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One shot dead in city

By Staff Correspondent
A young man was shot dead in a crossfire when two rival groups clashed at Kazipara under Mirpur thana in the city yesterday morning.

The dead was identified as Abul Hossain, 35, son of Azhar Hossain. He was a caretaker of a house at West Kazipara.

Police said Abul Hossain sustained bullet injuries in his chest while Jahangir Group and Jewel Group were locked in a clash at Kazipara at about 10 am over establishing supremacy in the area.

Huge crackers were exploded during the clash.

Leaders of Package Forum submit memo to minister

By Staff Correspondent

Leaders of the Package Forum yesterday submitted a memorandum to the State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed demanding implementation of their nine-point demand including inception of transmission of package programmes on Bangladesh Television (BTV) during peak hours.

Joint convenors of the Forum Badal Rahman and Mamunor Rashid along with other leaders handed the memorandum to the minister at his office.

The minister assured them of considering their demands.

Meanwhile, leaders of Sammilito Sangskritik Jote, Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation and Sangeet Shilpi Parishad at a meeting on Monday expressed solidarity with the programmes of Package Forum.

Package Forum is a platform of producers, artistes and technical persons of BTV's package programmes.

Top of agenda

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ing pressure" from the party rank and file to take "immediate action" against him, the sources said.

In another development, AL leaders from Tangail, home district of Siddiqui, have sought an audience with party president and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to discuss the issue which, they say, is damaging the party's public image. However, they were yet to get an appointment till yesterday.

Talking to this correspondent, some AL leaders said it was a "pressing need" to take action against Siddiqui. "The sooner, the better", one of them said.

Some party leaders prefer a "stopgap action" like serving a notice on him while others say "expulsion is appropriate" for a man who discredited the party and did not spare even the party chief while making "unbalanced remarks".

Kader Siddiqui, who until recently was enjoying a special clout in the party for his role in the Liberation War, came under severe criticism after his sudden meeting with BNP chief and Leader of the Opposition in parliament Begum Khaleda Zia on the occasion of the last Eid.

While making freedom fighters' welfare a core issue, Siddiqui is also raising questions about the assets of the Prime Minister, her Cabinet colleagues and their relatives.

On the other hand, a minister, a party central leader and some former leaders of AL's student front are questioning the legality of "huge property" accumulated by Siddiqui and two of his younger brothers over the years.

Tangail district unit of AL has already demanded a probe into the assets of Siddiqui.

In statement on Monday, AL Public Secretary Abdul Mannan criticised Siddiqui for demanding a statement on assets of the Prime Minister and her relatives. Mannan also raised questions about assets of Siddiqui in Dhaka and in Tangail.

PM thanks

From Page 1
fair elections.

She urged the opposition leader to work for the people as they were the supreme authority to decide who would govern them.

Sheikh Hasina said her government has achieved successes in resolving the Ganges water sharing problem with India and the Chittagong Hill Tracts issue.

The Prime Minister said that the Hill Tracts is no more disintegrated with rest of the country after the signing of the peace accord. She said the opposition did not praise the government efforts. Rather the opposition leader had said that areas from Feni to the Hill Tracts would become part of India.

Sheikh Hasina said that the Hill Tracts is no more a troubled area and anyone has a free access there now. She also wanted to know whether Begum Zia goes to Feni with a passport.

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina offering munajat after inaugurating the construction of 300 MW Haripur Power Project yesterday. —PID photo

Haripur power plant construction begins

Power sector is the priority, says PM

By Nazmul Ashraf, back from Haripur

said.

She said the public sector plants were expected to produce another 1000 MW by that time.

Private and public plants together have added 700 MW of electricity to the national grid since Awami League took over in 1996, the prime minister said.

Announcing formal commencement of the project works, the prime minister cut a ribbon to unveil the foundation plaque of the project.

She also opened the ground breaking works and witnessed construction activity for some time.

