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Garment worker slaughtered in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unidentified assailants slaughtered a garment worker at Begunbari in the city's Tejgaon area on Thursday night.

The deceased was identified as Shahidul Islam, 28, a resident of C&B quarters at Mohakhali.

Police recovered the body from a lake in the area yesterday morning.

The reason behind the killing could not be known till filing of this report last night.

The miscreants slaughtered Shahidul and dumped his body in the lake, police said.

Family sources said Shahidul and his wife Nasreen, both are employees of Saeed garments. Shahidul came out of his work place at 7.30 pm on Thursday and since then he was missing.

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Nasreen, wife of slain garment worker Shahidul, wailing. Police recovered Shahidul's body from a lake in the city's Tejgaon area yesterday morning.

3 missing as trawlers sink in Buriganga

UNB, N'ganj

Three people remained missing as two sand-laden trawlers sank after a collision with a passenger launch on the river Buriganga near Fatulla last night.

Witnesses said the trawlers capsized when Barisal-bound launch Sagar-7 knocked those at about 7.30 pm. Three labourers, Matin, Rasell and Shahidul, remained missing following the accident.

Other passengers of the trawlers managed to swim ashore, witnesses said, some 20/25 labourers were on board the two trawlers.

Rescue operation to trace the missing workers was on till writing of this report last night.

Meanwhile, six people including

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A S M NURUNNABI

The pace of development on the southern side of Buriganga is much slower than that on the northern side of river. Because of the natural obstruction created by the river, Dhaka city's southward expansion could not take place on the same scale. Due to lack of proper and adequate communication system and natural constraints like low-lying areas, places like Keraniganj and Zinzira situated on the other side of the river have fallen behind in development.

The Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge over Buriganga in 1989 opened a new horizon of development of communication facilities for the areas on the southern side of the river. The bridge contributed to the opening of the Dhaka-Khulna highway and exerted considerable impact on the development of the areas adjoining the highway, such as Sreenagar, Zinzira, Nawabganj and Dohar. The potentialities of the bridge in the

DOWN TO EARTH

Development trend across river Buriganga

development of the areas served by the new highway are yet to be fully realised. With a view to reaping greater benefits from communication with the southern side of the river, construction of a second Buriganga Bridge at Baburbazar is nearing completion. The second bridge, when completed, will establish an easy link between Dhaka city and Zinzira and Keraniganj and provide easy access to the Dhaka-Mawa road and Zinzira-Keraniganj-Dohar road.

The low terrain on the southern side of the river is the main impediment

to the rapid development of the areas close to the existing road network.

In some of the low-lying areas bordering the river, there are a few brick-fields. The kilns of these brick-fields spewing clouds of toxic smoke from their chimneys create an environmentally adverse situation around them. As most of the low-lying lands are agricultural requiring large investments for development of non-agricultural projects like housing, industries and other ancillary concerns, we notice the growth of low-cost hous-

ing units in most of these areas, some of which are semi-pucca.

An attempt at planned development for housing is the RAJUK project named Jhelmeed township project covering 450 acres of land along Mawa road which has been divided into 3 and 5 katha residential plots, numbering about 200. RAJUK has lately invited applications for allotment of such plots.

In spite of the mostly low-lying lands, busy localities have sprung up at Zinzira. Though Zinzira has acquired some bad name or pro-

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Signing of contract for BGSL gas sale to Kafco deferred

SHARIER KHAN

The signing of a contract for sale of gas by Bakhrabad Gas Systems Limited (BGSL) to Kafco, initiated two weeks ago, was deferred late last week following "stiff resistance" from BGSL which thought that it bypassed a decision of the Prime Minister.

Secretaries of Economic Relations Division (ERD) and the ministries of industries and energy earlier took the initiative to make BGSL sign the contract with Kafco, sources concerned said.

But late last week, when BGSL officials pointed out that the contract would violate the Prime Minister's decision on three points, the secretaries asked them to prepare a fresh draft of the contract in the light of the PM's decision.

The ERD and industries secretaries had gone to Singapore where the final contract was supposed to be signed. However, they returned without signing it, the sources said.

The sources said that the contract was initiated two weeks ago on the basis of the Prime Minister's

decision taken in September last year.

The secretaries had insisted that the contract was drafted in the light of the Prime Minister's decision but BGSL officials claimed that several of its clauses were "deliberately modified" in favour of Kafco.

As per the contract the country would incur a minimum loss of Tk 165 crore in the first five years, BGSL claimed.

The loss would continue till 2015, the period of the contract.

As per the contract BGSL would have to sell gas to Kafco at 0.75 dollars per thousand cubic feet (one unit) against the domestic price of 1.2 dollars. It would also ensure Kafco's payment at only 75 cents per unit till 30 April 2005.

Kafco consumes between 45 and 62 million cubic feet of gas per day (mmcf).

