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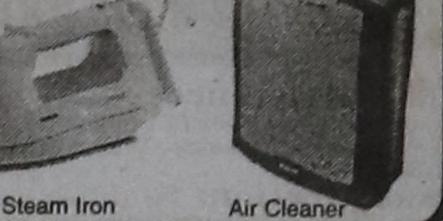
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Date with disaster Loaded to the brim, the pick-up truck on the airport road not only exposes both men and machines to fatal accidents but also makes mockery of extant load limits. Star photo: Sk Enamul Haq

Protests in Saudi Arabia wake up Dhaka officials

By Staff Correspondent

Protests by Bangladeshi workers in Saudi Arabia are forcing Dhaka to deal with devious recruiters who trick people out of their money with promises of lucrative jobs

In late December, Bangladeshi workers marched through the streets of the Al-Sharfiyah district to protest employers who withheld

According to reports published in the Saudi Gazette, the labour office in Jeddah summoned the owner of a trading establishment who didn't pay 170 Bangladeshi workers for four months.

The Saudi daily also published photographs of Bangladeshis living in unhygienic conditions, and 20 workers sharing a small plate of dates — the only food they could afford.

The country's mission in

Fearless lady

catches snatcher

By Staff Correspondent

catch a mugger yesterday when

an armed gang swooped on her

in Malibagh area, reports UNB.

while her brother defying gun-

one-year-old daughter were

travelling in a rickshaw at

about I pm when the incident

torcycle, waylaid the rickshaw

and snatched Shirin's gold

chain first, police and witnesses

her purse containing Tk 50,000.

Shirin's brother. Mujibur

Rahman. 28. jumped from the

rickshaw and pounced on an at-

volver to terrorize the victims

and threw her daughter Mumu

her baby and brother and

caught the other mugger who

was on the motorcycle," said a

the spot and caught the muggers.

and set fire to the motorcycle.

Soon, local people rushed to

The mob then beat up the two

Later, police arrested the

muggers - Manik and Badal -

from the spot and sent them to

Dhaka Medical College Hospi-

5 pc duty on

import of rice

ernment has imposed a five per

cent import duty on rice, re-

National Board of Revenue on

BENAPOLE, Jan 13: The gov-

The duty was imposed by the

on the street.

ports UNB.

The robbers then fired a re-

"Shirin went to the rescue of

As the muggers tried to grab

The muggers, riding a mo-

fire caught another attacker.

A woman risked her life to

She grabbed of the muggers

Shirin. 30. her brother and

Saudi Arabia has asked officials in Dhaka to investigate the practices of recruitment agencies to prevent more people

from being duped. Labour and Employment, said they expect a full report on the incident from the country's mission in Saudi Arabia by

However, nobody from the ministry would discuss why the and Employment for not taking government didn't crack down the unscrupulous recruiting on deceptive recruiting agencies agencies to task. before the protests.

"We haven't received a full report from our mission in Saudi Arabia." said M.A. Mannan, the labour and employment minister. "Once we get that report, actions will fol-

failed for years to stop the dubi-

CHITTAGONG, Jan 13: Chit-

Bangladesh Steamer Agents

tagong port users have ex-

pressed concern at congestion

situation at the port's jetties

Association (BSAA) chairman

Tarek Anis Ahmed expressed

grave concern at the existing

In a letter issued to Chit-

tagong Port, Authority today

ing immediate measures to ease

plied to the press here in which

BSAA termed the congestion as

Dozens of vessels have been

waiting at the outer anchorage

for over 12 days for loading and

unloading of several lakh tons

of import and export cargo, the

attempt

with the help of Detective

Branch (DB) of police foiled a

snatching attempt by the vehi-

cle's driver and members of its

staff at Palashi in the city yes-

Yusuf Akand, conductor Abdur

Rashid Dewan and helper Ja-

The driver, identified as

terday morning.

Passengers of a minibus

BSAA chairman said.

