

2 inmates die in prison

Family of one alleges negligence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

Two inmates of Chattogram Central Jail died yesterday at Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) after both fell sick.

One of the deceased was identified as Md Rafiq, 58, who landed in jail on March 27 in a case filed with Chandanish Police Station over a clash between two rival groups.

Around 4:00am yesterday, he fell sick and the on-duty guards took him to the prison's hospital, said Dewan Md Tariqul Islam, the jailor of Chattogram Central Jail.

As Rafiq's physical condition deteriorated, he was taken to the CMCH, where the on-duty doctors declared him dead.

Rafiq's family maintains his death was due to the negligence of the jail authorities and the police in giving him proper treatment.

"We have a longstanding rivalry with our political opponent in our area. On March 26, our opponent group attacked us with lethal weapons -- my brother was seriously injured in the attack," said Jamal

"My brother was not given proper treatment in the police station. Rather, he was sent to jail the next day with his physical injuries."

Uddin, Rafiq's elder brother.

Rafiq managed to flee the scene of violence and went to the Chandanish police station for safety.

But the police locked him up on the charge of his involvement in the bout. His rivals went to the police station and beat him up in the absence of the officer-in-charge, Jamal said.

Later, Rafiq was shown arrested in a case of violence filed by the other side.

"My brother was not given proper treatment in the police station. Rather, he was sent to jail the next day with his physical injuries," Jamal added.

Anwar Hossain, the OC of Chandanish police station, denies the allegations of an attack on Rafiq inside the police station.

Rafiq and their rival group locked into a clash in the village and the police registered cases against both groups. The OC, however, did not elaborate on the incident.

In a separate incident, Md Babul Mia, 38, died at CMCH after complaining of chest pains in the early hours of yesterday.

Babul, who landed in jail on November 18 last year in a drug case field with Chandanish police station, was taken to the prison hospital. Later, he was shifted to the CMCH's emergency ward, where he died.

Both the bodies were sent to CMCH morgue for autopsy, Islam said.



A trader brings live chicken to the capital from Savar by a battery-run rickshaw via the busy Dhaka-Aricha highway yesterday. Such slow-moving vehicles are banned on the highway but the authorities concerned seem unable to properly enforce it.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Ensure proper use of water

Urges Sheikh Hasina

UNB, *Dhaka*

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her government has adopted plans to ensure better use of surface water and the reduction of its underground extraction.

"Another name for water is 'life'; it is important [for us] to preserve this resource. We have taken plans to increase the use of surface water," she said while addressing a programme on World Water Day 2022, organised by the water resources ministry at Pani Bhaban in the capital. This year's theme is "Groundwater, making the invisible visible".

Attending the event virtually from the Gono Bhaban, the PM mentioned that two billion people in the world are suffering from a lack of safe drinking water.

"If we can use this resource properly, then there will be no suffering for our country's people and we will be able to supply [safe]

water to the world [market]. We have to do our work keeping that in mind."

Hasina said the government has already begun supplying river water after purification. Even at the district level, the government is supplying treated river water to save underground water.

Hasina mentioned the government has given the highest priority to dredging, which will not only increase navigability, but also improve waterways. "We will be able to transport our goods at lower costs."

She said river beds have silted for a lack of dredging for a long time. As a result, rivers have widened unnecessarily.

"We can reclaim land through dredging and reduce the river widths. We have already reclaimed a good amount of land this way."

Hasina said earth generated from dredging must not be put on arable land and can instead be preserved by

creating pockets in rivers.

She also asked to make sure that there will be no obstruction on water flow due to any development project.

While constructing any building, the premier said, "We have to consider some preservation of rainwater and having a water reservoir."

She mentioned that if the underground water is used excessively, probability of earthquakes may increase in the country as Bangladesh situated on a plate under which stability is achieved due to the water level.

Hasina said unplanned and indiscriminate construction of dams have to be restricted.

"In the name of increasing the height of dam, I know, the amount of expenditure will be increased and some people will get commission. This kind of mentality has to be shunned. Plans that benefit the country have to be made."

The PM urged all to maintain austerity in using pipe water and stop the misuse of water for any purpose. "We all have to remain alert in this regard."

State Minister for Water Resources Zaheed Farooq, Deputy Minister AKM Enamul Hoque Shameem and Senior Secretary Kabir Bin Anwar also spoke.