Finance Minister Samsul Kibria, Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed, Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Energy Abul Hasnat Abdullah, State Minister for Energy Prof. Rafiqul Islam, US envoy John Holzman and AES President Dennis Bakke also addressed the opening ceremony.

Speaking on the occasion, Sheikh Hasina gave a resume of the steps her three-year-old government had so far taken to ease the power situation. The measures included: withdrawing duty on import of power generators, allowing private entrepreneurs to set up small power plants up to 10

MW, segregating power production, transmission and distribution to increase efficiency in management, creating DESCO and RCP, privatising commercial electric billing gradually, disconnecting unauthorised electric lines, repairing faulty metres, reducing systems loss and resolving low-voltage problem.

"Too much dependence on the donor agencies and non-disbursement of required funds are making it impossible to set up new power plants and power transmission lines," she said.

She said the present government drew up a private power policy, which generated renewed interest among local and foreign investors.

Sheikh Hasina blamed the post-1975 governments for lack of initiatives to respond to the increasing needs in a planned and timely manner.

As a result of a short and long-term policy in the first five-year plan by the Bangabandhu government in 1973, the reserve margin of electricity stood at 401 MW in 1974 while the production capacity in 1972 was 224 MW against the demand of 182 MW, she recalled.

But the margin had plummeted to zero in the following years.

Schoolboy murdered over land dispute

By Staff Correspondent

A schoolboy was killed when assailants hit him in the head with an iron rod in Amin Bazar area under Savar thana Monday afternoon.

The dead was identified as Soleman, 13, son of Abdur Rahim, a resident of Baradeshi village in Amin Bazar, hospital sources said. Soleman was a student of class five of Baradeshi Government Primary School.

Hospital sources quoting Anwar Hossain, an uncle of the dead, said that Soleman was killed during a dispute over a piece of land.

The killing took place when his relatives were attending a local arbitration on the land at Baradeshi village at about 4 pm.

At that time Soleman went to visit the land where Moja Mia, his wife and his sister-in-law attacked him. Moja Mia hit in his head with the iron rod and escaped the scene, sources added.

Chhatak blast

Jagadish's bail prayer rejected

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, May 25: The District and Sessions Judge of Sunamganj Iktedas Ahmed to-day rejected the bail prayer of Sylhet district Jibto League joint convenor and Ward Commissioner of Sylhet Pourashava Jagadish Chandra Das.

He was arrested on May 10 in connection with the bomb blast that took place in the house of ruling party MP Muhibul Rahaman Manik. The bail prayer was also rejected by a magistrate's Court on May 17.

Advocate Syed Shamsul Islam moved the bail prayer today while PP Raisuddin opposed.

There are 26 cases including five under Explosives Act against Jagadish with Sylhet Kotwali thana, a police official said.

Gas: Future needs

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were expanding the infrastructure to develop local market of gas, maintaining their investment in Bangladesh in a tight world market and reducing their operational costs.

Heaton said Bangladesh had a big but untapped market. He also called for revising the existing contracts to make a win-win situation for both Bangladesh and the foreign companies.

The two Petrobangla officials said that Bangladesh consumed 38 million cubic feet of gas a day (mmcf) in 1970, which rose to 126 mmcf in 1990, 640 mmcf in 1995 and around 1050 mmcf in '99.

This figure would shoot up to as high as 1450-1700 mmcf in 2004.

Currently, the country was producing around 950 mmcf. This production would increase to 1300 mmcf in the coming years with the addition of new gas fields. This figure would remain static till 2005 until more gas fields come in to operation.

The current operational gas fields would keep a demand-supply balance till 2001. Absence of standby capacity in the supply side may cause imbalance.

Therefore, no matter how attractive a short-term solution (gas export) may sound, how can the economy run if we do not have gas to use after three to five years?" said Imamuddin, arguing that gas should be conserved for domestic use as per National Energy Policy.

The two added that the country now needed a vibrant and aggressive gas exploration and consumption policy. New explorations were needed and should be done by the private sector. A great deal of private investment was required in the downstream gas sector.

