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TRANSCOM
ELECTRONICS

Woman tortured to death by husband

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A housewife was tortured to death allegedly by her husband and in-laws for failing to provide dowry at Uttar Khan in the capital Monday.

An autopsy performed at Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday revealed torture on Sharmin Akhter Ruma, 25, hospital sources said.

Her husband Tajul Islam, an employee at an Uttara electric appliance shop, and other members of his family are in hiding since the incident.

Neighbours told police that they heard the couple brawling Sunday night and found the housewife's body hanging from the veranda ceiling of their house at Uttar Khan's Maddyapara the next morning.

Police recorded an unnatural death case Monday as they said they were primarily convinced that Sharmin committed suicide.

Second Officer at Uttar Khan Police Station said if the

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Authorickshaw driver stabbed to death by muggers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver and a bus helper were murdered in the city yesterday.

The victims were identified as auto-rickshaw driver Rafiqul Islam, 25, and bus helper of Navana Transport Md Kamal, 20.

Rafiq died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday morning, 10 hours after snatchers stabbed him and took away his vehicle, while Kamal was beaten to death by a gang of unknown miscreants at Khilgaon in the city.

South Keraniganj police said they rescued auto-rickshaw driver Rafiqul Islam with stab injuries from the bank of the river Buriganga at around 11:00pm on Monday.

They rushed him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where he succumbed to stab injuries at about 8:30am yesterday.

Md Kamal of Sepoybagh under

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Suicide bombers kill 29 in Iraq

AFP, Tikrit

Two suicide bombings killed 29 people in Iraq on Tuesday, including 25 who died when a bomber slammed his vehicle into a truck carrying gas cylinders at an Iraqi army checkpoint near Baiji.

The two attacks appeared to be directed against groups fighting al-Qaeda militants in Iraq.

The truck bombing occurred on the outskirts of the refinery town of Baiji, 200km north of Baghdad, an official from the joint Iraqi-US security coordination centre in Tikrit said.

The bomber drove his pick-up vehicle into the truck, which was full of cooking gas cylinders, at the checkpoint manned by Iraqi soldiers and members of a group fighting al-Qaeda, the official said. About 85 people were also wounded.

A medic from the local hospital and the US military both confirmed the attack, which was close to the Baiji oil refinery from where fuel products are distributed across Iraq.

"We do have initial reports of a car bomb in Baiji today and that there were casualties," the military

said without giving further details. After the attack, the Baiji police chief Lieutenant Colonel Saleh al-Qaisi was sacked by the interior ministry, state television Al-Iraqiya said, quoting the ministry's director of operations Brigadier General Abdel Karim Khalaf.

Shortly after the Baiji bombing, a suicide bomber blew himself up in the midst of a funeral procession in the city of Baquba, north of Baghdad, killing four people from a similar group fighting al-Qaeda, police and medics said.

An AFP correspondent on the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Fire damages rubber goods factory

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fire at a rubber sandal factory in the city's Rayerbagh area under Demra Police Station yesterday gutted machinery and other valuables worth about Tk 15 lakh.

Fire Service and Civil Defence (FSCD) sources said the fire originated from a stub of a cigarette inside Desh Rubber Industries at about 4:05pm. However, no casualty was reported.

On information, firefighters from Demra and Postogola stations rushed to the spot and extinguished the blaze at around 7:30pm.

During the incident, the industry remained closed for Eid holidays, the FSCD sources said, adding they could recover valuables worth Tk about 10 lakh from the factory.

