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The Daily Star

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Miladunnabi today

Eid-e-Miladunnabi, commemorating the death and birth of Prophet Hazrat Mohammad (SM), will be celebrated today across the country with due religious fervour, reports BSS.

The day will be celebrated through special prayers, milad mahfils and discussions under the auspices of different government, private and religious organisations including the Islamic Foundation.

The day is a public holiday and the National Flags will be hoisted atop all public and private buildings while the important streets and road islands in Dhaka and other cities will be decorated with colourful flags and banners inscribed with "Kalema Taieba." The Television and Radio will broadcast special programmes while newspapers will publish special supplements highlighting the significance of the day.

Special diets will be served at hospitals, children's homes and jails.

In a message on the eve of the holy Eid-e-Miladunnabi President Shahabuddin Ahmed said that the lifelong efforts of Prophet Hazrat Mohammad (SM) would act as a source of inspiration for establishing fraternity, equality and solidarity among the nations and also peace by removing injustice and untruth from society.

The President described the life and philosophy of the Prophet (SM) as an exemplary ideal.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a separate message expressed her belief that peace could be established in the present day world, now fighting the menace of terrorism, anarchy and war by adhering to the teachings and ideals of Prophet Mohammad (SM).

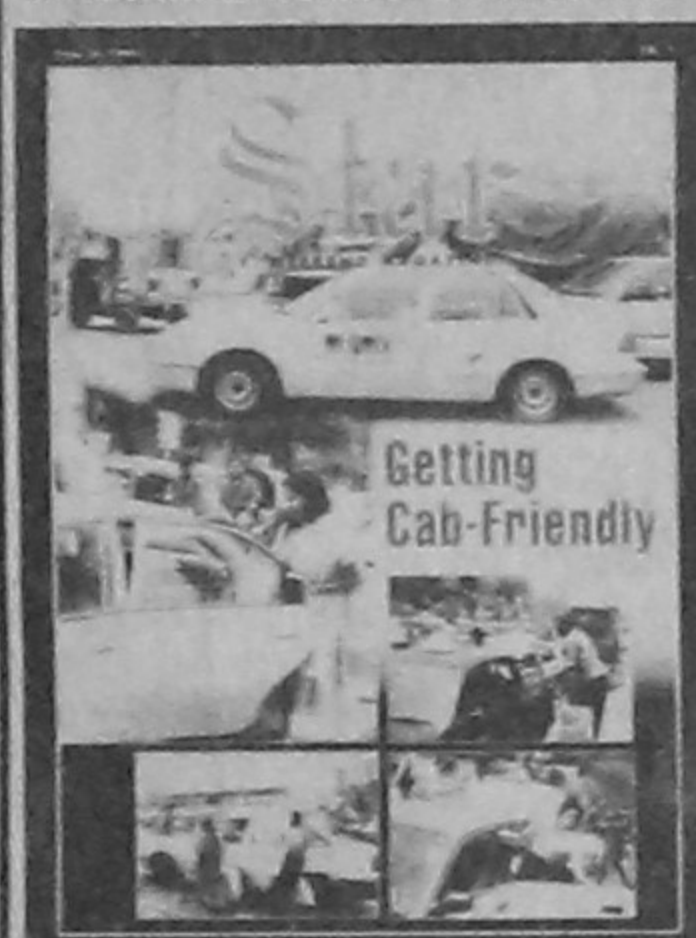
"Our dearest Prophet (SM) See page 11 col 6

Holiday

The offices of The Daily Star will remain closed today on the occasion of holy Eid-e-Miladunnabi.

Therefore, there will be no issue of the newspaper tomorrow.

Announcement



This week's cover story of The Star Weekend Magazine focuses on a new feature in Dhaka streets — the taxi cab. Why are cabs becoming popular among the public and what are the facilities on offer. Since there will be no newspaper on Friday, The Star Weekend Magazine will come out on Saturday.

Inside Today

Article

Will the New Syrian Leadership Follow the Trodden Path?

Column: Spotlight on

Middle East
by Muslehuddin
Ahmad
Page 4

Focus

The greatest of all man of all times; and Caring for cardiac patients

Page 5

June	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
15	5-11 am	6-47pm
16	5-11 am	6-47pm

Prayer Timings

June 15	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4:15	4:45
Zohr	1:00	1:30
Asr	5:00	5:15
Maghrib	6:50	6:55
Esha	8:15	8:45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Koreas sign landmark reconciliation accord

PYONGYANG, June 14: North and South Korea today signed a landmark accord on reducing Cold War tensions and bringing together families divided for the past five decades, officials said, reports AFP.

