

Water reservoir toxic gas claims four in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Toxic gas claimed the lives of two construction workers and a local when they went into a water reservoir of an under-construction school building in Badda in the capital yesterday.

The construction workers are Ershad Rahman, 20, and Hafizur Rahman Fatik, 30, while the local has been identified as Mainul Haq Biswas Babul, 40, collector of a local cooperative society.

Witnesses said the incident took place when Ershad, one of the construction workers of Grace Talitha Khumi School at Khilbarirtek, got down into the reservoir to complete the coat of plaster at 8:15am.

"After he went down, we heard hissing sound coming out of the reservoir and I rebuked Ershad for making such sounds," Saidur Rahman, head of the workers, told The Daily Star.

As Ershad did not respond, Fatik got down into the reservoir to see what was going on and called out Ershad's name. "I heard scuffling sound in the water at the bottom of the reservoir for a few moments," said Saidur who was standing at the mouth of the reservoir.

As the sound in the reservoir suddenly stopped, he attempted to go down and see what was happening, but failed to slip through the manhole. Saidur asked Babul, who was standing in the crowd that had gathered during this time, to go down and have a look.

Babul got down into the reservoir

and the locals did not get any response from him after few moments. Alarmed at the situation locals informed police and the Fire Brigade.

Three members of the Fire Brigade rescue team went down into the reservoir with gas masks and recovered Ershad, Fatik and Babul's bodies at around 10:00am. Fire Brigade sources said the victims died of Carbon mono-oxide inhalation.

The bodies were sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy.

The construction work of the three-storied school building remained suspended for 15/16 days and resumed yesterday. The two construction workers hailed from Chapainawabganj. On behalf of the school authorities Sikha Adhikari filed an unnatural death case with Badda Police Station.

PRINTING OF BOOKS

'Lowest bidder not awarded work order'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A book publisher yesterday alleged that the National Curriculum and Textbook Board's (NCTB) awarding work order of printing books to parties who were not the lowest bidders added Tk 2.20 crore to the estimated cost.

NCTB gave work order for printing 111 categories of primary and ebtedayee (primary education in madrasa) level books for the year 2006 to disqualified, even fake parties, AFM Shah Alam, a director of Bangladesh Pustak Prokashok O Bikreta Samity, said at a press conference in a city hotel.

Showing the grounds of reaching the books to the students in due time, the NCTB violated the tender rule, he added.

Shah Alam, who is also managing director of Progoti Printing and Packaging Ltd, demanded amendments to the Textbook Publishing Act 1983 to give private publishers right to publish books.

Meanwhile, talking to The Daily Star last night, the NCTB chairman denied the allegation and said the tender process was accomplished according to government's public procurement

AUGUST 21 ATTACK

Prime suspect Mukul now living in India

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mukul, one of the prime suspects of the August 21 grenade attacks on an Awami League rally, is now living in India.

A top official of CID (criminal investigation department) said Monzur Hossain, driver of Mukul, disclosed to them that Mukul has bought a flat in India and his mother recently visited him there.

Monzur disclosed the names of bombers, investigation officer (IO) of the case told the court in his forwarding letter. The IO also added in the letter that Monzur could not say the whereabouts of the bombers.

The top CID official told The Daily Star that Monzur has two passports on different names and was planning to leave for Sweden prior to his arrest.

The CID arrested Monzur from his house at Dholaipar High School Road in the capital's Shyampur area on August 28.

In his forwarding report, Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Abdur Rashid of CID who is also the IO mentioned that he took Monzur on a seven-day remand on August 29 and interrogated him intensively to find out vital clues of the attacks. Producing Monzur before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, the IO pleaded for another seven-day remand of Monzur to find out more about the bombers. Metropolitan Magistrate Mamun Al Rashid granted a four-day remand after the hearing.

George Miah, who gave a confessional statement to a magistrate on June 26 disclosed Monzur's name and said a group of 14 led by most wanted criminals Subrata Bain Shuvro and Mukul carried out the August 21 attacks.

Saibal Saha Partha, Abdur Rahman, Habib alias Hannan, Waliullah, Hasan Zahid Tusher, Zahir Hossain, Akhter, Jiten, Monir, Mohammad Hossain, Ayub Ali, George Miah, Moklesur Rahman and Badsha Miah were arrested in the August 21 grenade attack case filed by the police on August 22.

Among them Partha, Abdur Rahman and Moklesur were granted bail from the High Court.

