



Bangladesh Nritya Shilpi Sangstha takes out a colourful procession from Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday in observance of the World Dance Day.

Freed French hostage arrives home

AFP, Paris

A young French woman freed by the Taliban after 24 days in captivity in Afghanistan arrived back in France early yesterday, a source said.

The source, who asked not to be named, said the aid worker had been taken "to a calm place where she is resting and will undergo a medical examination".

She will then be questioned, as is customary in such cases, by the French secret service who will try to find out as much as possible about her detention.

Celine Cordelier, who is aged between 20 and 30, was captured on April 3 in the southwestern province of Nimroz with another French volunteer, Eric Damfreville, and three Afghans.

They were all working for the non-governmental organisation Terre d'Enfance (A World For Our Children).

Cordelier was freed in the southern province of Kandahar on Saturday with a message from her captors demanding the withdrawal of France's troops in the Nato-led International Security Assistance Force.

Nine killed in fresh Kashmir violence

AFP, Srinagar

Eight suspected Muslim militants and a civilian were killed in continuing separatist violence in revolt-hit Indian Kashmir, the army and police said Sunday.

Four of the militants were killed early Sunday in a fierce gunbattle with troops in the northern district of Kupwara, army spokesman A.K. Mathur told AFP.

He said the fighting erupted when troops surrounded a forested hide-out and asked the militants to surrender.

"They instead opened fire, which was returned killing four of them (militants)," he said, adding the search operation was continuing in the area which borders Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

Four more rebels were killed in two separate gunbattles with troops in the southern districts of Doda and Rajouri late Saturday and early Sunday, a police statement said.

Police also said suspected militants shot dead a civilian in the southern district of Kulgam early Sunday.

"We are ascertaining why he was targeted," police officer Fayaz Ahmed said. No rebel group has claimed responsibility.

Kashmir is split between India and Pakistan, which have fought two of their three wars over the region since independence from Britain in 1947.

The scenic Himalayan region is in the grip of a nearly 18-year insurgency against Indian rule that has left more than 42,000 people dead by official count. Rights groups put the toll at 70,000.

Police are investigating five cases that came to light in early 2007 in which civilians were killed in custody and falsely labelled "Islamic militants."

More than a dozen policemen have been charged with murder in three of the cases so far.

Two touchstones worth Tk 33 crore recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

A team of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab)-12 recovered two touchstones worth around Tk 33 crore in two separate drives from Raiganj upazila of Sirajganj district on Saturday night.

Acting on a tip off, a team of Rab led by Lieutenant Mizan Uddin Sarkar launched a drive and raided the house of Shubol, 35, in Dhanghora village of the upazila and recovered a touchstone, weighing around 5 kg. During the drive, the team also arrested Shubol for his alleged involvement in the incident.

After a few hours, the team recovered another touchstone of Vishnu goddess, weighing around 28 kg in a raid at the house of Saidul Islam in adjacent Chardakatia village of the same upazila and arrested Saidul in this connection.

The sources said the two touchstone's price is estimated at around Tk 33 crore.

Acute water crisis in Rajshahi city

RU CORRESPONDENT

Rajshahi city dwellers are suffering from acute water crisis though there is no frequent power crisis in the city.

Hundreds of hand-operating tube wells have gone out of order as the ground level water dropped drastically.

Despite repeated complaints to the ward commissioner and city corporation authorities, no step has yet to be taken in this regard, the sufferers alleged yesterday.

Water supply division of Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) said the power generators are lifting minimal water as water layer in the ground has declined.

The city dwellers in different areas alleged that they are receiving scanty amount of water in the pipeline of the city corporation.

The speed of water supply in the pipeline has fallen as many dishonest people and industry owners are extracting water by using mini-motors in the pipeline, locals said.

"Water flow in the pipeline is in the worst level now causing delay of household works," said Farhana Rahman, a homemaker of Sultanabad.

Besides, dwellers of many high

rise building areas such as Sagarpara, Hadirmore, Ghoramara, Seroil, Professor Para, Kazihata and Hatemkhan are suffering with water crisis for the last one week, the residents alleged adding that the old pipe lines have failed to supply water as those were blocked by iron, sand and other objects.

Ward No 2 Commissioner Nazrul Islam said he asked the water division of the city corporation for restoration of water. The pump may go in operation within a day or two, he added.

RCC Chief Engineer Sarit Dutta Gupta told reporters that the ground level water-recharging rate has dropped down in many city areas and pumps are failing to lift satisfactory amount of water.

