

Sammilito Sangskritik Jote team meets Hasina

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged all concerned including cultural activists to forge strong resistance against those who are out to create an unstable situation in the country, reports BSS.

She was talking to a 12-member delegation of Sannik Sangskritik Jote at her office.

Led by president of the jote Ramendu Mazumdar, the delegation condemned the bomb attack on Uddi function at Jessore and Kazi Aref killing at Kushtia. They urged the Prime Minister to find out the persons responsible for these heinous incidents and bring them to book. They thanked Sheikh Hasina for making all possible arrangements for the treatment of the injured persons of the Jessore bomb blast.

Sheikh Hasina told the delegation that immediately after hearing the bomb incident at Jessore, she directed all government agencies including the army field hospital to take measures for treatment and rescue of the injured people.

The other members of the delegation were Sanjida Khatun, Akbar, Asaduzzaman Noor, Mamunur Rashid, Ataur Rahman, Rafiqunnabi, Naisuruddin Yusuf, Laila Hasan, Liakat Ali Lucky, Mofidul Haque and Golam Qudus.

Jubo Dal leader stabbed in police custody

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Mar 22: A local Jubo Dal leader was stabbed allegedly by police in custody at Boalia thana this afternoon.

Relatives of the Jubo Dal leader Sultan, 28, said, police arrested Sultan from Dargapara area this noon and took him to Boalia thana. He was beaten and later stabbed on the belly allegedly by some policemen. He was shifted immediately to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital in a critical condition.

PM's political secy redesignated

By Staff Correspondent

The position of political secretary to the Prime Minister has been redesignated as "speech writer", a PID handout said Sunday night.

The handout said that the position of political secretary having the rank of State Minister/Deputy Minister will now be transformed to that of "Speech Writer".

Dr S A Malek would continue to hold his position as Political Adviser to the Prime Minister with the rank and status of a full minister.

FEJB Award to be introduced

The Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) in its 15th annual general meeting (AGM) yesterday stressed the need for immediate programmes to mitigate the environmental hazards like lead polluted air in the cities and arsenic contaminated groundwater in Bangladesh, reports BSS.

The AGM also decided to introduce FEJB Award for environmental reporting, photography and writings.

Held at the National Press Club, the meeting was presided over by FEJB chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury.

FEJB general secretary Bakhtiar Rana presented the general secretary's report and Hasan Haliz presented the treasurer's report in the AGM.

FEJB vice-chairman Gazur Rahman, founder member Mashir Hossain, Shehabuddin Ahmed Nafa, Khondker Monirul Alam, Syed Akhter Yusuf, Nurul Huda, Sarwar Jahan, Sheikh Enamul Huq, Rosy Ferdous, DK Fuad Hasani, Mohammad Quamruzzaman and Lutfor Rahman Binu took part in the discussion on reports of general secretary and treasurer.

Bathing festival at Langalbandh March 24, 25

NARAYANGANJ, Mar 22: The holy bathing festival and mela (fair) of the Hindu community will be held at Langalbandh on March 24 and 25, reports BSS.

Thousands of Hindu devotees of all ages from home and abroad will perform the holy bathing in the Shitalakshya River at historical Langalbandh under Bandar Thana and take part in the fair.

JU holiday Mar 24- Apr 1

By JU Correspondent
Classes and offices at Jahangirnagar University (JU) will remain closed from tomorrow to April 1 on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha and Independence and National Day, official sources said.

The examinations scheduled during this time will however be held as per schedule, the sources added.

New envoys to Egypt, Thailand appointed

The government has appointed Sirajul Islam, a Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador to Egypt, reports AP.

Islam, a career diplomat, has served country's various missions abroad in different capacities.

Suhrah Hossain, a Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, now posted in the Prime Minister's Office, has been appointed Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand.

Projonma's demand

By Staff Correspondent

Projonma 71, an organisation of the children of the martyrs of the Liberation War demanded trial of a section of so-called intellectuals who has been misguiding the young generation by distorting the history of independence.

