

BSF kills 1

UNB, Thakurgaon

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) shot dead a Bangladeshi farmer at Kantivita frontier in Baliadangi upazila of the district early yesterday.

The victim was identified as Khasirul Islam, 32, son of late Khatu Mohammad of Shaldangi village.

BDR sources said the BSF troops of Hatkhola camp opened fire on Khasirul as he went to his cropland near border pillar no 390/3 at about 4:00am. He died instantly.

Immediately after the incident, the Indian border guards took away the body.

Lt Col Rafique, commander of 20 Rifles Battalion, confirmed the incident. BDR sent a letter to its Indian counterpart protesting the killing.

Earlier on March 9 and 21, two Bangladeshi farmers were killed in BSF firing on Ratnai and Beurjhari borders in the upazila.

RAISING NON-TAX REVENUE

Govt plans to hike city land prices

Fees, train fare to go up too

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government is planning to raise the prices of land in Dhaka and other metropolitan cities up to almost hundred percent in a bid to increase non-tax revenue in the national exchequer.

In addition, different government fees and train fares will also be hiked up as part of the plan, finance ministry sources said.

Different ministries have already been asked to draw up proposals on the possible fees and land prices,

which would be implemented through the next budget.

Due to the big gap between the market prices and government prices for land in the capital and other metropolitan cities, the government loses huge revenue in the form of registration fees.

While per bigha (20 katha) land in Dhanmondi residential area costs Tk 80 lakh as per the government price fixed in 1993, the market price for per katha land in the area stands at Tk 2 crore, an astonishing contrast to the government price, a land

ministry official said.

"In the Gulshan residential area, government price of per bigha land is Tk 2 crore, while the present market price of per katha land in the area is Tk 1 crore to Tk 1.5 crore," he said.

Citing from the government's 1993 price list, the official said that prices for per bigha land in Mohammadpur area was set at Tk 40 lakh, in Mirpur area at Tk 16 lakh, in Karwan Bazar and Motijheel at Tk 3 crore while in

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



PHOTO: STAR

President Iajuddin Ahmed and Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed pay homage to the Liberation War martyrs at the National Memorial in Savar on the Independence Day yesterday.

JMB man held with CDs

UNB, Savar

Police yesterday arrested a member of the outlawed Jam'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) at Kakran village in Dhamrai upazila and recovered two CDs from his possession.

Acting on a tip off, the law enforcers raided a house of the village at around 3:30am and arrested JMB member Monjurul Ahsan Monju along with two CDs.

Later, the arrestee was taken to Dhamrai Police Station for quizzing.

Pakistan signs new peace deal with pro-Taliban militants

AFP, Khar

Pakistani authorities and tribal elders signed a peace deal yesterday with pro-Taliban militants in a troubled region bordering Afghanistan, officials and witnesses said.

The deal was signed in Bajaur, one of Pakistan's seven federally administered tribal areas, where al-Qaeda number two Ayman al-Zawahiri escaped an airstrike in January 2006.

The tribesmen and militants agreed not to give foreign militants safe haven in the area or allow "subversive" activities, while the authorities pledged not to make arrests without consulting the elders, they said.

Pakistan signed peace pacts with pro-Taliban rebels in the South Waziristan area in 2005 and North Waziristan in 2006, although unlike the Bajaur deal those agreements involved the withdrawal of thousands of troops.

US and Nato officials in Afghanistan criticised the previous

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

WB happy with anti-graft actions, may release funds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Satisfied with the government measures to curb corruption and separate the judiciary, the World Bank (WB) might disburse the fourth instalment of development support credit and also increase the amount from the one pledged previously.

The Bretton Woods institution that undertook to provide Bangladesh \$200 million in loans has recently hinted that it might raise the amount up to \$300 million for the fiscal 2006-07, an Economic Relations Division (ERD) source said.

A WB mission, led by its sector director Sadiq Ahmed, arrived in Dhaka on Sunday. They will stay here till April 12 to discuss different conditions for the loans.

The delegation will meet high officials of the finance ministry, Bangladesh Bank and other government agencies.

