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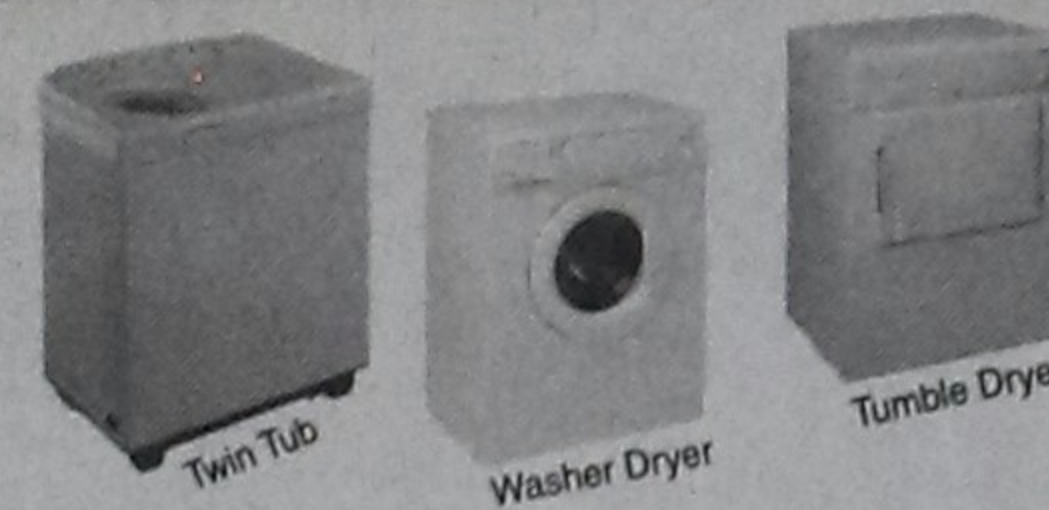
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Jubo Dal activist murdered in Feni

From Our Correspondent
FENI, May 31: A Jubo Dal activist was killed by some unidentified assailants at village Mohupur under Sadar upazila of the district last night, police said.

The victim, Khorshed Alam, 25, son of Abdul Quddus of village Jagatpur under Daganbhuiyan thana was kidnapped by a group of eight youths from Mohupur village at about 9 pm. They took him to Malekmar Bazar and hit him with sharp weapons.

The youths left the scene, leaving Khorshed critically injured. On receipt of information, police rushed to the spot and found Khorshed lying in a paddy field in unconscious state. They sent him to Feni Sadar hospital where he succumbed to his injuries at around midnight.

Police said Khorshed was wanted in four cases, including a murder filed with Daganbhuiyan thana.

District Jubo Dal President Syed Mizanur Rahman and District JCD secretary Kamrul Hassan Masud blamed the ruling party activists for the killing.

Five tribals shot in Khagrachhari

From our correspondent
KHAGRACHHARI, May 31: Unidentified gunmen shot and wounded five tribals including a woman in two incidents on Tuesday and today.

Tension is prevailing since the incidents.

Tow of the them -- Ushakhal Marm, 30 and Bishnu Dewan, 28 -- shot at Lakhichhari, are said to be activists of Jana Sanghati Samity led by Shantu Larma.

JSS has accused the United Peoples Democratic Front, a breakaway faction, for the incidents.

The three others -- Mani Chakma, 48, Ramesh Chakma, 22 and Hirubala Chakma, 45 -- were shot when they were working in their fields in Shubmandir area under Khagrachhari Sadar thana.

Mani was sent to Chittagong Medical College Hospital in a critical condition and the two others were admitted to Khagrachhari hospital, sources said.

Army has been deployed in the area to back police. But none was arrested in connection with the incidents.

JSS has called a rally at Chengi Square today at 4.0 a.m. to protest the shooting incidents.

Crime reporters submit memo to home minister

Bangladesh Crime Reporters' Association (BCRA) submitted a memorandum to Home Minister Mohammad Nasim yesterday demanding immediate removal of DMP Commissioner Matur Rahman and withdrawal of case against Aminur Rahman Taj, reports UNB.

The minister assured the BCRA leaders of taking necessary steps when they went to his office to submit a memorandum to him.

Matur Rahman directed the arrest of Taj, senior reporter of the daily Ajker Kagoj, without any specific ground or warrant and produced him before the court on Sunday. He was, however, enlarged on bail.

BCRA leaders urged the minister to withdraw the case against Taj and refrain from harassment of reporters who protested arrest of Taj.