A copy of the letter was sup-

BSAA chairman urged for tak-

congestion of vessels at Chit-

and its outer anchorage.

the congestion.

alarming.

abroad but fail to live up to their promises.

The ministry planned to raise agency licensing fees from Tk 6 lakh to Tk 10 lakh, but Sources in the Ministry of backed down under pressure. said sources.

The minister and his officials also came under fire during a recent meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Labour

The Welfare Association of Repatriated Bangladeshi Employees held an emergency meeting on January 7 to discuss the protests in Saudi Arabia. It challenged the consulate's "silence" on the issue.

Last year. Bangladeshis liv-Sources said officials have ing abroad sent over Tk 7.000 crore back to their home in reous dealings of brokers, agents mittance. Saudi Arabia hosts and labour contractors who about one-third of Bangladesh's paint 'rosy pictures' of life two million foreign workers.

being provided with the privi-

leges enjoyed by Bangladeshi

vessels during congestion pe-

riod, the BSAA chairman men-

tioned in the letter. BSAA sug-

gested Bangladeshi vessels

shouldn't get berthing privi-

leges, including those of the

BSC. It also recommended strict

adherence to time schedules, no

consideration for loading of

containers or cargo after expiry

of cut-off time and liberal use of

private equipment for clearance

of cargo or container and

ensuring optimum use of port

However, port sources said

about 50 ships, including 12

container vessels are now

staying at port's jetties and

and Eid holidays caused the dis-

Recent hartal programmes

equipment.

outer anchorage.

Port users cry over

congestion

From Staff Correspondent

Khaleda urges FBCCI to act neutrally

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia yesterday urged the Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI) to act neutrally for the greater interest of the country, reports

Khaleda said this when a delegation of FBCCI led by its President Abdul Awal Mintoo called on her at her Minto Road official residence.

She said the FBCCI, the apex body of the country's businessmen, should paint correct picture of the country's economic. social and political situation.
Mintoo sought guidelines of

the national leadership about the country's social, economic and political situation.

BNP chairperson consented to be the chief guest at a businessmen's conference to be held on January 23 at Osmani auditorium.

Four BNP leaders including former finance minister M Saifur Rahman will also speak on

Munshiganj AL leader shot dead

MUNSHIGANJ, Jan 13: A ruling party leader was shot by a terrorist gang at Sipahipara in sadar thana today, reports

Police said some terrorists led by one Mostafa fired 10 shots in legs of sadar thana Awami League vice-president Abdul Bareque Dewan on his way home after renewing licence of his gun.

He was rushed to sadar hospital and later shifted to Dhaka "in critical condition" The attackers then went on

the rampage at Rampal Bazar and ransacked a video centre and a studio. Police arrested one Mithu.

in this connection.

Shell extends Sangu drilling plan

By Staff Correspondent Shell Bangladesh Exploration has extended its drilling programme in the Sangu gas field in the Bay of Bengal under

A Shell press release yesterday said that during the drilling of an appraisal well, "South Sangu-1" Shell discovered gasbearing sandstone at a depth below 3300 meters.

"Preliminary analysis of intermediate wireline log data indicate that South Sangu-1 intersected 34 gross metres of gas-bearing sandstone. The drilling of the well continues seeking deeper objectives." stated the release.

Shell and its partners Cairn Energy and HBR Energy have undertaken the joint drilling programme under a Production Sharing Contract with Petrobangla.

Petrobangla sources said that Shell faced difficulty during the drilling of the appraisal well due to some unforeseen geological formations. The British company Cairn struck the Sangu gas field in

15 and 16 to Shell.

Law's labour lost

Crooks' creativity defeats the very objective of women, children act

By Chaitanya Chandra Halder

The Special Law for Prevention of Women and Children Repression is being misused to settle personal scores and rivalry, judicial officers and legal experts say.

