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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 Mamunur 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 Sammito Sangkritik 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, artists and technical persons of BTV's package programmes.

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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 Publicity 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

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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.



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

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said yesterday that her government had prioritised the power sector as it was the "primary base of all infrastructure development" in the country.

"We don't lack quality manpower, nor do we lack natural resources. What we lack are proper management of the resources and necessary infrastructure," she said.

She told a ceremony to begin the construction work of the country's biggest private power plant project at Haripur in Narayanganj.

"Therefore, a major goal of my government is to develop appropriate infrastructure so that the people can build their future," she said.

The US\$ 200 million land-based 300-megawatt plant is being constructed by AES Corporation, a US-based global power company which will own and operate it. The plant is expected to be commissioned by early 2001.

But the prime minister would like the plant ready before the next general elections, which she jokingly referred to in her speech, prompting laughter in the audience.

Commissioning of the plant is expected to raise the power generation capacity in the private sector to 1200 MW by 2002, she said.

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.

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

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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 Kapasia Bazar crossing in Mathbar 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 Ainul, 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 Bhairab Bazar bound truck collided with a passenger bus coming from opposite direction at around 10 am.

Unocal

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sises long-term vision regarding its investment in Asia, believes that Bangladesh could play the role of a "hub in an international network of pipeline that begins in Central Asia and ends in the ASEAN countries. Unocal also has its presence in Thailand.

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 Bhola, set up a regional pipeline up to Khulna-Kushia and four power plants.

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

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

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.



Members of the Bangladesh Teachers Association laid a siege to the Shikha Bhavan in the city yesterday to press their six-point demand. —Star photo

Gold, foreign currency worth Tk 15 lakh seized at ZIA

By Staff Correspondent

Customs surveillance team at the Zia International Airport (ZIA) seized gold bars and foreign currency worth about Tk 15 lakh from two passengers in separate incidents yesterday.

According to customs officials, gold bars weighing 1004 grams were recovered from one Mohammed Nazir while he was passing through the Green Channel at about 11:30 am.

Nazir arrived at ZIA by a Saudi Airlines plane at about 11 am. He tried to pass through the Green Channel without any prior declaration. On suspicion customs officials challenged him and recovered the gold bars from his suitcase. They were hidden inside a medicine packet.

In another incident the surveillance team seized 7000 US dollar (equivalent to Tk 3.5 lakh) from a Bangkok-bound passenger at noon.

Customs officials said one Jahangir Alam was carrying the dollars in his handbag. The surveillance team challenged him at the boarding bridge and found the dollars in his handbag.

The Bangkok-bound passenger was carrying the money without any prior declaration, officials said.

Two separate departmental cases were lodged in this connection.

Kader Siddiqui says

What I've said is my honest thinking

Belligerent Awami League leader Kader Siddiqui MP has said that the government is guided by bureaucrats, not by the party in power.

The government is dependent on advice and decision of the bureaucrats rather than the party," he told UNB in an interview at his Mohammadpur residence on Monday.

"People had expected more dynamism, economic progress and stability from this government, but it had not been so," he added.

He said Awami League has been a bit isolated from its workers and lost some popularity as it failed to move in consultation with party leaders and workers.

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 relations. Because her statement on this point disgraced me to the people."</