The accord was struck on the second day of historic summit meetings between President Kim Dae-Jung of South Korea and the North's supreme leader Kim Jong-Il.

The agreement covers four broad areas taking in North-South reconciliation, cooperation and moves toward reunification, tension reduction, families separated since the 1950-53 Korean War and exchanges and cooperation in various fields.

Presidential spokesman Park Joon-Young said "the two leaders signed the accord, which was drafted by South and North Korean delegates, after studying it."

The leaders held four hours of talks and attended a state banquet at which they were given a standing ovation before signing the accord, pooled television images showed.

Kim Dae-Jung hailed the success of the summit in a speech to the banquet.

"The sun is rising at last for national reunification, reconciliation and peace," he declared.

"The talks were successful," he added, "I express my thanks to Chairman Kim Jong-Il for helping to reach the accord."

The meetings produced results which indicated major strides toward ending more than half a century of enmity.

The Korean peninsula was divided between the communist North and pro-capitalist South.

See page 11 col 7



Happy reunion: South Korean First Lady Lee Hee-Ho (L) meets her old school teacher Kim Ji-Han, from the Ewha Women's High School in Seoul, in the North Korea's capital Pyongyang yesterday during the historic summit. Kim Ji-Han had left Seoul to Pyongyang just before the Korean liberation from Japanese colonial rules in 1945. —AFP photo

Petrobangla's surprise move

BAPEX asked to prepare development plan for Shahbazpur gasfield

By Sharier Khan

Petrobangla in a surprise move asked the BAPEX recently to prepare a development plan for the Shahbazpur gasfield, which is the centre of focus of the controversial Western Region Integrated Project (WRIP) of US oil company Unocal.

Discovered by Petrobangla's oil and gas exploration and production wing BAPEX in 1995, Shahbazpur gasfield is still under the purview of the on-going WRIP negotiations. As a result, BAPEX got confused when Petrobangla asked it to submit a development plan, a well-placed source said.

It is not clear if the government is really serious about BAPEX's venture in Shahbazpur, the source pointed out, "especially given the fact that Petrobangla is still holding meetings with Unocal over WRIP."

"It is unclear if there has been any government policy change regarding BAPEX or if it has any implication in the upcoming general elections."

The country's lone hydro-

carbon exploration company hardly got its due attention from the government until recently. Few months ago, the government decided to promote its status from exploration company to exploration and production company. However, apart from the elevation of status there had been no commitment of a working capital.

Following the Shahbazpur discovery, the BAPEX gave a gasfield development plan twice, outlining drilling of two appraisal wells. But the ECNEC rejected both proposals as BAPEX failed to come up with anything convincing about the economic viability of its plan.

"Back then, the Power Development Board was not interested to buy gas from Shahbazpur and BAPEX did not plan to set up a pipeline to transmit the gas to places like Khulna. The overall gas sales market was too small to justify further investment," said a Petrobangla source.

"The situation remains more or less unchanged. PDB,

which has a small 20 MW oil-fired power plant there, is still not interested to buy gas. The local gas consumption would be less than 0.003 million cubic feet per day (mmcf). It is doubtful whether BAPEX can submit any sound financial plan," he said. "But at the same time, this Petrobangla directive is significant."

He said that in mid-96, when BAPEX was formulating the Shahbazpur development plan, Unocal was one of the many foreign oil companies to express its interest to work with BAPEX.

"Unocal had submitted a joint venture proposal to BAPEX under which it would build a pipeline from Bhola to Khulna and set up a power plant there. All it wanted was a government guarantee for the sale of the power," he added, "it was totally different from the WRIP."

"Yet, the government had decided to sidetrack BAPEX and See page 11 col 7

'Staying in jail better than police harassment'

By Staff Correspondent

Ruling party lawmaker Kamal Ahmed Mojumder made a fiery statement in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday accusing police of harassing him unnecessarily and blasting a section of the press for 'trying to blackmail' him.

Mojumder, whose son Jewel is an accused in the sensational Shipu murder case, also sought protection as a member of parliament.

Rising on a point of order, the Awami League MP claimed that police had searched his residence 16 times and his business office six times in connection with the killing of (Iftikhar Ahmed) Shipu, a businessman in the city's Banani area.

"If law provides that a father is responsible for any action of an adult son, send me to jail. Staying in jail will be better than continuous police harassment,"

Mojumder drew Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's attention to say, "Please send me to prison if the government's image is damaged for me."

See page 11 col 6

BNP keeps all options open, devises plan for polls

By Rezaul Karim

BNP has devised an elaborate plan to prepare itself for the upcoming parliamentary polls.