Addressing a press conference at the National Press Club on Saturday, Saidur Rahman, the founder President of Projonma 71 said that the youths should be protected from such misguided elements who are making use of the Liberation War for their personal gains.

Good governance

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The Budget Cycle as an instrument of accountability: The South Asian Experience.

In his presentation, Dr Langdon noted that the Parliament should not collude with the executive branch of the government. But it should contribute to making the administrative wing truly accountable to the people. He defined the budgeting process as one to reflect priorities of the society and to bring about a social change.

He felt the Parliament has an important role to play in the process of budgeting but found the parliament in South Asia is unable to get effectively involved with the planning process. "There is no accountability at the planning level of the budget and also there is limited financial reporting (in the newspapers) on the issue."

Dr Langdon made some recommendations to address the problem. They include enforcing accountability in all areas of the budgeting process, ensuring openness and free flow of information about different phases of the budget cycle, identifying the problem areas and dealing with those, allowing civil society groups to provide for a check and balance and the relevant parliamentary committees to review the draft budget.

Akhtaruzzaman, MP and Prof Muzaffar Ahmad of Bangladesh, Senator Aftab Sheikh of Pakistan, Rabindra Chakrabarti, MP and Shree Bhadrin Sharma of Nepal discussed on the keynote paper.

They were of the view that the budget process in different countries in South Asia lacked transparency. On many occasions, they noted, governments in these countries exercised their discretionary powers to bring about changes in the budgetary measures even after those were adopted by their parliaments.

The MPs should act responsibly and efficiently and lessen their dependency on the bureaucrats to ensure transparency in the process of formulating and passing the budget, they added.

It was noted that Bangladesh's budgets were too lengthy to the supplementary sections and there was a little access to the whole process of the budget formulation. In other South Asian countries, the process was kept secret and the ministers were authorised to change the budget even after it was finalised.

They suggested an effective role by the MPs in ensuring proper budgetary allocations and their expenditures, and felt that the parliamentarians be rightly educated on their duties.

MPs from Pakistan Shafiqat Mahmud and Syed Naveed Gami, Indian economist Ravi Kathpalia and Sri Lankan researcher Sundari de Alwis were among those who spoke on the deliberation by the auditor general of Bangladesh.



WHEN IS THIS GOING TO END? Traffic jams on the road leading from Dainik Bangla Square in Motijheel area to Paltan Square seem to be have become a regular pattern for almost the everyday. This has become a regular harassment for the drivers on this road who have to spend a miserably long period in the scorching midday heat. This snap was taken from the area yesterday noon.

—Star photo by SK Enamul Haque

Dhaka Sheraton launches SPG facility for journalists

By Staff Correspondent

Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, a brand hotel of the Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide Inc, will launch the Starwood Press Club Programme for journalists to offer them 50 per cent discount on rooms and 25 per cent discount on food and beverage at 600 hotels around the globe.

San Amalan, General Manager of Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, said this at a press conference while launching Starwood Preferred Guest (SPG) programme yesterday. The programme has been introduced with a view to make it the most frequented guest programme in the world.

With the launching of SPG programme, Dhaka Sheraton has become the only hotel in Bangladesh to offer guests such a choice of Starwood's which has a network of more than 600 hotels around the globe and more than 20 international airlines.

"The customer who spends at least ten dollars earns two points for his single dollar. But with an special offer upto May 31, a person will earn four points for each dollar," Amalan said.

He said with these points, the members can enjoy free nights across the globe, free flights, room upgrades and other facilities.

All active members of Sheraton Club International and Westin Premier will be automatically enrolled in SPG.

Membership is free and open to all. Amalan said adding that the purpose of SPG is to increase revenue and stays at any of the six participating hotels while building customer loyalty through personal recognition, benefits and rewards for staying at Starwood Hotels and Resorts.

