

Separated twins

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of the twins, are eagerly waiting back in Bangladesh for the day when they hope they will be flown to Melbourne to see their daughters.

Lovely said Moira Kelly, the Australian legal guardian of Trishna and Krishna, phoned her on Saturday to ask if they want to see their daughters, reports our correspondent in Khulna.

"I promptly expressed my eagerness and urged her to see if arrangements could be made to take us to Australia so that we can see our daughters," Lovely said while talking to The Daily Star at her Khulna residence yesterday.

Moira Kelly is the founder of Children First Foundation charity that made arrangement to take the conjoined twins to Melbourne two years ago.

Trishna and Krishna were joined at the top of their heads and shared brain tissues and blood vessels and the success of the 32-hour complicated surgery at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne to separate the babies hit world news headlines.

The biological parents who had put their newborns up for adoption said they want to maintain contacts with their daughters.

"It is our fervent appeal to the authorities of the charity to allow us to keep contact with our daughters," Lovely and Kartik told The Daily Star.

Lovely, 25, a final year student of diploma in agricul-

ture at Shaheed Flight Lieutenant Masud Memorial College at Keshabpur in Jessore, gave birth to the conjoined twins on December 22, 2006.

Lovely said they had taken the heartbreaking decision to put their daughters in an orphanage in Dhaka because of their poor financial condition. "We are too poor to maintain the huge costs needed for taking care of my daughters for their survival," she said.

"We had no alternative to giving Nirmal Shishu Bhawan an undertaking in writing that we would not claim the babies in the future. Trishna and Krishna remained there for 17 days," said Lovely.

The Children First Foundation, which took the twins to Australia for surgery, said it would support their further treatment in Australia for at least next two years.

"Each and every moment of my life is now filled with the thrill and emotion of the prospect of having a glimpse of my daughters. I am counting days for the moment when I'll see my daughters and hold them to my bosom and kiss them," she said.

The twins' conjoined condition was detected in an ultrasonography at a private clinic at Jorhagate in Khulna, said Dr Girindra Nath Kundu, who owns the clinic and also performed the caesarean section on Lovely.

"The babies had been under treatment in my clinic for 16 days. Later, I sent them to Mother Teresa Nirmala Shishu Bhawan for further treatment as the parents had no means to bear the huge expenses here," Dr Kundu said.

Pak troops repulse attack, kill 11

AFP, Khar

Pakistani troops yesterday repulsed an attack by militants on one of their posts in a lawless tribal region, killing 11 rebels, officials said.

Armed with heavy weapons, a group of 30-40 militants launched the attack on an army post in Rashakai area in the Bajaur region which borders Afghanistan, senior local administration official Adalat Khan told AFP.

"Troops effectively repulsed the attack, killing 11 militants," Khan said, adding that two soldiers were wounded in the exchange of fire.

Another security official in the area confirmed the incident and said the remaining militants fled leaving behind their weapons.

Elsewhere, fighter jets bombed militant hideouts in Mamound area of Bajaur on Sunday, killing five rebels.

Two Jubo League

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The robbers broke open the door of the house and searched for the Jubo Dal worker.

At one stage, the miscreants tied the family members at gunpoint and looted valuables. They also gang-raped his younger sister, 13, a madrasa student.

The dacoits left the scene leaving the girl in serious condition. She was admitted to Noakhali General Hospital with the help of local people on the following day (Tuesday).

Resident medical officer (RMO) of the hospital Dr Abdul Moteleb said they had to give the girl three bags of blood and she needed five stitches. Her condition improved slightly yesterday, he said.

Moteleb said lawmaker from Noakhali-4 constituency Ekramul Karim Chowdhury visited the girl at the hospital. The victim's mother has filed a case with the police station accusing Jubo League leader Zahir and his associate Hedayet and 4/5 other persons in connection with the dacoity and rape.

Local sources said those involved in the dacoity and rape are involved in the politics of Jubo League and Chhatra League.

ASP Abdur Razzak said, "The barbaric attack on was tragic. Whenever we asked her about the incident she lost her consciousness while describing it. Police have taken the incident seriously and are investigating it accordingly."

Upazila unit Awami League organising secretary and Kabirhat municipal mayor Ala Bakh Titu said the persons arrested in connection with the incidents of dacoity and rape may be supporters or workers of their organisation. "But the incident should not be seen from a political angle. It should be seen as a crime and the criminals should be punished," he said.