They told the Star that the law aimed at protecting women and children from repression is now being used by influential people as a weapon against rival groups. "The law is benefiting only a few", one expert noted.

Under the Special Law, an accused is put behind the bar soon after charges are brought against him and no court can grant him bail during the investigation period of 90 days.

A total of 1879 cases were registered with the Special Court for Prevention of Women and Children Repression. Dhaka, during the period 1996-1999. Of these, 417 were dis-

posed of and 1462 still remain pending. The accused in 312 cases out of the 417 were acquitted, court sources said.

Besides, many other cases filed with various thanas during the same period simply ended in 'final report' as charges brought against the accused could not be proved during investigation. The sources pointed out that

in 33 cases registered with the special court, the law was used to victimise rivals. They cited Manik Chand's case as a glaring example of this. Manik Chand, son of

Moghul Baksh, a resident of Ganderia under Sutrapur thana in the city, was put behind the bar as an accused under the Special Law. His cousins accused him in December 1998 under the law when they lost a legal battle over a piece of land.

Manik was accused under Section 9 (c) of the Special Law on charges of 'gang-rape' of a

Soon after Manik was put behind the bar for three months as an obligation under the law. the piece of land for which he had won legal battle even in the Supreme Court was occupied by his cousins, the sources said.

By the time the Special Court acquitted Manik, his rivals implicated him in two other casesone under the Explosives Act and the other under the Arms Act. Manik was granted bail in both these cases filed with Kotwali thana.

The rivals who include a ruling party MP from old Dhaka ousted Manik's family from the land and also assaulted his 90year old mother, the sources

Police want assault suspects to be detained for a month

By Staff Correspondent Police prayed for a onemonth detention of the two arrested, on charges of sexual assault on a lady during the New Year's celebration, officials said vesterday.

Maniruzzaman Mamun and Mokhtar Hossain, accused by the victim in her judicial statement, were sent to the Dhaka Central Jail yesterday after the end of the five-day po-

The court also rejected the bail prayers of the accused.

Mamun and Hossain, book sellers in the city's Nilkhet area, had been claiming that they tried to rescue the lady from the marauding miscreants and also went to the police on January 4 to help the investiga-

The victim in her judicial statement before a magistrate's court in the city on Wednesday also accused Fazlul Haq Russel of the assault.

See page 11 col 1

JU teachers gun for VC's office

By JU Correspondent

Teachers' politics at Jahangirnagar University (JU) has apparently taken a new turn in view of the upcoming election for a three-member panel for Vice Chancellor (VC) of the university scheduled to be held on January 22.

Pro-Awami League teachers have become divided into two different panels as a sequel of the previous conflict between former VC Prof Alauddin Ahmed and present acting VC and Pro-VC Prof Abdul Bayes.

Earlier, during the tenure of Prof Alauddin Ahmed, his attempts at 'seizing' some of the power from the Pro-VC. Prof Abdul Bayes, worsened the conflict between them. This conflict paved the way of forming two different groups of pro-Awami teachers, namely, the

'VC group' and 'Pro-VC group'. These two groups have now formed two different panels for the VC election-one fed by Prof Bayes and the other by Treasurer Prof Shariff Enamul Kabir, who is known as a 'successor' of Prof Alauddin Ahmed. Pro-Awami League teachers

leaning political organisations, led by Prof Abdul Bayes, have already announced their threemember 'Pro- Liberation War Candidates of this panel for the VC election are the acting

and some teachers of the left-

VC and Pro-VC Prof Abdul Bayes, Dean of Social Science faculty Prof Tajul Islam and Prof Farida Akhtar of Chemistry department.

Meanwhile, the rest of pro-

Awami League teachers and a section of pro-BNP teachers, led by Prof Shariff Enamul Kabir, are to announce yet another panel soon. They have also decided to name their panel 'Pro-Liberation War Panel' Sources. preferring

anonymity, told this correspondent that this panel might include Treasurer Prof Shariff Enamul Kabir. Dean of Science Faculty. Prof Khalilur Rahman and Prof Mohammad Salimullah of Physics department. Though the mainstream of

the pro-BNP teachers are yet to declare their panel, they have begun campaign in favour of their candidates.

