today

DU CORRESPONDENT

Saraswati Puja will be celebrated across the country today with due religious enthusiasm and fervour.

The Hindus, especially the students, who invoke blessings of the goddess for success in learning arts and crafts, observe the festival wearing yellow clothes.

Bangladesh Puja Udjapon Parishad President Chittoranjon Sarker and General Secretary Biresh Chandra Saha greeted the people of the country on the eve of the carnival.

Mohanagar Sarbojanin Puja Committee will celebrate the puja at Dhakeshwari Temple, said a press release.

Saraswati is worshipped as the goddess of speech and wisdom.

Crowley for quick polls

BSS, New York

US Congressman and Co-chairman of Bangladesh Caucus Joseph Crowley has urged the Bangladesh caretaker government to hold the national election soon.

The US congressman was speaking at a meeting of Bangladeshi expatriates here on Sunday.

Urging the caretaker government to create a congenial atmosphere for holding a free and fair election, Crowley said, "There is no alternative to democracy and election in Bangladesh."

He said no political worker should be harassed without any specific allegation in the name of the state of emergency.

Welcoming the decision on separation of the judiciary from the executive taken by the caretaker government, he said it will enhance the image of Bangladesh in South Asia.

He said the US will give maximum priority to Bangladesh when it will prepare its trade benefit bill for the least developed countries (LDCs).

Crowley also said he will take special initiatives for mitigating the arsenic problem in Bangladesh with the help of American Geological Society.

Chaired by Shah Shahidul Haque, the meeting was also addressed, among others, by district leader of Democratic Party Mohammad Amanullah and New York City Councillor Jim Jinaro.



PHOTO: STAR

Bus operators use the open space near Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge at Postagola in Dhaka as an illegal parking lot. The photo was taken yesterday.

Iran announces new missile tests

Tehran bars 38 UN inspectors

AP, REUTERS, Tehran

Determined not to budge under pressure, Iran announced new tests of short-range missiles Sunday, and headline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad dismissed criticism that the country's economy has been hurt by UN sanctions imposed for its suspect nuclear programme.

The missile tests come as the US Navy is sending a second aircraft carrier to the volatile Persian Gulf. US officials said the USS John C Stennis, which arrives in Middle East waters in a matter of weeks, is meant as a warning to Iran.

The deployment appeared to alarm some in Iran's hardline leadership, including a member of a

powerful cleric-run body who warned last week that Washington plans to attack, possibly by striking Iranian nuclear facilities. US officials have long refused to rule out any options in the faceoff with Tehran, but say military action would be a last resort.

Stressing Iran's preparedness, state television said the Revolutionary Guards planned to begin three days of testing the short-range Zalzal and Fajr-5 missiles Sunday. It could not be confirmed if the exercise had begun near Garmar city, about 100km southeast of Tehran.

"The manoeuvre is aimed at evaluating defensive and fighting capabilities of the missiles," the

report quoted an unidentified Guards commander as saying.

Last year, Iran held three large-scale military exercises to test what it called an "ultra-horizon" missile and the Fajr-3, a rocket that it claims can evade radar and use multiple warheads to hit several targets simultaneously.

Though US officials suggest Iran exaggerates its military capabilities, Washington is very concerned about Iranian progress in developing missiles. Some of its missiles are capable of hitting US-allied Arab nations and Israel, which Ahmadinejad has called to be wiped off the map.

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PHOTO: STAR

Taxis are hardly seen in the tailback at Satrasta intersection in the capital yesterday as the traffic police go tough against vehicles without proper documents.

Political parties, rights bodies hail CA's address

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different political and rights organisations yesterday hailed the speech of Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed in which he expressed the caretaker government's firm determination to prepare a fresh voter roll and to reconstitute the Election Commission (EC) for holding a free and fair election.

The chief adviser's (CA) speech was broadcasted on radio and television on Sunday night.

Welcoming the speech, Workers Party of Bangladesh (WPB) in a statement said that the CA stated to hold the election free from black money, violence and communalism, for which the party has been striving hard since the 90s.

On the issue of state of emergency, the statement said it should not be used against the political activities and democratic and basic rights. Indiscriminate arrests of political leaders and activists and disgracing them before people are giving wrong signals, it added.