They told him that the process of arrest was unethical, illegal and manifestation of abuse of power by the DMP commissioner. Taj was arrested at the Public Relations office of police when he went there to perform his professional duty.

Nasim urged the journalists to take necessary steps against "yellow journalism".

Panna Murder Case Shikdar to die, 6 get life term

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, May 31: Ershad Shikdar has been awarded death sentence and six of his associates -- 'Jamal' Farooq, Idris Ali, Jalil Mollah, French Alam, Moti and Moktar -- have been sentenced to life imprisonment in Panna Murder Case.

The judgement was delivered by Shamsul Arefin, Additional District and Sessions Judge of the Third Court, Khulna at 12-30 pm today.

The Judge also fined the six Tk 10,000 cash, in default of suffer one year more rigorous imprisonment. Of them Moktar was tried in absentia.

The prosecution story in brief is: Panna, a member of Bangladesh Ansars was severely injured in an armed attack by Shikdar and other accused on October 17, 1997 near Jorhagate.

Panna succumbed to his injuries in Dhaka Medical College

hospital the following day. Earlier, Panna named his attackers in a statement given to police and doctors at Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH).

The court recorded statements of 25 witnesses in this murder case. Today's judgement was the fourth in last three months. In all the verdicts, Ershad has been sentenced to death. The first judgement in Zainal Murder Case was delivered on February 20.

Ershad demanded a copy of the judgement from the Judge today. "I shall not leave the court without having a copy of judgement," he shouted at the Judge who asked Ershad to follow rules in this regard.

Later, he and all the accused were forced out of the court escorted by APBN and KMP forces.

Shimul tells CID team PBCP had key role in murder of Rupsha UP chairman

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, May 31: Arrested leader of outlawed PBCP Mahmud Hasan Shimul has divulged some important information relating to looting of 12 arms from Noapara Akij Jute Mills and five from the Sundarban Seafoods Ltd at Rupsha in December, 1997.

He confessed that all these 17 firearms and ammunition were looted by armed cadres of his party under his instruction.

On the fifth day of interrogation yesterday at the Jessore Police Lines, Shimul said Terokhedha thana police recovered one of the five arms looted from Sundarban Seafoods and another by Chuadanga police. The remaining three rifles are still in possession of his cadres, he said. The case is being investigated by the CID, Khulna.

Denying his involvement in the looting of 12 firearms from Akij Jute Mills, Shimul said all these arms are in possession of notorious dacoit Kibria of Pira village under Abhoyanagar thana.

These arms were looted by Kibria who is not a member of PBCP at although he claims like Shimul told CID during interrogation.

Kibria is already in the Jessore Central Jail custody for extortion. CID will seek remand for questioning him about looting of arms from Akij Jute Mills.

Police quoting confessional statement of Shimul said PBCP armed cadres also played key role in the murder of Golam Faruque, Chairman of Naitati Union Parishad under Rupsha Thana, Khulna.

He will be sent to Joint Interrogation Cell in Dhaka for further interrogation needed to 'reconfirm' his statements, said a high official of Jessore district police.

According to a reliable source close to the interrogation team, Shimul also discussed for sometime the 'dialectical materialism' of Karl Marx during the non-stop interrogations Tuesday night.

At one stage, he said he wanted to return to normal life, but the 42-year life term in Imran Ghazi Murder Case stood in his way to do so, said one of the interrogators quoting Shimul.

Meanwhile, court has granted five days' remand for questioning him in the Ganesh Murder Case recorded with Sonadanga thana in 1998.

Tk 140cr medicine, medical equipment misappropriated

An investigation has unearthed misappropriation of medicines and medical equipment worth Tk 140 crore by 5 Civil Surgeons and a number of officials of Health Ministry and Directorate during 1996-98, reports UNB.

The Civil Surgeons are of Bogra, Rangpur, Satkhira, Tangail and Gopalganj.

The investigation was carried out by a parliamentary subcommittee headed by Tajul Islam Chowdhury of JP.

The sub-committee submitting its final report to the parliamentary standing committee on Health and Family Welfare Minister that met yesterday recommended legal action against the corrupt officials.

Sources close to the meeting told UNB last night that the report identified the officials who indulged in corruption and specified how they misappropriated the public wealth.

"The report mentioned specific allegation against the officials involved in corruption," said Syed Mehedi Ahmed Rumi MP.

