

ATTEMPT TO KILL JOURNO JU authorities file case

JU CORRESPONDENT The authorities of Jahangirnagar University (JU) filed a case accusing some unidentified miscreants who set fire to the room of JU correspondent of the daily Prothom Alo at Al Beruni hall on Wednesday night apparently to kill him.

Though the authorities through a letter intended to file a general diary regarding the incident, the Ashulia Police filed a case considering the seriousness of the incident.

A team of seven police from Ashulia Police Station visited the room of Nur Siddiqui on Thursday night and collected burnt materials as evidence. They also collected addresses of those who rescued Nur and helped dousing the blaze on the night of incident.

The authorities of Al Beruni hall have formed a four-member probe body with Provost Prof Lutful Hai Jami to investigate into the incident. Shikshak Manch, a JU teachers' platform, condemned the incident and demanded punishment to the perpetrators of the crime.

A protest meeting, organised by Bhairab Press Club, was also held at the office of Chokher Alo, a local newspaper, in Kishorogonj yesterday. Different organisations of Rajshahi University in separate statements also condemned the incident while journalists of Bangladesh Agriculture University held a protest meeting in protest against the incident.

The Jahangirnagar University Journalists Association will bring out a silent procession and hold protest meeting demanding punishment to the people involved in the incident.

Over 50 Jubo League men injured in police action

BDNEWS, Laxmipur

More than fifty leaders and activists of the Jubo League (JL) were injured as police attacked its rally at Balua Choumuhani of Ramganj yesterday.

Following the attack agitated Jubo League workers vandalised police vehicles while police fired six round blank shots.

JL leaders and activists said the police swooped on their rally without any provocation at about 11:30 am leaving five persons injured.

The injured are district AL senior vice president Shaiful Islam, joint secretary Syed Mozammel Haq Milan, Ramganj upazila AL president Aljaji Md Shahjahan, general secretary AKM Ruhul Amin and JL leader Arif Hossain.

The Laxmipur district AL leaders condemned the police attack on the rally.

Former outlaw slaughtered in Pabna

BDNEWS, Pabna

An alleged extremist Raja Sarder was slaughtered at Sujanagar upazila of Pabna early yesterday.

Miscreants called him out of his father-in-law's house before they killed him, sources said.

Police said Raja Sarder, son of Mobarak Sarder of Vawdanga village under Pabna Sadar, had long been involved in the extremist politics.

Recently he has left the extremist group and returned to normal life. He married the daughter of Yunus of Challapara under Sujanagar upazila.

As a result, the extremist group he was involved in became furious and killed him, they added.

The body was sent to the Pabna General Hospital Morgue for autopsy. A case was filed with Sujanagar thana in this connection.

Road mishap kills one in Rajbari

UNB, Rajbari

A man was killed and two others sustained injuries when a microbus rammed their motorcycle at Gariana Kalibari in Pangsha upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Chandan Modok, 40, hailed from Gafarganga in Mymensingh district. Injured Sudhangsu Dutta, 41, and Laxman Day, 32, were admitted to Rajbari Sadar Hospital.

Police and witnesses said all the three passengers fell on the road from the bike when the Kushtia-bound microbus knocked down it from behind at about 9am.

The microbus ran over Chandan when the driver hurriedly escaped the scene, leaving him dead on the spot.



Covering their faces with black cloths, members of Garments Sramik Federation form a human chain at Mukttangan in the city yesterday protesting deaths of fellow workers in a devastating fire in Chittagong recently.

Drug abuse in S Asia continue to be serious: UN report

UNB, Dhaka

Lapses in the control of pharmaceutical preparations containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances have led to widespread abuse among all segments of the population."

The main reason, the report said, was the availability of pharmaceutical drugs without prescription. The report also pointed to a shift in drug abuse patterns in India in recent years, from inhaling to injecting drugs.

"India remains the main illicit manufacturer of methaqualone (a sleep-inducing drug). This drug is not only abused in India but also smuggled to other countries, mainly South Africa, its main consumer," the report said.

The UN body also highlighted the increasing menace of drugs smuggled through international mail.

Urging the governments to strengthen national legislation and to screen all routes for incoming and outgoing international mail, the body said the screening process should include the premises of international mail courier companies.

It also recommended limiting the number of entry points for parcels to allow for more effective control of consignments.

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ILLEGAL MIGRATION

Harrowing tales of a victim

PORIMOL PALMA

When Arifur Islam Arif, a youth from Madaripur, began his journey towards Spain three years ago, little did he know that he would end up in the Saharan desert without food and water.

