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**Robbers, not Rab, killed 3 in Gutia**  
A victim's relative says  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A relative of the three of a family who died in early Friday's 'shootout' with Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) at Gutia in Tongi yesterday said it was robbers, not the elite anticrime force, who killed three people and wounded four others.

Shefali Begum, 30, Delwar's sister whom criminals hacked in the head, said she recognised two local robbers Rashed and Ibrahim and another one - either Sadu or Yusuf - who were armed with knives during the incident.

She, however, said two other unknown people clad in black with the word 'RAB' inscribed in the back were with them, she added.

"Rashed first hacked me in the head as I coincidentally got up to go to the toilet. Then they knocked at

# Musharraf for Saarc role to end political conflicts

SULTANA RAHMAN, from Lahore, Pakistan

Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf yesterday called for Saarc to play the lead role to thrash out political and economic conflicts among the regional countries for progress and prosperity of South Asia.

He made the call while inaugurating three-day fourth Regional Conference of South Asian Free Media Association (Safma) on 'Media and Reconciliation in South Asia' here.

"We must make Saarc a produc-

ive and pro-active forum for trade and economic cooperation and even for resolving political disputes," he told the opening session.

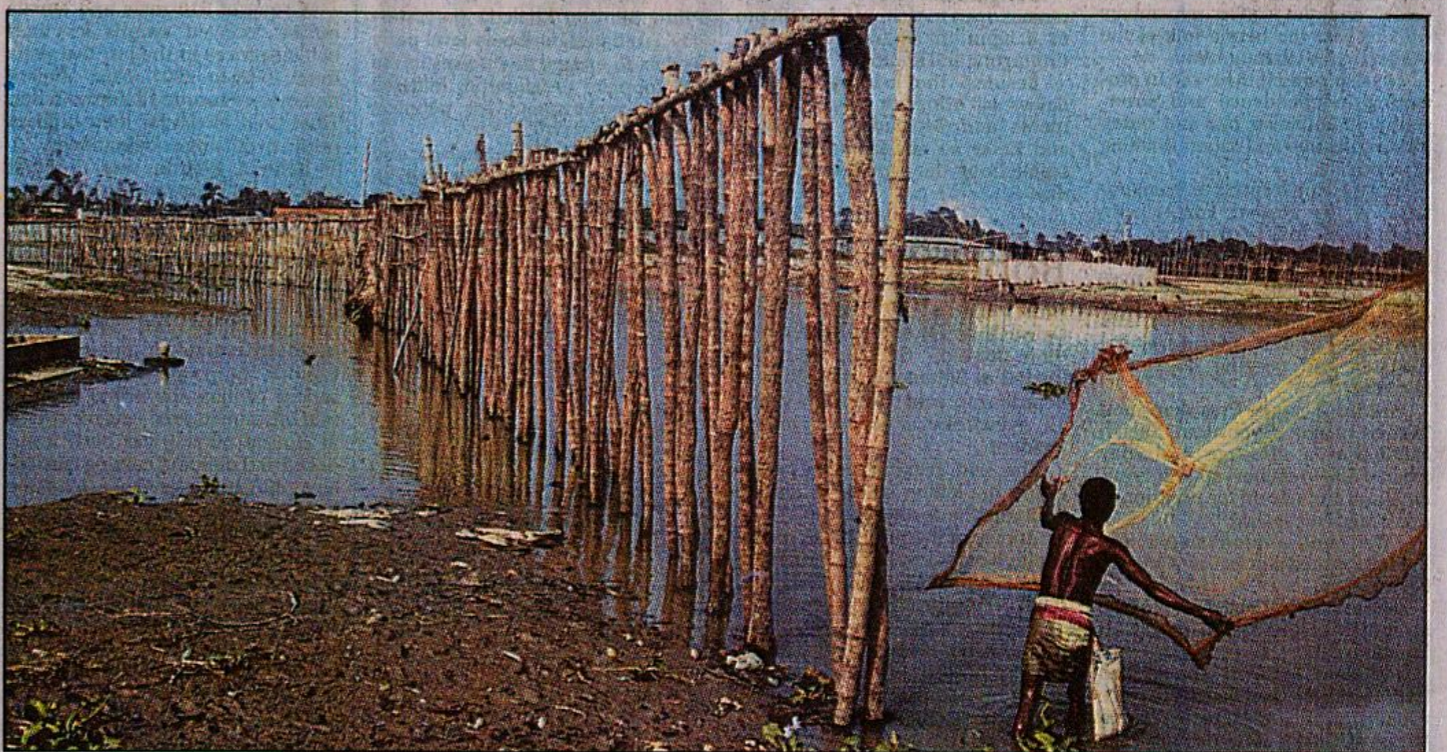
On the much-talked-about intra-regional cooperation, preferential trade agreement and free trade agreement, the president said Pakistan likes to move forward on these concepts but cautioned that these "good words" would not yield any results if there were obstructions to business in the form of tariff barriers.