Islamic militants creation of CIA Menon says at rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Islamic militants in Bangladesh are the creation of US intelligence agency CIA, said Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon at a rally in the city yesterday.

"Branding Bangladesh as a country of Islamic militants, the United States wants to occupy its strategic position and exploit its natural resources," he added.

The rally was organised by the Left Democratic Front at Muktangan to decry militancy, imperialism and fundamentalism.

Menon said although the BNP-Jamaat coalition had been denying the existence of Bangla Bhait, Shayekh Abdur Rahamn and their militant activists from the very beginning, it has now admitted their involvement in various criminal activities.

Nur Hasan, Dilip Barua, Morshed Ali, Zakir Hossain, Quamrul Ahsan and Masum Uddin also spoke.

Communist Party of Bangladesh President Monjurul Ahsan Khan, Bimal Biswas, Abu Ahmed Sahabuddin, Sajjad Zahir Chandan and Harun Chowdhury were present on the occasion.

DAB to set up transplant centre

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Professor AK Azad Khan, secretary general of Diabetic Association of Bangladesh, yesterday said they would set up an international standard transplant centre in Bangladesh.

He was speaking at a memorial meeting in the city to mark the death anniversary of Dr Mohammad Ibrahim, former national professor and founder of Diabetic Association of Bangladesh.

On the occasion, all the centres of National Healthcare Network (NHN), an institution of the Association, and RVTC arranged diagnosis of diabetics at free of cost from 8am to 11am.

Ibrahim Cardiac Hospital and Research Institute arranged "free heart camp" for cardiac patients from 9am to 4pm.

Ibrahim Medical College also took up several programmes in this regard.

Professor Wahiduddin Ahmed, president of the Association, chaired the meeting at Birdem auditorium. National Professor Dr Nurul Islam, Major General A R Khan and Professor M A Mannan were present in the meeting.



PHOTO: STAR

Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain, Chittagong city Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury and other leaders of 14 opposition political parties wave to supporters at a public meeting at Laldighi Maidan in Chittagong yesterday. The AL-led 14-party organised the meeting to protest the government's interference in judiciary and countrywide bomb blasts.

Dhaka's efforts to achieve MDGs lauded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Officials of the United Nations (UN) and the European Commission (EC) at a seminar yesterday appreciated Bangladesh for achieving some millennium development goals (MDG) and stressed the need for fulfilling other goals.

They observed that the country has met the target to enrol equal number of boys and girls in the primary schools, but there are around 70 countries, which are yet

to reach that level.

The Delegation of the European Commission in collaboration with the United Nations office in Dhaka organised the seminar ahead of the EU-UN World Summit 2005 to be held in New York from September 14 to 16.

More than 170 heads of state and government are expected to attend the summit, which will provide a rare opportunity to take decisions in the areas of global development, security and human rights as well as reforms of the United Nations, they said.

UN official Morten Giersing and EC Charge d'Affaires Francoise Collet spoke at the seminar.

They noted that the Asian countries, including Bangladesh, are doing well in terms of achieving MDGs and now the focus is on Africa and Sub-Saharan countries as the poverty is much acute there. The situation is very alarming as

nearly half of the Sub-Saharan Africans live on less than one dollar a day. And over 40 percent of out-of-School children live in Sub-Saharan Africa, they noted.

The other MDGs include eliminating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/Aids and ensuring environmental sustainability.

Francoise Collet said the EC is one of the main donors helping Bangladesh achieve the MDGs.

It supports a number of projects for food security, protection of environment and development of Chittagong Hill Tracts, she pointed out.

The EC contributions to these projects stand at around 200 million Euro, she added.



PHOTO: STAR

The Muktijoddha Gono Parishad took out a procession in the city yesterday protesting countrywide bomb blasts.

Govt has failed to give security to people

FF leaders tell rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Muktijoddha Gono Parishad yesterday said the August 17 bomb blasts proved that the government has failed to provide security to the common people.

Addressing a rally at Muktangan in the city, they called for bringing the perpetrators of the blast to justice.

Blaming the previous governments for not taking any measures to find out the reason behind the blasts, the leaders said if the successive governments took measures and gave exemplary punishment to the culprits, the August 17 blasts would not happen.

They said the political parties were backing the communal forces since the liberation war instead of taking any effective measures against them.

Parishad President Istiaq Aziz Ulfat, Mahmud Jamal Qadery, Sadeq Ahmed Khan, Nasim Uddin Ahmed, Korshed Alam, Mehedi Hasan, and Ali Reza spoke at the rally.

A procession was also brought out that paraded different city streets.

