

Over 50 killed as Iraq Shias mark Ashura

AFP, Baghdad

At least 56 people were killed in vicious tit-for-tat sectarian attacks in

Italy offers help to CG

UNB, Dhaka

Italian Ambassador Dr Pietro Ballero yesterday offered his country's assistance to the caretaker government whenever needed.

The Italian envoy came up with the offer when he called on Foreign Adviser Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury at his office yesterday, said a Foreign Ministry handout.

The envoy also expressed satisfaction at the steps being taken by the caretaker government.

During the meeting, they also discussed matters of mutual interest, including the possibility of enhancing cooperation in the field of development.

Italy is also ready to support Bangladesh for power generation, the Ambassador said.

The possibility of taking a greater number of manpower from Bangladesh to Italy also came up at the meeting.

Iraq as hundreds of thousands of Shiite pilgrims observed an annual mourning ritual that culminated on Tuesday.

With Shiites marking the final day of the 10-day Ashura ceremony -- Shiite Islam's holiest dates -- dozens came under bomb attacks, mainly in the restive province of Diyala, northeast of Baghdad.

Twenty-three Shiite pilgrims died when a suicide bomber blew himself up in a mosque as they were marking Ashura in Dur Mandali, near the town of Balad Ruz in Diyala, security sources said. A further 57 were wounded.

In another attack, 12 Kurdish Shiites, known as Faylis, were killed when a bomb stashed in a roadside bin exploded as they headed to a local husseiniyah (religious hall) in Khanaqin, also in Diyala near the Iranian border.

Police Colonel Azad Issa said the dead included a woman and a child, and that another 38 people were wounded.

In a third attack, a sniper killed three Shiite volunteers as they served traditional meals to pilgrims near the Diyala provincial capital Baquba.

Shiite Muslims observing Ashura have become a frequent target of Sunni militants.

Later Tuesday, several mortar rounds slammed into the Baghdad Sunni district of Adhamiyah, killing at least 10 people, police said.

Factory sealed off for producing unauthorised acid

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'garij

The joint forces yesterday sealed off an illegal factory for producing sulphuric acid illegally at Sanapar of Shidhbirganj in the district and arrested two people in this connection.

Sources said the forces led by magistrate Manzarul Mannan raided FA Enterprise that has been producing different chemicals and sulphuric acid to produce detergent without having any government licence.

They arrested general manager and commercial manager of the factory and confiscated the materials.

The owners - Anwar Chowdhury and Ajit Chowdhury of the factory- have been absconding since then.

Barred from travelling to India

Sohel Taj demands probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tanjim Ahmad, a former Awami League lawmaker, yesterday called for an investigation into why he was barred from travelling to India.

Immigration officials at Zia International Airport prevented Tanjim, also known as Sohel Taj, from boarding an India-bound plane on January 28. He was due to attend a global conference in New Delhi.

Sohel Taj, son of Tajuddin Ahmad, the first prime minister of the country, submitted a letter to Chief Adviser to the caretaker government Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday seeking his intervention in the issue.

"I demand corrective measures and an adequate explanation for this horrendous and humiliating incident which has greatly tarnished my and my family's image," he said in the letter.

Talking to reporters at Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) yesterday, Sohel Taj also demanded that the caretaker government arrest criminals and their godfathers, corrupt people and corrupt politicians.

He also urged the government not to harass innocent politicians and people.

The AL leader said though there is no allegation against him, he was barred from travelling to India when he was representing the AL.



PHOTO: STAR

Prothom Alo organises a roundtable titled 'Imperatives of Present Caretaker Government' at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel in the city yesterday. Sitting from left are M Hafizuddin Khan, Sultana Kamal, Dr Akbar Ali Khan, Prof Zillur Rahman Siddqui, Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud, Rokia Afzal Rahman, Syed Manzur Elahi and Maj Gen (ret'd) Moynul Hossain Chowdhury. (Story on Page 16)

Govt-allocated tin, blankets seized from Bogra BNP leader's house

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

The army-led joint forces recovered 3000 pieces of corrugated tin, 1000 blankets and 1000 pieces of warm clothes from a house of a BNP leader at Sonatoli in Bogra on Tuesday night.