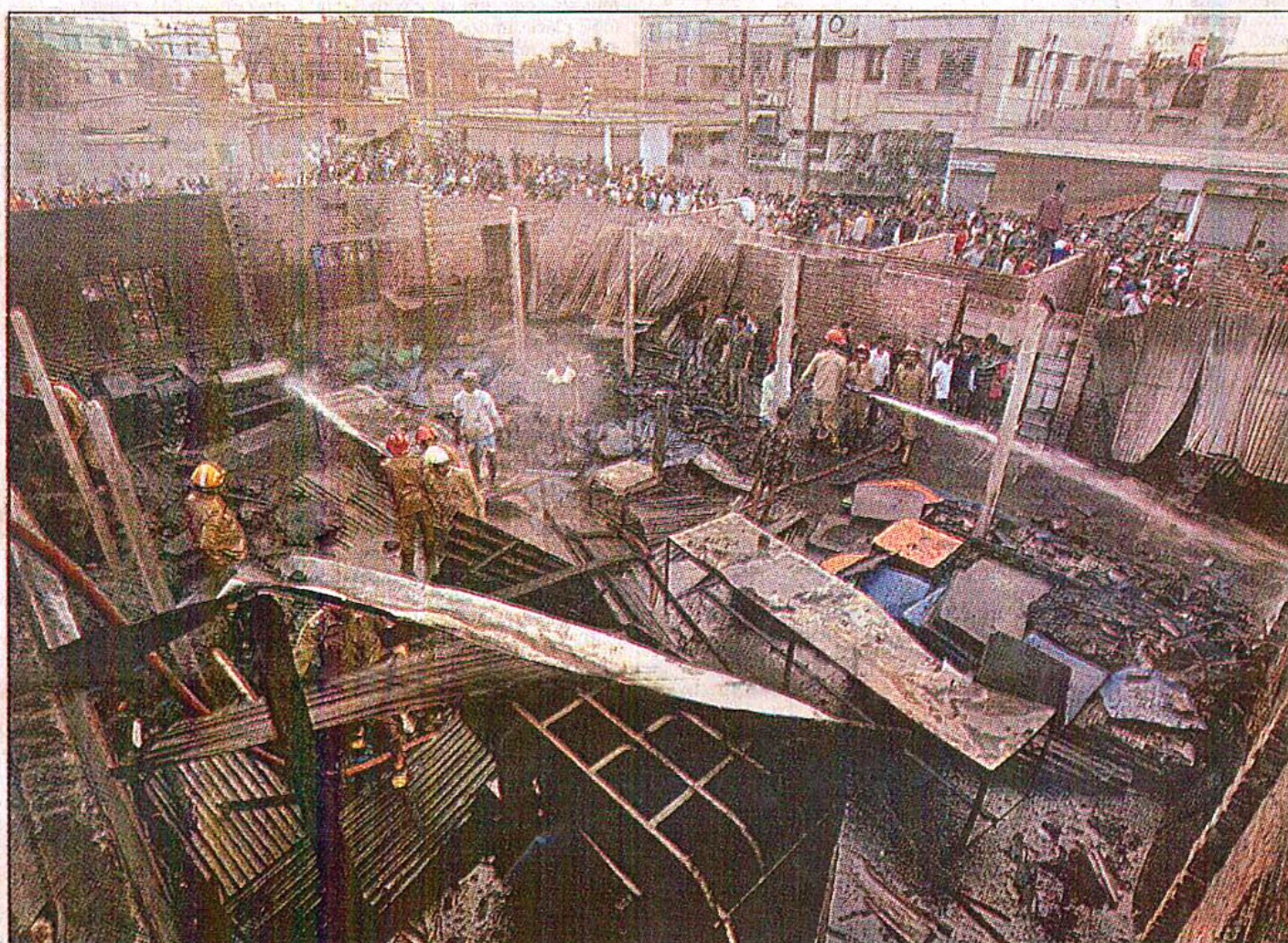


PHOTO: STAR

Firemen douse the flames after fire reduced a rubber sandal factory to ashes at Rayerbagh of Shanir Akhra in the capital yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Devotees offer prayers at a church in Kakrail in the capital during the Christmas service yesterday.

Christmas celebrated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Christmas was celebrated across the country yesterday with pledges to assist the victims of Cyclone Sidr and to work for peace and humanity following the ideals of Jesus Christ.

Among different festivities, the Christian community of Bangladesh celebrated their biggest religious festival, the birth anniversary of Jesus Christ, as elsewhere in the world.

On the occasion, the churches and adjoining grounds were decorated with colourful lighting and illuminated Christmas trees were placed with a star standing right on top. Santa Claus handed out Christmas presents to the children, much to their delight.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Thaksin vows to return in Feb

Seeks reconciliation with military

AFP, Hong Kong

Deposed Thai premier Thaksin Shinawatra said yesterday he wanted to return to Thailand in February, as he called for reconciliation with the military following weekend elections.

Thaksin, who was deposed by a military coup 15 months ago, also insisted he did not want to return to politics following the polls, which saw his allies in the People Power Party (PPP) emerge as the biggest winner in the new parliament.

