



PHOTO: STAR

Spring sprites... jubilant sari-clad women celebrate Pehela Falgun at a cultural programme at the Institute of Fine Arts, Dhaka University yesterday.

## 3 killed in gunfight in Shariatpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three persons were killed and seven others injured in a gunfight between two factions in a village under Sadar upazila in Shariatpur yesterday.

The dead are two brothers -- Md Motiur Matbar, 45, and Md Aslam Matbar, 40 -- sons of Abdul Hai Matbar, and Tipu Matbar, 35, son of late Abdul Karim Matbar.

Police and villagers said the incident was a sequel to a long-standing feud between two families in Bhortishar village under Damshar union. The row intensified over theft

of date-juice on Tuesday.

The two families have been confronting each other since the October 1 general election, villagers said.

Both families were supporters of the Awami League (AL) but split over supporting candidates in the election.

One family supported AL nominee Mobarak Ali Sikdar, while the other supported Hemayetullah Auranga MP, also AL leader, who contested the election as an independent candidate.

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## On first day of spring

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pehela Falgun, the first day of spring, was celebrated with youthful exuberance across the country yesterday.

Hundreds of traditionally attired youths flocked to the Dhaka University campus, the prime place of Pehela Falgun celebration or Basanta Utsab.

Many jubilant youths arrived at Bakul Tala at the Institute of Fine Arts early in the morning to join the cultural programme arranged as part of Basanta Utsab, one of the biggest festivals of Bangladesh.

Sari-clad young women and punjabi-attired young men congregated on the campus and exchanged greetings with each other.

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## Taskforce probe reveals Industrial units in N'ganj alone steal gas worth Tk 100cr

UNB, Dhaka

Industrial units in Narayanganj alone are stealing gas worth some Tk 100 crore every year, an official investigation revealed the tip of the iceberg while probing into irregularities in the sector.

A taskforce formed to stop gas stealing and realise outstanding bills detected the theft and mentioned it in its primary report submitted to State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharrar Hossain.

It says several thousand mills and factories in Narsingdi are also stealing gas, apart from pilferage in many other areas and organisations.

The taskforce in its primary report blamed a racket comprising a section of Titas administration, Titas employees dismissed on corruption charges, blacklisted contractors, industry owners, hoodlums and police for gas pirating in Narayanganj-Narsingdi industrial belts.

The taskforce in the first month of its work could also realise overdue bills worth Tk 20 crore although the amount of outstanding bills is in terms of crores of taka, more than half in public sector, sources concerned said.

However, they said a section of Titas Gas itself had launched a bid to hamper the activities of the taskforce. "Added to that there is non-cooperation from the police administration," said one official.

Even taskforce members are being threatened by various quarters, sources close to the oversight body on the gas distribution system said.

Sources at Titas said the amount of its outstanding bills is Tk 968.67 crore of which Tk 477.67 crore is due from government organisations and sector

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## Papers relating to graft at Ctg Port stolen: 6 arrested

UNB, Ctg

Important papers and documents relating to financial misappropriation at the Chittagong Port were stolen from the lockers of 12 officials and employees, including the Port Chairman, at midnight on Monday.

Three ansars -- Sayed Ali, Quamruzzaman and Azad, and three security guards -- Nurul Huq, Taher Ahmed and Ahsanullah -- were arrested in connection with the burglary.

A joint cell, comprising the representatives of five detective organisations, was formed yesterday to probe the incident.

Port sources said, robbers

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## One beaten to death in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man aged about 45 was beaten to death by unidentified assailants in front of K C Memorial Hospital in the city's Gulshan area Tuesday evening.

The identity of the man could not be known immediately. Gulshan police recovered the body from the spot at around 10 pm and sent it to

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## News Analysis

### Judge, jury and executioner

SHAIKH NAZRUL ISLAM

Rapidly waning confidence in police as law enforcers is prompting the public to take the law into their own hands and mete out instant justice on the streets.

A total of 37 alleged muggers or robbers were beaten or burnt to death on the streets of Dhaka within the last three months ending in January. Four of them were killed in November while a staggering 25 in December and eight in January.