Talking to this correspondent, some teachers of this group said that any three from former president of JU Teach-

ers' Association (JUTA) and Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers' Association (FBUTA). Prof Jasimuddin Ahmad, president of JUTA Prof. Abu Sayeed Khan, Prof M Imamuddin and Prof Obaidur Rahman may be chosen as their representatives for the election.

The pro-BNP panel may be announced on Saturday or Sunday after a meeting, some of the teachers said.

The Chancellor of the university will, later appoint one of the elected three as the VC of the university.

The JU VC's position fell vacant as the then VC Prof Alauddin Ahmed resigned from his post on November 9 to contest in the Parliamentary by-election of Kishoreganj-1.

Tanguar battle won

By Special Correspondent

The government has finally decided to declare the Tanguar Haor, the 9725 hectare fresh water lake in Tahirpur. Sunanganj as a Ramsar site to protect the wetland's rich biodiversity.

Necessary orders to declare it as a Ramsar site has already been signed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Wednesday. officials said yesterday.

Earlier last year, the wetland was declared as an Ecologically Critical Area (ECA) by the ministry of forests and environment in the backdrop of demands from the environmentalists.

They had been pressing for saving the lake and its diverse eco-system that supports migratory birds like the rarest Tibetan Black Net Stork, whose existence had become threatened following leasing of the wetland for commercial exploitation by the Land Ministry in October last year.

The Land Ministry overrode Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) declaration in April. proclaiming it as an Ecologically Critical Area (ECA).

As the MOEF fought against attempts at leasing the haor. which yields an estimated Tk.10 crore in revenues from commercial exploitation of fish and other resources for sometime last year, declaring it as an ECA. forbidding commercial exploitation of its natural resources without any manage-

It wanted to implement the plan with community participation in line with a recommendation by a panel of experts, headed by Wim Giesen from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

But Ministry of Land claimed it to be their property and leased it out following manipulations by influential ones only for Tk 46 lakhs. While the two ministries

fought over the issues, the file regarding declaration of it as a Ramsar site became 'missing' at the Prime Minister's office! However, it was retrieved later on and finally signed by the Officials said that the lease

would run out sometime in April. The declaration of it as a Ransar site would probibit further leasing, they added. Home to many rare species.

including the Pallas's fishing Eagle, a globally endangered bird. 17 critically endangered fish out of 140 species, the 9725 hectare wetland supports the last surviving swamp forest in the country --- consisting of Hijal. Karach, Gunji kata and Chhongrass or reeds.

It sustains a wide variety of fish and aquatic life, including many exotic species and waterfowls, seasonally harbouring at least 60,000 of them besides the resident birds. A large flock of waterfowls visit the wetland ev-

Last year a Blacknet Stork fishermen farming the wetland wounded a very rare specie. A few hundred Blacknet's survive in Tibet only. The migratory birds from the Himalayas use Bangladesh as a 'transit point during their journey to and from the mountains. Following mounting concern on indiscriminate fishing and hunting, the government decided to include the Haor to the list of the ECAs for a better wetland management policy. terminating a fisheries lease

last December. Already the National Conservation Strategy (NCS) of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) has recommended that the haor be declared a Ramsar site on the basis of a declaration adopted at Ramsar, Iran. Bangladesh is a signatory to the declaration for preserving the world's wet lands, letting the nature survive in pristine condition under proper management.