UNDP launches HDR-2005 today

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launches its Human Development Report (HDR) 2005 titled 'International cooperation at a crossroads: Aid, trade and security in an unequal world' globally today.

The 15th annual HDR takes stock of human development, including progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

UNDP Administrator Kemal Derviz will lead the global launch of the HDR 2005 at the UN headquarters in New York today.

UNDP Dhaka office will also launch the Bangladesh part of the report at a press conference at the IDB Bhaban in the city.

Larry Maramin, resident representative of UNDP Bangladesh, Dr Quazi Mesbahuddin Ahmed, member of Planning Commission and Karen Dunn, Assistant Resident Representative, UNDP Bangladesh, will also attend the press meet.

Coal policy soon 'No compromise with foreign cos on nat'l interest'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government welcomes the foreign investment in coal exploration but will make no compromise with the foreign companies on the question of national interest while striking any deal, said AMM Nasir Uddin, secretary of the Energy and Mineral Resources Division, yesterday.

Bangladesh has to formulate a comprehensive coal policy with regard to foreign investment, infrastructure, its usage and development, he said at a coal reporting workshop at the city hotel.

He said the energy and mineral resources ministry will prepare a draft policy by the end of September and then finalise it soon after consultations with all sections of people.

"The existing rules regarding coal exploration are backdated, and we have no experience nor expertise on coal mining. So, for the time being, we have no alternatives but to invite the foreign companies," he added.

The workshop was jointly organised by The Forum for Energy

Reporters Bangladesh (FERB) and the Asia Energy Corporation.

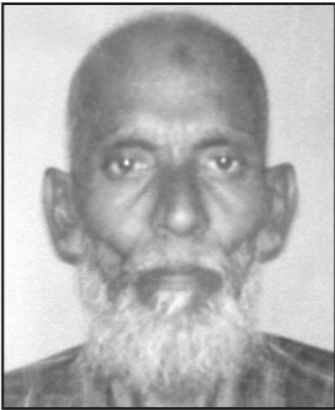
The Asia Energy Corporation has already conducted a study on Phulbari coal mine and found that its coal is of high quality, the secretary said, adding that it now wants to strike a deal on coal exploration, but the government will not sign any contract with the British company before having a coal policy.

"In the wake of the high price of oil and growing energy demand worldwide, I am personally convinced that we must go for coal extraction," said Nasir Uddin.

"The Asia Energy Corporation has come here not for charity work; they need business and we need the due benefit. There should be a win-win situation. So, we have to thoroughly analyse the issues relating to coal mining and their extensive and profitable use," he added.

Coal expert Colin Gubbins from McCloskey Group, world's premier information centre on coal industry, Bill McIntosh, director, Mushfiqur Rahman, general manager, and Brian Mooney of Asia Energy Bangladesh also spoke.

| WEATHER T O D A Y | | | | |
|---|------------------------|------|------------------------|---------|
| Light to moderate rain likely | | | | |
| UNB, Dhaka | | | | |
| Temporary light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by gusty wind is likely to occur at few places over Rajshahi, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Khulna, Barisal and Chittagong divisions till 6:00pm today. | | | | |
| Day temperature may rise slightly over the country during the period, Met Office said. | | | | |
| Highest temperature 37.4 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sylhet and lowest 24.8 degree Celsius at Dhaka. | | | | |
| The sun sets in the capital at 5:11pm today and rises at 5:42am tomorrow. | | | | |
| Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were: | | | | |
| City/Town | Temperature in Celsius | | Humidity in percentage | |
| | Max | Min | Morning | Evening |
| Dhaka | 35.1 | 24.8 | 68 | 73 |
| Chittagong | 35.5 | 25.4 | 70 | 69 |
| Rajshahi | 33.0 | 26.2 | 77 | 88 |
| Khulna | 35.2 | 27.5 | 75 | 70 |
| Barisal | 34.6 | 27.0 | 82 | 74 |
| Sylhet | 37.4 | 25.3 | 71 | 73 |
| Cox's Bazar | 34.0 | 26.0 | 77 | 100 |



Appeal for help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Md Sabder Ali alias Badal, a valiant freedom fighter, has long been suffering from stomach cancer.

Badal, who hails from Bonwarinagar in Faridpur upazila, Pabna, is now receiving treatment at the Radio Therapy Department of Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.

Before the detection of his disease, he had to either pull a rickshaw or work as a peon to make ends meet. His well-wishers have already given financial assistance for his treatment during the last six months.