City stung by gas crisis

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the other was likely to be brought back to operation early today, said Sheikh Jahidur Rahman, communications manager (corporate affairs) at Chevron Bangladesh.

A gas-processing train filters gas extracted from wells and also controls the pressure of gas.

"We hope to fix the technical glitches at three of the six wells tonight or early today. It will take some time to complete the repair work at the other three wells," he told this newspaper last night.

Ali Mohammad Al-Mamun, director (operation and mines) of Petrobangla, said they sent a high-powered team to the gas field in Sylhet on Sunday to assess the situation.

"Engineers are working

to fix the problem. We hope the situation will return to normal very soon."

He said Petrobangla usually gets 1,250 mmcf/d gas from Chevron. But it was receiving around 800 mmcf/d since the gas field was hit by technical problems.

Petrobangla data shows that three state-owned firms -- Bangladesh Gas Fields Company Ltd, Sylhet Gas Fields Ltd and Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company -- and two international oil companies -- Chevron and Tullow Oil plc -- add 2,380 to 2,395 mmcf/d gas to the national grid. But on Sunday, the supply decreased to 2,023 mmcf/d.

"We used to provide 1,100 to 1,150 mmcf/d gas to power plants. But it was brought down to 1,000 mmcf/d since Bibiyana Gas

Field ran into problems on Sunday," he said.

In a statement, Petrobangla apologised to its subscribers for their sufferings due to the gas crisis and hoped the situation would get back to normal soon.

Haronur Rashid Mullah, managing director of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company that distributes gas to 28.74 lakh households, said the capital and its adjoining areas bore the brunt of the shortage of around 400 mmcf/d gas.

Residents of Gazipur, Savar, Narayanganj, Narsingdi and Mymensingh also suffered due to the shortage.

Suraiya Parveen, a resident of Mirpur-12 in the capital, said she had to wait until 12:30am yesterday to cook sehri items as the gas supply in her area became

normal after midnight.

"I couldn't get enough sleep as I had to leave home for college early in the morning to take classes. When I returned home around 3:00pm today, I found that there was no gas..." said Parveen, a teacher at a private college in the city's Dhanmondi.

Lutfunnahar Begum, who lives in Shahjahanpur, said, "Today, the pressure of gas is so low that it's not possible to cook iftar items... we have no other option but to buy iftar items from restaurants."

Some residents chose electric burners to cook food.

One of them, Babul Hossain, a resident of Pallabi in the city, said they would use the electric burner he purchased a few years back to cook food and iftar items.

programme, not just to revive the economy but address issues of governance," Ivan told AFP.

A critical lack of foreign currency has left Sri Lanka struggling to service its ballooning \$51-billion foreign debt, with the pandemic torpedoing vital revenue from tourism and remittances.

The result has been unprecedented food and fuel shortages along with record inflation and crippling power cuts, with no sign of an end to the economic woes.

Biden hopes for stronger

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The drive, resourcefulness and innovation demonstrated by Bangladeshis in rebuilding after the 1971 war and the country's present-day economic growth and development serve as a model for the rest of the world, he said.

At present, the two countries are working together to address the climate crisis, help the Rohingya survivors of genocide and support the UN peacekeeping missions worldwide.

"Our defence cooperation is stronger than ever," he said, adding that the Bangladesh Coast Guard and Navy are invaluable partners in ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific region, contributing to the regional effort to end the trafficking of people and illicit drugs.

Biden, who took office on January 20 last year, went on to cite the US's donation

of about 61 million doses of coronavirus vaccine and \$131 million in assistance to Bangladesh to weather the challenges of the global coronavirus pandemic as examples of cooperation between the two countries.

"We are proud of our partnership on development, economic growth and counterterrorism. I am confident our partnership will continue to flourish for the next 50 years and beyond," he added.

Meanwhile, in a video message shared on his Twitter account, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken cited the Sears Tower as an example of what cooperation between the two nations can achieve.

Now known as the Willis Tower, the Sears Tower in Chicago was designed by Bangladeshi-American Fazlur Rahman Khan.

The building, which is the third-tallest building in the US, is

just one manifestation of what Americans and Bangladeshis can do together, he said.

The US would continue close cooperation with Bangladesh to strengthen the economy, investment, combat climate change, regional security, peacekeeping and sustainable solution to the Rohingya crisis.

Blinken welcomed the continuous dialogue on Biden's foreign policy principles of labour rights, religious freedom, human rights and democracy.