Former Petrobangla chairman SKM Abdullah endorsing the views of his former colleagues said: Why would anyone advocate gas exports when 86 per cent of the people were deprived of any power connection?

In this aspect, Bangladesh would need 106 TCF of gas in the next 10 years to meet the demands of people," he added.

"If I make a conservative calculation and say that Bangladesh should attain a per capita energy consumption of 260 KGOE,

it would still require 28 TCF of gas.

He also added that income from export of 2 TCF gas, as recommended by the US Ambassador, did not seem to be much promising for the country's GDP growth.

Ismail, a microbus driver of the transport pool of the secretariat, got into an argument with Mahbub when Mahbub began honking from behind the microbus near the building.

Both Ismail and Mahbub got out of their motor vehicles and locked in an altercation. At one stage other drivers of the pool joined Ismail and beat up Mahbub.

On duty policemen later brought the situation under control, police added.

Tamim said reserve potentials in Bangladesh could be greater than previously thought. By using appropriate technology, the reserve could be enhanced to a great degree.

Road accidents kill 12

By Staff Correspondent

Twelve people were killed and 70 others injured in two road accidents in Rajshahi and Narsingdi yesterday.

Of them, eight were killed in Rajshahi and four in Narsingdi.

Our Rajshahi Correspondent reports: Eight people were killed and 40 others injured, ten of them seriously, when a minibus and a coach collided at Kapasila Bazar crossing in Matihar Thana on Dhaka-Rajshahi Highway at about 11.30 am yesterday.

Of the dead, four were identified as Yaad Ali, 60, China, 22, Bakul, 16 and Ainal, 30. The identity of four others could not be known immediately.

Our Narsingdi Correspondent writes: Four people were killed and 30 others injured in a road accident at Dakundir Char on Dhaka-Sylhet Highway yesterday.

Police and witnesses said, the accident occurred when a Bhalir Bazar bound truck collided with a passenger bus coming from opposite direction at around 10 am.

The AL leader said he does not feel he has any conflict with the Prime Minister. "What I have said is my honest thinking for the betterment of the country, people and freedom fighters. I want to bring dynamism to the party."

When asked about his demand for disclosure of the Prime Minister's assets, Siddiqui said: "Prime Minister wanted to take account of my assets, if she does not do it in a month, we will take account of her assets and those of her relatives. Because her statement on this point disgraced me to the people."

He said any criticism or discussion about any action of the Prime Minister is not tantamount to breaking party discipline.

Asked if his remarks are challenge to the leadership of the Prime Minister, he said in a democracy, such remarks and statements were made in the past and would be made in future. If all remarks are considered against the party leadership, the party cannot run smoothly.

"My statements are aimed at bringing dynamism in the party and the government. My speeches are neither to please or displease any individual," he said.

Sources and analysts said that the country's energy sector has already been polarised by Shell and Unocal and the original stakeholders in this sector — Cairn and Occidental — are simply quitting.

Unocal came to Bangladesh by negotiating an unsolicited deal on the Shahbazpur Gasfield late in 1996.

Later it submitted the controversial Western Region Integrated Project (WRIP) to develop the Shahbazpur field in Bholia, set up a regional pipeline up to Khulna-Kushtia and four power plants.

Despite repeated warnings from local experts and the World Bank, the government is moving ahead to sign this deal smoothly.

Unocal has also strengthened its position in Bangladesh by signing an agreement — "areas of Mutual Interest" — with Shell Oil last month.

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About his assets in Dhaka and Tangail, Kader Siddiqui claimed that he has valid documents against his property.

If there is any thing illegal, the government can take any step, he said.

BNP will hold a public meeting at Paltan Maidan tomorrow in observance of the 'Black Day', reports UNB.

BNP and its allies will observe 'Black Day' on Thursday

protesting the taking over of the charge of the CHT Regional Council by Shantu Larma.

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