Most of the water pumps have become older and water-lifting capacity of those pumps have been expiring, corporation officials said, adding that the corporation is mulling over to replace those pumps and trying to supply surface water from the river Padma aiming to reduce pressure of ground level.



PHOTO: STAR

Health and Family Welfare Ministry organises a colourful procession in the city yesterday marking the Global Road Safety Week.

Behavioural change of street users a must to curb road accidents

Experts tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To reduce road accidents, pedestrians should be given the utmost priority in the streets while highways should be kept open for fast moving vehicles, experts said at a seminar yesterday.

They also stressed on behavioural change of the street users, pedestrians as well as vehicle drivers, to curb the rate of road accidents in the country.

The seminar was jointly organised by Centre for Injury Prevention and Research, Bangladesh (CIPRB) and Accident Research Centre (ARC) at ARC auditorium on Bangladesh University of Science and Technology (Buet) campus in the city on the occasion of First Global Road Safety Week.

Presenting the keynote paper, Executive Director of CIPRB Dr AKM Fazlur Rahman said road accidents have multiplier effects on the entire society as well as on the economy.

Road accidents take away around 12000 lives each year making around 20000 children orphan, he added.

He also stressed the need of adopting a multi-sectoral approach to minimise the magnitude of road accidents and to rehabilitate the accident victims.

Speaking at the programme, Director of National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Research Dr Sirajul Islam said that fixing minimum educational qualifications for the drivers would greatly contribute to reducing the rate of road accidents in the country.

Abdur Rauf, one of the participants at the programme, said government formulated three national action plans since 1997 to ensure road safety, yet not a single one was implemented so far.

Speaking as the chief guest at the programme, Vice Chancellor of Buet Dr Shafiullah said "Accidents do not take place automatically, rather we create situations that breed accidents. That is why we must eliminate the causes of road accidents".

Director of ARC Dr Md Mazharul Hoque chaired the programme while Director (operations) of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority Engr A Sattar and Dr Mostafa Zamal of World Health Organisation also spoke.



International Turkish Hope School celebrates International 23rd April Children's Festival on the new campus of the school on Saturday. The festival is organised to disseminate the feelings of fraternity, love and friendship among the children.

Karzai heads to Turkey talks with hope for peace

AFP, Kabul

Afghan President Hamid Karzai headed to Turkey yesterday for talks with his Pakistani counterpart over the Taliban-led insurgency, saying he had a "tremendous desire" for peace.

Karzai flew out of Kabul hours after telling a meeting of donors to his war-scarred nation, "I'm going there with a lot of hope, with tremendous desire to have peace in this region."

"Afghanistan is going to Turkey with a very clean heart, with a great desire. I hope it will be responded to and reciprocated," Karzai said.

The relationship between the two leaders has been soured over recriminations about the growing extremist violence on both sides of their shared border.

"We are all suffering, it's not

Afghanistan, it's not Pakistan alone, it's all the region suffering," Karzai said.

"The fight against terror is becoming even more important, and the cooperation between all of us in this regard becomes more important."

The Taliban movement that was toppled from government in Afghanistan more than five years ago is waging an insurgency that is supported by other Islamic extremists.

Karzai has been joined by some Western figures in accusing Pakistan of not doing enough to round up Taliban and Al-Qaeda leaders living there and to crack down on extremist groups training and funding militants.

Kabul has been particularly critical of Islamabad's failure to stop militants from crossing from

Pakistan into Afghanistan to carry out attacks, despite saying it had deployed 80,000 troops on the border.

This led Musharraf to announce late last year plans to fence 35 kilometres (22 miles) of the 2,500-kilometre frontier, angering Afghanistan which says it would do nothing to stop militants and would divide families living on both sides.

Kabul, which does not recognise the border drawn up by colonial Britain in 1893, has written to United Nations chief Ban Ki-moon to express "deep concern."

Musharraf and Karzai are scheduled to attend a dinner in Ankara late Sunday hosted by Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, followed by a formal round of bilateral talks on today.

Maliens vote for next president

AFP, Bamako

Maliens went to the polls yesterday in presidential elections expected to hand the incumbent a second five-year term and boost the west African country's democratic credentials.

Amadou Toumani Toure, a former coup leader who won democratic acclaim after handing power to civilian rule following the military takeover in the early 1990s, is seeking a new term as an independent candidate.

After retiring from the army, he stood for elections and won the 2002 vote. This time around he enjoys the backing of two large coalitions and a myriad of smaller parties.

The former general ousted dictator Moussa Traore in 1991, and installed a multi-party system before handing over power to civilians, in a rare transition of power in the region.