

## 2 forest department night guards in Sylhet murdered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Two night-guards of the forest department were murdered by unknown assailants here sometime around Saturday midnight.

Police and the forest office sources said Abdul Musabbir, 42, and Shahabuddin, 47, both gardener-cum- night-guards, were found dead at around 8:00am yesterday morning in their bed in the verandah of the Sylhet Town Ranger's office in Sheikhghat area of the town.

Both victims had a cord and a muffler tied around the neck and multiple stab wounds on the head. The bodies were sent to the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Abdul Musabbir hailed from village Rankeli under Golapganj upazila of Sylhet district and

Shahabuddin from village Barfa under Gopalganj district.

Police took four employees of the forest office into custody for interrogation. They are Faruque Ahmed Chowdhury, Abdul Qayyum, Ruhul and Balaram.

Forest ranger Faruque Ahmed Chowdhury said an amount of Tk 40,000 was missing from the drawer of the office room. The lock of the drawer had been broken. The miscreants had also ransacked the office. The forest ranger said he suspected it to be a case of robbery.

Some locals however alleged that the murders were carried out by a group of local heroin addicts. They said the two guards on many occasions had prevented the addicts from sitting on the office verandah.

The bodies of the victims would be handed over to their family after autopsy. A case had been started.

## Launch mishap kills one, injures 15 in Barisal

A CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A boy was killed and 15 other persons injured in an accident involving two double-decker launches on the Arial Kha River near Terochar of Muladi upazila Saturday night.

The victim was identified as Bappi, 15, son of Nazrul Islam of Kalishakhola of Pirojpur district.

Police and passengers said two double decker launches, Rajdut-1 and Rajdut-7 left Mathbaria for Dhaka Saturday evening. At about 10:00pm near Terochar, both vessels tried to overtake one another. At one point, Rajdut-7 hit Rajdut-1 in the back, breaking its guardrail in the upper deck and injuring 16 of its passengers including Bappi.

Bappi received serious head injuries in the accident and was admitted to Muladi Health Complex where he died at around noon yesterday.

Muladi Police arrested Jahangir Alam, 30, a staff of Rajdut-7.

## Cold

FROM PAGE 12 moderate fog is likely from midnight till morning. The current cold wave over Rajshahi, Khulna, Faridpur, Chuadanga and Madaripur may continue, it added.

Meanwhile, the cold wave claimed 10 lives in Barisal and five others in Panchagarh in last 24 hours till 6:00 last evening. Our Rangpur correspondent informed that at least 22 people died during last one week in the Rangpur Medical College Hospital (RMCH) due to cold-related disease. An unspecified number of people, mostly elderly and children, are suffering cold-related diseases in the different parts of the country, unofficial sources said.

A press release from the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief informed that it has allocated 40,000 blankets for floating and distressed people of 55 districts. They made the move following a meeting of the ministry yesterday chaired by the Disaster Management and Relief Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yousuf.

## Saber released

FROM PAGE 1 greeted him with slogans on his release and garlanded him to welcome. Police escorted his car to the Mymensingh town.

Saber, also political secretary to AL President Sheikh Hasina, was arrested on December 8 without any specific charge and detained under the Special Powers Act (SPA).

Saber was shown as an arrestee in the Ajanta Cinema Hall blast case and transferred from the Sylhet jail to the Mymensingh jail later.

On January 7, he was produced before a magistrate's court, Mymensingh that placed him on a seven-day remand for interrogation.

The court rejected his bail prayer. Another prayer for a stay on the remand was also rejected.

On January 8, a division bench of the High Court granted Saber an ad interim bail in the cinema hall blast case.

The same day, another division bench of the High Court issued a 15-day stay on the magisterial order for remand.

Back in Dhaka, Saber placed a wreath at the portrait of Bangabandhu at the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum and met with Hasina at the AL office at Dhanmondi yesterday.

## Shazneen case: Sister's deposition

FROM PAGE 1 Dhaka, recorded the deposition for over one and a half hours.

She was then cross-examined by the lawyer of Shahidul Islam alias Shahid, the principal accused in the case.

Simin identified all the six accused -- Shahid, Hasan, Badal, Shaniram, Minu and Parvin -- in the dock.

The court then adjourned the hearing till noon today.

In her deposition, Simin told the court that on April 2, 1998, she, her sister Sheji, their children and Shazneen went to visit Marina Tea Garden at Kulaura in Sylhet.

Her parents also went on a visit to Shillong in India on April 3, Simin said.

"In the morning of April 3, Shazneen looked very upset and told us that a serious incident had taken place on April 1 at their Gulshan residence in Dhaka.

Shazneen told us that on that day (April 1) at about 3.30 pm, contractor Hasan had entered her (Shazneen's) bedroom (at the Gulshan residence) and asked her to show the defective glasses in the bathroom. As she entered the bathroom, Hasan grabbed her with an ill-motive. Shazneen pushed him aside and warned that she would tell her parents about this so that he is punished. Hasan became angry and went away".

Simin told the court that on April 4 her husband Waqur Hossain and her second sister's husband Arshadul Haque also went to Kulaura. Shazneen narrated the April 1 incident to them also. Later, we decided to report it to our parents after their return home from Shillong, she said.

"We all returned to my Baridhara residence in Dhaka on April 16. My parents returned from Shillong on April 18 and took Shazneen from my house. But my mother fell sick and my father looked worried. So, we decided to report the incident to them at a later date, on April 24. On April 21 in the afternoon, I along with Shazneen went to Gulshan Market and returned in the evening. Later I found Shazneen excited. She was

shouting at Hasan: How dare you stand before me? I calmed her", Simin told the court.