BGSL now sells gas to Kafco at 1.01 dollars per unit under an agreement signed during the rule of HM Ershad.

Under Japanese pressure, the Prime Minister in September last year approved a gas pricing formula

under which Kafco would purchase gas at 1.05 dollars per unit from June 2005 to June 2006. The tariff would increase annually by 3.5 per cent till 2010.

The Prime Minister had clearly directed that the formula would be implemented through an agreement to be signed on May 1, 2005.

Last month, following a review meeting with Kafco, the secretaries of ERD, Energy Ministry and Industries Ministry drafted a gas supply and payment agreement (GSPA) adding a new line "(Contract) Start Date shall be 1 May 2005 or such earlier date as the Parties (KAFCO and BGSL) may agree."

The draft agreement accommodated the formula approved by the Prime Minister but added, "From the Start Date to 30 April 2005, the Floor Price shall be US\$ 0.75/MSCF (or unit)."

The sources said that to compel the government to agree to such provisions, Japanese company Marubeni that holds the major share in Kafco and the Japan Bank of Investment Cooperation (JBIC)

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Devi Lal dead

REUTERS, New Delhi

Former Indian Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal died in New Delhi yesterday of cardiac arrest, an official said.

Devi Lal, 87, popularly known as "Tau" which means respected uncle in Hindi, was from the northern state of Haryana and was a well-known leader of India's farming community.

"Devi Lal died early evening today. He was admitted a week ago to Apollo Hospital for a minor heart attack. He died of cardiac arrest," an official of the Haryana state government told Reuters.

Lal, who was active in India's drive for independence during the 1930s and 1940s, is survived by three sons. He was detained during India's emergency rule from 1975 to 1977 imposed by former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

One of his sons, Om Prakash Chautala, is chief minister of Haryana and an ally of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's federal coalition.

Devi Lal was Deputy Prime Minister from December 1989 to July 1990 during Prime Minister VP Singh's tenure and from November 1990 to June 1991 under Prime Minister Chandrashekar.

He was also the chief minister of Haryana on two occasions.

SS Ray joins Tinamool Congress

SAKYASEN MITTRA, Kolkata

Noted politician and former Chief Minister of West Bengal Siddhartha Shankar Ray has decided to join the Trinamool Congress.

Ray, in fact, will be contesting for the Lok Sabha seat from the Midnapore constituency. The seat fell vacant following death of veteran CPI leader Indrajit Gupta a few days ago.

The decision to field Ray as a Trinamool Congress candidate was disclosed by some top leaders of the party yesterday.

Ray himself yesterday said he decided to join Trinamool Congress simply because he felt that it was the right moment to build up an active opposition against the Left Front in West Bengal.

"The Congress has not been using me for quite sometime. I had contested as a Congress candidate during the last Lok Sabha elections. However, they had sent me to political oblivion after I had lost to Sudip Bandopadhyaya of the Trinamool Congress. So when the offer came I decided that it would be nice to take

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Pak SC orders retrial of Benazir's corruption case

AP, Islamabad

The Supreme Court yesterday ordered a new trial into corruption charges against former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, suspending an earlier conviction and jail sentence.

Benazir was found guilty of corruption in April 1999 and sentenced to five years in jail and disqualified from politics for seven years. She has been living in self-imposed exile in the United Arab Emirates and Britain refusing to return home while her conviction was under appeal.

The Supreme Court order means the former prime minister can return to Pakistan without risking arrest. Her supporters said she is likely to return soon, although no date has been set.

The Supreme Court also ordered a new trial for Benazir's jailed husband, Asif Ali Zardari, who was found guilty on the same charge.

The Supreme Court decision ordering a new trial did not elaborate on the reasons for its decision.

"Both Benazir and Asif have been vindicated," said Farooq Naik, one of her lawyers. "This shows that our judiciary is free and independent."

Zardari has been in jail in Pakistan since his wife's government was dismissed from power in November 1996. He also faces an attempted murder charge in connection with the September 1996 shooting death of Benazir's estranged brother.

He has pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Benazir was ousted on corruption charges by the president, who used his constitutional powers to dismiss her as well as Parliament.

However, Benazir, who has maintained her innocence throughout, said the charges against her were drummed up by her arch rival Nawaz Sharif, who was prime minister at the time of her conviction.

Sharif's government also was ousted, but by the army in October 1999. Sharif was accused of widespread corruption and economic mismanagement. He has since been sent into exile in Saudi Arabia.

Benazir's lawyer, Hafeez Pirzada, argued that a taped telephone conversation between a member of Sharif's government and the judge, who was trying Bhutto, provided proof of an unfair trial.

A transcript of the taped telephone conversations indicated that the judge had written the judgement in the Benazir corruption case before handing down his guilty verdict.