All the hotels in Starwood portfolio of six brands of distinctive hotels worldwide such as Westline Hotels and Resorts, Sheraton Hotels and Resorts, The Luxury Collection, Four Points Hotels, W Hotels and Caesars are participating in this programme.

7 to die for killing child

PIROJPUR, Mar 22: A court here today sentenced seven people to death with fine in the sensational Shithil Murder Case, reports UNB.

The convicts are: Ashok Saha, Sekender Ali, Nur Khan, Saijuddin, Eskandar, Billal Hossain and Shamsul Haq. Of them, Billal and Shamsul were tried in absentia.

Additional District and Sessions Judge SMA Rouf, in his verdict, fined convict Ashok with Tk five lakh and others with Tk 50,000 each.

The judge directed the government to realise the money from movable and immovable property of the convicted people before executing the capital punishment.

The court also asked them to give 75 per cent of the money to the victim's father as token compensation and the rest 25 per cent to the government fund for meeting the expense of the case.

The brief case story was that Shithil, 5, only son of District Bar Association member advocate Ratan Lal, was kidnapped and killed by the convicts inside the Maternity Hospital on December 9, 1996.

Reception accorded to freshers of JU English dept

By JU Correspondent

Freshers of the 27th batch (year 1997-98) of Department of English at Jahangirnagar University (JU) were accorded a reception on Saturday.

Organised at the seminar room of the central auditorium of the university, the reception ceremony was presided over by Ahmed Reza, chairman of the department. Pro-Vice Chancellor of JU Prof Abdul Bayes was present as the chief guest while Registrar Mohammad Ali was present as special guest.

The reception was followed by a cultural function performed by the students of the department.

Kabita Club discussion tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

A discussion on the writings of Poet Azizur Rahman Aziz will be held at the National Museum Agrani Bank auditorium at 5:30 pm tomorrow, says a press release.

Organised by Bangladesh Kabita Club, the programme will be attended by Prof Anisuzzaman, Poet Muhammad Nurul Huda, Rahat Khan, Dr Syed Anwar Hossain, Shamsuzzaman Khan, Rashid Haider, Rafiq Azad, Asad Chowdhury, Kaiyum Chowdhury, Ramendu Mojunder, Asaduzzaman Noor, Nasir Uddin Yousuf and Dr Masuduzzaman.

Renowned vocalists Subir Nandi, Shaheen Samad, Ferdous Ara, Rafiqul Alam, Abida Sultana and Baby Nazneen will render songs composed by Azizur Rahman following the discussion.

Fire at UNICEF office at Rangamati

RANGAMATI, Mar 22: Fire gutted the documents and furniture of the local UNICEF office in Kaokhali thana on Sunday night, reports UNB.

Police said the fire broke out at 1:30 am extinguished automatically burning the office in absence of fire brigade unit.

Police, however, could not confirm the reason behind the fire as there was neither electricity nor any oven in the office.

Rally of cultural activists begin tomorrow

By DU Correspondent

A two-day long cultural rally to create mass awareness about the recent rise of the religious extremists in the country begins at the Bangladesh Shishu Academy premises tomorrow.

This was disclosed at a press conference by a group of renowned cultural activists who believe in the spirit of the Liberation War at the academy yesterday afternoon. The cultural rally is part of a massive cultural programme to be launched across the country very soon, they said.

The cultural rallies will include songs based on the Liberation War, poetry recitation, folk songs, screening of films and a photo exhibition. Eminent cultural activists across the country will take part in the programme scheduled to begin at 3 pm and end at 10 pm on both days.

"We are launching the programme with a view to making the countrymen more conscious about these religious fanatics and resist their threat to peace in the society," said veteran artist Abul Khayer.

Expressing grave concern over the recent killings of a political leader and cultural activists, he said that religious extremists cannot be resisted if all does not unite against them.