The meeting also expressed its deep shock at the death of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and prayed for the salvation of the departed soul.

Minister for Health and Family Planning Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, state minister Prof Dr Amanullah, Begum Aleya Afroz, Tajul Islam Chowdhury, Dr Dewan Mohammad Salauddin and Dr Ziaul Haq Mollah attended the meeting.

7 years in jail without trial

By Court Correspondent

One Mohammad Siddique Ullah was acquitted of charge yesterday after confinement in the jail custody for seven years long without trial.

Metropolitan Magistrate Dillip Kumar Sharma gave the order upon a petition filed on behalf of Siddique Ullah yesterday.

The court also served a show cause notice on the jail authorities and police to reply why Siddique had been detained so long without being an investigating report.

Siddique, a resident of Chatkhil thana in Noakhali district, was arrested under Section 54 of the CrPC on March 15, 1993 by Motijheel police. But no report was submitted by the investigation officer in connection with the case in the last seven years.

When the correspondent tried to talk to Siddique Ullah, he shouted and talked inconsistently.

Sajal's father replies to Mokbul's legal notice

By Staff Correspondent

Shahidur Rahman, father of Sajal Chowdhury, has replied to a legal notice issued on him by a lawyer of a ruling party MP.

Syed Rezaur Rahman, lawyer of ruling party MP Alhaj Mokbul Hossain had served the legal notice on May 17, asking Shahidur Rahman to explain why a criminal case and a defamation suit would not be filed against him.

The allegation of Shahidur Rahman has damaged reputation of Mokbul Hossain, the legal notice said, asking him to reply within 15 days.

Police submitted the final report in Sajal Murder Case in December last year. Final report of a case is submitted when a police investigation fails to prove charges against the accused which normally leads to disposal of the case.

Police filed a murder case with Dhamondhi thana soon after the killing where it was stated that Sajal was killed during a clash involving activists of BNP, Jamaat and ruling Awami League.

But according to earlier newspaper reports and witnesses, gunmen from the rear of a motorcade of Awami League workers shot dead Sajal Chowdhury at the intersection of Mirpur Road and Green Road at about 11:30 am during the hartal of February 9 last year. The motorcade was led by AL MP Mokbul Hossain.

Shahidur Rahman in his reply mentioned that he did not know that Detective Branch had submitted the final report and the court accepted it on February 10.

Shahidur Rahman also said Mokbul Hossain can not deny the charge of killing Sajal by distorting inquest and autopsy reports.

The lawyer must know that a 'managed final report' and 'acceptance' of the report is not the conclusion of trial of such a murder which took place around noon, Shahidur Rahman said.

"Still, if your client files Criminal/Civil case against me as per your suggestion, he has to file it in his own responsibility," Shahidur Rahman said in his reply to the legal notice.

8 amendments to Law Commission Act '96 approved

The Cabinet at a meeting approved in principle as many as eight amendments to the law to make the Law Commission stronger and more dynamic, reports UNB.

Officials said under provision of the amendments to the Law Commission Act 1996, honorary members and consultants could be appointed to the Commission to strengthen its function in legal reforms.

Murder, rape case

Boy sent to remand centre

By Court Correspondent

Kabir Hossain arrested in connection with the alleged killing and raping of Gamru Nahar, wife of Major Ashraf Haider, yesterday refused to give a judicial statement before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka.

Kabir Hossain, 12, is a domestic help at the house of the deceased.

Kabir was produced before the CMM's court yesterday after a 5-day police remand. He was then taken to Metropolitan Magistrate M Shahidul Islam's room. The Magistrate became astonished to see Kabir as he is only 12 years old. How could it be possible to kill or rape a 25-year-old woman by such a tender aged boy? The court then ordered to send him to a remand home without recording Kabir's judicial statement.

Quamrun Nahar was killed and raped in December last year.

Victim's brother Md Maniruzzaman filed a case with Gulshan thana accusing Quamrun's husband. But police arrested Kabir Hossain, a 12-year-old boy.



Flying round the globe

Jennifer Murray, a grandmother who hopes to become the first woman to fly solo around the globe in a helicopter, and Nottingham's Colin Bodill (R), who is attempting to become the first person to circumnavigate the earth in a microlight aircraft, pictured at the Brooklands Museum, Weybridge, Surrey, yesterday. The pair hopes to raise 1 million dollars for Operation Smile, a charity which provides reconstructive facial surgery for young people in 16 developing countries.