"I will go back from February onwards," Thaksin told reporters in Hong Kong, in his first reaction to the election result. He declined to give a precise date, but said he hoped it would happen by April at the latest.

"I want to go back when my life can be peaceful in Thailand, as a normal citizen," said the billionaire former telecoms tycoon, who has been living in exile mainly in London since the military seized power.

Thaksin struck a conciliatory tone, calling for national reconciliation and thanking the military junta for allowing the elections to take place.

"I would like to congratulate them (voters) for bringing back democracy for Thailand," he said. "This should bring reconciliation efforts by everybody."

"I urge every party concerned to forget the past and look forward to a bright and prosperous future for Thailand," he added.

Thaksin, who was in contact with PPP leaders throughout the election, said repeatedly that he wanted to quit politics when he returned to Thailand.

The junta dissolved Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai (Thais Love Thais) party and in May this year a military-appointed tribunal banned him and 111 senior party members from politics for five years.

"I am quitting politics. I am not going back to politics. I will not take any political position except when they want any ideas," said Thaksin, who is also the owner of Premier League football club Manchester City.

However he later indicated that he could change his mind if the situation in Thailand changed.

"I have no wish to go back to politics until I feel safe, and then I will have to assess the situation," he said.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Human chain in Ctg to protest theft of artefacts

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Cultural activists here yesterday formed a human chain protesting theft of two artefacts from Zia International Airport (ZIA).

They however could not hold a rally due to police obstruction. Activists from different cultural organisations including Udichi, Charon, Baddhan, Prama, Uchcharak, Shaheed Smriti Pathagar and Chittagong University (CU) Abritti Mancha joined the human chain in front of the Central Shaheed Minar at around 4:00pm.

Noted personalities like Begum Mustari Shafi, Prof Abul Mansur of CU fine arts department, Prof Gazi Salahuddin of CU sociology department, Resident Editor of Prothom Alo Abul Momen, freedom fighter Faruk-e-Azam Bir Pratik, former curator of CU Museum Shamsul Hossain, Prof Masud Mahmud of CU english department, and Prof Hossain Kabir of CU public administration also joined the human chain.

Prayer Timing

December 26

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-27	5-30
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Power shortfall to take heavy toll on farmers in North

Irrigation cost to rise by Tk 500cr in Boro season

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra

Farmers of 16 northern districts will have to pay around Tk 500 crore extra in fuel cost for irrigation purpose in this Boro season due to a possible shortfall in electricity supply between December 2007 and May 2008.

According to "Sech", a Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) publication, BPC will have to supply an additional 1,07,639 tonnes of diesel in Rajshahi Division to irrigate over 18.66 lakh hectares of farmland that would produce around 59.59 lakh tonnes of Boro paddy, 4.68 lakh tonnes of wheat and other crops this season.

The BPC report said 2,77,361 tonnes of diesel was supplied in the last Boro season in the northern districts where food grain production has been surplus. This season BPC allocated 3,85,000 tonnes of diesel for the region to offset the electricity supply shortfall expected between December 2007

and May 2008.

Officials at the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) said if there is no shortfall in electricity supply during Boro season, farmers will be able to have their harvest spending on average Tk 4,500 per hectare to irrigate their fields with electric pumps. The cost is Tk 5,250 per hectare if they use diesel-powered pumps.

However, farmers claim that they would have to spend on average Tk 8,000 per hectare to irrigate due to the shortfall of electricity supply. The amount is about Tk 3,000 higher than that in the last season as the fuel price increased earlier this year.

Mohamed Jainuddin, 55, son of late Basir Uddin of Babai in Lalmonirhat said he would have to spend Tk 8,000 per hectare for irrigation purpose in this season whereas he spent around Tk 5,000 per hectare last season running diesel pumps.

Jamal, 45, son of Jalal Uddin of

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Court asks for health report of Khulna mayor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A Khulna court asked the jail authorities Monday to provide it with the latest health report of Shaikh Tayebur Rahman, detained mayor of Khulna City Corporation, by January 10 after he complained of ill health.

Metropolitan Magistrate Arunavo Chatterjee gave the order as Tayebur was produced before the court in connection with four of the nine cases that were filed against him with Khulna Sadar Police Station on a string of charges.