Addressing the conference, actor Pijus Bandopadhyay said a vested quarter was conspiring to retard the ongoing democratic process and peaceful atmosphere of the country. He urged all concerned including the pro-liberation forces and cultural activists to join the rally. Pijus also urged the government to take effective measures to ensure security of political leaders, intellectuals and cultural activists.

Among others Afroza Banu, Shahidul Islam Sachchu, Nasima Haque, Morshedul Islam, Tarek Mahmud, Khurshed Kabir and Ruhul Kuddus Kajal were present at the press conference.

Jamaat threatens oust-govt movement

Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday threatened to launch vigorous oust-government movement if the government failed to fulfil the opposition demands, reports UNB.

"Create congenial atmosphere for local body election by fulfilling the four-point demands of the opposition or announce midterm polls dissolving the parliament," Matur Rahman Nizami, Secretary General of Jamaat, asked the government at a public meeting at the city's Muktangan in the afternoon.

"This parliament has totally failed to materialise the peoples' expectation as the government made it ineffective," Nizami told the rally.

He said, law and order situation in the country deteriorated alarmingly and the government failed to ensure the security and safety of the people.

Terming the government as a "terrorist" one, he said, the ruling party leaders and activists are themselves engaged in violence to curb the opposition movement.

Road link with Ctg snapped for two hours

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Mar 22: Train and road communications between Chittagong and other parts of the country remained snapped for two hours from 11 am today when workers put up a barricade at Kumira point at Sitakundu industrial belt, police said.

The agitating workers of Kasem Jute Mills put up the barricade on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway and railway track to press home their demands for festival bonus and other dues, police added.

Later, with the intervention of police the barricade was removed at 1 pm today restoring communication.

Tk 47 lakh donation for NGOs

The British High Commissioner to Bangladesh, David Walker CMG CVO, presented cheques amounting to a total of Tk 47 lakh seven thousand to six non-government organisations (NGOs) yesterday, says a press release.

The recipient organisations were Samaj Paribarban Kendra (SPK), Development Society (DS), Rural Organisation of Health and Environment (ROHE), Shingher Khajura Basubhara Samajkalyan Samity (SIBAS), Jano Sheba Kendra (JSK) and Sheba Artha Samajik Ummayan Sangstha (SASUS).

The British High Commission funding will help these NGOs to implement a number of development programmes aimed at income generation for women. The ROHE's is an environmental project focussing on pollution of Dhaka city.

Office-bearers of Shibchar Thana Samity elected

By Staff Correspondent

Engineer Syed Mosharaf Hossain and Moshleh Alam Chowdhury were reelected president and general secretary respectively of the Shibchar Thana Samity at its biannual election held at Dr Milan Hall of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University recently.

Other office-bearers of the committee are vice presidents Lutfor Rahman Khan, AK Noor Mohammad, Abdul Haq, AKM Shahjahan Mia and Abdus Salam Mia, joint secretary Abdus Samad Mia and Dr Kazi Nazrul Islam, organising secretary Chowdhury Badiuzzaman, publicity secretary Majibur Rahman, education secretary Abdul Hamid Moral, treasurer SM Salam and social welfare secretary Sheikh Salauddin Ahmed.

The samity also decided to bring out a souvenir titled "prottya" shortly. Interested persons from Shibchar thana have been asked to send write ups to the samity office of 60/D, Gulshan (South), Road 131, Dhaka 1212. Interested people may also contact the office-bearer of samity over phone no. 601014, the press release said.

Holzman: Gas export

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International Affairs at CIRDAP auditorium. Director of BILIA Ambassador Waliur Rahman and Barrister Amirul Islam also spoke, among others.

"However, I am confident that the Prime Minister and the Opposition Leader were probably focusing less on export and more on the central issue, which is how to transform natural gas, trapped in underground reservoirs for millions of years, into more and higher paying jobs for Bangladesh men and women, more and better schools for the nation's children; and improved health and nutrition for all Bangladeshis."