The main opposition party is keeping all options open, including contesting the polls alone or through an electoral alliance, said a top party leader.

Sources said a good number of party leaders, ex-bureaucrats, academics, cultural activists and technical experts have already begun "research works" to get fully prepared within next six months for the national election.

BNP Chairperson and opposition leader Khaleda Zia is supervising the activities of the

just formed groups assigned to prepare strategies for next election and on other issues, gather feedback from grassroots level and what people think of BNP. The groups are also engaged in publication of booklets, leaflets and posters, selection of party nominees, resolving intra-party disputes and strengthening of party activities.

A new office at Banani has been set up and more such offices will be rented in the city soon, said a top BNP leader.

The office will be equipped with computer and other latest gadgets. There are office chambers only for Khaleda Zia, secretary general Abdul Mannan

Bhuiyan and Khaleda's eldest son Tareq Rahman. A limited number of people with prior appointment can visit the office on important occasions.

He said the Banani office is rented purely to carry out the research works. Khaleda will hold exclusive meetings with party MPs, businessmen, party's well-wishers, who do not want to meet her in public, and informal meetings with retired civil and military officials, and foreigners.

This office will mainly be used to carry out various research works and all necessary information and research

See page 12 col 2

AI alleges widespread HR violations

By Staff Correspondent

Activists of political parties and student groups linked to both ruling and opposition parties in Bangladesh continued to perpetrate acts of violence, including beating political opponents and students to death, Amnesty International (AI) has said.

Scores of people were injured due to indiscriminate police beating of anti-government protesters or journalists covering hartals in the country. Disproportionate use of force by police against demonstrators continued to be reported throughout the country last year, AI said in its report released in Dhaka yesterday.

Women were also subjected to an increasing number of violent attacks, the report said and attributed this to government's

failure to take adequate measures to protect women and address underlying gender discrimination.

The report was simultaneously released from the AI Secretariat in London, 56 sections and 40 coordinating structures, said officials of Bangladesh chapter of AI while releasing the report.

Institutional weakness, political instability and unchecked police brutality appeared to be major factors in continued widespread human rights violations in Bangladesh, the report said.

Neither the National Human Rights Commission nor the office of Ombudsman had been established by the end of 1999, it noted.

See page 11 col 6

31068 SSC examinees were expelled this yr

By Staff Correspondent

A total of 31,068 examinees were expelled during the SSC examinations under the five education boards in the country this year, results of which were announced on Sunday.

Education ministry officials said yesterday 3.38 per cent of the examinees were expelled. They, however, could not give the expulsion figures for the previous years.

Of the 918,045 examinees who appeared in the examinations this year, 381,762 passed. Percentage of pass was 40.34, 15 per cent less than last year's and the lowest in five years.

Education Minister ASHK Sadique, identifying the causes of failure of a record number of examinees this year, said on Monday strict vigilance had prevented students from adopting unfair means.

About 5000 examinees were expelled on the first day of the examinations that began on March 2.

The five boards had formed 60 vigilance teams to check malpractice in examination centres.

The number of expelled students was the highest — 12,643 — in Rajshahi Board and the lowest — 2408 — in Chittagong Board. The number was 6114, 5603 and 4300 for Dhaka, Comilla and Jessore boards respectively, the officials said.

Under Dhaka Board, of the 261,703 examinees, 6114 were expelled, percentage being 2.34. Percentage of pass was 36.44.

In Chittagong Board, 73,935 students sat for the examinations of whom 2408 were expelled — 3.25 per cent. Pass percentage was 37.27.

In Rajshahi Board, there were 270,623 examinees and 12,643 of them were expelled. The expulsion rate was 4.67 per cent. Percentage of pass was 47.26.

Under Jessore Board, of the 166,091 examinees 4300 were expelled, percentage being 2.59. Pass percentage was 45.44.

In Comilla Board, 145,693 candidates appeared in the examinations, of whom 5603 were expelled — 3.85 per cent. Percentage of pass was 35.40.

Khulna Shishu Hospital faces financial crisis

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, June 14: The number of patients at Khulna Shishu Hospital (KSH) is dropping alarmingly mainly due to acute shortage of medicare facilities, sources said.

The hospital authorities blamed the poor medicare facilities because of severe financial crisis that gripped KSH for the last two years.

Established in 1980, the

Stalemate at 4 US factories at CEPZ continues

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 14: Stalemate at the towel factories of American company Qualitex Group at Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) continued for the fourth day today as the workers were demanding reinstatement of 15 terminated workers, CEPZ sources said.

Some workers staged a demonstration today in front of GM's office at CEPZ, witnesses said.

