

2 children drown in Keraniganj

UNB, Keraniganj

Two children drowned in the river Buriganga in Keraniganj while taking bath yesterday.

Divers of the Sadarghat unit of Fire Brigade recovered the body of Sumon, 7, and Eti, 8, after hours of frantic search. The families of the children pleaded for their burial without post-mortem.

Local people said Sumon, son of Hossain, and Eti, daughter of Iskandar Ali, both of Aganagar area in Keraniganj

went for bathing at the Chhoto Masjid ghat, along with other children.

But the kids did not know how to swim and drowned as they were pulled into deep water by the strong current of the river.

As the other children bathing at the spot cried for help, people around started a rescue operation but in vain.

Later, the divers found the two bodies about 100 yards from the ghat at about 6.00pm.

Fathers of the children are fruit traders at Badamtoli in the city.



PHOTO: STAR

Humayun Azad Mancha took out a mourning procession on the Dhaka University campus yesterday to condole the death of eminent writer Humayun Azad.

11 schoolstudents leave for US today

Eleven Bangladeshi secondary schoolstudents will study in the United States for a year under the Partnerships for Learning Youth Exchange and Study Programme (P4L-YES), funded by the US government, says a USIS press release.

They are scheduled to leave for the US today (Saturday). The students had a pre-departure orientation at the American Club organised by Nacel Open Door, The American Centre US Embassy Dhaka and the US Department of State on August 8.

Gene George, Mission Director of USAID Bangladesh, welcomed the students, as did Dr Michelle Jones, Cultural Attache and Ms Arefin Jahan, Student Advisor, American Centre and Dulal Biswas, Secretary General, National Federation of Youth Organisations in Bangladesh.

During the programme, students will live with American host families, attend school, engage in activities to learn more about American society, acquire leadership skills and help educate Americans about their countries and culture. This is P4L-YES's first

year in Bangladesh, building on the success of 2003, when 160 students from Nigeria, Pakistan, Turkey, West Bank/Gaza, Indonesia and other countries travelled to the United States. This year the programme has expanded to include Afghanistan, India, Algeria, Saudi Arabia and the Arab community in Israel.

P4L-YES is a global initiative of the US Department of State to reach a younger and more diverse audience than before. P4L wishes to engage the successor generation in a dialogue for greater understanding through expanded exchange programmes, and builds on values the US has in common with Muslim societies. It seeks to strengthen voices of moderation and reinforce the US commitment to education and opportunity.

The 2004 participants in P4L-YES are: Shayaan Rahim Chowdhury, Sarowerdy Hossain, SM Fahad Bin Kamal, Md Imran Kayesh, Md Arifur Rahman, Raisa Safinatul Kazi, Samia Idris Seraj, Roesky Zafir Bakshe, Md Jamal, Niaz Md Zaidi, and Mohammad Zubair Hossain.

Khulna JP leader injured in bomb attack

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A Khulna city Jatiya Party leader was injured as miscreants hurled bombs on him on Thursday night near the millgate under Khalishpur thana.

The injured was identified as Zahid Hasan alias Jahangir, Joint Secretary of Khulna city Jatiya Party and assistant secretary of the Crescent Jute Mill CBA.

His colleague Nurul Islam also sustained injuries. They are undergoing treatment at Khalishpur Clinic.

Witnesses and police said that unidentified miscreants hurled four bombs at the JP (Ershad) leader in front of 'Mili Studis' few yards away from the mill at BIDC Road. Three of the bombs exploded, police said.

The JP leader was rushed to the clinic in a critical condition. Security forces have been deployed at the clinic to avoid further attack on him.

Police recovered the unexploded bomb.

CBA sources said, the JP leader was given death threat by the extremists last month for his bold stand against criminal activities that are on rise at Khalishpur.



PHOTO: STAR

Muktijoddha Sangsad took out a mourning procession at Dhanmondi in the city yesterday in memory of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Nepal villagers sell kidneys to beat poverty

REUTERS, Nepal

Man Dhoj Tamang cuts a forlorn figure as he stands in front of his house in central Nepal, overlooking a valley full of lush green rice fields.

The scenic beauty of the area hides an ugly reality symbolised by an 8-inch scar near Tamang's abdomen.

The gaunt 42-year-old, who looks a decade older, sold a kidney in 2000 to raise money to pay off a family debt and buy a piece of land in the village of Shikharpur, 40 miles east of Kathmandu, capital of the Himalayan kingdom.

Tamang, who is unemployed, received 70,000 Nepali rupees (\$930) for his kidney, cleared his family's debt and gave the remainder to a broker to buy his dream plot of land for farming. The broker disappeared with the money.

"I'm finished. I lost a kidney and I don't have the land I paid for," Tamang, wearing a brown cotton vest and a pair of faded shorts, told Reuters in front of his thatched-roof house with its mud and stone walls.

Tamang is far from the only person to have sold a kidney in Nepal, one of the world's 10 poorest countries.

There are 33 others in the village of some 3,000 people who have sold their kidneys to either rich Nepalis or Indians who are ready to pay up to 180,000 Nepali rupees to brokers to buy a kidney for themselves or for their relatives.

In Nepal and more economically developed India -- where demand for healthy kidneys is high and medical facilities are available for kidney transplants -- it is illegal to sell or buy the

organs.

The offence is punishable by fines and jail sentences of up to five years, although in Nepal one can legally donate a kidney to a relative who urgently needs the organ to save his or her life.

SECRECY AND MIDDLEMEN

But with hundreds of people in the region in desperate need of kidney transplants, many choose the illegal route and deals are done in secrecy in both countries, with middlemen scouring villages looking for donors.

"There are no complaints in any court of law involving the sale of kidneys," said Shambhu Koirala, chief administrator in Dhulikhel, the district in which Shikharpur lies.

Poverty in Nepal -- which drives thousands of young Nepalis to seek jobs in India as private guards, maids and army soldiers -- also propels the kidney trade.

Most of Nepal's 25 million people live on an income of less than \$1 a day and nearly half of them have no access to basic healthcare, primary education or safe drinking water, making it a fertile hunting ground for kidney middlemen.

Most of the population depends on agriculture, seasonal work which leaves many unemployed or underemployed for much of the year.

"Villagers, mired in deep-rooted poverty, are lured by local middlemen into selling kidneys for money," said Badri Prasad Dhungana, a teacher at the Shikharpur's only high school, who has tracked the sale of kidneys in the village for many years.

Locals say one reason why so many people have sold their kidneys in

Shikharpur is its high level of unemployment, backwardness and yet, at the same time, its relative proximity to Kathmandu, which makes the rural hamlet attractive to brokers.

There is no electricity or piped water in the village, and buffaloes roam freely on the dusty trails between the houses.

Operations to remove and transplant kidneys are done in India and involve the seller travelling to Indian cities where medical facilities are better.

"SELL KIDNEY, MAKE MONEY"

Pratap Lama said he grabbed the chance to sell his kidney.

"If you can live with one kidney, why not sell the other and make some money," said the 27-year-old farm labourer.

"What else can you do when you have nothing to support your family?" asked Lama, who started a tea stall and bar in the village from the money he received for selling his kidney to an Indian woman in the southern city of Madras four years ago.

But his business venture shut down as many impoverished villagers drank tea and liquor on credit and could not pay up.

"He (Pratap Lama) does not have any income to support two wives and eight children. Earlier, he could work as a physical laborer but now he is too weak for any hard work," said Maili Tamang, a local villager, standing nearby.

Others are critical of the kidney trade.

"We must take care of the body parts that are gifted to us by God," said Jit Bahadur Bishwokarma, who makes agricultural tools for villagers.