"Any consideration of the future of the gas industry in Bangladesh should include the possibilities of exporting Bangladesh gas to India, and of transporting Indian gas, for a fee, from Assam and Tripura through a Bangladesh pipeline to India," the envoy suggested. "These are sensitive issues but they should not be excluded from a debate and should be argued on their economic merits."

Holzman said the US Geological Survey is conducting a worldwide resource survey, which will include the Brahmaputra Basin. The results, which will begin to be available in the coming months, can serve as an indicator of Bangladesh's potential natural gas resource base.

"Gas in the ground is not wealth; it is only a potential asset that must be converted into economic goods that can be bought and sold. For it to become a marketable good, some one must risk the capital to discover the gas, develop the field and put in place the associated infrastructure."

"In the past several years, foreign companies have invested about 600 million dollars in exploring and partially developing a few gasfields in Bangladesh and in constructing two gas treatment plants."

They were taking high risk in investing in the oil and gas sector. When they discover gas, they expect to get their return fast, Holzman said.

He said Bangladesh's domestic consumption was already ensured by the current gas reserve for the next 15 to 20 years and if the country did not allow gas export, foreign investors would feel discouraged to invest in Bangladesh seeing

lesser prospects. "India has a huge economy with a growing appetite for energy," he said. "Bangladesh has a comparative advantage (relative to other neighbours of India) that could work to this nation's benefit."

Giving some statistics on Bangladesh's gas reserve, he said the country has a proven gas reserve of around 10 tcf and an unannounced reserve of more than 5.5 tcf. The country can go on for the next 45 years with this gas reserve at the present rate of consumption and if a 10 per cent annual growth in consumption is considered, it can go on for 17 years. He thought that it was a good reserve.

Replying to a question, the ambassador said that he did not have the statistics on the per capita gas consumption rate in Bangladesh nor the per capita consumption rate which would be catalyst to the country's economic take off.

A participant in the seminar asked Holzman if it was right to suggest gas export at a time when Bangladesh itself did not have adequate gas-based power and fertilisers.

Another participant warned against taking any hasty decision on such a politically sensitive issue.