Arif was a student of accounting at Dhaka College in 2003. He once harboured a dream of becoming a chartered accountant, but he had his dream shattered after losing a huge amount of money to 'modern slave traders' who promised him legal migration to Spain.

Arif, now 25, along with 47 others had to return home empty-handed on January 19 after spending three years in the hot Sahara region.

His ordeals began when he tried to go to Spain for a better future.

Persuaded by a friend, Arif visited a travel agent at Moltijheel in January 2003 who assured him of arranging a direct travel to Spain, saying that "Once you go to Spain, you need not think of your future any longer."

Karim (not his real name), the travel agent, then demanded a total of Tk 8 lakh -- Tk 2 lakh in advance and the remaining can be paid after his arriving in Spain.

Arif paid the advance money, but two months later, the travel agent demanded Tk 1.5 lakh more for air ticket. A few days later, Karim told Arif that he has to fly to Morocco first from where Spain is only 15 minutes away by speedboat.

But the ticket Karim handed over to Arif was of Mali. "Spain is only an hour away from Mali," Arif quoted the agent as saying. Karim again charged him Tk 1.5 lakh, saying that it is an easier route.

After all the preparations, Arif began his travel taking Dhaka-Dubai-Casablanca-Mali route and reached Mali airport after three days, but he did not have to go through any visa checking.

"Later, I realised that the visa was fake and the human smugglers have very close links with the immi-

gration authorities in Mali and many other countries," Arif told The Daily Star.

Arif was then taken to a three-room flat where about 70 Bangladeshi youths have already been staying. A few days later, some were sent to Spain as their agents paid the Malian agent, Mostafa, a good amount, Arif said.

"But when I asked Mostafa about my case, he said my agent in Dhaka did not pay him off. Then I contacted my brother in Dhaka who paid Tk 3.5 lakh to another agent Sohel (not his real name) as Karim told my brother that Sohel has better relationship with Mostafa."

But nothing worked for him. It also could not be known whether Sohel sent the money to Mostafa. "We were literally hostage to the whims of international syndicate of human smugglers," Arif said.

One and a half years in Mali During their stay in Mali, the 70 Bangladeshi youths were treated inhumanly. Mostafa kept all their passports in his possession so that they could not escape.

They were given only 1.5 kilograms of beef and some vegetables every day, far short of their needs. The foodstuffs can meet the demand of only 20 people. Many had to subsist only on water for a few days at a stretch as they failed to give money to Mostafa, says Arif.

"Mostafa extorted money from us in any way possible. He forced us to contact our relatives living in Europe and ask for money. Then he used his passport to collect the money through Western Union."

Arif said his brother from Italy sent 100 Euro a month using Mostafa's passport. Those who did not have close relatives in Europe were asked to contact distant relatives. Otherwise, they had to go without food.

Mostafa's men also prevented other flat members who were able to pay from sharing their meals with those starving, he added.

He got a few chances to go to

markets with Mostafa's men. Arif said, adding that he met at least 10 Bangladeshis outside who also lived like them in several flats in the West African state.

Arif said he thinks that about 1500 Bangladeshis were staying illegally in that country where many people are engaged in racketeering, smuggling and human trafficking in connivance with the police administration.

Following repeated appeals by the victims, Mostafa came up with a suggestion -- they either can return home or go to Spain by paying Tk 1.5 lakh more. "We chose the second option as we thought returning home after spending a huge amount will be a disaster for us," Arif said. Forty-six of them then managed to pay with the help from their relatives.

Real tragedy begins The journey towards the dreamland began on March 15 in 2005 as three pick-up vans carrying the 46 youths made their way through a vast desert with 40 degree Celsius during day and 2 degrees during night.

After crossing more than 8,000 km sandy and rocky path in 14 days, the vehicles escorted by four armed Malian members of the smugglers' gang pulled up at a place 500 km away from the Moroccan border.

"The seats were water drums on the vans that ran at a 90 km speed. After one and a half days' race, we had some time to cook and eat. After seven days the food supplies were running short. So, we ate very little and once a day. But we were hard hit by acute water shortage," Arif recalled the horrific journey.

After the vehicles pulled up, the four gang members handed over the exhausted youths to six Moroccan gang members fully covered with black clothes who then drove them to the border (about 150 feet high). "Blood came out of noses of many of us due to hot, dry desert winds," Arif says.

