

Farmer killed, wife, two others raped in Bagerhat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

Unidentified men chopped to death a farmer and raped three members of his family including his wife and sister-in-law late Saturday night at Korompur village of Jattrapur union in Bagerhat Sadar thana.

Tapan Bhattacharya, 43, who also worked in a BISIC bee project, sustained countless cuts and wounds before he died. The killers reportedly targeted Tapan's elder brother Niranjana Bhattacharya. Tapan's body was sent to the hospital morgue for an autopsy.

A gang of more than 10 men entered the house at 3:00am,

raped Tapan's wife, aged 34, his younger brother's wife, aged 28, and her mother whose age could not be known immediately. Swapan Bhattacharya, 35, the younger brother and a police constable of Rupsha Police Station, was severely injured in the incident and admitted to the Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH).

The wives of Tapan and Swapan were also admitted to the hospital. The condition of Tapan's wife was said to be critical as she delivered a stillborn child only 10 days ago. The rapists left her bleeding profusely.

Police said the motive behind the killing was the rivalry over the local Union Parishad election. They arrested one Abdur Rahman, 35, a member candidate who lost the election, in connection with the incident.

"During my career as a policeman, I have never seen such brutality," said Ishak Dukhu, officer-in-charge (OC) of the Bagerhat Sadar Police Station. A case of murder and robbery has been filed with the police station. However, a rape case is yet to be filed, said the OC, adding, "It is now under process and the police high officials are looking into the whole

matter."

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) is investigating the matter under the supervision of the Home Ministry Monitoring Cell. Many high officials including Additional Inspector General of CID police Ashraf Huda went to the spot yesterday.

According to Swapan and police, at least 10 armed men entered their house at around 3:00am through the kitchen. Hearing the footsteps, Tapan's wife woke her husband up and Tapan went to the kitchen to see

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AL extends support 11-party calls hartal today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The left leaning 11 party alliance has called a dawn to dusk hartal today across the country to protest the price hike of essentials and oil, passage of indemnity law, possible US attack on Iraq, and to resist export of gas.

The leaders of the alliance called upon the people to observe the hartal peacefully and make it a success.

Different left leaning political parties brought out processions in the city yesterday in support of the hartal.

The Jatya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) brought out a procession yesterday afternoon.

When the procession came to the zero point, police intercepted and baton-charged the procession, leaving 30 leaders and activists of the party injured. JSD leaders

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JS passes bill to cut govt control on BB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatya Sangsad yesterday passed three bills including one proposing formation of a Monetary and Fiscal Policies Coordination Council to lessen government's control on the Bangladesh Bank.

The two other bills aim at further strengthening the role of Bangladesh Bank and bringing about necessary reforms in the banking sector.

State Minister for Finance Shah Mohammad Abul Hossain on March 5 introduced the bills styled The Bangladesh Bank (Amendment) Bill 2003, The Bangladesh Bank (Nationalisation) (Amendment) Bill 2003 and The Bank Company (Amendment) Bill

2003.

Finance and Planning Minister Saifur Rahman sought their passage yesterday.

Opposition Awami League and Jatya Party opposed passage of the bills without detailed discussion on those in parliamentary standing committees. The bills were passed by voice vote.

The finance minister termed the government initiative a timely approach for reforms and hoped this will bring dynamism in the banking sector.

A statement on the objectives of the Bangladesh Bank (Amendment) Bill 2003 says it provides for autonomy to the Bangladesh Bank to take decisions as per need.

The bill provides for establish-

ing a Monetary and Fiscal Policies Coordination Council so that the government's macroeconomic framework is reflected in the central bank's policy.

The proposed council, to be headed by the finance minister, will comprise six members and coordinate fiscal, monetary and exchange rate policies.

The Commerce Minister, Governor of Bangladesh Bank, Secretary of Finance Division, Secretary of Internal Resources Division and Member (Programming) of the Planning Commission will be its other members.

In the bill the central bank govern

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Rajuk builds walkway to save shrinking lake

JULHAS RIPON

The Rajdhani Unnayan Kortripokkho (Rajuk) is building a six-foot-wide walkway along the embankment of the Gulshan-Banani-Baridhara Lake in an attempt to halt further encroachment.

Owners of lakeside land have been asked to give up five feet of their plots to enable the Tk 40 lakh path to be built.

Top Rajuk officials admit that they have become "totally confused" by the endless disputes over building in and around the lake, and hope the walkway will act as a clear demarcation line.

To meet concerns raised by the Gulshan Society whose members fear the 12,000-foot walkway will attract hundreds of squatters protective walls will be built where the path meets main roads.

In addition, an order has been issued for removal of illegal earth infills. Rajuk Chairman Iqbaluddin

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PHOTO: STAR

Construction of a six-foot wide walkway along the Gulshan-Banani-Baridhara Lake is underway to check encroachment. The walkway has been designed to draw a demarcation line between the embankment of the lake and residential plots.