Afghan war

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Court yesterday.

DB police said they had arrested Moteleb following information from detained Pakistani nationals Mohammad Monwar, Mohammad Ashraf Ali Zahid and Syed Abdul Kaiyum alias Sufian, who are suspected to be operatives of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

SM Rafiqul Islam assistant commissioner (AC) of DB said Abu Moteleb, who is a Bangladeshi national, took part in Afghan war from 1987 to 1990.

Moteleb is an explosives expert, the AC said adding, he had recruited many Bangladeshis and arranged their training in Pakistan before sending them to Afghanistan.

The AC also added that the recruited Bangladeshi nationals also had been sent to some other countries to carry out subversive activities.

However detective police could not ascertain the number of Bangladeshi men recruited by Abu Moteleb and the time when they were sent to Afghanistan.

And they are yet to know from where the Bangladeshi nationals were recruited and also what their present addresses were.

Earlier on November 4, DB arrested Mufti Harun Izahar, Shahidul Islam and Al Amin alias Saiful for their suspected link with a plot to attack the US embassy and Indian high commission in Dhaka.

Detective police so far detained seven alleged operatives of LeT in this connection. Three of them are Pakistani nationals.

Of the arrestees, six were sent to jail after grilling each in two spells of remand.

Meanwhile, DB police yesterday re-arrested three suspected Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) members when they came out of Dhaka Central Jail 18 days of their arrest from Chittagong in connection with the US embassy and Indian high commission attack plot.

Sources said a DB team re-arrested Mufti Harun Izahar, son of Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) faction chief Mufti Izaharul Islam Chowdhury, and his associates Shahidul Islam and Al Amin alias Saiful soon after they were freed from the jail around 7:30pm.

When contacted, duty officer of Chawkbazar Police Station confirmed the arrest but Assistant Commissioner Sanwar Hossain of DB who led the first arrest of the three in Chittagong said they were not informed of the matter.

Confusion

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formed for the national council of BNP.

In a written statement at the press briefing, Rizvi alleged that ruling party activists foiled BNP councils in many areas including Sathira, Kishoreganj, Narail, Naogaon, Feni, Habiganj, Lalmonirhat, Faridpur and Rajshahi in Chittagong.

And local administration imposed section 144 in many areas that foiled the scheduled councils of BNP units, he said. But they will complete local unit councils timely to hold the national council as scheduled, he added.

A senior BNP leader wishing anonymity said yesterday, "We have received many verbal and written requests from different district units to defer the national council. But everything will depend on the party chairperson's decision."

He also said the chairperson, general secretary and other senior leaders of the party have been informed about the suggestions. No discussion in this regard was held as yet among the top leaders.

Party insiders mentioned the chairperson is still to give her final decision regarding the national council. Different sub-committees formed for the council are already working.

But the international affairs sub-committee could not start sending invitation cards to foreign guests and delegates as the chairperson has not finalised the council date, the insiders pointed out.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, party's standing committee member Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman said the committee had earlier fixed December 8 for the party council but considering the reality it can be deferred by one month.

"We have one month more in hand but the decision would be finalised on the basis of consultation between the chairperson and standing committee," he said.

The venue of the national council is also to be finalised yet.

PM for controlled

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briefed newsmen after the meeting.

"People must not be allowed to haphazardly extract sands from rivers. Such practices are terribly harming the country's bio-diversity and environment," the PM said.

She said the massive river dredging project being implemented by the government will also be hampered if this chaotic and unsystematic sand extraction is not stopped immediately.

"Before going for sand extraction, it has to be known that from which part of a particular river and how many sands from that will be extracted. If a discipline can be ensured, river dredging and sand extraction can be run simultaneously."

Hasina also asked the ministries and departments concerned for ensuring better coordination between giving permission for sand extraction and other official procedures in this regard.

The premier further asked the authorities for taking punitive actions against those who will not abide by the rules and regulations regarding extraction of sands from the rivers.

About cleaning up the riverbeds, Hasina said the government will give all financial and logistic supports to the departments concerned for removing the river garbage. There are 53 waterways in the country of which 50 will be dredged by 2018. Six dredgers out of 16 have already started to work through the Garai River.

About the Garai River dredging, she said this river is very important for sound environment of the coastal areas.

If it loses its natural navigability, salinity will increase in the areas bringing down crop production in the region.

