

CARTOON ISSUE
'Unrest after apology is politically motivated'
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different secular political organisations yesterday expressed their concerns at the 'conspiracy' being hatched to destabilise the country following the publication of a cartoon strip in the weekly satirical magazine Aalpin of the daily Prothom Alo.

Some Islamist political organisations however condemned the publication of the cartoon, demanding arrests of the editor and the publisher of the newspaper.

The secular organisations said staging demonstrations even after the editor of the daily apologised repeatedly and actions were taken by both the government and the newspaper management, underlines that the brewing unrest regarding the issue is being fuelled by political motivations.

The Communist Party of Bangladesh said the newspaper authorities admitted to their mistake and apologised unconditionally while the cartoonist was

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Eid issue of 'Saptahik 2000' confiscated
BSS, Dhaka

The government has confiscated the Eid issue (September 21, 2007) of 'Saptahik 2000'.

The Eid issue of the weekly Bangla magazine has been confiscated as it contains an autobiographical write-up titled "Sutanati Samachar" that hurts religious sentiment of the people, an official handout said yesterday.

The action has been taken under section 99(Ka) of the Criminal Procedure Code-1898.

The handout said the government has prohibited marketing, sale, complete or partial re-print, publication or preservation of the Eid issue of 'Saptahik 2000'.

The government has ordered the seizure of all copies of the issue.

Get Prayer times from Warid Menu

Iftaar

Sehri

5.58 PM

4.28 AM

Sehri, Iftar timing

Ramadan	Sep	Sehri	Iftar
9	22	5-58	5-57
10	23	4-28	5-57
11	24	4-28	5-57

Prayer Timing

September 22

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-28	4-38
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	5-58	6-13
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

'Save bio-diversity of St Martin's Island'

Environmentalists call to stop its use for commercial tourism

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing deep concern over gradual destruction of the bio-diversity of Saint Martin's Island, environmentalists yesterday demanded that the government take effective steps to make it a 'marine protected area' based on scientific researches and stop its use for commercial tourism.

They recalled that the island, one of the finest coral islands of the world, was already declared an 'ecologically critical area' and projects were undertaken to protect its marine resources. But implementa-

tion of the projects was impeded as the officials concerned lacked knowledge and skills required for this and in absence of proper monitoring by the government, they said.

The environmentalists spoke at a seminar in the city on "Saint Martin's Island is on the verge of destruction: what is the way to save it?" organised by Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa).

The government should consider if the entire island could be brought under conservation schemes, speakers said.

People from other areas are buying land and constructing build-

ings in the island threatening its bio-diversity, they pointed out at the seminar held at Women's Voluntary Association auditorium at Dhanmendi.

"We destroy our natural resources like hills, forests and rivers in various ways without realising the consequences of destruction of bio-diversity. We must be careful that we do not destroy Saint Martin's Island in the name of eco-tourism," said Bapa President Prof Muzaffer Ahmed.

Legal and administrative steps

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PHOTO: STAR

Protesters remove police barricade at Shahbagh intersection in the capital yesterday in their bid to reach the office of daily Prothom Alo at Karwan Bazar. Story on page 1.

Heavy fighting, bomb blasts kill 82 in Afghanistan

AP, AFP, Kabul

A bomb attack yesterday against a convoy of French troops killed one soldier and injured many Afghans near the blast, while heavy fighting in southern Afghanistan killed about 75 Taliban fighters and six civilians, officials said.

The attack in western Kabul blew the windows out of a civilian bus and set at least one vehicle on fire. At least six civilians were in serious condition, and many others had lesser injuries, said Zormai Rasa, the local police chief.

Nato's International Security Assistance Force confirmed that one French soldier was killed in the blast, but a spokesman said he had no other information.

Heavy fighting in the south,

meanwhile, killed around 75 Taliban militants during the last 48 hours, the US-led coalition said. Six civilians were also killed after Taliban fighters sought shelter in their homes, which were then targeted by airstrikes, an Afghan official said.

Airstrikes were called in against "anti-coalition militants" in the Garmsir district of Helmand province early Friday, killing about 40 fighters, the coalition said. Soldiers found more than 20 rocket-propelled grenades, ammunition and land mines in the militants' compound, the coalition said.

Nato warplanes killed six Afghan civilians, most of them women and children, in an air strike during a battle with Taliban fighters in southern Afghanistan, a district governor told AFP Friday.

The International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) admitted civilians were killed in the attack in the southern province of Helmand but it did not say how many died.

Isaf said the civilians were killed Wednesday but the district governor said they died Thursday. Despite the confusion, the incident appeared to be same, as both said it had taken place in Gereschk district.

District governor Abdul Manaf told AFP Taliban fighters had been sheltering among villagers, who were being used as "human shields."

"The Nato forces called for air support. At this time the Taliban had fled the area and due to aerial bombing six civilians, mostly

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AMMO HAUL

Police hunt on to capture the culprits

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Police are conducting drives at Bakukura village and in the forests of Jhenaigati, a frontier upazila of Sherpur district, in a bid to capture the people involved with the stockpiling of huge amount of ammunition that Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) recovered over the past few days.

