

Furnace blows up at steel mill

1 killed, 15 badly injured in melting iron; work safety missing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Explosion of a furnace at a steel factory in the city left one dead and 15 workers seriously injured yesterday reminding the horrible lack of workers' safety in this sector.

Eight of the workers of Hasan Steel Mill at Kadamtoli were admitted to the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital with severe burn injuries sustained by melted iron. Four of them are in critical condition.

About 20,000 workers in over 100 steel factories in the country work in very unsafe conditions mostly without any protective gear and under almost non-existent government monitoring.

The deceased was identified as Billal, 26, said Officer-in-Charge Kazi Aiyubur Rahman of Kadamtoli Police Station. He claimed the factory authorities tried to hide the body of the victim and police recovered it in the evening.

The body of the deceased was sent to Sir Salimullah Medical College morgue.

The factory owners could not be contacted for comments and the secretary of the Bangladesh Steel Mills Owners' Association did not pick up his telephone.

Those admitted to DMCH yesterday were identified as Assistant Manager Ataur Rahman, 40, Manager Madan Mohan, 50, labourers Farhad, 22, Raju, 27, Ripon, 38, Fahad, 30, Ahidul, 30, and Abdur Rob, 30.

Locals and the injured said the furnace melting iron exploded around 10:30am. "The furnace of the re-rolling mill exploded

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Left, A crater made by an explosion of a furnace at a steel factory. Top, Molten steel all around in the factory.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Court's ruling on Ershad era today

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

After the Supreme Court's nullifying the fifth amendment to the country's constitution, the High Court will today deliver a verdict on the seventh amendment that legitimises HM Ershad's military takeover and the acts under his military rule.

An HC bench of Justice Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik and Justice Sheikh Md Zakir Hossain yesterday fixed Thursday (today) for the verdict on a writ petition that challenged the seventh amendment to the constitution.

The seventh amendment ratified the proclamation of martial law and other regulations, orders and instructions by Ershad between March 24, 1982, and November 10, 1986. Ershad, the then chief of army staff, declared himself the chief martial law administrator and imposed martial law on March 24, 1982.

Siddique Ahmed, sentenced to life for murder by a martial law court in Chittagong in 1986, filed the petition on January 24 this year.

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SHAHEED MINAR HC restricts programmes at main altar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

No organisation or individual can hold any meeting or gathering at the main altar (Bedi) of the Central Shaheed Minar following yesterday's High Court directives.

Different organisations have been holding social, political and cultural programmes there for several decades.

The people can place wreaths on the main Bedi of Shaheed Minar only on 21st February, the

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WEARING VEIL Educational instts asked not to force

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The education ministry yesterday directed the authorities concerned of all educational institutions not to force female students to wear borkha (veil) or religious attire at the institutions.

The ministry, in a circular, also asked them not to prevent the female students from participating in sports and cultural activities.

Forcing the female students to wear veil or religious dress and preventing them from participating in sports and cultural activities would

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BANGABANDHU BRIDGE CRACKS Chinese firm gets repair job

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

The government has selected a Chinese firm to do repairs five years after the Bangabandhu Multipurpose Bridge had developed cracks, communications ministry officials have said.

China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC) has been chosen for the task involving Tk 165 crore. The government earlier tried twice in vain to find a firm for repairs to the 4.8 km-long bridge.

Four companies submitted bids for the task. They are -- World Kaihatsu Kogyo Co Ltd and The Nippon Road Co Ltd from Japan, Second Highway Engineering Ltd-CATIC Beijing Co Ltd of China in joint venture with Bangladesh's Reza Construction Ltd and the CRBC from China.

The China-Bangladesh joint venture could not qualify in technical evaluation.

The other three fulfilled the requirements and made it to the technical and financial evaluation category, said the report of

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Presidential ordinances to become scarce

Apex court's verdict boosts parliament's legislative power

SHAKHAWAT LITON



Extensive promulgation of presidential ordinances during caretaker governments will no longer be possible, as the president's sweeping legislative authority, in absence of a parliament, has been declared void by the apex court of the country.

The same will also be applicable for any outgoing elected government between the dissolution of a parliament and formation of a caretaker government, legal experts said.

The original 1972 constitution allowed presidential ordinances on any urgent matter when the parliament would not be in session, and only to meet urgent financial expenditure from a consolidated fund, at the president's discretion, when the parliament would stand dissolved.

The framers of the original constitution did not foresee a situation when the country would be governed by a caretaker government, devoid of a parliament.

According to the original constitution, a parliamentary elec-

tion would be held within 90 days prior to the normal dissolution of a parliament, and in case of a sudden disbandment the poll would be held within the following 90 days.

In 1996, against a backdrop of agitation by Awami League and an electoral stalemate between AL and BNP, the then parliament brought the 13th amendment to the constitution introducing the system of caretaker governments.

A caretaker regime is to assist the Election Commission in holding parliamentary polls within 90 days following a parliament's dissolution, in all cases.

But the president's sweeping authority to exercise the parliament's legislative power was ensured years before in 1978, when military ruler Gen Ziaur Rahman, who also assumed the office of the president, amended article 93 of the constitution through a martial law proclamation.

The proclamation empowered the president to promulgate ordinances on any matter even when the parliament stood

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Specimen tested: Incineration the best way to kill anthrax positive bacteria

Lab test confirms disease as mildest form of infection; experts term it easily curable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The suspected anthrax outbreak in Sirajganj is tested to be the mildest form of the skin infection that can easily be treated with antibiotics.

Laboratory tests of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) has confirmed it as cutaneous anthrax, the most common form of the disease, which infected 127 people over the last two weeks.

Some 20 cows were reported to have died of anthrax, but death in case of human infection is extremely rare when antibiotics are promptly given.

"There's no reason to be panicked about human infection," asserted Prof Mahmudur Rahman, director of IEDCR, which submitted its findings to the health ministry yesterday.

"The government is trying to tackle the outbreak with enough medicines, vaccinations and surveillance."

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Incineration is the best way to get rid of anthrax infected animals and safeguard other animals and humans from being tainted as the bacteria responsible for anthrax can survive in harsh conditions for decades or even centuries.

And burying the infected animals is the second best option to stop spread of the disease, Prof Dr Abu Hadi Noor Ali Khan, head of pathology department of veterinary science of Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU), told The Daily Star yesterday.

Prof Khan led an expert team of BAU that first confirmed on Tuesday the recent onslaught of anthrax on domestic animals and humans in Pabna and Sirajganj as Bacillus anthracis, the bacteria responsible for anthrax disease.

According to sources, as many as 127 people have been infected so far with suspected anthrax after consuming meat of affected animals.

However, experts say one need not fear as the disease is not transmittable and its treatment is available in the country.

In an exclusive interview with The Daily Star, Prof Khan said, "The best option is to incinerate the affected cows, goats, sheep and other animals so that spores cannot be formed."

In case poor dairy owners cannot afford the cost for incineration, they should make sure their affected animals are buried at least seven feet below the surface where Bacillus anthracis fails to form cells for want of ventilation, the professor explained.

He warned that unless earth is dug at least seven feet deep for such burials, possibilities are that jackals and stray dogs will drag those out or cobbler will take away their hides.

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Nokia Connecting People

NEW POLL ON SATURDAY

The Daily Star & Nielsen Bangladesh have completed their third opinion poll on the completion of the government's one and a half years in office. The previous two polls were conducted at the completion of the government's 100 days and at the end of its first year. When the third poll is compared with the previous two, it gives an interesting overview of the public's mind. The new poll and its comparison with the previous two will be published in The Daily Star on Saturday. Please, get your copy.