"We need to be sincere in opening borders and removing tariff barriers to businesses for a mean-

ingful cooperation in trade and commerce among the Saarc member states," Musharraf noted.

He touched on the lingering issue of Kashmir and reiterated his offer for talks and dialogues with archrival India for peace in the region. "I have given options to resolve the political disputes and it is now up to India to respond," he told the conference.

The president said reconciliation between India and Pakistan is of utmost importance for regional and intra-regional cooperation. "We must make Saarc potent and



Grabbers have fenced off a large portion of the Biswa Ijtema ground to the west of the Turag river in Tongi in a first move to gobble up public land.



Foreign Minister Morshed Khan, left, speaks to Nepalese Premier Sher Bahadur Deuba in Kathmandu Friday after handing over an invitation from Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to attend the upcoming Saarc Summit in Dhaka.

## Woman student found dead hanging from showerhead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A woman student of Jagannath University College was found dead yesterday hanging from a showerhead in a toilet of her house on Jadunath Basak Lane in Sutrapur, Old Dhaka.

The dead, Romana Akther Tania, 24, was a second-year student of Bangla.

Her husband, Monir Hossain, claimed she hanged herself with a rope from the showerhead. But her parents alleged Monir killed her after failing to squeeze out an

## Land for Biswa Ijtema 'mistakenly' reallocated

Rajuk sells 10 acres out to private universities, hospital, commercial outfits

PINAKI ROY

Rajdhani Uন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষ (Rajuk) has reallocated 10 acres of Biswa Ijtema land in Tongi along the Turag river to set up commercial establishments, two private universities and a hospital sparking resentment among the Ijtema organisers.

In 1991, the government permanently allocated 160 acres of land -- 130 acres on the east and 30 acres on

the west bank of the river -- for holding the Biswa Ijtema, the second largest annual congregation of Muslims after Hajj.

But Rajuk recently created 12 plots on 10 acres of land on the west bank and sold them to different people for raising permanent structures, sources said.

"We want our land back," said Abdullah (not his real name), a member of the Ijtema committee.

He said the government must stop allocating land on the Ijtema ground to maintain normal flow of the river and protect environment.

When contacted, Rejaul Karim Tarafder, member (estate) of Rajuk, said they are trying to find ways to get the land back to Ijtema committee.

"We have allocated the land mistakenly and now we are talking

## BNP nominates Zakaria Taher for Comilla-7 by-polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) yesterday nominated Zakaria Taher Sumon for the by-election of Comilla-7 constituency.

The election to the seat, which fell vacant with the death of BNP lawmaker KM Abu Taher, is slated for December 18.

A BNP Parliamentary Board meeting with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in the chair yesterday finalised the nomination. Sumon, son of late Abu Taher, will contest the poll as a nominee of the four-party alliance, said a press release.

## 24 Rohingya sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-four arrested Rohingya refugees including 'most wanted' criminal Nurul Hakim alias Lulu Chairman were sent to jail yesterday in connection with Thursday's clash with law enforcers at Kutupalong refugee camp in Ukhiya upazila of Cox's Bazar that left more than 100 injured.

Ukhiya police yesterday evening told The Daily Star over telephone the situation at the refugee camp is under control and they have restored order.

The authorities have withdrawn Bangladesh Rifles personnel deployed in the camp area on Thursday as no untoward incident took place yesterday.

Police at Balukhali yesterday apprehended 25 Rohingyas when

## 9 soldiers, 42 others killed in Iraq unrest

AGENCIES, Mosul Baghdad

The bodies of what are believed to be nine murdered Iraqi soldiers were found yesterday in central Mosul as US and Iraqi forces patrolled the city in a continuing bid to flush out insurgents. US and Iraqi troops have killed 15 rebels as they chase down insurgents in the northern city of Mosul, while more than two dozen Iraqis were killed in other parts of the embattled country.

In Baghdad insurgents armed with automatic rifles and rocket-propelled grenades have skirmished with US and Iraqi forces in Sunni Muslim areas of Baghdad, killing at least three police and seven insur-

gents.

Guerrillas attacked a police station in the northern area of Aadhaniya yesterday killing at least three policemen, police said.

In the western Amriya district, gunmen in several cars opened fire on a group of Iraqi National Guards deployed in the area. A guard at the scene said seven of the assailants were killed in the gunbattle that ensued and seven passersby wounded.

The policemen, discovered in an industrial area not far from the scene of some of the worst clashes in Mosul, appeared to have been killed by a bullet to the head, an AFP correspondent said.