The eviction of poor and lower class people without creating alternatives for them first is increasing their agony, though bulldozing of big constructions is being halted in the meantime, the statement noted.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD)

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Suicide car bomber kills 5 Pak troops

AFP, Islamabad

A suicide car bomber blew himself up near a Pakistani army convoy in a troubled tribal zone bordering Afghanistan Monday, killing four soldiers and a woman civilian, officials said.

Several other people were wounded when the blast hit the lead vehicle of the convoy travelling to Miranshah, the main town in the North Waziristan region, from the nearby town of Bannu, security officials said.

Pakistani authorities signed a controversial peace deal with pro-Taliban militants in North Waziristan last September. Foreign forces in Afghanistan say attacks in the neighbouring country have since

risen.

"The incident took place at about 10:30 am (0530 GMT) on Bannu-Miranshah Road. A white car came and exploded near the convoy. It appears to be a suicide attack," military spokesman Major General Shaukat Sultan said.

He said four soldiers were killed in the blast near the Khajoori check post, some 40 kilometers (25 miles) east of Miranshah, and around nine were injured, including one who was in a critical condition.

Security officials speaking on condition of anonymity said that a woman who was travelling in a nearby car was hit by shrapnel and died. They also said up to 20 people were injured.

"It is now confirmed that it was a

suicide attack," a security official in Miranshah told AFP. "The vehicle used in the blast was totally destroyed," he said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the blast and pro-Taliban militants said in a statement faxed to the media that they were not linked to the attack.

"We have no link with the bomb blast ... and we want to keep our agreement intact and the government should also keep the North Waziristan agreement intact," the statement said.

Suicide attacks on Pakistani forces have previously been rare.

The army's Sultan added that it was too early to tell if the attack was linked to a Pakistani air strike in the

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ANTI-CRIME DRIVE

7 Poura commissioners among 2,166 more held

STAR REPORT

The joint forces arrested 2,166 people, including seven municipal commissioners, on various charges across the country in the ongoing anti-crime drive during the last 24 hours ending at 6:00am yesterday.

An official press release of the home ministry said that police and Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), nabbed 1,893 people while the army held 273 people during the period.

Police and Rab members also

recovered 14 firearms and the army seized 8,325 sacks of fertilizer and 6,820 litres of diesel during the drive.

In Rangpur, Rab personnel arrested municipality ward commissioner Bahalul Islam Zeplin, an accused in several cases, from court area, reports our correspondent.

In addition, 74 alleged criminals were nabbed by police in the last 24 hours from different upazilas in the district as part of the ongoing drive.

Meanwhile, our correspondent

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BDR, BSF trade gunshots at Benapole

UNB, Benapole

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) traded 50 rounds of bullet on Ogrobhulot border here on Sunday night.

BDR sources said the BSF troops of Bombaria camp opened fire on the BDR men patrolling the border at about 11:00pm "without any provocation".

In reply, the paramilitary Bangladesh troops fired several rounds of bullet.

No one was injured during the exchange of fire, but the nighttime border skirmish created tension among the frontier villagers.



PHOTO: STAR

Police arrests a Jagannath University student following a clash between the law enforcers and the students demonstrating for realising their seven-point demand on the campus yesterday.

Canada, Denmark, EU offer support in voter ID card preparation

UNB, Dhaka

The envoys of Canada, Denmark and European Union (EU) yesterday met Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Adviser Mainul Husein at his office and discussed matters relating to the next general election.

During the meeting, they offered support to the preparation of voter ID cards and procurement of transparent ballot boxes ahead of the election.

The diplomats also assured their necessary cooperation in holding a free and fair election.

The law adviser urged the envoys to discuss the matter with the Election Commission (EC).

He said tenure of the incumbent caretaker government will not be a day longer than its necessity. The prime objective of the government is to hold a free and fair election desired by the people, he added.

The envoys appreciated the steps taken for separating the judiciary from the executive and assured that they are ready to extend necessary cooperation in accomplishing the process of the separation of judiciary.

Govt warns illegal VoIP traders

UNB, Dhaka

The government has warned all against clandestine overseas phoning through Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) that deprives the exchequer of a huge amount of revenue.

An official handout yesterday said the government noted with grave concern that a section of dishonest persons are involved in such illegal "call termination" and "call origination" using VoIP.

It also requested the subscribers to desist from taking such facility, as "it is unlawful and punishable offence".

"Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) is the lone legitimate organisation approved by the government for call termination and call origination abroad," said the official release.