Meanwhile, production in four factories remained suspended for four days as the workers continued work abstention to press home their demands, CEPZ sources said.

KSH, the lone children's hospital in Khulna Division, developed into a full-fledged 100-bed hospital. According to a source, a total of 6,29,07 patients were treated in KSH from September 7, 1980 until May 31, 2000 and most of the patients came from outside Khulna district.

The source said more than Tk 4 lakh is needed every month to run the hospital. But it gets only about Tk 2 lakh through donation, rent from shops attached to the hospital, and admission fees received from patients. It is very difficult to cover the shortfall, he added.

Authorities of Khulna Shishu Hospital, which has so far received only Tk 8 lakh as government grant, are grappling with the growing crisis of lifesaving drugs and experienced physicians.

Apart from absence of ambulances, the hospital has no necessary equipment for treatment of patients who suffer from various fatal diseases.

The Health Ministry is yet to take any emergency step to stop patients from leaving the hospital despite repeated appeals and reminders, said a source.

There are allegations that female nurses do not want to stay in the hospital at night for

See page 12 col 8

Spirulina may come as a rescue

Breakthrough in arsenic treatment in the offing

By Naimul Haq

A possible breakthrough in arsenic treatment has been found after extensive clinical experiments in Bangladesh.

Clinical study suggests that spirulina, a green blue algae having a very high concentration of micronutrients and vitamins, may have good effects on people suffering from heavy metal poisoning like arsenic. A recent non-randomised study by the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) found tremendous improvement in skin manifestation of arsenicosis patients after they were given a daily dose of 10 grams of spirulina each for four months.

As the study was confined to hospital-based patients, a further epidemiological study was necessary under strict protocol to validate the effect of spirulina on a larger size of population.

Dr A Z M Iftikhar Hussain, a leading public health expert and also a senior instructor at NIPSOM, and his associate researcher Dr Hasina Momotaz, conducted this study.

The study was conducted in three villages in Narayanganj district where hand-pumped

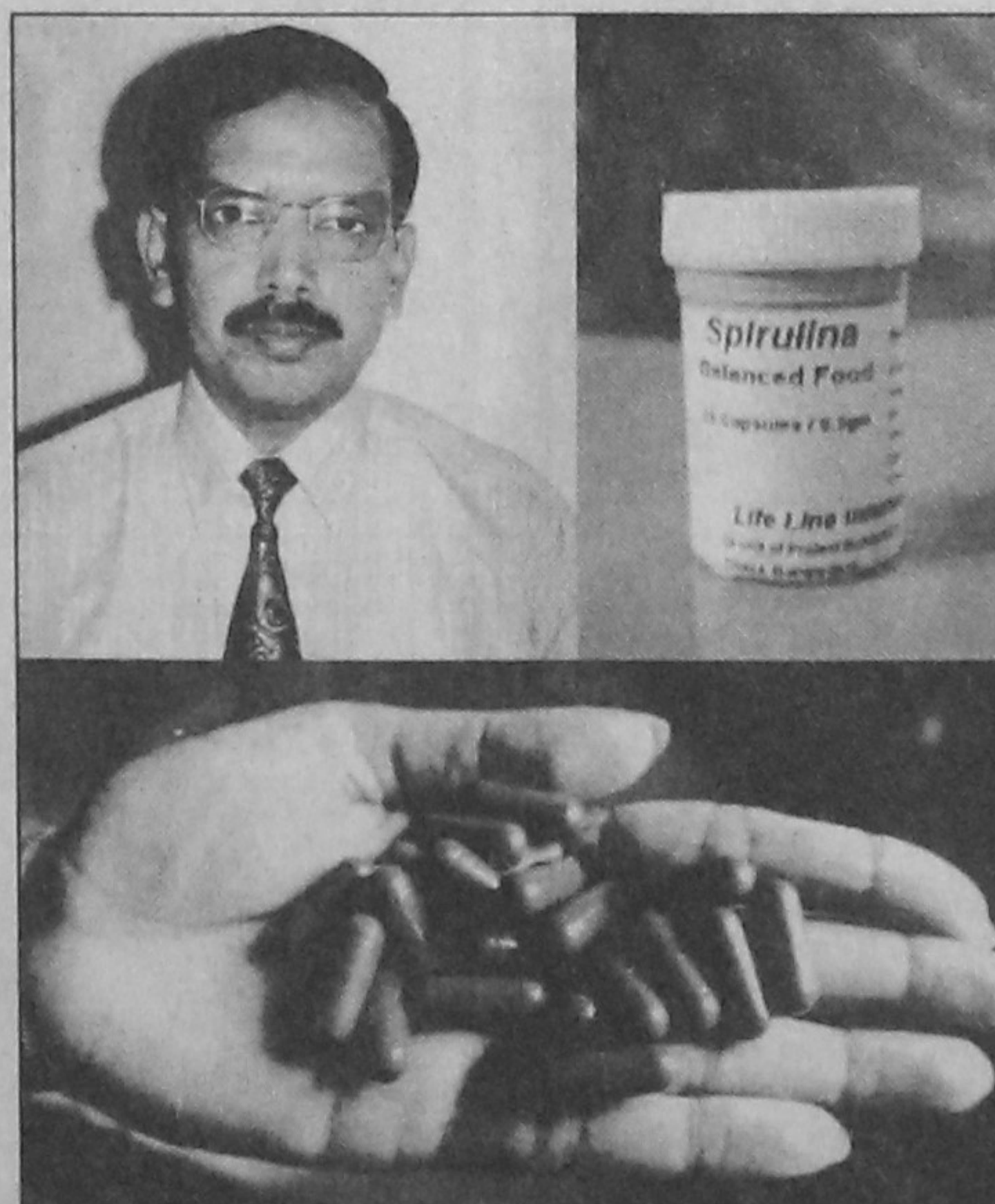
tubewells were known to be contaminated by arsenic.