The members of the joint forces raided the house of Sonatoli Upazila BNP President Ahsanul Tayab Zakir and recovered the government-allocated tin and warm clothes.

Zakir was out of the house during the raid.

Presidents hosts dinner for CA, advisers

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed and his wife Anwara Begum hosted a dinner for the chief adviser and the advisers to the caretaker government and the chiefs of the three services at the Bangabhaban last night.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, members of the advisory council, cabinet secretary, the chiefs of the three services and top military and civil officials and their spouses attended the dinner.

Cooperate with CG

Lord Avebury urges political parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

International Bangladesh Foundation (IBF) Chairman Lord Avebury has urged all the political parties to cooperate with Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed-led caretaker government in holding a free, fair and credible election in the country.

"It is very much in the interest of everyone in Bangladesh that the political parties should co-operate with the interim government to achieve a free and fair election," Avebury, also vice chairman of Parliamentary Human Rights Group said in a state-

ment.

He also welcomed the recent speech of the chief adviser to the caretaker government Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed and said racial or religious hatred and communalism must be avoided during the campaign for a free and fair poll.

Over the past two years, the IBF organised conferences, seminars and meetings to discuss the violence and intolerance, the political slanting of key appointments, and the gross flaws in the electoral roll, which would have made free and fair elections virtually impossible.

Pistol found at DU SM Hall

DU CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered a .2 bore pistol from SM Hall of Dhaka University (DU) yesterday.

Sources said police found the pistol deserted in a toilet at around 1:00am.

Someone from the hall saw it and informed the authorities.

On information, Shahbagh police recovered the pistol, sources said.

However, none was arrested in this regard.



PHOTO: STAR

Eminent poet and litterateur Al Mahmud inaugurates 'Etcetera-Oitijhya Ekushey Boi Utshab' at the Dhanmondi showroom of Etcetera in the city yesterday. Chairperson of Etcetera Yasmeen Murshed was also present.

DU body to observe Ekushey

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) yesterday formed a committee to observe Amar Ekushey as well as the International Mother Language Day on February 21 with due respect and fervour.

The Central Coordination Committee for Amar Ekushey Observation has been formed with Duta President Prof. Sadrul Amin as Coordinator and Proctor Prof AKA Firoz Ahmed as Member-Secretary.

Duta General Secretary Prof. Md Anwar Hossain and Vice President Prof. Tazmeri SA Islam have been made Joint Coordinators.

3 die in road crashes

UNB, Dhaka

At least three people were killed in separate road accidents in Bogra and Jamalpur yesterday and on Tuesday.

A Bogra report adds: Two people were killed in a road accident at Ranirhat on Bogra-Natore highway in Shajahanpur upazila yesterday.

Police said a Natore-bound truck from Bogra hit a rickshaw van and a bicycle from behind at about 8:00am, leaving bicycle rider Ruhul Amin, 45, and the rickshaw van driver dead on the spot.

Identity of the rickshaw van driver could not be known immediately.

The truck driver managed to

escape with the vehicle immediately after the accident.

Another report from Jamalpur adds: A minor girl was crushed under the wheels of a truck near Zia Health Complex on Bozrapur road in the town on Tuesday.

Police and witnesses said Trisha, 4, only daughter of local drug trader Sanwar Hossain Sanu died on the spot, as a fertiliser-laden Sherpur-bound truck ran over her while she was crossing the road.

Local people caught the truck driver Nazrul Islam Munshi and damaged the truck protesting the accident.



PHOTO: STAR

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members seize three firearms, 5,373 rounds of ammunition and three walkie-talkies from the residence of a businessman at Bijoynagar in the city on Tuesday.

BCL leader murdered in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unknown criminals stabbed a reportedly Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) leader to death at

city's Mohammadpur area yesterday.

Family sources said Riaz Uddin Babu, 26, was the BCL general secretary of Ward No. 42 at Bijji Mohalla.

Giashuddin, elder brother of Riaz, said his brother went to upstairs for sleeping on Tuesday night and in the morning his mother Hajera Begum saw Riaz bleeding on the bed and his hands and legs were tied.

Mohammadpur police recovering the body sent it to Dhaka Medical College Morgue.

Police confirmed that Riaz was drunk and recovered bottles of liquor from his room.

According to police, previous animosity might have led to the murder.