

## Bela team attacked during Ctg field visit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A team from Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association was attacked yesterday allegedly by the aides of a councillor during a field visit in Lake City residential area of Chattogram where hills were razed for a housing project.

The team along with journalists first visited the housing project and later visited Kalirichara Khal, a water body filled up by grabbers. A group of youths started to follow Bela's Chief Executive Sayeda Rizwana Hasan and at point started quizzing her.

Some minutes later, Ward 9 Councillor Jahurul Alam Jashim appeared on the scene along with his men. He also started questioning Rizwana, said Bela officials.

Talking to The Daily Star, Rizwana said, "Due to their aggressive behaviour, we were forced to postpone our visit and leave the spot. While we were waiting for our vehicle, some youths were seen roaming with

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

## Murad granted pardon from AL

STAR REPORT

After withdrawing expulsion of former Gazipur City Corporation mayor Zahangir Alam from his party post, the ruling Awami League has now granted a pardon for disgraced former state minister Murad Hassan.

Murad, who had been serving as the health affairs secretary of Jamalpur Awami League, was relieved from the post and also party membership for his offensive remarks on women that sparked waves of criticism.

On December 22 last year, Murad wrote to AL chief and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina after a decision was made at a meeting of the AL National Committee on December 17 last year to withdraw the expulsion orders for those who formally apologised for misdeeds.

In the letter, he asked for pardon and promised not to do anything in future that may embarrass the party or the party chief.

While talking to reporters after attending AL's Mymensingh divisional delegation meeting at the party's Gulistan headquarters, Murad

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



People gather around a building damaged and burned by Israeli troops during a raid on the West Bank's Jenin refugee camp, yesterday. The raid killed 9 Palestinians including an elderly woman, Palestinian officials said, also accusing the army of using tear gas inside a hospital.

PHOTO: AFP

## Israeli raid kills 9 in West Bank

Palestinian Authority cuts security ties with Israel

REUTERS, Jenin

Israeli commandos killed seven gunmen and two civilians in a raid on a flashpoint town in the occupied West Bank yesterday, Palestinian officials said, stirring fear of further flare-ups after the largest single death toll in years of fighting.

The Palestinian Authority said it was ending its security coordination with Israel, which is widely credited with helping to keep order in the West Bank and preventing attacks against Israel. It has frozen the cooperation numerous times in a sign of protest.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel was not looking to escalate the situation, though he ordered security forces "to prepare for all scenarios in the various sectors."

UN and Arab mediators spoke with Israel and Palestinian factions to try to keep the clash in Jenin, among areas of the West Bank that have seen intensified Israeli operations, from sparking a broader confrontation.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will travel to Egypt, Israel and the West Bank next week to discuss the situation.

Israel's military said it sent special forces into Jenin to detain members of the Islamic Jihad armed group suspected of having carried out and planning "multiple major terror attacks", shooting several of them after they opened fire.

Islamic Jihad said two of its men died battling the unusually deep raid on Jenin's refugee camp, a militant bastion. Four slain gunmen were claimed by Hamas, another by an armed wing of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah faction.

The two other dead were a civilian man and woman, local residents said.

"We consider that security coordination with the Israeli occupation government no longer exists as of now," the Palestinian leadership who gathered to discuss Jenin said in a statement.

US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Barbara Leal said they were pushing to calm tensions and that the security coordination should be deepened, not cut.

During the three-hour clash, gunfire echoed through the camp's cramped alleys, as well as occasional explosions from improvised bombs set off by militants. Youths pelted army vehicles with rocks. There were no Israeli casualties.

After the troops withdrew and the smoke and tear gas cleared, civilians who had kept away streamed into the camp to check on casualties. A two-storey building that had been the focus of the fighting was heavily damaged.

Separately, a Palestinian was killed during a clash with Israeli security officers in the city of Ramallah, said Palestinian health officials. A spokesperson for Israel's border

police was not reachable for comment on the report.

Violence has surged since a series of lethal Palestinian street attacks in Israel in March and April. The attendant diplomatic stalemate has helped rally Palestinian support for Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which refuse coexistence with Israel - where the new hard-right government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu includes members opposed to Palestinian statehood.

An Islamic Jihad official told Reuters the group had told international mediators to warn Israel that the Jenin violence "could spread everywhere". Deputy Hamas chief Saleh Al-Arouri said in a statement that an armed response "will not take long".