When salinity is increased, habitation and breeding of wild animals in the Sundarbans, particularly the Royal Bengal Tigers, will be

endangered apart from harming the flora and fauna of the mangrove forests, she said.

As the necessity of latest information and statistics on Brahmaputra and Jamuna rivers came up for discussion in the meeting, the PM said the report made prior to the construction of Bangabandhu Bridge, can be the most fruitful research work to move on for more development of waterways in the two major rivers.

About the recent international summits on climate change, the PM said the international leaders have also agreed with her that climate change and food security are interlinked.

Hasina said the climate change, particularly in the countries like Bangladesh, is severely harming food production, threatening the government's target to attain food security.

She laid emphasis on intensive studies and research works for inventing salinity- and drought-tolerant crop varieties for attaining sustainable food security.

The premier reiterated her call for ensuring a separate fund for the most vulnerable countries to enable them to face the challenges of climate change.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, Planning Minister AK Khandoker, Land Minister Rejaul Karim Hira, Water Resources Minister Ramesh Chandra Sen, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan, PM's Advisers HT Imam and Mashiur Rahman, State Minister for Forest and Environment Hasan Mahmud, secretaries of the ministries concerned, among others, attended the meeting.

Later, a delegation of Dredgers' Association of Bangladesh called on the PM at the PMO.

They assured the premier of putting in their best efforts to help the government implement its river dredging project.

Mercy plea

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Firoza Begum, and one of his nieces talked to him for about half an hour. But his wife Nafiza Huda could not enter the jail as she had fallen sick at the jailgate.

Shahriar's wife Masowara Khan, son Ashrafur Rashid, daughter Shahnaz Rashid, and his two sisters met him for over half an hour. Mahiuddin's wife Hosneara Mahiuddin met him for about 10 minutes, the sources added.

According to the sources, the five condemned convicts are confined in separate death row cells in a one-storey building named of Rajanigandha which houses eight cells, adjacent to the gallows.

Towhidul said the families of the convicts were taken to the death row instead of bringing the convicts out to the jail gate due to security concerns. The families had to meet the convicts from the other side of the cell bars in presence of personnel from different intelligence agencies including the Directorate of Field Intelligence, and National Security Intelligence. Only one family was allowed at a time into the death row.

According to witnesses, during the visits, the families burst into tears wailing, while the condemned cried silently with tears rolling down their cheeks. The families declined to talk to the media following the visits.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG-Prisons) Golam Haider told The Daily Star, "We have informed the convicts about the final verdict of the court and asked them to express their positions regarding filing of presidential clemency petitions within seven days of the verdict."

"So far four of them verbally informed us about their desire to file the petitions. There are still five more days remaining, they might also reconsider their decisions, and the others also have the time to inform us about their willingness," he added.

The DIG said no lawyer of any convict has yet visited their clients in the jail.

The Supreme Court on Thursday upheld the High Court decision in the case. The High Court earlier upheld the death sentences of 12 of the original 15 convicts, acquitting the other three.

Six condemned convicts in the case are currently absconding, they are Lt Col Khandaker Abdur Rashid, Lt Col Shariful Haque Dalim, Lt Col SHMB Nur Chowdhury, Lt

Traffic

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Now, traffic officials will not halt normal flow of vehicles to make passage for the VIPs except for the president and the prime minister.

DMP will also demarcate major roads for movement of different modes of vehicles from December 1 to check overtaking, congestion and road accidents.

DPM Commissioner AKM Shahidul Haque told reporters yesterday that they had decided to activate the automated signalling system to restore image of the traffic police whose manual control is often partially blamed for traffic congestion.

Only a swing towards automated signals will not give optimum benefit until the city's traffic infrastructure is enhanced, he said while replying to a question.

"However," he said, "we are trying to make people accustomed to the automated signalling system."

MONEY LAUNDERING Mamun again denied bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court rejected yesterday a bail petition of businessman Giasuddin Al Mamun in connection with a money laundering case.

Judge ANM Bashir Ullah of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order after Mamun's lawyers filed a bail petition against a rejection order of the lower court on November 8.

Moving the bail petition, Mamun's lawyers told the court that their client was implicated in the case as part of a conspiracy to harass him as he was earlier sued for amassing wealth illegally and convicted.