Officer-in-charge (OC) of Jhenaigati Police Station Shahjahan Kabir told The Daily Star that they are trying their best to find clues about people behind the scenes.

A police team led by investigation officer (IO) of the case Sub-inspector Akkas Ali is staying at the village to verify the statements of Russell, the OC added.

During two separate drives recently, a squad of BDR recovered 39,100 bullets, including 29,100 pistol bullets and 10,000 rifle bullets, and three magazines of sub-machine gun (SMG) at Bakukura and at the forest of Gazni in Jhenaigati.

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4 JMB men arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) arrested four suspected members of banned Islamist outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) at Balarhat of Phulbari upazila in Kurigram yesterday as they were trying to cross the border into India.

ABDR patrol team arrested them at Balarhat village around 11:00am yesterday.

The arrestees are Zillur Rahman, 20, Lal Miah, 22, Saidul Islam, 18, and Alamgir, 22. They are allegedly madrasa students and residents of Ichhamot village of Ulipur upazila in Kurigram.

They were handed over to Phulbari police. Phulbari police arrested them under section 54 and sent them to Kurigram jail.

Depression over Bay

UNB, Dhaka

The well marked low over west central Bay and adjoining north-west Bay intensified into a depression.

It was centred about 715- km southwest of Chittagong port, 660-km southwest of Cox's Bazar port and 585-km south-southwest of Mongla port at 9:00am yesterday, a Met Office bulletin said.

It is likely to intensify further and move in a northwesterly direction. Squally weather may affect the maritime ports, the bulletin said.

Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been advised to hoist local cautionary signal number three.

All fishing boats and trawlers over the north Bay and deep sea have been advised to come close to the coast and proceed with caution until further notice.



PHOTO: STAR

The Lifebuoy Friendship Hospital, a floating hospital, is anchored near a char in the Jamuna in Gaibandha to serve poor char dwellers with healthcare.

Helping fight deluge, diseases on chars

PINAKI ROY, back from Gaibandha char areas

Yunus Ali, who moved to Shidhar char in the Jamuna from flood-affected Kachir char just a month ago, now spends his days in safety listening to the radio seated at the shop of Motiur Rahman.

Yunus came here along with his nine-member family when erosion of the Jamuna bank

reached his home yard. He was only able to save the bamboo structure and corrugated tin of his house before setting out for a new pasture.

"I talked to one of my relatives living here and came here since most chars in the region were inundated at that time. This place is good—floodwater could not reach this part of Shidhar char as dwellers had constructed earth plinths," he said.

Shidhar char and a few others were safe from the floods as "Friendship", an NGO, taught the people living there to construct plinths in a part of the char and make cluster village there.

"We taught them to construct oval-shaped plinths and it worked. The strong current of the Jamuna could not destroy the plinths because of its shape," said Runa Khan, executive director of Friendship.

Friendship is working with the people of different chars in the Jamuna who do not have any stable economic base and live in khas land. Working mainly in health, education and income-generating programmes, Friendship has already become very popular among the char people.

Starting with a floating hospital, Friendship first went to a Jamuna char in 2001. Foreign and local physicians and surgeons treated 2,230 people that year. Up to September this year, as many as 2,65,847 people have received treatment at Friendship's small but well-equipped floating hospital.

"Poor people from far away come at the Lifebuoy-Friendship floating hospital because of its

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PHOTO: STAR

People of a char in the Jamuna in Gaibandha build homes on an oval-shaped earth-filled plinth to protect the houses from floodwater.

Rab to crack down on extortionists on the highways

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) will crack down on illegal toll collectors on the highways during Ramadan and upcoming Eid.

The intelligence wing members of the elite force have already started work to identify the points on highways where extortionists used to collect tolls from goods carrying truck and covered van, Rab officials said on Thursday.

They will also set up checkpoints at the entry and exit points of the city and will check vehicles to ensure security. Moreover, Rab members will patrol either on motorbike or on foot at different city places, which usually witness traffic jam, to stop snatching.

On the eve of Eid, the uniformed and intelligence wing members of the elite force will be deployed at bus and railway stations, launch terminals and the adjacent areas to arrest extortionists and muggers. They will also launch a clampdown on black marketeers at different ticket counters to ensure that the

people bound for home get tickets ahead of Eid.

In a press release on Thursday, Rab said the members of its intelligence wing have started drive at different markets against dishonest businessmen aiming at preventing hoarding and selling of adulterated foods.

Rab and members of other law enforcement agencies with representatives from Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institution (BSTI) have already started drive at different markets.

Besides, the elite force is keeping vigil on different crime prone spots near and around the city shopping malls to stop snatching or mugging from Eid shoppers.

The press release also said the Rab has already intensified area wise anti-drug drive and beefed up security at different shopping malls and markets.

A total of 1,900 Rab personnel have been deployed in the capital. Moreover, the government has already decided to deploy 6,000 policemen during Ramadan and Eid to maintain law and order.