Tor Wennesland, a UN mediator, said on Twitter that he was "actively engaged with Israeli and Palestinian authorities to de-escalate tensions, restore calm and avoid further conflict".

Israeli officials gave no public indication they were in truce talks. Lauding Israeli forces on the Jenin raid, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir said: "Any terrorist who tries to harm our personnel should know that his blood is forfeit."

According to the Palestinian health ministry, at least 30 Palestinians, including gunmen and civilians, have been killed by Israeli forces in the West Bank since January 1.

## Cop's noble act

FROM PAGE 1

Facing constant pressure of repayments from the creditors and finding no way out of this crisis, the mother sold her child to a neighbouring childless couple for Tk 30,000 on Monday.

Lima used the money to pay off her debts.

On information, Ashraf Islam, officer-in-charge of Tongi East Police Station, visited the childless couple, paid them Tk 30,000 from his own pocket, and reunited the child with her mother.

Besides, the OC also arranged a job for the child's father in a local factory, said Yeasin Arafat, sub-inspector of the police station.

SI Yeasin was the first responder after police got information about the incident via national helpline 999.

Swarna Akhter, who bought the child, said, "We spent Tk 30,000 on the child. We later gave the child back to the mother in accordance with the police's instructions."

## BNP to start

FROM PAGE 1

to Shyampur and from Mugda to Malibagh on February 1.

In reply to a query, Fakhru said, "The BNP announced the programme and will discuss it with like-minded political parties. If they want to, they can observe the same programme."

The BNP leader said their march programmes would be held peacefully with spontaneous participation of people from all walks of life.

## Sugar price

FROM PAGE 1

Rahman demanded that the government make sugar available and bring down the prices to Tk 80-90 a kg during the fasting month.

Market insiders said a section of traders is taking advantage of the supply shortage in the market.

In the first six months of the fiscal year, raw sugar imports fell 22 percent year-on-year to 7.33 lakh tonnes, shows data from the commerce ministry.

The opening of letters of credit for the import of raw sugar also slumped 28 percent year-on-year to 3.75 lakh tonnes in the October-December period of 2022.

Bangladesh requires 20 lakh tonnes of sugar annually, 98 percent of which is met through imports.

## Govt mulls a 40-bigha cap

FROM PAGE 1

is saying the next election will be held under the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina-led government.

According to the law, the Election Commission will conduct the election, but the DCs play a vital role in the districts because they will be the returning officers.

"People want a free, fair and credible election. The whole world is also looking at it. For a fair election, you will play a key role. Prepare yourself to present the nation with a fair election," he said.

The security forces are capable of tackling any situation during the election period, he said, adding that the government will have no control on the security forces during the election period as the Election Commission will lead them and the home ministry will discharge its routine work.

Termining the use of drugs a big challenge, Asaduzzaman said the DCs should be proactive in reducing the use of narcotics. "We asked them to work along with the public representatives to reduce its [drugs] use."

A section of Rohingyas are involved

in smuggling in yaba to Bangladesh, the home minister said, adding that the army, police and intelligence agencies are working to stop it.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen asked the DCs to take action against illegal hill cutting and filling up of ponds and canals.

He also alerted them to human trafficking by travel agents.

Emerging from the meeting, he told reporters that the Myanmar government was not sincere about taking back the Rohingyas.

"Our priority is to repatriate Rohingyas. Myanmar also said they will take back Rohingyas. But it has been six years. Not a single Rohingya has returned," he said.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Hasan Mahmud asked the DCs to inform the ministry about rumours spread by the unregistered online portals and IPTVs so that legal actions are taken and counter-messages against the rumours are spread to create awareness among the people.

"There are many unregistered online portals and IPTVs in the districts. These are used to spread

misleading information and rumours," he said.

Health Minister Zahid Maleque asked the DCs to visit private clinics and check whether the patients are charged extra and unnecessary C sections are performed.

After a session with the DCs, Law Minister Anisul Huq said the data protection law will be enacted to protect data, not to control it.

"We will place the draft of the Data Protection Act in parliament. That does not mean suggestions from the stakeholders will not be heard," he said.

Regarding the Digital Security Act, he said, "We have taken measures to ensure that cases are registered after proper verification..."

The government has taken an initiative to raise the salary of public prosecutors and government pleaders.

The three-day conference concluded yesterday with a session conducted by Cabinet Secretary Mahub Hossain.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina opened the conference on Tuesday. The DCs made 245 recommendations and participated in 26 sessions.