Dr Hussain talking to the Daily Star said: "Fifty arsenicosis patients, both male and female, of different age groups were randomly selected from a total of 185 patients of the three villages. The patients were grouped into three stages — stage one included melanosis, keratosis and conjunctivitis; stage two included leucoderma and hyperkeratosis; and stage three hyperkeratosis with nodules in palm and feet."

"Spirulina was distributed among the 50 patients in the form of capsule. Double blind method was followed in the study where 33 patients received true spirulina and the rest 17 got mock spirulina (capsules did not contain spirulina). The patients who received the capsules were at different stages of arsenic poisoning."

Prior to the study patients were examined to record visible signs of arsenicosis and photographs were also taken to compare the condition before and after the intervention.

See page 11 col 8



Spirulina in the form of capsules and Dr A Z M Iftikhar Hussain, one of the two researchers who conducted the study. — Star photo

Impounding of Ershad's passport legal: HC

The High Court yesterday observed that impounding of passport of HM Ershad, former President and Jatiya Party Chairman, was legal and in accordance with the law, reports UNB.

The court summarily rejected the writ petition of Ershad challenging impounding of his passport on June 5 when he was going to London for medical checkup.

Rejecting the writ the court observed that there was no evidence that the petitioner had no scope for treatment in Bangladesh. Papers submitted showed that he sought for medical treatment abroad on his own. No local doctor advised him for treatment abroad.

A Division Bench comprising Justice Mohammad Golam Rabbani and Justice Nazmun Ara Sultana rejected the petition after hearing counsel of both sides.

Earlier, opposing the contention of the petitioner's counsel, Additional Attorney General Mahbub Alam submitted that the Passport Order allowed impounding of passport of any citizen if deemed necessary in the interest of sovereignty, integrity and security of the country or in public interest.

Barrister Rafiqul Haque and Khandokar Mahbub Hossain appeared for the petitioner.

Sarbahara Party leader murdered in Sirajganj

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, June 14: A leader of outlawed Sarbahara Party was murdered by a gang of armed men near Bangabandhu Bridge yesterday.

Police and witnesses said the victim Tota Munshi came under attack when he along with his three accomplices reached near the bridge at around 7:30 pm.

The gang caught Tota while his three associates managed to flee.

They took Tota to a nearby Jute field and hit him with sharp weapons. Tota died on the spot.

Police today recovered the body and sent it to Sirajganj General Hospital for autopsy.

A case was lodged with Kamekhand thana, but none was arrested till filing of this report at 8 pm today.

Two Indians held in Sylhet town

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, June 14: Two Indians were arrested last night for their suspicious movement in the town by the Kotwali police.

Debashish Bhattacharjee and Rahul Sharma, both from Bhaktanagar thana of Jalpaiguri district, West Bengal were arrested by the Supanighat Out post police at about 11 pm.

They were arrested when they failed to show passports or any other document in support of their travel to Bangladesh.

Debashish and Rahul were produced before the Magistrate's court today from where they were sent to the jail habitat.

A case was filed in this connection.

Electricity tariff has increased 9 times since '90

The electricity tariff has increased as many as nine times since 1990, Parliament was told yesterday, reports UNB.

In reply to Kamal Ahmed Majumder (AL-Mirpur), State Minister for Energy Prof Rafiqul Islam attributed increase in price of fuel used in power production and differences in exchange rate to the enhancement of electricity tariff.