Generous people have been requested to extend a helping hand to save the life of a war hero.

Contribution can be sent to Savings Account No.-6876-8, Agrani Bank, National Press Club branch, Dhaka.

For details, please call at 0178-300396, 8351462, 0172-141589, 9663330 and 0171-588091.

SSKOP demands Wage Board meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Sangbadik Sramik Karmochari Oikya Parishad (SSKOP) yesterday expressed grave resentment over the government's failure to hold a meeting even after two months of the formation of the 6th Wage Board.

At a meeting at the National Press Club in the city, they threatened to launch tougher agitation if the government does not take any steps to arrange a meeting of the board immediately, says a press release.

The government constituted the 6th Wage Board in the face of severe agitation by the SSKOP despite its dilly-dally tactics from the beginning, said the leaders.

They said such delay in arranging the first meeting of the wage board was never happened earlier triggering severe resentment among the news-men.

Presided over by SSKOP Co-convenor Gias Kamal Chowdhury, the meeting was addressed by another Co-convenor Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, and other journalist leaders Fazole Imam, Ruhul Amin Gazi, Matir Rahman Talukdar, Manzurul Ahsan Bulbul, Altaf Mahmud, Md Khairul Islam, Elahi Newaz Khan Saju, Shah Alamgir, Sardar Farid and Abul Hashem.

Cellphone sets, batteries worth Tk 1 cr seized at ZIA

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The customs authorities at Zia International Airport (ZIA) yesterday seized a huge number of mobile phone sets and batteries worth about Tk 1 crore.

They also arrested a passenger on charges of smuggling the goods. He was identified as Mosharraf Hossain, 28, from Faridpur district.

According to the customs authorities, they seized at least 1634 pieces of mobile phone sets and 1250 batteries wrapped in three bags.

Customs officials said Mosharraf came from Dubai by a Gulf Airlines flight at about 7:30am. But they were yet to be sure how Mosharraf was able to cross the green channel.

Customs officials interrogated some of their security men in this connection.

Police said Mosharraf visited different countries, including Hong Kong, more than 25 times during the last one and a half years and was linked with smuggling.

ALLEGATION AGAINST SPP Solicitor asked to submit report within 24 hours

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The law ministry yesterday directed its solicitor to submit a report within 24-hour regarding the allegation of a complainant that a Special Public Prosecutor (SPP) demanded money unlawfully from him.

Asource in the Law Ministry said the law minister gave the directive yesterday after seeing reports on different newspapers on the issue.

Mohammad Nizamul Haq, the complainant in a petition filed to the General Secretary of Dhaka Bar Association (DBA) alleged that SPP Mohammad Abul Khair on Monday demanded Tk 1,000 when he (Nizamul) appeared before the court for giving his deposition.

Nizamul Haq of Shahidbagh at Motijheel in the capital, complainant of a case filed under the Special Act for Prevention on Women and Children Repression, in his petition mentioned that he appeared before the court at about 10:00am for giving his deposition. But SPP would not take necessary steps for giving his deposition if he (complainant) did not pay the money, the petitioner said.

Khair became angry and misbehaved with the complainant as he refused to give the money. Moreover, the SPP ousted him from the courtroom, the complainant added.

But the SPP told The Daily Star that the charges brought against him were false, fabricated and concocted.

Court sources said the news was the talk of the court yesterday and it created a reaction among the lawyers and the litigants.

Controversial RU staffs threaten agitation

RU CORRESPONDENT

The controversially appointed 544 employees of Rajshahi University (RU) yesterday threatened to launch tougher agitation along with their wives and children if the authorities make any fresh recruitment before confirming their jobs within a month.

They gave the threat from a meeting held near the administrative building on the campus and expressed dissatisfaction over a university press release that said the vice-chancellor did not confirm their jobs as their appointments are under legal process.

The meeting was organised by Oikya Parishad, an organisation of 544 employees with its Convenor Rafiqul Islam Sader in the chair.

"We withdrew our agitation programme on Sunday after being assured by the VC that our jobs would be confirmed," said Joint-convenor Masud Mia.

"The VC also promised us that he would not make any fresh recruitment without confirming our jobs," said Farman Ali, another joint-convenor.

Meanwhile, many teachers and students' organisations have expressed deep concern over the attitude of the administration towards the employees.

They protested the arrogance and misbehaviour of 544 employees at the administrative building on Sunday and demanded punishment to the employees.

The High Court stayed the controversial recruitment following a case filed by Abu Aslam, a lawyer, last year.