"The grounds will show that this conviction of both Benazir Bhutto and Asif Zardari is unwarranted by law," Pirzada told the Supreme Court appeal hearing.

No date was set for the new trial. It also wasn't known whether Bhutto would return to Pakistan, although her supporters have indicated that she is likely to return soon.

Another report says Benazir Bhutto said yesterday she will soon be going home.

In a telephone interview with The Associated Press, Bhutto said her return will happen "sooner rather than later."

She called the court decision a vindication of her and her husband as well as a tribute to the independence of Pakistan's judiciary. "I am very happy with the court's setting aside of mine and my husband's conviction," she said. "Today's judgement has vindicated me."

Picnic bus crash kills five at Chokoria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Five people were killed and 30 injured when one of the two buses carrying a picnic party from Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD), Comilla met with an accident at Chokoria on Cox's Bazar-Chittagong road yesterday morning.

Police said the accident occurred at about 7 am when the bus skidded off the road and fell into a roadside ditch. Witnesses said the driver of the bus lost control over the steering when he was giving side to a truck at a turning point.

About 110 staff of the academy were going to Cox's Bazar aboard the two buses for picnic.

The dead were identified as Anwar Hossain, 31, Jewel Ahmed, 28, Sahara Begum, 35, Sonia, 22 and Khairuzzaman 30. All the five died on the spot.

The injured were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital, Chokoria Upazila Health Complex and Malanghat Christian Hospital.

Police seized the bus, but its driver managed to flee.

A case was filed with Chokoria thana in this connection.

UNB adds: Two people were killed in separate road accidents in Narayanganj yesterday.

Police said Mithu, 20, a bus helper, received injuries when a bus collided with another bus coming from opposite direction at Dapa Idrakpur in Fatulla thana in the afternoon.

Later, he succumbed to his injuries on way to hospital.

In another accident, an unidentified 60-year man was crushed under the wheels of a truck at Sanarpara in Siddhirganj thana on Dhaka-Chittagong highway at noon.

The bodies were sent to general hospital morgue for autopsy.

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World Health Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

World Health Day will be observed around the globe today, focussing on mental health.

This year is devoted to mental health. The theme of the day is "Stop Exclusion - Dare to care".

About 1500 million people around the world suffer from mental and neurological disorders or from psychological problems such as those related to alcohol and drug abuse. According to WHO.

In Bangladesh, an estimated one crore thirty thousand people suffer from such mental disorders.

Mental illness and brain disorders, both of which have biological roots, provoke suffering, cause disability and can even shorten life due to depression after heart attack and liver diseases resulting from alcohol. Mental disorders also lead

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A Tazia procession was brought out in the city on Thursday on the occasion of holy Ashura, commemorating the supreme sacrifice of Imam Hussain (R) at Karbala some 1360 years ago.

BTTB plans a unified telecom network

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

The Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) plans to install at least one telephone in every village across the country.

According to BTTB sources, the idea is to bring rural people in the country under one unified telecommunication network. The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) put the number of villages in the country at around 80,000.

"We have floated a tender for setting up one telephone in each village of the country," a highly placed source in the board said. "It will help increase the country's tele-density."

"Telephone facility would reach the doorsteps of villagers through the scheme. People will be able to communicate with their near and dear ones at home and abroad after implementation of the project."

The project would be implemented in phases on a turnkey basis and suppliers' credit financing. The government wants to realise the plan as a priority, the source said.

It would also help ease the demand for basic telephony. The BTTB had a vision to provide one phone for every 1,000 people by the year 2000, as per the government's telecommunication policy.

According to available statistics Bangladesh's population is estimated at approximately 130 million, so it needs around 1.3 million phones. But the country has a little over half a million land-based connections.

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Bakery employee shot dead by BCL activists in Feni

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Feni

An employee of a bakery was shot dead allegedly by BCL activists at Natun Bazar under Feni Sadar upazila Thursday morning.

The victim was identified as Abu Bakkar, 23, son of Mofzal Haque of village Damdama under Motabi Union.

Witnesses said two BCL activists Mizan and Zia entered the Mohammadi Bakery at around 9 am and shot Bakkar point blank. He died on the spot.

Police recovered the body on Thursday evening and sent it to Feni hospital for autopsy.

Police could not arrest the two BCL activists till filing of this report at 6 pm yesterday.

Bagerhat Jubo Dal leader murdered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Kamruzzaman Tito, 25, publicity secretary of Jubo Dal Bagerhat District Unit, was murdered at Muniganj area under Sadar thana at midnight on Wednesday.

Tito came under attack while he was returning home from local BNP office. He was taken to Bagerhat Sadar hospital where he succumbed to injuries the same night.

Police immediately arrested four activists of the ruling party suspecting their involvement in the murder.

The arrested are Jalal Shaikh, 25, Ruhul Amin Babu, 27, Mizanur Rahman

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