However, the prosecution said Mamun was earlier sued for acquiring wealth through illegal means and concealing information in his wealth statement submitted to the ACC. But the case was filed for laundering money to Singapore that was not shown in the wealth statement.

On November 2, Mamun was shown arrested in the case after Assistant Director Mohammad Ibrahim of Anti-Corruption Commission submitted a petition.

ACC filed the case on October 26 against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's elder son Tarique Rahman and his business partner Giasuddin Al Mamun.

The case statement said Tarique and Mamun laundered Tk 20.41 crore to Singapore between 2003 and 2007.

The joint forces arrested Mamun from his Banani house at DOHS on March 26, 2007 in connection with an arms case.

Later, police seized a 22 bore pistol and eight bullets from his house.

Mamun is accused in a dozen cases of extortion.

He was sentenced to 23 years' imprisonment in separate cases on charge of possessing firearms and ammunition, not submitting his wealth statement, and amassing wealth illegally.

1 killed

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the slum with her family for the last 12 years.

Many others are injured and destitute, including children, women and older persons.

A spokesperson from the Fire Service and Civil Defence (FSCD) said that 16 units were sent to contain the fire, which took an hour and a half to contain.

The FSCD believe it may have been caused by a cooking burner.

Bilal Hossain, one of the house owners, alleges that criminals may have torched the slum as part of an attempt to grab government land.

Bilal said that over a thousand homes built on bamboo stilts collapsed soon after they caught on fire.

Leaders from various parties inspected the area today.

Meanwhile, a fire broke out last night on the third floor of Moteleb Tower at Poribagh in the city.

Fire Brigade sources said the fire broke out around 1:00am inside an office that sells medical equipment.

The extent of damage could not be ascertained immediately.

Govt asked

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issued a suo moto rule, asking the government to explain in 48 hours why appropriate actions should not be taken against Rab officials Major Kazi Wahiduzzaman and Lieutenant Hasan and their companions.

The High Court passed the directive, as Deputy Attorney General Kazi Ejazul Haque Akand Sagor told the court that no one by the name Major Kazi Wahiduzzaman was found in the Madaripur Rab unit.

The court also allowed Ain O Shalish Kendra, a human rights organisation, to place arguments as an intervener in this case.

The hearing on government's explanation of the extra-judicial killings will be held on December 9.

The High Court bench of Justice AFM Abdur Rahman and Justice Md Emdadul Haque Azad came up with the order following a government prayer moved by Kazi Ejazul Haque Akand Sagor and an application filed by Sultana Kamal, the executive director of Ain O Shalish Kendra.

Ezazul told the court yesterday that the government could not explain the extra-judicial killings within the given timeframe.

He prayed for time-extension to deliver a reply to the rule.

Lutfur Rahman Khalasi and his younger brother Khairul Haque Khalasi, operatives of outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party, were killed during a "shootout" between their cohorts and Rab on November 16.

Following a newspaper report, the High Court bench issued the suo moto rule.

Palestinians refuse Israeli talks offer with no halt to settlement

AFP, Ramallah

The Palestinian Authority has refused a recent Israeli proposal to restart peace talks without a complete freeze of settlement activity, a Palestinian official told AFP yesterday.

"Israel offered through a mediator from the American administration to resume negotiations" but the PA declined, the official said on condition of anonymity.

"The reason for the refusal is that the Palestinian Authority demands first of all a stop to settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem," he said.

Asked to comment on the report, Israeli government spokesman Mark Regev said he was not aware of such an offer and reaffirmed the oft-repeated position of Prime

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that the Jewish state was ready for an immediate resumption of peace talks without preconditions.

The Palestinian official said that as part of the proposal, Israel offered to free 400 Palestinian prisoners, extend Palestinian control over parts of the occupied West Bank and remove more checkpoints in the territory.

The Palestinian Authority under the leadership of president Mahmoud Abbas has repeatedly said all Israeli settlement activity must halt before the resumption of peace negotiations suspended during the Gaza war at the turn of the year.

Israel has so far refused a complete freeze, offering instead a partial and limited ease on construction.

Caught with bribe

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Corruption, promising that he would no more be an obstacle to the release of the amount of Tk 1.5 lakh Rafiqul's family is entitled to get because of his death.

Rafiqul died five years ago.

"It is like Noor was taking bribe from the dead person," said ACC Assistant Director Sheikh Abdus Salam, who led the operation to arrest the unscrupulous government officer.

