

Intra-party feud Jessore BNP president's driver shot dead, 2 hurt

BSS, Jessore

Driver of the Jessore town BNP President Sukur Ali, 30, was shot dead and two other BNP activists were injured at Dharmatola area in Jessore yesterday evening.

Police and local people said the killing occurred following an intra-party feud over establishing domination in the area.

Police quoting local people said a group of armed miscreants came in front of the house of city BNP President Delwar Hossain Khokon at Dharmatola at about 6-30 PM.

The miscreants suddenly opened fire on the driver Sukur and others standing in front of their leader's house. They also stabbed BNP activists Rajibul Haque and Jahangir and left the spot after exploding home made bombs.

Local people took the injured to Jessore General Hospital where doctors declared Sukur dead. The injured were admitted to the hospital from where Jahangir fled.

Rajibul disclosed the names of two BNP activists who were allegedly involved in the killing, police said.

Student drowns in Kaptai Lake

BSS, Rangamati

A teenage girl, who had come here to attend the marriage ceremony of her cousin, drowned in the Kaptai Lake Tuesday afternoon while she was taking a bath.

Kaniz Faria Farhana, 18, a student of computer science, drowned in the lake in front of WAPDA Colony near Parjatan as she was taking a bath with her mother and a cousin, police and witnesses said.

Local people said Farhana's mother cried out for help when she realised that her daughter was drowning.

But by the time people gathered on the spot, Farhana had already drowned.

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8 state-owned textile mills go to workers tomorrow

UNB, Dhaka

Eight state-owned textile mills will be handed over to their former employees and workers.

To this effect, the government signed deeds with representatives of the workers and employees in presence of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office yesterday.

Officials said the prime minister took this initiative in 1997. She will formally hand over the ownership of the mills to the workers and employees at a workers' rally at Tongi on Friday.

The mills are: Olympia Textile Mills, Monno Textile Mills, Fine Cotton Textile Mills, Meghna Textile Mills, Laxminarayan Cotton Mills, Dhaka Cotton Mills, Pylon Cotton Mills and Karilin Silk Mills.

Besides, the National Cotton Mills will be handed over to its former worker-employees later on

after settlement of some legal matters.

Officials said 7,193 workers and employees of the nine mills were paid off under the voluntary retirement programme at a cost of Tk 89.32 crore.

Assets of these mills are worth Tk 468.10 crore, liability Tk 447.13 crore, transferable liability Tk 167.44 crore while transferable lands are 84.40 acres.

Officials said the government will provide short-term loans while the new owners will have to manage long-term loans.

They said the government is handing over the share of the mills without any cost and waived 1.5 per cent share interest of the mills.

The workers and employees will operate the loss incurring mills without any interference from the BTMC or the government, they added.

Earlier, addressing leaders of

the workers and employees at ICC, the Prime Minister said a revolutionary change would take place in the industrial sector with the successful operation of these mills.

She said the present government had adopted the formula of handing over closed textile mills to the workers and employees. She hoped that with sincere work and good management, they will make these mills profitable.

Asking the new owners to work with utmost sincerity and dedication, the Prime Minister assured all government help and assistance for the smooth operation of the mills.

Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria, State Minister for Textiles KM Jahangir, Jute-Textile Workers and Employees Council convenor Abul Bashar, Textiles Secretary Helal Uddin Khan and BTMC chairman AFMS Zaman also addressed the meeting.

Indian parliament paralysed for 6th day amid chaos

Reuters, New Delhi

India's parliament was paralysed yesterday for a sixth straight working day as a sensational arms bribery scandal engulfing the 17-month-old ruling coalition showed no signs of abating.

Parliamentary proceedings were adjourned amid scenes of chaos as opposition deputies thronged the centre of the lower house bellowing "Resign, resign," at members of the coalition government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Earlier, outside parliament, some 50 government and opposition members hurled insults at each other as security men struggled to keep them apart.

"The government should quit and save India," cried a member of the main opposition party, Congress while members of the governing

coalition ripped up opposition signs.

The scandal, which has plunged the government into its worst crisis yet, broke last week after a news website released secretly shot videos of senior officials and army officials apparently taking wads of money from journalists posing as arms salesmen to push a fake defence contract.

Cash shadow

The naval chief said on Thursday the payoff scandal had cast a shadow on the defence establishment but that it would pass.

"This expose has cast a shadow on the country's defence system but it is a temporary phenomena and the armed forces will come through it more resilient," a Naval spokesman quoted Navy Chief Admiral Sushil Kumar as saying.

The media sting, in which two reporters apparently bribed their way into the heart of India's defence establishment, has already forced the resignation of the defence minister and two chiefs of parties belonging to the coalition government.

An army court of inquiry, set up a

day after the scandal broke, is looking into the conduct of officers in the videos.

A defence official said the army inquiry was expected to summon more than a dozen military personnel to appear before it.

Yesterday, Tarun Tejpal, editor-in-chief of the upstart news service, tehelka.com whose name means sensation, was grilled for 90 minutes by the army inquiry.

He handed over four-and-a-half-hours of videotapes of senior army officers and political figures apparently discussing defence deals with the Tehelka journalists, according to media reports.

"He (Tejpal) probably will be called again," an army spokesman told Reuters.