6 killed in Moulvibazar road accident

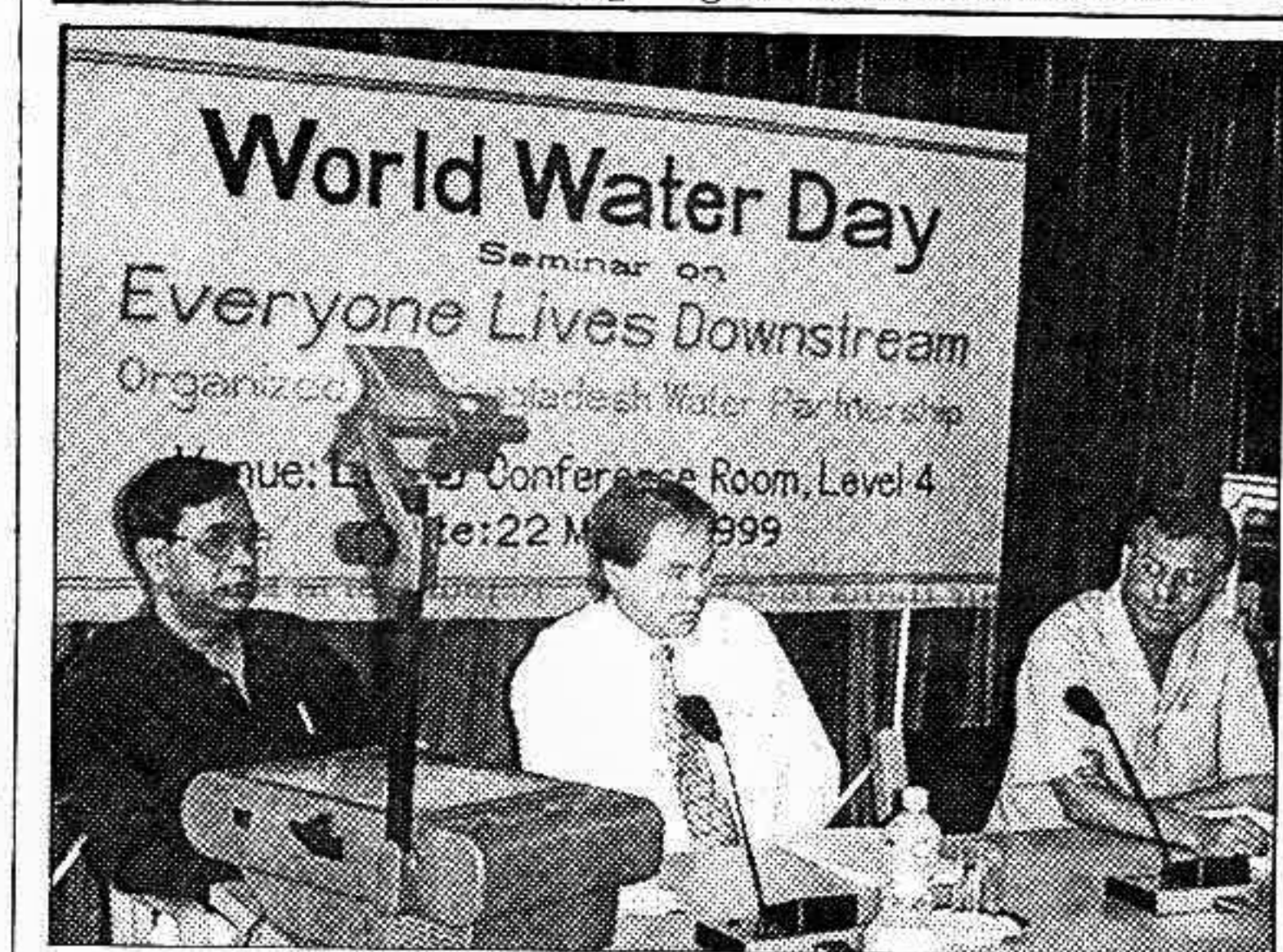
From Our Correspondent

MOULVIBAZAR, Mar 22: Six people were killed when an autorickshaw and truck collided head on near Moulvibazar town today.

The Sylhet-bound truck hit the Moulvibazar-bound autorickshaw at village Koshba on the Sylhet-Dhaka highway, police said.

Four people died on the spot while two others succumbed to injuries on way to hospital. All the victims were passengers of the autorickshaw.

The dead were identified as Bakul Kumar Baidya, 27, of village Trailakhya, Bijo, Kamru Miah, 35, of village Radhanagar, Mohabbat Miah, 65, of village Baranti, Abdur Rouf Rupi, 28, of village Kamalpur, Rabbani Miah of village Baranti and 5-year-old grandson of Rabbani Miah.



A seminar based on "Everyone Lives Downstream" was held at the LGED Bhawan yesterday. The seminar was organised by the Bangladesh Water Partnership. Seen in the picture are from left: Touhidul Anwar Khan, key note speaker, Anders Johnson, Swedish Ambassador to Bangladesh and the chief guest, Quamrul Islam Siddique, Chief Engineer, LGED.

Seminar on 'Everyone Lives Downstream' held

By DU Correspondent

Bangladesh Water Partnership (BWP), held a seminar on "Everyone Lives Downstream" at the LGED Bhawan yesterday in observance of the world Water Day. The keynote speaker of the seminar was Touhidul Anwar Khan, Director General WAPRO and member secretary, BWP, expressed concern at the growing decrease of natural dry season flows of the transboundary rivers, says a press release.

Khan mentioned in his paper that this decrease of dry season flows caused, ruinous impacts on the hydrology, river morphology, agriculture, domestic and municipal water supply, fishing, forestry, industry, navigation, public health and bio diversity. Khan observed in his paper that of the total water used in Bangladesh 90% is for agriculture. About 73% of the water used comes from ground water. In recent years an alarming situation has arisen as ground water acquires have become contaminated with arsenic.

