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If you want to relax, go to this painting show at Alliance Francaise
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Saudi blogger sentenced to 1,000 lashes may now face death penalty
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Cops now can search office of Khaleda

Court acts on police petition; Khaleda expresses no-confidence in judge after arrest warrant; police team withdrawn from Gulshan office

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
A Dhaka court yesterday issued a warrant allowing police to search Khaleda Zia's Gulshan office for communication devices allegedly being used for carrying out subversive activities across the country.



The warrant also authorises police to look for suspects in a case filed for carrying out a crude bomb attack on a procession led by Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan on February 16 in Gulshan.

Labour leader Ismail Hossain Bachchu filed the case with Gulshan Police Station on February 17 accusing Khaleda and 13 other BNP leaders and activists of attacking the procession.

The procession was against the blockade and hartals being enforced by the BNP-led 20-party alliance. The BNP chief was accused of masterminding the attack while Mohila Dal General Secretary Shirin Sultana, Khaleda's Press Secretary Maruf Kamal Khan, and BNP chief's Special Assistant Shamsur Rahman Shimul Biswas were among the accused.

In a petition before a metropolitan magistrate yesterday, Sub-Inspector Sohel Rana of Gulshan Police station, also the investigation officer of the case, said 13 suspects, excluding Khaleda Zia, were hiding in the BNP chief's office.

Khaleda has been staying at the office since January 3. The SI claimed that the suspects had been communicating with their men across the country and instructing them to carry out subversive activities using communication devices.

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Prof Ajoy Roy, father of slain writer-blogger Avijit Roy, sweats in the midday sun while sitting by his son's coffin at the foot of Aparajeyo Bangla of Dhaka University. Those surrounding him mop sweat off his face. Nothing, however, could wipe away his grief.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Are militants stronger than law enforcers?

Asks father of Avijit; people pay tribute to the writer; his body donated to Dhaka Medical College

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dr Ajoy Roy stood firm and resolute by the coffin of his son Avijit Roy, the slain writer, before the body was donated to the anatomy department of Dhaka Medical College for scientific research yesterday afternoon.

His son was put to death for following a path he himself has treaded and followed. Yet, no drop of tear was there to cloud his vision; nor was there any hint of defeatism in his stance. The only sound of sobs and wails came from relatives and friends who were there with him.

Earlier in the morning, while addressing a programme on the DU campus, Dr Roy questioned if Islamist militants were stronger than law enforcers.

"I urge the government, the prime minister, to uproot the militant organisations and the people behind the killing of Avijit and other free thinkers," he said.

Sammilito Sangskritik Jote organised the programme at the foot of Aparajeyo Bangla on the DU campus where hundreds of people from different organisations paid last tribute to the 42-year-old writer who was killed on February 26 by Islamist militants.

Dr Roy, retired professor of physics at Dhaka University, also urged the government to immediately ban militant organisations including Jamaat-e-Islami and arrest and try all leaders of the militant organisations.

He suggested the government receive

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Govt wants FBI assistance

Foreign minister informs envoys about govt decision; condition of Avijit's wife improves

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Responding to Washington's offer, Dhaka has decided to seek FBI's assistance in the Avijit murder probe.

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali conveyed the government decision to a group of top diplomats from influential countries at the state guesthouse Padma yesterday afternoon.

According to a highly placed source at the foreign ministry,

Mahmood Ali shared "the government decision to positively respond to the US' offer to engage the FBI in unearthing the motive and real culprits behind the murder."

Unknown assailants hacked writer-blogger Avijit Roy to death and seriously injured his wife Rafida Ahmed Bonya on Dhaka University campus on Thursday night.

The next day, US Department of State Spokesperson Jen Psaki

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Gold smuggling has gone remarkably up of late. Big haul of the most-sought-after metal makes headline all too frequently. But most of the smuggled gold enters and exits the country quite safely. The Daily Star in its 3-part extensive reports tries to put some light on the trans-border crime in which Bangladesh has become a transit destination for international smuggling syndicates.

Seized gold goes to central bank

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

PART-3

Since independence, 2.2 tonnes of seized illegal gold worth around \$90 million has been added to the country's foreign currency reserves.

In the last year alone, more than a tonne of illegal gold, mostly bullion, was seized by Customs intelligence and other agencies across the country.

Of those, 269 kg of gold has already been added to the forex reserves while the rest awaits disposal of the pending cases filed over their seizures, according to BB officials.

Last September, 244 kg of gold was included in the central bank's reserves and

25.31 kg in June, they said. The central bank now has gold reserves of 14 tonnes with the foreign exchange reserves hovering around \$22 billion. Excluding the 2.2 tonnes, the rest is kept in a vault of the Bank of England, said an official of the bank.

All illegal gold -- both bullion and ornaments -- seized by government agencies from all over the country goes straight to a secured vault of Bangladesh Bank.

Seeking anonymity, another BB official said one has to go through a seven-layer security system to enter the central bank vault where gold is kept.

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The access points in the cargo hold of a Biman aircraft where gold bars were stashed.

PHOTO: FILE

No case ends in verdict

SHARIFUL ISLAM, WASIM BIN HABIB and CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER

Court officials cannot tell when a gold smuggler was punished last time. What they can tell though that there is no such instance in the past 10 years. This, they say, has contributed to the recent surge in the smuggling of the yellow metal.

In the last four years, some 158 cases have been filed against over 200 people, mostly carriers, in the capital alone. But not a single case has seen the verdict, police and court sources said.

Filed under the non-bailable section of the Special Powers Act of 1974, the cases are either under trial or are being investigated. The charges carry life sentence and fine in maximum punishment.

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TOP QUOTE

"I had informed all including the DIG and IG [about death threats to Avijit]. People will consider Avijit's killing as an indicator of your [law enforcers] failure."

PROF AJAY ROY
FATHER OF SLAIN WRITER-BLOGGER, SPEAKING AT A PROGRAMME WHERE PEOPLE PAID THEIR LAST RESPECTS TO HIS SON



Officials of China Major Bridge Engineering Company before the start of test piling for the Padma bridge project sacrifice a bull as per a Chinese ritual at Mawa in Munshiganj yesterday. They let the blood flow into the river.

PHOTO: STAR

PADMA BRIDGE Work starts in Chinese style

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The test piling of the Padma Bridge project began yesterday with the project officials sacrificing animals as per Chinese ritual.

Officials of the China Major Bridge Engineering Company Ltd sacrificed two black bulls, two goats and two chickens on the occasion of the test piling and let the blood flow in the water on the Mawa side of the project in Munshiganj.

To ward off any bad or evil influence that may come in the way of implementing the job successfully, the front legs of the bulls were floated in the water as per the Chinese ritual. The Chinese officials kept the rest of the meat for a feast to be held later in the capital for their employees.

The project site wore a festive look yesterday with crackers being blasted around the piling site. This is how the Chinese start any major work as per their rituals, said Padma Bridge project officials.

"They [the Chinese builders] were repeatedly requesting us to start the test piling this way [through

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Indian foreign secretary due today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Indian Foreign Secretary Subramanyam Jaishankar flies to Dhaka this morning to convey New Delhi's intention of early resolution of pending water and land issues and explore new areas of talks focusing on connectivity, energy cooperation, and trade.

Diplomatic sources said India's top diplomat is coming as part of his "yatra" of four Saarc countries from yesterday, with Bhutan as the first stop. He is seeking to revive and reinforce New Delhi's neighbourhood diplomacy.

Jaishankar, who took over on January 29, is coming to Dhaka for a 24-hour working visit and then he

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