Blair faces cabinet revolt

AFP, London

British Prime Minister Tony Blair will suffer a number of government resignations if he joins a US-led war against Iraq without UN Security Council backing, Britain's Sunday newspapers said.

Five members of Blair's Labour government, including three aides to cabinet ministers, told The Sunday Telegraph they would resign if he went to war without the UN Security Council first passing a second resolution authorising military action.

The Sunday Times said as many as 10 cabinet ministers could resign, adding that up to half of Labour's members of parliament (MPs) are set to back a rebel motion attacking Blair's push to war.

"If we don't have a second resolution I would resign," Andy Reed, an aide to Environment Secretary Margaret Beckett, told The Sunday Telegraph.

Anne Campbell, aide to Trade Secretary Patricia Hewitt, also promised to step down, as did Ken

Purchase, aide to Robin Cook, leader of the House of Commons.

"I have taken the view that I would find it very difficult to support the government unless there is a proper UN resolution. If it came to war without that I would have to quit," Campbell told the Telegraph.

Purchase told The Mail on Sunday: "If the war goes ahead in the face of a UN veto I could not remain a member of the government and I believe others will do the same."

Britain, Spain and the United States are sponsoring a draft UN resolution that sets a March 17 deadline for Iraq to disarm itself of any banned weapons or face war.

It follows Resolution 1441, approved by the UN Security Council in November, that said Iraq must disarm of any weapons of mass destruction it might possess or face unspecified "serious consequences".

The second resolution looks unlikely to pass, however, with three of the five veto-wielding council members -- France, Russia and

China -- opposing it.

The Sunday Times said Blair would face a rebellion by up to 200 Labour MPs if he bypassed the UN.

Last month, the prime minister suffered his biggest ruling party revolt since becoming Britain's leader six years ago, when in a show of anti-war dissent, 121 Labour MPs backed a rebel motion declaring the case for military action, after 12 years of Iraq defying UN demands to disarm, was "as yet unproven".

The motion itself was soundly defeated by a 393-199 parliamentary vote, thanks in good part to solidarity within Blair's cabinet and support from the opposition Conservatives.

But the fact that 121 out of 412 Labour MPs were among the 199 who voted for the motion was a sign of how deeply the party is divided on the crisis.

Meanwhile, The Mail on Sunday said 40,000 paid-up members of the Labour Party, one tenth of its total, have already quit the party over Blair's handling of the Iraq crisis.



Tony Blair

AL to resist gas export ignoring domestic demands

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League will resist the government's any move to export gas through pipeline without meeting domestic demands.

The party will build up resistance with support of all sections of people irrespective of their political affiliations, its Executive Committee resolved at a meeting here yesterday.

Party chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina presided over the meeting, held at its Dhanmondi office, said a press release.

The meeting also condemned the government for not making the appointments of eight High Court judges permanent despite the chief justice's recommendation. It called upon the government to show respect to the judiciary and the recommendation of the chief justice.

In a separate resolution, the meeting protested retrenchment of 3,500 employees and workers from Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC), transfer of government employees and closure of state-owned mills and factories. It demanded immediate re-opening of closed mills and factories.

The party also expressed concern over what it called the deteriorating law and order and price hike of essentials.

It called upon the government to improve the law and order situation and to stop arrest and repression of opposition leaders and workers.

The BNP-Jammat government has created a chaotic situation in the country by resorting to terror-

ism

Visa forgery claiming to be govt officials

REZAUL KARIM

The Canadian High Commission in Dhaka has detected forged documents of two visa seekers who claimed to be government officials.

The documents show that the applicants are officials of the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) under the Ministry of Local Government Rural Development (LGRD) and Cooperatives.

The commission has expressed concern over the forgery in a letter to Foreign Secretary Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury, said highly placed sources yesterday.

First Secretary of the Canadian High Commission Philippe de Varennes said the visa seekers also submitted two introduction letters on the foreign ministry letterhead.

Credentials of the applicants were verified and proved false, he said. "We consider the matter very seriously and would like the ministry to take appropriate action," he said.

According to the documents, Senior Assistant Secretary of the LGRD ministry Zafar Siddique issued an order on January 31 to t

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CEC seeks army for Barisal, Sylhet polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner M A Syed has formally requested the prime minister for deployment of the army in city corporation polls in Sylhet and Barisal.

Following a meeting at the Election Commission (EC) yesterday, the CEC sent the letter to the Prime Minister's Office, requesting the government to deploy the army in the polls in Sylhet and Barisal.

Some candidates from Barisal and Sylhet have also requested the EC to call in the army for peaceful and fair holding of polls on March 20.

But the government is not willing to deploy the troops.

On Saturday, high officials at a law and order review meeting claimed that the situation was satisfactory and troops deployment would not be necessary. But one of them said the army already on duty in the two cities might be called in as a precautionary measure.

It was decided in Saturday's meeting that nine platoons of the BDR in Sylhet and 11 platoons of the BDR in Barisal would be deployed to prevent poll violence. Besides, one magistrate and 25 police personnel and members of ansar, including 14 armed police personnel, will be deployed in every poll centre.