Four of the victims were burnt to death in December and January. And the ghastly trend seems to have caught on with the public as just a few days back another suspected mugger was burnt to death by a mob in front of Adarsha Police Camp in the city's Dhanmondi area.

Although the phenomenon of mob beating is nothing new in the capital, the recent dangerous trend hit the city with a vengeance before the Eid-ul-Fitr. Fourteen suspected

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## Ward Commissioner Shahid arrested

Alleged godfather of terrorists remanded for 3 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detective Branch (DB) of police yesterday arrested DCC Ward Commissioner Saidur Rahman Shahid.

Police in a press release said Shahid is a 'godfather of terrorists' and there are several murder cases against him including one for the killing of Azizur Rahman Khokon.

A team of DB police headed by ADC Ruhul Amin and AC Akhteruzzaman Bhuiyan arrested him from his Shahidnagar residence in the city's Sutrapur area at about 3:45 am.

The team went near his residence at Shatish Sarkar Road and called him over mobile phone. The DB men identified themselves as law enforcers and said they needed his cooperation to conduct a raid in the area. As soon as Shahid came out of his residence, they bundled him into a waiting car and drove straight to the Minto Road DB office.



Saidur Rahman Shahid

Following his arrest police teams in riot gear and plainclothesmen were deployed in and around Sutrapur to avert any untoward incident.

Although Shahid is widely alleged to have committed or masterminded more than 12 murders,

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## 40 Hajj pilgrims killed in Saudi road accident

AFP, Riyadh

Forty pilgrims travelling by bus from the United Arab Emirates to Makkah for the annual hajj pilgrimage to Makkah were killed yesterday in a road accident in eastern Saudi Arabia, the official SPA news agency reported.

The dead included 37 Pakistanis, one Saudi, one Egyptian and one Syrian.

Ten other people were injured in the accident, which happened in Al-

Ihsaa province at 3.00 am local time.

Another 12 passengers escaped uninjured.

Meanwhile, the climax of the annual hajj pilgrimage to Makkah will fall on February 21, ushering in the biggest Muslim holiday of the year the following day, the Saudi Supreme Judicial Council said yesterday.

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## 'Their living is our death'

People of Hazaribagh and environmentalists demand relocation of tannery units

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More than 200 residents and environmental activists yesterday demanded immediate relocation of the city's tannery units at Hazaribagh to save people from severe environmental hazards.

They formed a human chain and staged a protest rally and procession on the Dhaka Protection Embankment at Rayer Bazar to register their demand.

Men, women and children under the banner of the Bangladesh Movement for the Protection of Environment (BMPE) shout slogans against the rapid environmental degradation caused by millions of litres of untreated tannery wastes which hundreds of tannery industries in Hazaribagh release.

"It is their (tannery industries) living which is causing our death; we need foreign currency from exports of tannery items alright, but by no way should it be at the cost of lives and the environment," said Al Biruni, a member of the BMPE representing the Coalition for the Urban Poor.

Others said the tannery wastes are to blame for various health hazards in the area, including eyesore, gastrointestinal disorders, pulmonary complications and skin diseases. The wastes are dumped directly into

the land, which flows into the river Buriganga through networks of canals and low-lying areas instantly polluting those.

Naser Khan of the BMPE said the tannery wastes are also contaminating the city's underground water. "If the tanneries were relocated today, it would take years for a huge city area to return to a friendly environment," he said.

"We are urging the government to act immediately to relocate the tanneries elsewhere and save millions of people on this western fringe of the city," he said.

Mihir Biswas of POROSH (Poribesh Rokhha Shopoth) said movement to protect environment would continue until the government took measures to relocate the tanneries.

"We are not only demanding immediate relocation of the tanneries, we are also demanding of the government that the relocation must be done in a planned way so that new areas do not become polluted," said Biswas.

The organisations represented at the rally include PROSHIKA, Biswa Shahitya Kendra, ADAB, Dhaka Branch, RHDS, CESC, Coalition for the Urban Poor and The Hunger Project.



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Paribesh Andolan staged a demonstration on Hazaribagh cross-dam in the city yesterday demanding relocation of tanneries from the area.