The smugglers handed over the youths to two Moroccan border

guards, who were supposed to take them to Spain. "As the guards drove us about 20 km into Morocco at dead of night, a message came over their walkie-talkies, prompting them to speed away, leaving behind all of us on the road," he says, "and we were arrested by Moroccan army."

"We urged the army men to hand us over to the police, but they refused to do so and fired several blank shots, forcing us to run away with only three cans of water," Arif went on. "This was the most terrifying time. With no food and water, we went crazy. Some of us even tried to drink their urine."

After three days of wandering in the wilderness, the group met a Saharan man riding a camel. "When we told him about our plight, he took all of us -- two by two in turn -- to a tent, 10 kilometres away from there. He also gave us some food and took us to a camp of rebels in the desert," Arif said. The rebels had been fighting for separation from Morocco.

With the help of camel rider Salama, they started living in a house made of baked mud and tin. During their ten-month stay there, they used to break stones, make bricks and clean camps, Arif added. In the meantime, two more Bangladeshis joined the group.

Fortunately, a Bangladeshi peacekeeper, Major Abdur Razzak, who had been posted at a UN camp just 25 km away from their house came to know about the group and visited them.

He then contacted Major Mamun, another Bangladeshi peacekeeper, who, in turn, communicated with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in Geneva, which helped them to return home.



Sex Workers Network of Bangladesh takes out a procession in the city yesterday to press for their 11-point demand.

Sex workers place 11-point demand to resolve their problems

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sex workers at a rally yesterday placed an 11-point demand to resolve their various problems.

These include stopping forced eviction from brothels, arrangement of alternative income and ensuring healthcare facilities for sex workers.

They also demanded proper education of their children to discourage them from joining the profession, raising the issue of trafficking at different forums and creating awareness about their human rights.

Sex workers from Dhaka and Narayanganj organised the rally under the banner of Sex workers Network of Bangladesh at the

Central Shaheed Minar in the city. "We want to live in the society as women and human being, not as sex workers because we were forced to join the profession under various circumstances," said Noori (not her real name).

Betrayed by her husband, she engaged herself in sex trade to survive with a girl child who is still in dark about her mother's profession.

While reading in class nine Noori left home with Mostafa, a garment worker, without the consent of her parents and later came to know that the man already had a wife living at his village home.

"I could not help but divorce the man who married two more women after her marriage, and started to

work as a floating sex worker to avoid death from starvation," said Noori.

The case of Rani is, however, a little bit different as she came to Dhaka from Narsinghdi as a domestic help.

She fell in love with a neighbour who was later found to be a broker of sex worker.

He forced her to sell sex with others.

Rani is now working in a project of Durjoy Nari Sangha named 'Empowerment of sex workers' and earning nearly Tk 3,500 leaving her past profession.

"I will get a loan of Tk 2 lakh from the organisation soon and set up a boutique shop to be self-dependent," she said.

Rani said different non-government organisations have stopped funding clinics to provide treatment to sex workers which has increased the possibility of spreading sexually transmitted diseases.

The rally was also addressed by President of Durjoy Nari Sangha Shahnaz Begum, Organising Secretary of Sex Workers Network Kajol and President of Ulka Nari Sangha Parul.

HARUN MURDER CASE Reinvestigation demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Speakers at a discussion yesterday demanded reinvestigation of the murder case of journalist Shaikh Harun-ar-Rashid as all the chargesheeted accused were acquitted by the court due to lack of evidence.

The discussion was held at Khulna Press Club on the occasion of his fourth death anniversary with club President Alhaj Liaquat Ali in the chair.

The speakers accused the investigation officer of submitting a weak charge sheet that helped three accused get acquittal.

Khulna Divisional Special Trial Tribunal Judge Md Abdus Samad pronounced the verdict of the case on February 7 acquitting chargesheeted accused Shahin, Moktar Hossain Baby and Amjad Hossain alias Kala Amjad.

The speakers also recalled Harun's courage in reporting against crime and violence for which he was gunned down on March 3, 2002.

Later, a milad mahfil was held at the press club.

Asian art show begins tomorrow

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The month-long 12th Biennale Asian Art Exhibition organised by Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy begins in the capital tomorrow.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is expected to inaugurate the exhibition as the chief guest at the Osmani Memorial Hall.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs Begum Selima Rahman will also be present at the function.

Obituary



Saleha Begum, wife of late Alhaj Adel Uddin Ahmed, the last zemindar of Utrail Shibchar, Madaripur, passed away in Dhaka on

February 2 at the age of 98, says a press release.