Four of the corpses were also badly burned, the correspondents said.

Senior Iraqi and US military sources said they probably belonged to an Iraqi army unit that had joined US troops for a massive onslaught against insurgents in the country's third-largest city.

With US attack helicopters and soldiers covering them, Iraqi national guardsmen retrieved the bodies.

"These are not my men. They all have IDs from outside Baghdad. It seems they had been on leave and were returning to their barracks," said Lieutenant Colonel Ammar Abdelhadi.

## BNP agrees on UZ polls

UNB, Dhaka

BNP standing committee, the highest policymaking body of the ruling party, informally agreed yesterday to hold upazila elections.

"The informal endorsement came from parleys on the sidelines of BNP parliamentary board meeting held at the Prime Minister's Jamuna office in the afternoon," a source in the party told the private news agency.

Party Chairperson Khaleda Zia presided over the meeting convened for interviewing the intending candidates to get party ticket for upcoming by-election to Comilla-7 parliamentary seat. Standing committee members and members of the parliamentary board attended the meeting.

The seat fell vacant following the death of BNP lawmaker Abu Taher.

## Sirajganj power project put back on bidding track

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 450-megawatt Sirajganj power project the government cancelled in June at its final stage saw its revival yesterday, as four bidders submitted their proposals to pre-qualify in the scheme.

However, the project cost this time is likely to increase because of depreciation of dollar against most other currencies, industry insiders apprehend. "The cost may rise by 30 to 35 percent compared to the cancelled previous proposal," one of the

bidders told The Daily Star.

Besides high oil and steel prices, higher interest rates have also made the power plant installation costlier than a year ago, he added.

Bangladesh Summit group, which had won the previous bid with a groundbreaking price and had brought in a number of financiers, has again submitted a proposal. German company Siemens and Transnational Electricity Co. stand as its partners.

Another Bangladesh company --

## Citizens condole Arafat's death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The name, Yasser Arafat, has become a source of inspiration for all the peoples across the globe fighting for individual, political and other sorts of freedom, speakers at a condolence meeting said yesterday.

Though Arafat died with his dream of a sovereign Palestinian state unfulfilled, the guerrilla icon succeeded in consolidating his nation, they noted.

Sammilito Nagorik Samaj, a civil society body, organised the citizens' gathering at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city to condole Arafat's death.

"While striving for the independence of Palestine, Arafat also rushed to every corner of the world where

## Tributes paid to Sufia Kamal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday paid tributes to the memory of poet Begum Sufia Kamal for her immense contribution to the emancipation and empowerment of women.

They said an honest, defiant and devoted person like Sufia Kamal is still needed in a society where women continue to face violence and religious bigots who are out to suppress them forcefully.

The memorial discussion was organised by Bangladesh Mahila Parishad at the Cirdap auditorium in the city to mark the fifth death anniversary of the poet.

The speakers said though Sufia Kamal was born in a conservative family, she cherished progressive and democratic thoughts throughout her life.

They said as a poet as well as

## Ferryboat with 4 vehicles capsizes in Kirtonkhola

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A ferryboat laden with a bus, two trucks and a pickup capsized in Kirtonkhola river at 5:30am yesterday near Char Kawa Ferry-ghat on Barisal-Bhola highway.

Two people on board the Roads and Highways (R&H) Department ferryboat were reported to be missing. And the road link between the southern district of Bhola and rest of the country snapped for a while as the R&H staff manning the wharf fled following the accident.

Salvage vessel Hamza and tugboat Agrodoot of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) and a team of fire service frogmen started a joint salvage operation at around 9:00am. They recovered the sunken bus half an hour after the noon.

The R&H Department runs the ferry service between Barisal City and Char Kawa Ferry-ghat across the Kirtonkhola with two U-type

ferryboats, each having the highest loading capacity of 30 tonnes, R&H sources said.

The pickup driver, Amir Ali, said one of the trucks on board was overloaded with rice and molasses, the second truck and his pickup were carrying vegetables and the bus was a Dhaka-Bhola night-coach of Meghna Parishad. According to his calculations, all together the four vehicles would weigh more than 40 tonnes.

Zafar Iqbal, supervisor of the bus, said the overloaded boat left Barisal Ferryghat on the western bank at about 5:15am in a dense fog, which caused it to bang into the jetty at Char Kawa Ferryghat.

The boat then lurched to one side, the vehicles on board slipped into the river, and the boat sank a few yards away from its cargo, he added.

According to Zafar, the night-coach was carrying only eight passengers including a woman. All of them could reach the jetty safely before the bus sank.

## Bank guard's body found in bathroom

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The body of a bank guard was recovered from inside the Janata Bank branch building at Biswanath upazila headquarters yesterday morning.