— AFP photo

Rodriguez: Nothing can be done

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and those of architects and accountants have started functioning and several others are in the process of formation, which will give a new thrust to the organisation", Nihal said in an interview with The Daily Star.

The Secretary General functions from the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu.

The SAARC Secretary General was in Dhaka last week for consultations with government officials as part of his efforts to give the organisation a fresh boost after the Summit scheduled to be held last in November in Kathmandu was postponed due to reported objection by India to sit across the table with Pakistan's military ruler.

But can Nihal, who is a former Additional Secretary of Sri Lanka, do anything to hold the Summit?

He is candid enough to admit that his position as Secretary General is "not enough" to make the Summit take place. Besides Dhaka, he has already visited Colombo, Delhi, Male, Kathmandu and hopes to travel to Islamabad shortly. He said the organisation is now hoping to hold the next Summit, the 12th since its inception.

Nihal said, as per the SAARC Charter, consent of all seven heads of government or state are required for holding the Summit, and nothing can be done unless "all agree".

He however said the ball for holding the Summit has already been set rolling. It has been decided by the member countries that meetings of technical committee will start shortly. The first technical committee meeting on environment is expected to be held this month or next month in Bhutan. This is likely to be followed by a ministerial level

meeting. A meeting of commerce secretaries will also be held soon in preparation for WTO meetings.

Asked about the future of South Asian Free Trading Arrangement, he said the process is on and an 'enabling agreement' is likely by the end of



Nihal Rodriguez

next year.

On creation of a visa-free regime to allow more people-to-people contact, Nihal said "visa-free stickers" are provided to Speaker of Parliament, Vice Chancellor of University, a certain number of representatives of chamber bodies and some others.

Discussions are underway to expand the list but it will require more time. Heads of airlines and tourism boards would possibly be the next to get visa-free movement facility among SAARC countries.

Nihal said he is very much optimistic about the future of SAARC. Considering the history and political scenario in

South Asia, SAARC has been a 'cementing force' among the countries of the region.

He felt that the organisation holds tremendous potential, particularly in addressing the common issues of poverty alleviation, illiteracy, and removing tariff barriers for promoting intra-regional trading.

SAARC is now focussing on core economic issues. "Thus, despite the apparent slow pace, proves that member countries feel that economic problems are core issues which should be addressed immediately for the benefit of their own people and for the entire South Asia."

He said it is true that there is no scope to discuss bilateral issues through SAARC. But at each Summit "discussions among neighbours on bilateral issues are taking place". The "Retreat" during the Summit gives the scope for discussing and solving bilateral problems. "This happened during Bangalore and Colombo summits," Nihal said.

"My observation is that SAARC summits are now becoming more business like."

Asked if he felt that the position of Secretary General should be upgraded to ministerial status as has been suggested at a seminar recently, he replied, "More than level, it is important to have authority."

As Nihal Rodriguez left Dhaka for Kathmandu, it was evident that he was determined to inculcate more vibrancy in the organisation. He already visited five SAARC capitals and is heading for two others shortly. That spoke of his growing confidence and an emerging aura of authority as a de facto spokesman of an organisation representing nearly one and a half billion people, one-fifth of the world's population.

Abducted agents of 'Syndicate Bank' rescued

From Our Correspondent

JHENIDAH, May 31: Two agents of Kotchandpur 'Syndicate Bank', who were kidnapped by armed terrorists on Saturday night and yesterday, were rescued last night, police said.

Mahmud Uddin Joarder alias Madhu was rescued from village Beledanga under Kaliganj thana while another agent, Abdul Mannan, from Jhikorgachha thana.

Mahmud was abducted at 10 am yesterday while he was going to Kotchandpur from his village home Raniparuta.

The armed gang picked up Abdul Mannan from his house at Tanapara on Saturday night.

Serajul Islam Seru, Convener of the Survey and Disbursement Committee and Chairman of Kotchandpur municipality said assets of one of the agents Rahima Begum Ratna will be sold by June 20. The money would be distributed among the poor and genuine investors.

Ratna was caught by the locals with huge amount of money on February 13 last. Later her four trucks, two pickup vans and a microbus were seized by the survey and disbursement committee.

Ratna is now under the custody of Kotchandpur. When asked, Deputy Commissioner, Pourashava chairman of Jhenidah said the money of the poor investor must be returned as early as possible, otherwise, the situation would go beyond the control.