## Nothing but political

FROM PAGE 1

will work to lift the ban.

"Later, on his invitation, I visited Washington and held a bilateral meeting. In the meeting, Bangladesh's position on the ban on Rab and the development of the human rights situation in Bangladesh were highlighted."

Momen said, during that visit, a meeting was held with various individuals, including senators and congressmen. "I requested their support in lifting the ban. I also emphasised the need for the formation of the Congressional Bangladesh Caucus."

During a meeting, Assistant Foreign Minister Donald Lu, who visited Bangladesh recently, especially praised the current activities of Rab, he added.

Momen said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Bangladesh embassy in Washington, along with legal aid organisations, have continued strong diplomatic efforts to get the ban on Rab lifted.

## Russian missile

FROM PAGE 12

strikes against energy infrastructure across Ukraine, with temperatures currently near zero degrees Celsius (32 degrees Fahrenheit).

Energy Minister German Galushchenko accused Russia of seeking to "create a systemic failure in Ukraine's energy system."

The attacks delayed the visit of French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna, who arrived in Odessa to discuss aid with Ukraine's top diplomat Dmytro Kuleba.

The Ukrainian air force said its units also shot down all 24 Iranian-made drones launched by Russian forces from near southern Ukraine.

By announcing heavy tank deliveries, the United States and Germany on Wednesday swept aside long-standing misgivings and signalled a new surge of Western support for a counteroffensive against the Russian invasion.

## Release Satkhira journo

FROM PAGE 12

Dainik Projonmo Ekattor, was detained by plainclothes police officials around 11:00am on Monday.

"Kha was detained after reporting on a land dispute in Khalishakhali area of the southwestern Satkhira district," the CPJ statement said.

Citing sources, it said police arrested Raghunath and two others over allegations of their involvement in an attempt to explode bombs in coordination with the local landless people, adding that the authorities concerned initially denied he was in custody.

"When the journalist appeared in court the following day, he was unable to stand properly and said that police severely beat him, electrocuted him and threatened to kill him if he continued reporting on the landless people," the statement said.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Raghunath's wife Supriya Rani Kha said, "When he saw me in the courtroom, he put his arms around me through the bars of the cell and started crying like never before. He told me - and the full court - that the police had electrocuted his earlobes for half an hour. They also repeatedly hit the back of his head with a baton."

Raghunath was also charged with sabotage and extortion in cases filed

## No Covid-19 death in 24hrs, positivity rate 0.77pc

STAR REPORT

No Covid-19 death was reported in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, according to a press release issued by the Directorate General of Health Services.

The total number of Covid-19 deaths in the country remains 29,441 and the death rate 1.44 percent.

At least 16 new infections from Covid-19 were recorded in this 24-hour period. The total number of cases rose to 20,37,494, added the release.

The current positivity rate is 0.77 percent while the total positivity rate stands at 13.37 percent, said the press release.

A total of 2,072 samples were tested across the country during this time.

At least 213 patients recovered from Covid-19 during the period. The total number of recoveries now stands at 19,91,792 and the recovery rate is 97.76 percent.

## Policeman dies in road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

A police officer died in a collision between two motorcycles in Chapainawabganj yesterday afternoon.

The victim is Nurul Islam, 33, sub-inspector of special branch of the district police. He was posted at Islampur police outpost.

Alamgir Jahan, officer-in-charge of Chapainawabganj Sadar Police Station, said the accident took place around 1:00pm when Nurul was heading towards Chataidubi village from the outpost.

When he reached near the School Intersection area, another motorcycle coming from the opposite direction hit Nurul's bike, leaving him critically injured, the police official said.

Locals rushed him to a nearby hospital where doctors declared him dead.

## Lawyer sues Godagari UNO for filling up pond

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A lawyer yesterday filed a case against Rajshahi's Godagari Upazila Nirbahi Officer Jana Alam for filling a pond without regard to environmental laws.

Lawyer Salah Uddin Biswas filed the case against seven people, including the UNO, with the Environment Court in Rajshahi.

The court's senior judicial magistrate Abu Taleb accepted the case and fixed the date for hearing on the case on May 22 in presence of an inspector from the Department of Environment.

Contacted, the UNO said the pond was under illegal occupation of some local people for last 15 years.

"The land grabbers are now taking new strategies to keep the land under their occupation," he added.