The NCS recommendations follow a detailed study by six experts including a wetland conservation specialist from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Wim Giesen. The others from Bangladesh were SMA Rashid, AKM Nuruzzaman Khan, Anisuzzaman Khan, Syed Shafique Ahmed and Abu Naser Khan studied the lake's management, fishery, birds, socioeconomic and land tenure as-

The report identified the main issues of the Tanguar Haor-- the decline of fisheries production due to over-fishing. depletion of natural resources like reed lands and swamp forest, which threatened the birds like Pallas's eagle, decline in the number of migratory birds and against such backdrop, a growing threat of conflict between the local community and the leaseholder of fisheries over the question of resources.

The study, prepared with the help of the satellite imageries drew a sustainable management plan for the haor ecosystem and natural resources. Considering the close relation between an estimated 25,000 people living around 46 villages, they suggested an integrated conservation and management plan, involving the community without leasing the lake to individuals/groups who hired seasonal labour from outside -- as had been the prac-Anisuzzaman Khan, one of

the experts from the IUCN, said that the lake is the only wetland in-Bangladesh which is unique because of its bio-diversity and fits in the criteria set for declaring it as a Ramsar site like the 'transit' camp for migratory birds. He said its resources could be used on a sustainable basis with community participation.



Terribly tangled telephone cables at a business hub in Narayanganj poignantly speak of the state of affairs in Bangladesh. Star photo: A K M Mohsin

Three Nikunja murder suspects arrested

By Staff Correspondent

Police arrested three more men yesterday in connection with Tuesday's killing of a joint secretary near Jaganath Hall on Dhaka University campus.

The arrested are Hossain, alias Morshed. Shah Noor and Shukur. Hossain and Shah Noor appeared before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrates Court yesterday and were granted oneday police remand. Shukur was being interrogated by the police yesterday and will appear in court today, sources said.

Morshed and Noor have been arrested before in connection with other snatching cases, police said. Police said the two were roaming suspiciously around the Shahid Minar area on the day of the killing.

Ramna police continued their interrogation of the four men arrested on Tuesday.

Ramna police have picked up 85 people in connection with the killing of the joint secretary. Seven have been arrested. Nikunja Bihari Debnath, 55.

Development was stabbed to death by muggers near the 'Swadhinata Sangram' (Struggle for independence) Sculpture, which is located at the intersection between S.M. Hall and Jaganath Hall, The secretary was returning

of Local Government and Rural

to his Azimpur residence from Kamalapur railway station in a rickshaw. "We can confirm muggers

were involved in the attack and

stabbed the victim to intimidate him and extract more money," said Rafiqul Islam, the officer-in-charge of Ramna Police. He ruled out claims that attack was linked to tender bids or another rivalry. Islam said police suspect

only twelve people were involved in the attack. They hope to determine the motive behind the killing very soon. The sub-inspector who was

in command of the police patrol near Jaganath Hall of Dhaka University was temporary susjoint secretary of the Ministry pended on Wednesday.

hangir Hawlader, were arrested Tuesday, effective from today in from in front of BUET at about all Customs Houses. 6:30 am by DB. The government issued the Sharif, one of the passengers circular to ensure fair prices for of the bus lodged a FIR with the the farmers after two consecutive bumper crops," one official Ramna Police in this regard

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location in ship handling activities at Chittagong port, offi-Foreign ship owners are disappointed particularly for not cials claimed. Police, public 40 shanties foil mugging

By Staff Correspondent At least 40 shanties were gutted in a fire in the city's Shahjahanpur area yesterday.

fire originated from an earth oven of a shanty at Shahjahanpur Railway Colony slum at around 12:15 pm.

three city stations rushed to the scene and extinguish the blaze at about 1:05 pm.

Prayer Timings

January 14 Azan Jamaat 5-25 5-18 1-20 Juma 12-15 4-00 4-15 Maghrib 5-35 5-40 Esha 7-15 7-45

gutted in city

No casualties, however, was reported in the incident. Fire brigade sources said the

Six fire fighting units from

early 96 and developed it in a record time of 18 months. Last year. Cairn struck a deal with Shell Oil under which it transferred the operatorship of Block Source: Islamic Foundation