In both the cities, the BNP is grappling with inter-party squabbles. Several candidates were inter-

ested to get the nomination from the ruling party to compete as a mayoral candidate.

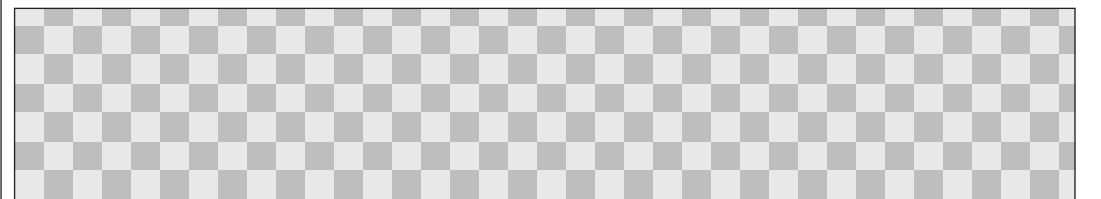
The BNP expelled the former Barisal district BNP president Ahsan Habib Kamal on Friday. Kamal sought nomination from the BNP for the poll, but the party high command nominated Whip of the Jatya Sangsad Mozibur Rahman Sarwar. The expulsion came after his refusal to withdraw his candidature despite request from the BNP high command.

The main opposition Awami League has also demanded deployment of the army to assist the civil administration.



PHOTO: AFP

FORGET ABOUT TOMORROW'S MATCH: India's Yuvraj Singh (R) cracks a joke with Dinesh Mongia at the Wanderers Stadium yesterday. India play Sri Lanka in the Super Sixes today.



Playing for high stakes

REUTERS, Johannesburg

India and Sri Lanka head into Monday's World Cup Super Six game at The Wanderers with an unsettled score to resolve and semifinal qualification at stake.

India's jittery win over Kenya in Cape Town on Friday has put them in pole position to qualify for the last four while Sri Lanka know they need a quick recovery from their

demoralising defeat against Australia.

The last time the two sides met they could not be separated. The final of the Champions Trophy in Colombo in September 2002 started twice but was abandoned both times due to rain before the title was shared.

The teams will thus go into the game with something to prove to each other, but India captain

Saurav Ganguly says the Colombo wash-out will not be uppermost in his players' minds.

"That is in the past," Ganguly said after defeating Kenya. "The World Cup is a much bigger stage. We are almost in the semifinals."

An Indian victory on Monday will guarantee them that.

Defeat for Sri Lanka, meanwhile, will leave them precariously placed. To qualify, they would have to beat Zimbabwe in their final Super Six match in East London and hope Kenya are unable to find a win -- or indeed two points from a washed-out game -- in their next two games.

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TODAY'S MATCH

Super Six
 India vs Sri Lanka
 Venue: Johannesburg

Accused sick, hearing adjourned

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Hearing of the Shaazneen rape case has been adjourned till noon today.

Kazi Rahamat Ullah, Judge of the Second Special Tribunal for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka, adjourned the hearing yesterday as one of the six accused was not produced before the court.

The judge took his seat at 12:15 pm and came to know from the prosecution and the defence lawyers that the accused Parvin -- was not produced in the court. He adjourned the hearing till 2:00 pm and asked the prosecution to talk to Dhaka Central Jail authorities why Parvin was not produced.

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Cancelled PSC test unlikely to be held before July

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cancelled preliminary test of the 24th Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) is unlikely to be held before July, sources in the Public Service Commission (PSC) said.

The PSC is contemplating some special measures to deal with question paper leakage.

The inquiry committee, investigating the question paper leakage, will quiz persons reportedly involved in it today", PSC member Prof. Hasanuzzaman Chowdhury, and also a member of the committee, told The Daily Star yesterday. The committee will also talk to the intelligence personnel, he added.

If there was any leakage of question papers, the culprits,

whoever they might be, must be brought to justice, Prof. Chowdhury said.

The PSC formed a three-member inquiry committee headed by Prof. Mohammad Mohabbat Khan on March 6.

The cancelled test cost the government around Taka 50 lakh, according to a PSC source.

"We are going to adopt some measures to stop leakage of questions", a PSC member said without elaborating.

Sources said the PSC would request the concerned ministry to impose restrictions on the coaching centres that offer BCS preliminary test coaching.

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Two awarded death penalty in UP member murder case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

Two armed cadres of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) have been given death penalty in UP member Tarique Islam murder case.

The judgement was pronounced on Saturday by M R Masud, District and Sessions Judge, Chuadanga.

The convicts are Shohag, 32, and Alam, 40.

According to the prosecution, Tarique Islam, a member of Kutubpur Union Parishad under Chuadanga Sadar upazila, was shot and then slaughtered by some PBCP cadres at 7:00 pm on August 5, 1996.

Police recovered the body from Kutubpur Primary School ground the same night and sent it to hospital morgue for autopsy.

Fazlur Rahman, elder brother of

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