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WARI MURDER
3 arrestees used licensed guns for crimes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three gangsters arrested Thursday for killing a man and injuring his two brothers in Wari last month confessed they had been carrying out murders, extortions and other serious crimes with licensed guns, police yesterday said.

They told police that they licensed their guns in 2001 using both Awami League and BNP connections.

Detective police arrested Manjurul Abedin Russell, 37, Mahbulul Alam, 34, and Mohammad Ali Munna, 33, at village Sadratulak in Rangpur's Kaunia upazila on information from the man who hired them for the murder.

Two other people involved in masterminding and executing the murder are also in police custody. Police are now hunting down the sixth man involved in the crime.

Following the three men's confession, police recovered five licensed guns—three pistols and

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Govt yet to act on EC plan to clip party wings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government is yet to respond to the Election Commission's (EC) proposals made more than a year ago to bar political parties from having overseas units and front organisations comprising students, teachers, employees, workers or members of any profession.

The EC sent the proposals to the law ministry in May last year requesting it also to repeal the existing provisions in the Political Parties Ordinance 1978 which allow parties to have front organisations, not party units.

But the law ministry could not yet take any steps in this regard as the government did not ask it to do so, officials in the ministry said.

Against this backdrop, the EC has requested President Iajuddin Ahmed and Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed to make the proposed amendments to the

ordinance as soon as possible, EC sources said.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda and two election commissioners made the request when they met the president and the chief adviser on Wednesday.

"For the sake of holding the next parliamentary election in a free and fair manner, the ordinance should be amended as soon as possible," the CEC said after their meeting with the president.

Almost all those political parties that participated in the electoral reform talks with the EC agreed with its proposals concerning overseas units and front organisations of parties, he said. "It is a major achievement at the dialogue."

Only one or two parties opposed the move to bar overseas units, Huda mentioned.

EC officials pointed out that until the political parties ordinance

is amended incorporating new provisions and repealing some existing ones, it would not be possible to bar all political parties from having overseas units and front organisations.

Explaining this, they said the proposed electoral laws would be applicable only to parties that will get registered with the EC. As per the EC-proposed criteria for registration, around 20 parties are eligible for registration.

So, the parties not registered with the EC will have scope to have overseas units and front organisations.

In its amendment proposals, the EC said, "No political party shall form or recognise any organisation or body as its affiliated or associated body, if the organisation or the body is formed by (a) the students or teachers of any educational institution (b) the employees or labourers of any financial,

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CLIMATE CHANGE
Alternative farming method stressed to cope with situation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Renowned environmentalist Dr A Atiq Rahman yesterday urged experts to put their heads together to find alternative methods of cultivation and new varieties of crops adapting to global climate change.

He said it has become necessary to do so for ensuring food and occupational security for the people, especially of the southern part of the country.

"With the sea level rising and underground water level declining, salinity is going to be a major problem. Taking notice of it at this very moment, we need to find alternatives because farmers are not being able to grow traditional crops anymore," Dr Atiq said during workshop for journalists yesterday.

Although, Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) has invented a new variety of paddy, which is currently at the testing phase right now and may grow in saline environment, it has not been

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Pakistani players and officials celebrate with the Kityp Cup after their 25-run win against India in the final of the nation one-day tournament at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Ashraf thanks Menon for backing Hasina's release

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League's acting General Secretary Syed Ashraful Islam yesterday met Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon at his party office and thanked him for his steadfast stand on the release of AL chief Sheikh Hasina that came amid a political turnaround.

Talking to the news agency, Menon said Ashraf mainly came to thank him personally and his party for their stand on the release of Sheikh Hasina to make the political dialogue and next election meaningful.

However, during the courtesy meeting, Ashraf discussed 14-party stand on election issues to be placed by Awami League during its dialogue with the caretaker government shortly.

Menon said, "We discussed, among other issues, the necessity of lifting the state of emergency and holding the parliamentary polls prior to any other elections."

He said Awami League will hold talks separately with its allies in the 14-party combine before going to the dialogue.

Syed Ashraf also told reporters that they discussed the recent release of Sheikh Hasina, political dialogue and election matters.

US envoy hails Hasina's parole

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US Ambassador James F Moriarty yesterday welcomed the parole of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, saying it kick-starts the process of ensuring all parties' participation in the general elections.

Moriarty however warned that release of leaders charged with corruption should not mean a return to the levels of corruption in the past, which would scare away investors.

"It's (Hasina's release) a good start ahead of fair and credible elections. Now, it should be ensured that all parties are going to participate in the elections," Moriarty told a press conference at the US embassy in connection with extension of the embassy's consular section.

He declined to comment on whether the other detained former premier Khaleda Zia should be released, but said political parties must run in the elections for the sake of democracy.

The envoy called for a 'compromise' between the government and other stakeholders, mainly political parties, to ensure that the election preparations are based on mutual understanding.

He stressed that political parties must agree on the larger, long-term political, social and economic goals of Bangladesh -- resembling the government-proposed 'citizens charter'.

The press conference was followed by Moriarty opening three new booths at the consular section's visa wing.

| Prayer Timing | | |
|---------------|-------|--------|
| June 15 | | |
| | Azan | Jamaat |
| Fajr | 4-05 | 4-40 |
| Zohr | 12-45 | 1-15 |
| Asr | 5-00 | 5-15 |
| Maghrib | 6-50 | 6-55 |
| Esha | 8-15 | 8-45 |

Source: Islamic Foundation



A physically-challenged boy paints with his mouth during an open art competition held at LGED Bhaban in the capital yesterday. Around 115 such kids from different schools participated in the competition organised by SEID Trust.

Schoolchildren vow to fight corruption

Hundreds take oath to build a better Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over a thousand students from different schools in the capital city yesterday vowed to refrain from corruption and build a better Bangladesh.

The youngsters took an oath to not engage in corruption in all spheres of their life.

The daylong Aparajeyo Festival, held at the Bangladesh China Friendship Convention Centre (BCFCC), was organised by the SSC Batch Community 2008 in association with Transparency International Bangladesh.

Around 1500 students from 22 schools participated in the festival with the theme 'Corruption free Bangladesh: Our Dream, Our Pledge'.

The hall of BCFCC resonated with promise as the youngsters raised their voice against corruption, which causes the government a loss of around Tk 7,000 crore every year.

Sultana Kamal, former adviser

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EU delivers nuclear deal to defiant Iran

Bush slams Tehran for deal rejection

APP, AP, Tehran/Paris

EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana yesterday presented a new offer to Iran on ending the six-year standoff over its nuclear drive but Tehran once again rejected the proposal's key demand.

The package drawn up by six world powers offers Iran economic and trade incentives in a bid to resolve a crisis that has raised fears of regional conflict, pushed up oil prices and seen Iran hit by UN sanctions.

Solana -- who has warned not to expect "miracles" -- presented the offer during talks on Saturday with Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, his spokeswoman said in a statement.

"Solana handed the proposal to Mottaki," said the statement.

But just hours into Solana's visit, Iran's government spokesman rejected the main condition of the offer -- that Tehran suspends uranium enrichment, a process that can be used to make a nuclear bomb.

"Iran's stance is clear. The pre-condition of a halt and suspension of nuclear activities cannot be brought up," Gholam Hossein Elham told reporters.

"If it exists (a demand for a suspension of enrichment) it cannot be considered at all. If the issue of suspension is relied upon, the (nuclear) issue will not change," said Elham.

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JS DEMARCATION
Hearing on objections continues

UNB, Dhaka

Exodus of villagers from erosion-prone areas caused depopulation and resulted in decrease in the number of parliamentary constituencies in Manikganj district.

The disclosure came during hearings on written objections to delimitation of parliamentary constituencies for a second day yesterday at the Election Commission Secretariat.

All the petitioners from the newly redrawn Manikganj-1, 2 and 3 constituencies expressed their frustration over reduction in the number of parliamentary seats in their district and urged the Election Commission to keep intact the old four constituencies instead of the new three.

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Criminal killed in 'shootout'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A criminal was killed on Friday night in a shootout between police and his cohorts at Mathurapur village in Jhenidah.

The deceased was identified as Mofizul, 25, son of Fazlul Molla of Bhadali Danga village.

Police said acting on a tip-off, they cordoned off a field at Mathurapur village where a group of criminals were holding a meeting at about 9:30pm on Friday.

Sensing the presence of police, the criminals opened fire on the law enforcers prompting them to retaliate.

Mofizul was killed in the shootout while his accomplices managed to escape.

Police recovered a shutter gun, three bombs and three rounds of bullet from the spot.

Sharif fires up lawyers against Musharraf

Thousands chant 'Go, Musharraf, Go!'

AFP, Islamabad

Former Pakistani premier Nawaz Sharif told tens of thousands of supporters of the country's deposed chief justice Friday that President Pervez Musharraf would be forced to "pay for his crimes."

Around 30,000 lawyers and political activists chanting "Go, Musharraf, Go!" swarmed into Islamabad at the climax of a cross-country "long march" to demand the reinstatement of dozens of judges sacked by Musharraf last year.

"Musharraf will have to pay for his crimes, he will not be given a safe passage now," said Sharif, waving his fists in the air in a hard-hitting speech aimed at his arch-foe, who ousted him in a bloodless military coup in 1999.

Lawyers have led opposition to Musharraf since he fired judges, including chief justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, under emergency rule in November, and vow to stage a sit-in outside parliament until the government restores him.

"I can see in you the dawn of a

new sun. Your passion will restore the supremacy of the law, restore the judges and punish this dictator," Sharif told the flag-waving crowd, which answered with cries of "Hang Musharraf!"

Friday's rally, which was held amid tight security, came after a caravan comprising hundreds of vehicles completed a 24-hour journey from the eastern city of Lahore on the final leg of a nationwide protest.

Police said around 30,000 people had gathered, including

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Traffic grinds to a halt near Matshya Bhaban in the capital yesterday as Dhaka Wasa installs drainage pipes, narrowing down the usable road.

Tarique's wife petitions CA to free husband

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tarique Rahman's wife Zubaida Rahman yesterday submitted an application to the government, seeking necessary measures to release him for treatment abroad.

She and her daughter Zaima Rahman turned in the petition to the Chief Adviser's Office. They are likely to submit another application to the home secretary today, said sources close to the family.

Elder son of detained BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, Tarique has been behind bars on graft charges since March 8 last year.

In the application, Zubaida, a physician by profession, said her husband needs specialised orthopaedic surgical correction that is not available in the country.

Earlier, Sharmila Rahman, wife of Khaleda's other son Arafat Rahman Koko, had submitted an application to the interim administration for her husband to be sent overseas for treatment.

Koko has various medical conditions and been under treatment since his arrest in September last year.

Obama hits McCain, oil companies

AP, Washington

Democrat Barack Obama told voters yesterday he would push an aggressive economic agenda as president: cutting taxes for the middle class, raising taxes on the wealthy, pouring money into "green energy" and requiring employers to set up retirement saving plans for their workers.

Campaigning in Pennsylvania, a key battleground in the fall campaign, Obama said he would take a much more hands-on approach than would Republican John McCain. He again criticized McCain's proposal for a temporary halt in the federal gasoline tax. It would "actually do real harm," Obama said, by reducing revenue for road and bridge construction even as oil companies make record profits.

Obama planned to visit the flooded Midwest later Saturday, stopping in Quincy, Ill., to help fill sandbags.

Speaking to about 200 people in Wayne, a Philadelphia suburb, Obama made no new proposals but emphasized earlier ones in light of rising gas prices, inflation and job losses. They include a \$1,000 tax cut for most working families; a new Social Security tax on incomes above \$250,000; a "windfall profits" tax on oil companies; a \$4,000 annual college tuition credit for those who commit to national or community service programs; and an end to income taxes for elderly people making less than \$50,000 a year.

Obama said he could pay for his programs by eliminating the Bush administration's tax cuts for the wealthy, winding down the Iraq war and spending more on alternative energy programs that eventually will save money.

He said employers should be required to set up retirement

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