Parliament will resume sitting today but Congress was expected to keep forcing adjournments until Friday when both houses go into recess until mid-April.

The Times of India newspaper reported the parliamentary paralysis had cost taxpayers 420 million rupees (\$8.99 million) since the scandal erupted.



Home Minister Mohammad Nasim, Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed join local Awami League MP Shamim Osman and other party leaders for a round of applause during yesterday's public meeting at Narayanganj (left), which caused heavy traffic jam on the Biswa Road.

Power handover on completion of tenure, says Tofail

BSS, Narayanganj

Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed yesterday asserted that the Awami League government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will hand over power after completion of its tenure.

Referring to the ultimatum given by the four-party alliance at Paltan Maidan yesterday asking the government to resign by the end of this month, Tofail said, "The Awami League government will relinquish power only after completion of its tenure on July 13."

The minister was speaking as the chief guest at a grand rally of the workers at Adamjee Jute Mills playground, organised by Siddirganj thana Awami League.

Tofail called upon the people to fight against Razakars, Al Badars and anti-liberation forces who, he said, had reunited in the fold of the four-party alliance to oust the elected government through conspiracy.

The meeting was also addressed, among others, by Home, Post and Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim as special guest, AKM Shamim Osman MP, Segufta Yasmin MP, Narayanganj District Awami League President Nazma Rahman, Adamjee Jute Mills CBA President Ruhul Amin Sardar, Sramik League Vice-President Abdul Matin Master, former CBA leader Rehan Uddin Rehan and

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Water crisis: Integrated management of resources suggested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar here yesterday said Bangladesh needs to take up an effective integrated water resources management programme to cope with water crisis.

They said groundwater at several places has been over-exploited for irrigation, migration routes of fish have been disrupted and fish habitation damaged in many places, navigation has been obstructed while water quality has deteriorated.

The speakers were of the view that the challenges in improving the performance of the water resources sector in Bangladesh could only be met if a good management is put in place.

Co-organised by the Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) and World Water Forum of Journalists (WWFJ), the two-day seminar titled 'Water for People, Water for Health' at the Jatiya Press

Club coincided with the World Water Day, which is today.

Chairman of FEJB and Secretary-General of WWFJ Quamrul Islam Choudhury, who presided over the seminar, urged all to focus on the realities that water has been a problem in many ways.

"It is a problem in the form of floods that cut a swathe through the country and in the forms of arsenic contamination, river erosion and many others."

"These problems are being increasingly experienced not only by our people but by the people of Asia and other parts of the world as well. It is time we started addressing the issues concerning water crucial in ensuring a sustainable environment as well as a sustainable future for prosperity," he said.

Dutch Ambassador to Bangladesh J.L. Ijzermans said, "The problems of too much, too little or too polluted water are increasing rapidly in the world. These

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Govt college teachers continue strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Teachers of government colleges in the country continued to 'abstain' from taking classes for the third day yesterday to press their four-point demand including promotion.

Classes were not held at government colleges in the city and elsewhere due to the abstention programme, said leaders of BCS General Education Association, a platform of government collage teachers.

They claimed that no teacher in

any government college was promoted in the last five years.

"Teachers of 246 government colleges have long been deprived of various facilities they deserve as per rules. But the authorities concerned ignored these despite being repeatedly pressed," one leader told The Daily Star.

"We were compelled to announce the latest programme as the authorities did not pay heed to our logical demands," he said seeking anonymity.

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To stop opposition supporters ?

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTA) suspended operation of all ferries at Doulatdia, Nagarbari and Charjarajat jetties yesterday snapping communications through the three river routes.

Addressing a public rally in the city, the four-party alliance leaders alleged that the government action was aimed at stopping their supporters from outside Dhaka to attend yesterday's rally at Paltan Maidan.

A copy of the BIWTA order in this regard was made available to The Daily Star. The order said operation of the ferries was suspended due to unavoidable circumstances.

Narsimha Rao on comeback trail?

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Is senior Congress leader and former prime minister PV Narasimha Rao staging a comeback to the centre stage of party affairs, ending his virtual isolation over the last three years?

Speculations in this regard have gained currency ever since she was invited to occupy a seat next to Congress chief Sonia Gandhi at the party's just-concluded plenary session in Bangalore at the weekend. Gandhi had begun her speech to the plenary by addressing Rao first.

This is in sharp contrast to the previous plenary in Calcutta in 1997 when Rao was pushed to a corner when late Sitaram Kesri was at the helm. Rao's isolation in the party grew ever since he was convicted in a corruption case involving allegations of bribing some members of parliament to secure their votes to help his minority government win a trial of strength in parliament some years back.

Rao is not the only first Indian Prime Minister to be convicted in a

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BCP man slaughtered in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Abdul Majed, 35, of Tala thana unit of Biplobi Communist Party was slaughtered on Tuesday night.

Police recovered his body from Matiabhang village under the same police station.

Tala police said the murder is a sequel to intra-party rivalry in the BCP. However, a handbill found beside his body said he was killed for being a police informer.

Majed was in the hit list of BCP.

Tala thana OC said that Majed was wanted in four murder and eleven dacoity cases. He was one of the ring leaders of Tala-Dumuria unit of the BCP Shailen group, police said.