"He used to take bribe from whoever went to his office for a work to be done. People present at his office at that time brought this allegation against him," Salam said, adding that they found Tk 5,500 more in his pocket.

Noor had refused to give the cheque of Tk 1.5 lakh to Shirin Akter, wife of Rafiqul, unless she paid him. Shirin visited the office several times in the last five years to get the benefit money of her husband.

At last, the bribe was settled at Tk 5,000 which Shirin, a resident of Noakhali, sent through parcel service to her brother Tipu in Chittagong on November 19. Tipu went to the ACC office in Chittagong yesterday morning and lodged a complaint about Noor's illegal demand.

The ACC officers formed an operation team aided by the police and prepared an inventory of Tk 5,000 before sending Tipu to pay the bribe.

Immediately after Tipu handed over the bribe to Noor, the ACC team rushed into the office room and caught the dishonest official with the envelope of money in his pocket.

"Noor had written on the envelope the serial number of the file containing documents related to Rafiqul's benefit, which was awaiting Noor's approval. The way the envelope was marked bears testimony to the fact that Noor usually receives so many such envelopes every day," ACC Assistant Director Salam said.

Family members of Rafiqul said Noor had held up Shirin

Akter's application for financial grants from the welfare and joint-insurance funds of the department for around five years.

Noor was handed over to Double Mooring Police Station where filing of a bribery case was under process.

Domain name

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committee on telecommunications ministry, told The Daily Star after a meeting of the committee.

Inu said he asked Beckstrom why Bangla, which is spoken by about 40 crore people, will not be included for using in domain names while Russian and Arabic scripts are going to be incorporated in the domain name system.

"Beckstrom finally agreed in principle and advised me to apply formally from government level," said Inu.

"The parliamentary standing committee today asked the ministry concerned to apply to Ican to this end and inform Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina about it," he added.

Inu expressed hope that Bangla will be one of the top-level domain name languages by the next International Mother Language Day.

Ican is a non-profit organisation that was created on September 18, 1998, in order to oversee a number of Internet-related tasks including assigning Internet Protocol (IP) addresses and managing generic and country code top-level domain name system.

The parliamentary standing committee meeting asked the telecommunications ministry to declare about 29 acres of land of Telephone and Shipa Sangstha as telecom and electronic machinery production zone.

It also asked the ministry not to apply the government purchase policy to purchase of machineries or equipment for the organisation.

"We have also set a timetable for Telephone and Shipa Sangstha to turn the losing venture into a profitable one," Inu said.

Twin blasts

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around 10.20am.

"The explosives were stuffed inside bicycle frames, and the cycles were parked at the two sites," Nalbari district police chief Jitmol Doley said.

The authorities acted quickly, announcing a security alert. Police used loudspeakers to ask people to be vigilant against unattended bicycles and cars.

Police also said that a nine-member Ulfa hit squad had entered Assam to stage terror attacks.

"A massive hunt is on to nab the Ulfa hit squad," an official at the Assam Police headquarters said.

Most victims of Sunday's bombings were morning shoppers or vendors as there was a Sunday market teeming with people close to the attack sites.

"There was panic and chaos with human limbs strewn all over the place and blood splattered on the road," said Ankur Das, a witness.

"The sound of the first blast was deafening. The second took place in front of our eyes. Many who came rushing to the site of the first blast got injured in the second blast," said another witness, Biplob Barman.

Police blamed the United Liberation Front of Asom

(Ulfa).

"The modus operandi suggests it was the handiwork of the Ulfa. The explosions are nothing but an attempt to make a point after two of their top leaders were arrested," an intelligence official said.

Ulfa 'foreign secretary' Sasha Chowdhury and 'finance secretary' Chitran Hazarika, in police remand since Nov 6, were arrested by the Border Security Force (BSF) near Gokul Nagar in Tripura Nov 5 while trying to sneak into India.

The Ulfa denied carrying out the attacks.

"We have not carried out the blasts in Nalbari. It was a conspiracy, an attempt to derail the peace initiatives taken by various civil society groups to push forward the deadlocked peace process between the Ulfa and the government," Hira Sarania, an Ulfa commander, told the local media by telephone.

On Monday, Ulfa rebels blew up a petroleum-laden train in eastern Assam. At least 20 wagons went up in flames and a loss of Rs.100 million was estimated.