Citing Bangladesh's export worth \$8.3 billion to the US in 2021, he went on to encourage Bangladesh to make progress on workers' rights to deepen the robust economic partnership.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen told reporters before his meeting last night (Bangladesh time) in Washington DC with Blinken that he would

request the US to make more investments in areas of blue economy, IT and pharmaceuticals to diversify Bangladesh's exports.

American investors can benefit from the opportunities created by Bangladesh's fast-growing economy.

Momen said he would also request the US to reinstate the Generalised System of Preferences facility, which was suspended in 2013, and the sanctions imposed on RAB and seven of its current and former officials in December last year.

"We don't see any tension. We have good relations with the US and therefore they can share their observations, if any, with us without hesitation. If needs be, we will take remedial measures."

Momen said he would also request Blinken to return Bangabandhu's killer Rashed Chowdhury, who is residing in the US.

Headmaster beats student, fractures her hand

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

A schoolgirl fractured her hand as she was beaten up by the headmaster at Tarash Government High School in Sirajganj's Tarash upazila on Saturday.

Mahiya Rahman, a 10th grader at the school, is currently undergoing treatment at home.

According to her father Mojibar Rahman, Mahiya refused to take private tuition from headmaster Ali Hasan, which angered him. "He tortured my daughter inhumanly."

After hearing about it, Mojibar rushed to the school and took his daughter to Tarash upazila health complex, where doctors said her hand was fractured and there were injury marks elsewhere on her body.

Mahiya is undergoing treatment at home. Headmaster Hasan Ali said, "I heard she was using a mobile phone in school. When I told her to hand it over, she used foul language with me. So, I beat her with a stick. It wasn't as bad as to fracture her hand."

Meanwhile, Majbahul Karim, upazila nirbahi officer, said a three-member committee, headed by Upazila Education Officer Jakir Hossain, was formed to probe the allegation and submit a report within three working days.

Madrasa teacher killed in clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Sylhet*

A madrasa teacher was killed while trying to stop a clash between people of two villages in Sylhet's Jaintapur upazila yesterday.

The dead, Mawlana Saleh Ahmed, was a teacher of Tahfizur Quran Madrasa of Sylhet's Majortila area and a resident of the upazila.

The clash started at Haripur bazaar, over land dispute between Rafique Ahmed of Hadpara village, and Rashid Ahmed, of Shyampur village.

As it went on all night, a group of local Islamic clerics, Imams and teachers came to the spot to settle the matter around 7:00am. However, the violence intensified and Saleh was beaten to death by a group.

Lutfur Rahman, additional superintendent of Sylhet District Police, said, "Police brought under control...A case is being filed in this regard and we are trying to arrest those behind the killing."

Furniture seller shot dead in Brahmanbaria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Brahmanbaria*

A furniture seller was shot dead by unidentified criminals in Brahmanbaria's Nabinagar upazila early yesterday.

Aminur Rashid, OC of Nabinagar Police Station, said the incident took place in Baghaura village in Shibpur union around 5:00am.

Atiqur Rahman Sumon, 28, lived in a rented house in the village and ran a furniture shop in Baghaura bazar. When he left his home for sehri, some people shot him and fled. He died on the spot.

On information, police went to the spot, recovered the body and sent it to Brahmanbaria General Hospital for autopsy.

Opposition rejects unity govt offer

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TNA spokesman and lawmaker Abraham Sumanthiran told AFP.

The main opposition Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) party made no formal statement, but its leader Sajith Premadasa vowed Sunday that it would not join any government featuring members of Rajapaksa's family.

Every member of Sri Lanka's cabinet except the president and his elder brother, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, resigned late Sunday.

The country's central bank governor Ajith

Cabraal -- who has long opposed the International Monetary Fund bailout now being sought by the country -- also stepped down yesterday.

The departures cleared the way for the country's ruling political clan to seek to shore up its weakening position and attempt to stem growing public protests.

But the president has already reappointed four of the outgoing ministers -- three of them to their old jobs -- while replacing brother Basil Rajapaksa as finance minister with the previous justice chief.

Political analysts said the offer of a unity government did not go far enough to address the economic crisis or restore confidence in the Rajapaksa administration. "This is like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic," Bhavani Fonseka, political analyst and human rights lawyer, told AFP. "This is a joke."

Political columnist Victor Ivan added that a cabinet reshuffle in the guise of a national government would not be acceptable to the public.

"What is needed is a serious reform