Officers and employees of the bank found the bank building under lock and key when they went to the office at 9am.

Getting no response even after repeated calls and seeing marks of blood on the floor, they informed the police.

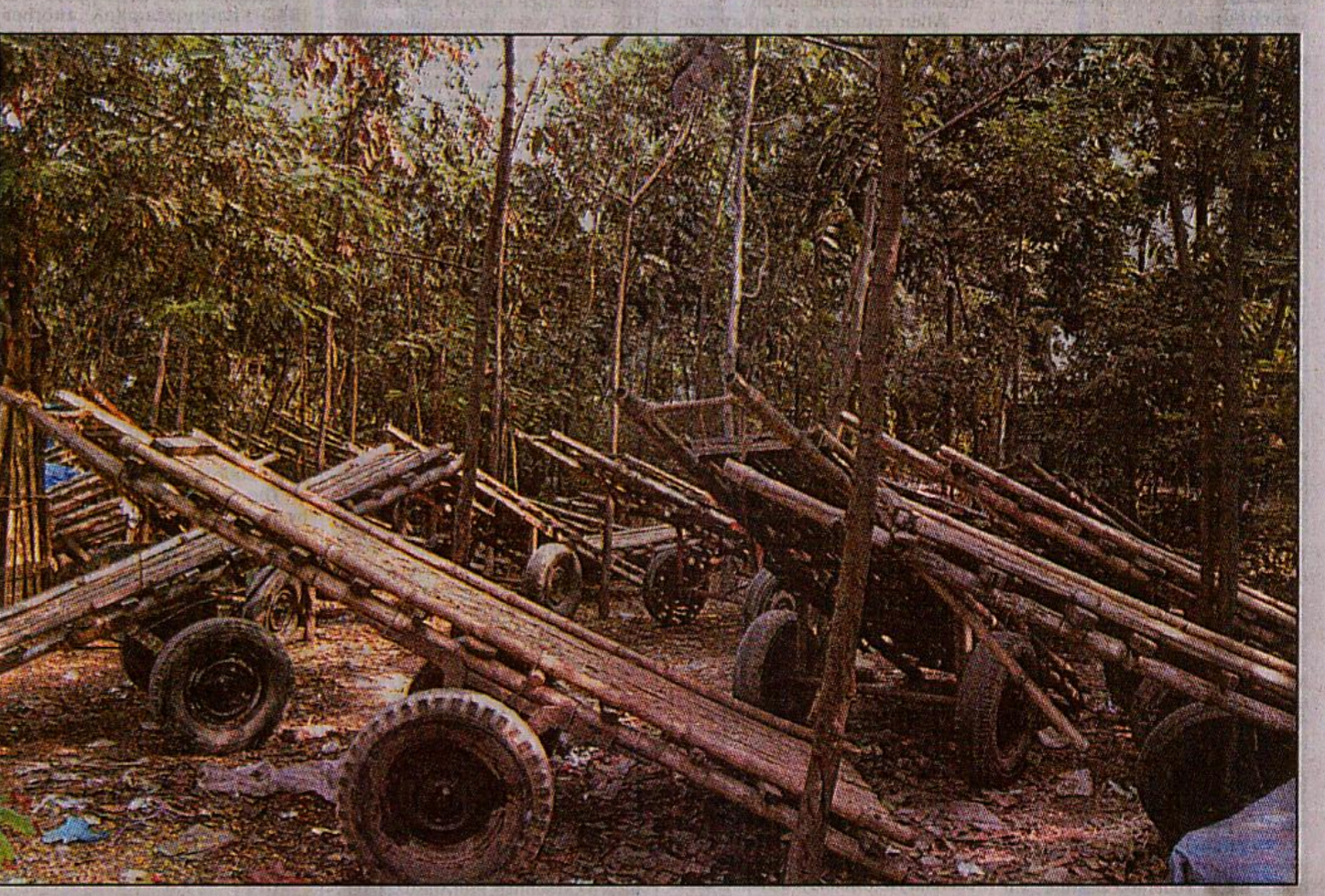
Police broke into the bank building and recovered the body of Mashuk Miah, 20, from inside the bathroom.

They sent the body with a number of marks of injury to the Sylhet Osmani Medical College and Hospital for autopsy.

An official said nothing was lost from the bank. The cause of the murder could not be known.

Mashuk Miah, deputised by a private security company, was serving the bank branch for the last few months.

A case has been lodged with the Biswanath Police Station.



Handcart owners clog the public park near Mohammadpur Town Hall Market in the capital, who use it as a free parking lot, with authorities indifferent to the nuisance.

**Prayer Timing**  
November 21

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-05	5-40
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-21	5-24
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation