

Body of missing Jubo League leader found in waterbody

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The body of a Jubo League leader, who went missing after an alleged chase by police and BNP activists in Ramna a week ago, was found in a waterbody yesterday.

Bellal Bepari, 25, general secretary of unit 5 in Dhaka City Corporation ward No. 55, used to run a tea stall near his house at Wireless Gate slum in Maghbazar.

Witnesses said police clubbed Jubo League supporters and locals when they tried to bring out a procession in Maghbazar with Bellal's rotting body. Police also snatched the body from them and sent it to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) for autopsy.

Awami League lawmaker Asaduzzaman Noor and a several Jubo League leaders visited the hospital.

Earlier on January 30, local BNP cadres Khaleq, Kashem, Faizul, Babul, Nasir and Jabbar with a team of Ramna police raided Bellal's house at midnight, said Hasina

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# Iran major obstacle to ME peace

Observes Rice

AFP, London

Diplomacy and unity among the world's "great democracies" are key to ensuring Iran meets its international obligations, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in an interview broadcast yesterday.

The Islamic Republic had become a major obstacle to peace and stability in the Middle East and must be prevented from developing nuclear weapons, she told BBC television.

"We believe dealing with the Iranians diplomatically is the key and that is why I am here for discussions," Rice told the BBC on Friday at the start of her first diplomatic mission to Europe and the Middle East since taking office.

"We do need a strong message to Iran. We need a united front on the Iranian nuclear programme. We need us great democracies to tell

the Iranian people that they deserve a better future than the present they currently have," she said.

Omitting any mention of a possible military answer to the Iranian question, Rice emphasised that Washington's policy for the time being was diplomacy.

"We believe this is a time for diplomacy, this is a time to muster our considerable influence... to bring great changes in the world," she said.

The Iranian government was a chief funder of terror groups that are trying to prevent peace between Israel and the Palestinians, according to Washington's chief diplomat, who was in Israel on Sunday for talks with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, and was due to meet Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas on Monday.

"Iran is a destabilising force in the

international system and we need unity of purpose, unity of message to Iran to stop those activities," Rice said.

Washington would support "any effort to get Iran to live up to its international obligations that can succeed," she said.

"We believe the Iranians are being offered an opportunity and they ought to take it."

The question of US policy on Iran's suspected nuclear weapons programme and bleak human rights record has dogged the secretary of state during her sprint through eight European capitals, Israel and the West Bank.

She has tried to ease European fears the Americans might launch a pre-emptive military strike and has warded off queries on whether Washington is officially seeking regime change in Tehran.



PHOTO: STAR

A farmer from Gazipur sells seeds of a high-breed pumpkin at Karwan Bazar yesterday. He put a pumpkin plant on a rickshaw-van to claim that the Korean-origin sapling starts to produce pumpkins only three-weeks into its plantation.



PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka City Corporation officials shoo away cows roaming in the Kalabagan park that is mostly used by small dairy owners as grazing ground.

## 4 Egyptians abducted

US soldier, 10 Iraqis killed in attacks

AFP, REUTERS, Baghdad

Four Egyptian engineers working for a subsidiary of Egyptian telecom giant Orascom were abducted in front of their Baghdad home while one US soldier was killed in action yesterday, a spokesman told AFP.

"They are working for an Orascom subsidiary in Iraq. It happened today, a bit before 11:00 am (0800 GMT), in front of their house in Baghdad," said the spokesman, who asked not to be named.

"We don't yet have all the details of what happened," he added.

He specified the four were not directly employed by Iraqna, the Orascom subsidiary which operates the mobile phone network for the Baghdad area.

Iraqna has been repeatedly accused by the government of helping insurgents and by the rebels of

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# Exploitation, abuse routine for Bangladeshi women working in ME

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A portion of the 75,000 Bangladeshi women working abroad in the Middle East and other countries are routinely subjected to inhumane forms of exploitation, including physical and mental abuse, according to personal accounts of recently returned workers and reports from human rights organizations.

Women constitute only a small fraction of the 38 lakh Bangladeshi migrants working abroad, but official sources say their numbers are steadily rising, making them a more vital component of Bangladesh's expatriate labor system.

With that rise comes the risk

that more women, especially those who migrate illegally, may fall victim to the dark side of the migration labor experience: a widespread, but little discussed system of exploitation that operates both at home and in many countries abroad.

Last year 10,172 women sought work in foreign lands through regular channels. Sources from the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) say 50 per cent of them work as domestic workers in Saudi Arabia, with the remaining spread throughout the Middle East and other countries.

Until recently many women were not legally permitted to migrate abroad for work. In 1997 the government banned the expa-

triation of all unskilled and semi-skilled female labor, following increasing reports of exploitation and abuse of Bangladeshi nationals in foreign countries. But the ban was later repealed in 2003, according to BMET director general SM Wahiduzzaman.

"The government relaxed the ban on unskilled and semi-skilled women domestic workers to the Middle East in response to the requests of many organisations that the ban increases the risk of women trafficking," he said.

The government, through the authority of the BMET, now stipulates a number of mandatory protection for female labor, including

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## Body decides to propose 14yrs' imprisonment for land grabbers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A secretary-level committee on resisting private land grabbing yesterday decided to suggest making provisions for 14 years' imprisonment for land grabbing.

"The decision was taken to ensure protection for the general people against losing land at the hands of powerful persons," Dr Shahadat Hossain, chairman of the committee, said.

A five-member committee, headed by a joint secretary of the cabinet division, will also be formed to bring necessary changes in the land laws to include the new provision of 14-year imprisonment.

Besides, the secretary-level committee decided to suggest the government take punitive actions against the government officials and employees involved in land grabbing.

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# Thaksin wins Thai polls

THE NATION/ANN

Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra looked poised to establish a historic one party rule in Thailand after voters, poor rural villagers and Bangkokians alike, handed his Thai Rak Thai Party a massive landslide general election victory yesterday.

The resounding mandate has yet to be officially confirmed, as vote count only started late yesterday evening. But the results of exit polls showed Thai Rak Thai could win between 340 and 399 House of Representatives seats, thanks largely to a major sweep of Bangkok where voters apparently snubbed the opposition Democrats' desperate, last-ditch plea for preservation of checks and balances.

Shinawatra confirmed that his party had won enough seats to set up a one party government, although he vowed to 'consult' his bitter ally, Chat Thai Party leader Banham Silapaaarcha, before making a final decision. However, Chat Thai chances of maintaining its



Thaksin Shinawatra

place in the post election government will depend on parliamentary numbers rather than its on and off relations with the ruling party.

If Thai Rak Thai wins more than 350 seats, it will most likely go ahead and form a single party administration, and Shinawatra gave a strong hint he would do just that.

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## KIBRIA'S DEATH Speaker came to know about it from newspaper

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar yesterday said he learnt about the attack and death of former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria from the newspapers on the following day of the incident.

"No-one of my office, the Public Relations Department, Awami League leaders and family of Mr Kibria informed me about the incident. I read it the next day in the newspapers," Sircar told reporters at his Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan office.

"Had I been informed about the incident that night, I would definitely have arranged a helicopter for bringing him (Kibria) to Dhaka," he added.

After the assassination of main opposition Awami League lawmaker Kibria, his family alleged Sircar did not take any step to bring the AL leader to Dhaka in a helicopter.

Kibria and four others were killed

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Prayer Timing		
February 7		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-52	5-56
Esha	7-15	7-45
Source: Islamic Foundation		