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BDR KILLING
Indian HC terms media reports 'inaccurate'

STAR REPORT

The High Commission of India in Dhaka has expressed concern at the "inaccurate" reports in some sections of the media that have alleged violence by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) leading to the death of some personnel of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR).

In a press release, the Indian High Commission yesterday said, "On the basis of a specific input on cattle smuggling along river Ganga (Padma), on the night of the July 17-18, 2008 the 108 Battalion of BSF noted movement of cattle and their smugglers in the area of border outpost Nimitia (Malda Sector of West Bengal). The BSF river wing pursued the cattle smugglers who were travelling in boats in Indian Territory. These smugglers fired at BSF upon which BSF retaliated. During this exchange of fire, one BSF constable sustained serious bullet injuries."

RAJSHAHI CITY CORPORATION
Mayor aspirants vow to check crime, graft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Twelve mayoral candidates of Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) polls during a meeting with people of the city yesterday vowed to resist crime and corruption.

They took an oath holding each other's hands that they would not use or raise musclemen for winning the elections or to confront their opponents.

They promised to ensure people's participation in planning and implementing development schemes, if elected. They also promised to accept defeat in the election and help the winner in the work for development of the city.

They pledged that they would try to increase the use of local resources in augmenting develop-

ment, hold open budget sessions and maintain regular interaction with the people to ensure accountability.

Three mayoral candidates, Awami League (AL) leader Nasir Ahmed Biddyt, Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh Rajshahi city President Akhtaruzzaman Bablu and independent candidate Forman Ali, did not show up at the meeting.

Prof Muzaffar Ahmad, eminent economist and chairman of Transparency International Bangladesh, attended the meeting as the chief guest.

Rajshahi district Shushashoner Janney Nagorik (Shujan) President Prof Nurul Alam presided over the meeting and Shujan General Secretary Badiul Alam Majumder conducted the programme.

Build graft-free Bangladesh
Gen Moeen urges people

UNB, Dhaka

Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed yesterday called for taking a vow to give the responsibility of running the country to honest and competent leadership.

"It's time to turn around. Let's promise to build a corruption-free Bangladesh. Let's root out terrorism for ever," he said.

Gen Moeen was addressing as special guest the concluding ceremony of "Esho Bangladesh Gori" road show at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city.

The army chief also urged the patriotic people to join en masse in nation-building activities.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed formally declared the conclusion of the 50-day long road show.

Praising 'Esho Bangladesh Gori', the army chief said people not only welcomed the caravan, but also spontaneously took part in it.



Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed addressing the concluding ceremony of "Esho Bangladesh Gori" road show at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in Dhaka yesterday.

CA seeks WB support for food security

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed has sought support from the Global Food Crisis Response Programme in building food security for Bangladesh, apart from enhanced World Bank (WB) assistance.

He made the plea as newly appointed WB Vice President for South Asia Region Isabel Guerrero, now visiting Dhaka, made a courtesy call on him at the CA's official residence 'Jamuna' at Hare Road yesterday.

The head of the caretaker government hoped that regular assistance for Bangladesh through the WB's soft-lending window IDA would increase in the next fiscal year alongside enhanced assistance and investment in various sectors including infrastructure, power, gas, water, tourism and human resource development.

Fakhruddin also sought support



Garbage recyclers dump plastic trash in the Buriganga worsening pollution of the river. The photo was taken at Kamrangirchar on the outskirts of the capital yesterday.

Iran declines to shelve uranium enrichment

Begins nuke talks with EU, US in Geneva

AP, Geneva

Tehran yesterday ruled out freezing its enrichment programme, casting doubt over the sense of key nuclear talks between Iran and six world powers less than an hour after they began.

The talks with the US in attendance for the first time had raised expectations of possible compromise on a formula that would have had Iran agree to stop expanding its enrichment activities. In exchange, the six powers, including the five permanent United Nations Security Council members, would hold off on passing new UN sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

But the comments from Keyvan Imani, a member of the Iranian delegation, appeared to indicate that Tehran was not prepared to

budge on enrichment at least going into the talks.

"Suspension there is no chance for that," he told reporters gathered in the courtyard of Geneva's ornate City Hall, the venue of the negotiations.

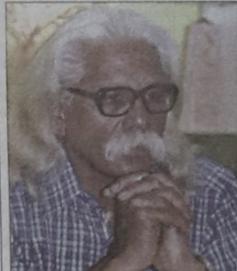
The presence of Undersecretary of State William Burns at the talks the first instance of the Americans attending such meetings had led to hopes Iran would compromise on suspension.

The enrichment issue is key because the activity can produce either nuclear fuel or the material used in the fissile core of warheads. Iran has defied three sets of UN sanctions demanding it cease its program, saying it has a right to its peaceful uses under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. But there is growing concern the Islamic Republic might want to generate the fissile core of warheads instead.

Recent Iranian statements suggest Tehran is looking to improve ties with the United States, with officials speaking positively of deliberations by the US administration to open an interests section an informal diplomatic presence in Tehran after closing its embassy decades ago.

Although the US says the nuclear issue, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said Friday they could also result in agreements to open a US interest-protection bureau and have direct flights between the two nations.

US interests in Iran are now



Poet Samudra Gupta passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Noted poet Samudra Gupta passed away yesterday morning at the Narayana Hridayalaya Hospital in Bangalore, India, at the age of 62.

He was suffering from gallbladder cancer and had been taken to India for treatment on July 3.

Gupta, whose real name was

Criminal shot dead in Rab 'shootout'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A criminal was killed in a 'shootout' between his accomplices and the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members in Jheelmil project area in south Keraniganj in the early hours yesterday.

The dead, Moksudur Rahman alias Mokshu, 27, was accused in 11 cases, including seven for murder, with Shyampur Police Station.

According to a Rab press release, a team of Rab-10 arrested Mokshu from Narinda Lions Club in the city during a raid on Friday night. During his interrogation, Mokshu told Rab where his firearms were hidden. He also said that his gang gathered at the Jheelmil project area for meetings.

Following this information, a team raided the area near Maowa Road in the Jheelmil project area at around 1:45am, taking Mokshu with them.

Mokshu's gang members

CITY POLLS PARTICIPATION
BNP waits on fate of writ petition

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

The BNP high command might decide on the fate of the defiant party leaders for their participation in local government elections following High Court order on a writ petition questioning the legality of the elections before finalising voter rolls.

On July 6, Jamaat-e-Islami leader Jasim Uddin Sarker, who is also a Supreme Court lawyer, filed the public interest litigation (PIL), challenging the legality of two ordinances promulgated by the government for holding the local government elections.

Following the filing of the petition, the High Court (HC) on Tuesday issued a ruling upon the government and the Election Commission (EC) to explain within eight days as to why the EC's August 4 schedule for holding elections to four city corporations and nine municipalities without the final voter roll should not be declared illegal.

Rizvi Ahmed, acting office secretary of BNP, told The Daily Star on Wednesday that the high command has been observing the situation and once the HC passes the order regarding the polls, the party would take appropriate course of action against the leaders who are contesting the local body polls violating the party's decision.

"Our senior leaders will take decision soon after getting the High Court decision on the writ petition."

Earlier, the BNP led four-party alliance formally announced that they would not take part in the local body polls. The BNP central leader including Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain warned its party leaders saying that participating in the local body polls would be considered as violation of the party decision and action would be taken against the violators.

A number of well-known BNP leaders ignored the warning and

ASSAULT ON FREEDOM FIGHTER
Arrest culprits or face consequences

Warn sector commanders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sector Commanders' Forum (SCF) yesterday warned the government that there would be serious repercussions if the persons responsible for the recent assault on a freedom fighter are not brought to trial immediately.

SCF, a platform of those who led the Liberation War in 11 sectors, also demanded that the caretaker administration ban Jatiya Muktiyoddha Parishad, a Jamaat-e-Islami-backed organisation.

"Arrest the culprits or you [government] will be responsible for anything untoward that might follow," Major Gen (ret'd) KM Shafulah said, speaking at a press briefing at the Dhaka Reporters Unity auditorium.

On July 11, activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir, the student wing of Jamaat, assaulted elderly freedom fighter Sheikh Mohammad Ali Aman at the city's Diploma

Engineers Institute during a programme organised by Jatiya Muktiyoddha Parishad.

Aman came under attack after he in his address had demanded punishment to the Jamaat men who were members of Al-Badr and "Peace Committee" during the war in 1971.

At the news briefing, the Forum leaders announced they will continue their campaign against any electoral alliance with Jamaat and other anti-liberation forces.

KM Shafulah said, "We want to remind the government that the freedom fighters are still alive and we will go for a tough movement if needed."

He urged the government to draw up a list of war criminals and disqualify them from all elections.

Lt Gen (ret'd) Mir Shawkat said, "We don't need a government that does not care much about the public demand for trial of the war criminals."

Student held with firearms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rab yesterday arrested an A-level student and recovered four illegal firearms and ammunition from his possession in the city's Mirpur area.

The arrestee was identified as Pantha Hossain Dipu alias Pinku, 18, an A-level student of Combined International School at Mirpur.

Lt Mohiuddin of Rab-4 said acting on a tip-off, a 10-member

19 Tamil Tigers killed in fresh fighting

Lankan army chief sees 'war nearly won'

AFP, AP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's army chief said yesterday his forces had wiped out two-thirds of the Tamil Tigers' military capability, and that the decades-old conflict with the rebels was at its tail-end while 19 more rebels killed in fresh fighting.

Lieutenant General Sarath Fonseka said the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) would gradually start collapsing, the state-run Daily News paper said.

"We are almost at the beginning of the end... we are nearing the turning point now, through the way LTTE is reacting. In another three to four months time you would see very clearly how the things change," he said.

He said security forces had already advanced 40km into rebel-controlled territory in the north.

The military drive is now moving fast, he said, indicating that rebels either offered little assistance or melted away. "Every week we move about three km unlike in the past," he said.

He said the Tigers had lost at least 9,000 fighters in the latest round of fighting, and put the rebels' current strength at 5,000 combatants - with around 200,000 civilians forced to provide logistic support.

"Now we hear that they are training anybody over 15 years and below 50 years. But they cannot be motivated to fight a battle," Fonseka said.

The rebels have not released their estimate of casualties. Figures from either side cannot be independently verified as journalists are barred from reporting from front-line areas.

Fonseka said the enemy was no longer able to resist security forces using conventional tactics and were resorting to hit-and-run attacks.

Nepal assembly fails to elect first president

AFP, Kathmandu

Lawmakers in Nepal yesterday failed to elect the country's first president and end weeks of political deadlock following the abolition of the Himalayan monarchy, official television said.

The selection of the country's first post-royal head of state would have paved the way for Nepal's Maoists, who hold the most seats in a recently elected assembly but do not have a majority, to form a government.

But no candidate won the 298

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