Her kulkhwani will be held at House # 109, Road # 17, Sector # 14, Uttara toady.

She was the grandmother of Syeed Ahmed Chowdhury, a staff at the advertisement section of The Daily Star.

Alhaj ABM Kalim Ullah

Alhaj Moulavi ABM Kalim Ullah, former chairman of Adra Union Parishad, Langolkot, Comilla, passed away at his home on February 25 at the age of 95, says a press release.

He is survived by his wife, four sons, five daughters and a number of grandchildren.



Members of the first female team, who planned to go trekking Keokradong, the highest mountain peak of the country, on March 5 to mark the International Women's Day, pose for photograph at a press conference in the city yesterday.

3D edn software to be launched soon

BDNEWS, Dhaka

A 3D Multimedia Education Software (MES), prepared in line with the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), is going to be introduced soon in the country for the first time to help raise the teaching quality.

SS Business Corporation Limited (SSBCL), an education consulting firm, disclosed this at a pre-launch demonstration programme, attended by about 200 teachers from different schools and colleges, at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city.

The MES has been developed using a variety of media, including

text, graphics, animation, video, sound and speech, to present information in an efficient manner to the students and teachers, said Sumon Talukder, managing director of SSBCL.

Ravi Ram Swami of the Academy for Computer Training Private Ltd of India, which has developed the software, said the MES would help the students understand the critical topics, as they would be able to see the problems repeatedly like a CD or DVD movie.

"This is an excellent move. Both students and teachers will benefit from the software," said Shajahan Kabir, assistant headmaster of South

Muhsendi Girls' High School.

"We will be able to show multimedia presentation on all topics of all subjects with the help of this software," said Rokhsana Parvin of an English medium school.

The software titled 'Eureka' covered science and mathematics subjects entirely as per the syllabus of primary and higher secondary schools, prescribed by the NCTB for both Bangla and English medium.

Ravi said one teacher could teach both science and mathematics easily with the MES in the schools of rural areas where there is a serious dearth of quality teachers.

WEATHER TODAY Dry weather likely UNB, Dhaka Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country during the next 24 hours as of 6:00pm today. Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period, Met Office said in a forecast. Yesterday's highest temperature of 33.5 degree Celsius was recorded at Cox's Bazar and the lowest of 16.3 degrees at Rangpur. The sun sets in the capital at 6:03pm and rises at 6:17am tomorrow. The highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

BSF abducts Bangladeshi woman

BDNEWS, Kurigram

Border Security Force of India (BSF) allegedly abducted a Bangladeshi woman on Thursday from Rajibpur border under Kurigram district, BDR sources said yesterday.

The abducted woman was identified as Manowara (40). The BDR urged BSF to hand over the women immediately.

DHAKA TODAY BFUJ Council The biennial council session of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) will be held with Barrister Jamiruddin Sarker, speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad, as chief guest. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:30am. BLAST seminar Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services (BLAST) organises a seminar on 'Relocation of garment factories and problems of the owners'. Venue: Cirdap auditorium. Time: 3:00pm. Seminar on CNG Rahimafrooz organises a seminar on 'CNG-The Future Fuel'. Venue: Spectra Convention Centre. Time: 11:00am. Rotary Dhaka Central The regular meeting of Rotary Club of Dhaka Central will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club. Time: 1:30pm. Seminar on Bengal Partition Bangladesh Iltash Parishad will hold its annual seminar on 'Hundred Years of Partition of Bengal'. Venue: TSC, DU. Time: 9:30am. View exchange The daily Deshbanla organises a view exchange meeting on 'The rational inclusion of HIV/Aids in the text books' with Prof Mozaffar Ahmed as chief guest. Venue: Khwaja Nijam Auditorium, Reporters' Unity. Time: 2:30am. Alhaj ABM Kalim Ullah Alhaj Moulavi ABM Kalim Ullah, former chairman of Adra Union Parishad, Langolkot, Comilla, passed away at his home on February 25 at the age of 95, says a press release. He is survived by his wife, four sons, five daughters and a number of grandchildren. Chehlum Chehlum of Shamsul Islam Khan, a lawmaker from Manikganj-4 constituency and former industries minister, will be held at his ancestral home at Charigram in Sigair, Manikganj today, says a press release. He passed away on January 22. Also, chehlum of his elder brother Shakhauddin Khan, who passed away on January 27, will be held at the same place on the day. Shakhauddin was a noted footballer. Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to attend the chehlum.