The mayor has been suffering from arthritis, hypertension and cardiovascular problems. He told the court that he was not in a position to move out of jail on health grounds and that he needed better medical treatment.

His wife Laila Rahman complained that the jail authorities have so far been careless about the health conditions of the 73-year old mayor who was arrested on November 2.

DATELINE AFGHANISTAN Anxious wife and a happy ending

PORIMOL PALMA, back from Bagharpura, Jessore

The night of December 7, 2007 turned out to be the most memorable night of all in the lives of Noor Islam and his wife Anwara Parveen.

"I couldn't trust my own ears. I doubted if I was hearing right and didn't know whether to cry or laugh. The news of his release that night brought a sense of joy that I had never felt before," said Anwara Parveen, who had given up on her own life since her husband's abduction in Afghanistan on

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Turkey hits 200 rebel Kurd targets

Up to 175 rebels killed in attacks

AP, Istanbul

Turkish airstrikes and artillery have hit more than 200 Kurdish rebel targets in the mountains of northern Iraq since Dec. 16, killing hundreds of insurgents, the military said Tuesday.

Up to 175 rebels were killed on Dec. 16 alone, the military said in a statement posted on its Web site. The military said other hideouts were hit in a cross-border airstrike on Saturday, followed by artillery fire.

In Iraq, a Kurdish official said information from the rebels cast doubt on Turkey's claims.

"These are exaggerated figures," said Mahmoud Uthman, a Kurdish leader and member of parliament. "Most of the villages (that were attacked) were abandoned."

Iraqi officials said the Dec. 16 operation the first confirmed by

Turkey since the US-led invasion in 2003 violated Iraqi sovereignty. That operation was followed by an incursion by ground forces, who spotted a group of Kurdish rebels preparing to cross into Turkey.

The last confirmed offensive across the Turkish-Iraqi border came this past Saturday, when Turkish airplanes entered Iraqi air space and bombed suspected rebel targets.

A spokesman for Iraqi Kurdistan's Peshmerga security forces said earlier that Turkish fighter jets also bombed Kurdish rebel targets in northern Iraq on Sunday.

But a US official in Ankara said Tuesday that there was no evidence of a Sunday air assault. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to release the information.

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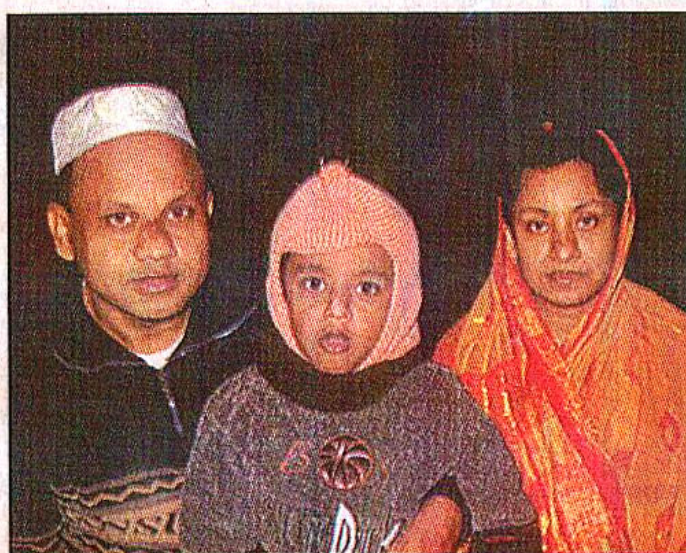


PHOTO: STAR

Brac official Noor Islam, left, with his wife and son after his return home from Afghanistan. Unknown Afghan militants abducted him on September 15.

Qulkhwani

Mrs Husn Ara Khan, widow of late Abdul Qaiyum Khan, Retd District and Session Judge passed away on Thursday, Dec 20, 2007 (Innaillalhe..... Rajun).

The deceased is survived by two sons and six grandchildren. The qulkhwani will be held after the Maghrib prayers on Wednesday, December 26th at House No. 74, Road 11A, Dhanmondi. We, the deceased's sons, earnestly request relatives, family friends and well-wishers to attend the qulkhwani and pray for the departed soul.

AM Khan (Rokon)
AM Khan (Pearu)

C-3041