"The World Bank, one of foremost donors of Bangladesh, had earlier declined to increase the development support credit, citing

poor governance and political unrest," an ERD high official said.

"They are quite content with the government's recent efforts to contain the graft menace and move to separate the judiciary from the executive," he observed.

"Corruption and government interference in the judiciary have long been treated [as] two major obstacles to promoting good governance," the official added.

Of late, the present caretaker government has taken some robust steps towards tackling corruption. A number of high-profile individuals have been detained on graft charges and the government has promulgated an ordinance to complete their trials within the shortest possible time.

Another key condition for the WB loans was to strengthen the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC). The government has already reshuffled the ACC and enacted some new laws to empower it.

The donors are happy with the present administration's performance. They however expect some

more affirmative actions and precisely that's what the WB mission will discuss during its three-week visit, said the ERD source.

The WB will also watch the process of the government handing over 93 percent of the Rupali Bank shares to the Saudi Prince.

Another significant precondition for the loans was corporatisation of the three Nationalised Commercial Banks—Sonali, Janata and Agrani. The advisory council's recent decision to that effect is now at the implementation stage, the source added.

The other conditions include having specific terms of reference and a fixed tenure for managing directors of the NCBs, and bringing about accountability and transparency in public expenditure.

The WB also proposed that the government lower import and supplementary duties by at least 2 percentage point on average in the coming fiscal.

Finance ministry sources said

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



Jubilant youths celebrate Bangladesh cricket team's proceeding to the Super Eight round of the 2007 Cricket World Cup early yesterday on the Dhaka University campus after the tigers beat Bermuda in their last group match.

Muggers stab man in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Muggers stabbed a man indiscriminately in the city's Kajipara area yesterday.

The victim was identified as Badshah Mia, 55, a resident of West Ibrahimpur area.

Family sources said Badshah Mia, a cloth trader, was going to his village home at Sherpur Nokla to attend a reception programme on the occasion of Independence Day when the incident occurred.

He was attacked by a gang of muggers at around 5:30am near

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Tamil tigers bomb military base in first air raid

REUTERS, Colombo

A Tamil Tiger light aircraft bombed a Sri Lankan air force base next to Colombo international airport before dawn yesterday, killing three airmen and wounding 16 in the first such air strike by the rebel group.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said more such attacks by its air wing would follow, threatening to deepen renewed conflict in the island state off the toe of India.

Airline and government officials said the civilian airport, 23

miles north of the capital, was not damaged but was closed for several hours following the attack.

The military said the bombs hit a barracks, and none of its aircraft was damaged. Sri Lanka's stock market fell 1.3 percent on news of the attack. Nordic truce monitors said the air force responded with air strikes on Tiger terrain in the island's northwestern district of Mannar.

"A light Tiger aircraft flew over the air force base and dropped explosives. There

have been two explosions. At the same time our air defences activated and there is a search operation going on," said an air force spokesman, Group Captain Ajantha de Silva.

The government condemned what it called a "cowardly" attack, which followed weeks of air force raids on rebel targets in the north and east, and said security forces were on high alert.

"It's a threat to the entire region,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Five US soldiers killed as Iraq violence rages

AFP, Baghdad

Attacks swept across Iraq yesterday with six Iraqis and five US soldiers declared dead amid reports that the outgoing US ambassador held talks with Sunni rebel groups in a bid to curb the insurgency.

Four of the Americans were killed in a roadside bombing on Sunday in the troubled province of Diyala, where the local US commander has said his troops are battling al-Qaeda, Sunni, Shia and even Kurdish renegades.

Two troops were also wounded in the attack, while another soldier

died in northwest Baghdad on the same day in another roadside bombing -- the biggest single killer of US forces in Iraq.

The latest deaths brought to 3,234 the military's losses in Iraq since the March 2003 invasion, according to an AFP count based on Pentagon figures.

Four years after the invasion, the 140,000 plus US troops in Iraq are still bogged down fighting a gruelling and ever changing insurgency while battling to contain sectarian conflict between the Shia majority and the ousted Sunni Arab elite.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