Bangladesh

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Akram's fifth half-century may have been overshadowed by a princely knock from Ganguly, but it offered the partisan crowd something to relish about for a long time.

He came in to bat at number four after Habibul Bashar departed for a disciplined 57 off 96 balls. It was Bashar's second ODI fifty.

The Indian bowling, which badly missed the firework of Javagal Srinath and Venkatesh Prasad, however needed a helping hand from batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar to get the breakthrough. Tendulkar with his cocktail of spinners also had Aminul caught at cover by Anil Kumble for 47 off 72 balls.

The two quick dismissals only set the stage for an absorbing 105-run partnership between Akram and Naimur Rahman. Akram was so dominant that Ganguly was forced to use eight bowlers including himself, but to no avail. In his flawless knock, Akram hammered eight fours and a huge six against Ganguly over mid-wicket.

The most striking facet of Akram's swashbuckling knock was three successive boundaries against leg-spinner Anil Kumble in the 43rd over. Besides, Akram clobbered 18 runs in Ganguly's one prodigal over. He was eventually caught in the 49th over while trying to loft Ajit Agarkar over cover.

Naimur remained not out on 39 that included a couple of fours and an extraordinary six over point off Agarkar. Rafique smote the other six, a huge heave against right-arm seamer Thiru Kumar, in Bangladesh innings.

But barely had Rafique thought that he would be the target of a Ganguly blitzkrieg when India started the chase after a ten-minute break. A ruthless Ganguly whacked five out of his seven sixes against the left-arm.

Bangladesh's ploy to open the bowling with Rafique totally backfired as Saurav clouted two massive sixes in his first over that yielded 16 runs. Ganguly smote another six in Rafique's second over before Aminul removed him from the attack.

Ganguly shared 85 runs with Sachin Tendulkar in just 11 overs. Sachin scored a breezy 36 off 25 balls before becoming the first one-day victim of debutant right-arm seamer Mushfiqur Rahman. The little master, though not in the best of his form, hammered four successive boundaries and a sixer in one expensive over by left-arm seamer Monjurul. Tendulkar fell just when he was about to cut loose, mistiming an attempted lofted drive and being caught at mid-on by Bashar.

Ganguly then shared 77 runs for the second wicket with debutant left-handed Hemang Badani, who chipped in with a 51-ball 35. Badani's dismissal ended Bangladesh's long-standing jinx of losing by identical nine wickets against India in their four previous Asia Cup meetings.

But India cruised to victory without further hiccup thanks to exactly 100 run partnership between Ganguly and Mohammad Azharuddin, who remained not out on 43-ball 35.

Mori wins censure vote

TOKYO, May 31: Japan ruling parties rejected today censure motion in parliament Upper House charging Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori was for his job, despite a new survey showing most voters have ready given him a thumbs down, reports Reuters.



Shopkeepers at Gulshan observed a half-day hartal to protest murder of businessman Iftekher Ahmed Shipu at Banani in the city yesterday. Police have so far failed to nab the killers.

— Star photo

Vajpayee under pressure to be more active about Fiji

From Pallab Bhattacharya

NEW DELHI, May 31: In the first overt diplomatic effort by India vis-à-vis developments in Fiji, where a democratically elected government has been overthrown, a senior official of the External Affairs Ministry today rushed to the Pacific Ocean island nation.

The official Sudhir T. Devare, Secretary (Economic Relations) in the ministry, will also hold talks with officials in Australia and New Zealand, immediate neighbours of Fiji and key

players in the geopolitics of that region, to mobilise world opinion on the grave threat to political pluralism and racial balance in Fiji.

Ever since Fiji Prime Minister Mahendra Pal Chaudhury has been taken hostage at gun point by coup leader George Speight on May 19, India has avoided a pro-active diplomatic posture on the developments to move would exacerbate the ethnic situation there, making the

conditions more difficult for Indians domiciled in Fiji who constitute 44% of 800,000 population in that country.

The government of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has come under pressure at home to be seen as more active about the developments in Fiji.

Indian National Lok Dal, an ally of Vajpayee government and the ruling party in Jharkhand, has demanded that the government should take a more active role to restore democracy.

India has been in touch with Australia, New Zealand and Britain in the last few days on the events in Fiji. Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh has had consultations with British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, and the Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer to launch a Commonwealth initiative on Fiji.

Besides, Vajpayee's own party BJP yesterday strongly advocated international sanctions against Fiji to put pressure on it to restore democracy.

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