JCD protests ransacking of DUCSU bldg

By DU Correspondent

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), the student wing of BNP yesterday protested the incident of ransacking the DUCSU building on Saturday.

A faction of the ruling party backed Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) went on a rampage and damaged furniture and window panes of the DUCSU building as their men were not included in the new committee of BCL DU unit.

Condemning the incident, JCD brought out a procession of the Dhaka University campus and held a rally in front of the DUCSU building at noon. The leaders accused BCL leaders and activists for the incident and demanded an exemplary punishment of those responsible.

Presided over by Manir Hossain, the JCD rally was addressed, among others, by Monjur Elahi, ABM Mosharaf Hossain and Rehana Akhter Ranu.

Shazneen

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sons — domestic help Shahid, contractor Hasan, supervisor Badal, carpenter Shani Ram, guard Humayun Kabir, maids — Parveen and Minu. Of the accused, Humayun Kabir died of a cardiac arrest on January 11.

During yesterday's proceedings, lawyers of Badal, Shani Ram and maids Minu and Parveen moved bail petitions on behalf of them. The court, however, did not pass any order regarding the bail prayers.

Following is a brief account of the answers given by Latifur Rahman during the cross examination by the defence lawyer, Mosharraf Hossain, yesterday.

— The party started at 8 pm I saw my daughter last at that time.

— I do not know whether police seized any invitation card.

— I do not know whether any invitation letter was delivered to police.

— I cannot remember whether all the guests came by motor vehicles. But I think all of them came by motor vehicles.

— Some of the vehicles were parked at my residence and some outside.

— I cannot say exactly how many vehicles came between 8 and 10 that night.

— Yes, there were arrangements for food for the drivers of vehicles at the guard room situated at the east end of the main building within the boundary of my residence.

— Two drivers of my residence — Sadek and Ashgar — were in charge of supplying food to the drivers.

— Except the carpenter and Badal, all were busy with their job at my residence during the party time.

— I myself did not check who were in the kitchen at that time. But cook Mannan and his assistant Shahidul were supposed to cook.

— Yes, I had a heart attack in 1992.

— No, I did not become unconscious that night after the killing.

— I was not told directly by any one that Shahid had committed the murder. After the incident, Shahid was missing and a kitchen knife was also missing — considering these things I suspected Shahid had done it.

— I do not remember when did police come after the incident. Probably within two hours after the killing.

— Yes, my wife, the guests, staff and others came to know about the incident. But some 12 carpenters were apparently sleeping.

— I am sorry. I did not invite the carpenters.

— No, I did not explain in the FIR the reason behind suspecting involvement of some other persons along with Shahid in the killing.

At this stage, the defence lawyer asked Latifur Rahman whether the suspecting Shahid was based on three points: that Shahid was missing, a knife was missing and that Shahid hailed from Gopalganj.

In reply, the complainant said "I suspected his involvement on two points — Shahid was missing and a knife was missing. I did not suspect Shahid's involvement as he is from Gopalganj."

I do not remember exactly when after the killing I got inside the kitchen.

— None told me that Mannan was at the kitchen at that time. He was supposed to stay at the kitchen as it was his duty.

— Yes, I hold membership of Gulshan Club and Dhaka Club. But I am not a member of Uttara Club or club Tramps.

— I used to go to Gulshan Club or Dhaka Club once or twice in a year.

Minu worked at my residence after two months. My wife appointed Minu.

On behalf of the government, Public Prosecutor Kamrul Islam and on behalf of the complainant Senior Advocate Ramzan Ali Khan, advocates Saima Khanam, Mahbub Hossain, Tajuddin Ahmed, Istiaq Ahmed Khan and Mrs Mahmuda were present at the court.

The judge fixed April 6 for further cross examination of the complainant.

Sub-editor's Forum meeting held