"At about 10 pm on April 23, a telephonic message came from my parents' house that something had happened to Shazneen. I and my husband went there and saw my father crying beside Shazneen's body on the floor in front of the bathroom. Her body bore a number of injury marks and blood spilled on the floor. On the left side of her neck, there was a deep wound. I cried out for doctor. But my father told me that Shazneen was no more. After a few minutes, I learnt that domestic help Shahid was missing.

"Cook Abdul Mannan informed that a kitchen knife was missing. Later Sheji and her husband also came there. But 10 to 12 people including carpenter Shaniram were lying nearby as if they were asleep despite so much of noise around", Simin said.

"Later, at about 3.30 am on April 24, police came and made an inquest report in presence of me, my brother and my mother's friend Mrs Almas Jakuddin.

"After the incident, Hasan came to my parent's house on April 26 and left the house after some time. Later, he was called by my uncle Masum on April 30. We asked him many questions why he did not come for work as usual. But his answers were not satisfactory", Simin added.

Simin continued, "On September 27, police took Shahid to my parents' house where he narrated the incident chronologically. He said Hasan and Badal hired him, Humayun, Parvin, Minu and Shaniram with money to rape and kill Shazneen. Shahid told us that on April 3, Hasan told him to rape and kill Shazneen. Two days later, Hasan showed Badal, Shaniram and Shahid the bed-room of Shazneen. Shahid told that at about 10 pm on April 23, he along with Parvin and Humayun went to the bedroom of Shazneen while a party was giving on upstairs. Before entering her room, Shahid took a knife from the kitchen.

"Shahid said Humayun took the chisel of carpenter Shaniram.

Shahid said he stabbed Shazneen with the kitchen knife and Humayun hit her with the chisel. Parvin grabbed Shazneen by the hair. Then the three pulled down Shazneen from the bed. She was losing sense. Shahid raped her in this condition. Shahid then came out of the room with the blood-stained knife and threw it by the side of the tin-shed where Shaniram used to stay and fled the house. Shahid then met Hasan at Gulshan Avenue. Hasan was waiting there in a white microbus and asked him if the job was properly done. Shahid told him that it was done as per his instruction", Simin told the court.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, chairman of Transcom, was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23.

Special public prosecutors Arfan Uddin Khan, ABM Sharfuddin Khan Mukul, Mahbub Ahmed, Saima Khanam and Assistant PP Anwar Rahman appeared for the state while advocates Mosharraf Hossain Kajal, Mohammad Hanif, MA Kamrul Hasan Khan Aslam, Mizanur Rahman and Anwarul Kabir Babul appeared for the accused.

## Newborn

FROM PAGE 12 On information the Khilgaon police rushed to the spot and took the mother and child to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors examined the baby and found her in good condition.

At the hospital, Mita did not reveal any kind of information. She only told journalists that Chandu Karmoker threw her baby.

Police, however, arrested the couple - Manindra Chandra Dey and Shouva Dey - for their alleged involvement in the incident.

The duty officer of Khilgaon police station said that no case was filed as the victim was admitted at the hospital.

## PM: Police officials

FROM PAGE 12 Sayeed Hasan also spoke at the meeting.

State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar, PM's Political Secretaries Harris Chowdhury and Mohammad Mosaddek Ali were present.

On the occasion of Police Week 2003, the prime minister had a free and frank exchange of views with senior police officials, including the IG, AIGs, DIGs, Commissioners and SPs, at the ICC in the Prime Minister's Office complex.

Assuring all cooperation from the government, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia advised them to remain alert so criminals cannot make a comeback.

She noted that a calm now prevailed in the society as many criminals were arrested, huge firearms recovered as well as some terrors fled the country during the 86-day combined operation by army, police and BDR.

Asking them to keep round-the-clock watch on all spheres to fend off recurrence of any crime across the country, she reminded the police officials that people would not have confidence in them if they failed to do these tasks. "And it would not bring good for anybody".

She asked them to be active in gathering advance information about criminals and take action against them before they can commit crime.

Listing various types of area-

based crimes in the capital's criminal gangland, Khaleda also suggested to them to keep themselves up to date on those crimes in order to eradicate such offences. Also she advised the police force to adopt new strategies to cope with new modes of crime.

The prime minister urged the police to discharge their duties neutrally ignoring any interference from any quarters, asserting that her party and government don't believe in politicisation.

She asked them to rein in offenders irrespective of their identity or position.

Khaleda urged the police officials to present themselves in a way such that people take them as friends and can depend on them while terrors fear them.

Referring to "breakdown of the chain of command" in police administration during the last government's tenure, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia assured them that if any police official did wrong under pressure during that time, her government would let the matter drop.

"We want service -- and service for welfare of the people," she said asking them to carry out their duties without having to worry about any action against them for unwarranted deeds during the time of the past government.

## Impunity encourages HR violations

FROM PAGE 1

dog, Irene said. "Parliament and judiciary, the lower courts in particular, are allegedly corrupt while the executive branch of the state lacks check and balance. Human rights require an institutional framework."

In this regard, she regretted that a human rights commission has not yet come into being in the country.

"Human rights have been violated during successive governments in Bangladesh. We raised the issue with the present government and the previous one as well, but at no avail. That's the context in which we're looking at human rights issues in Bangladesh.

"Special Powers Act, Section 54 of CrPC and outdated Sedition Act, which are contradictory to the Constitution, have become tools of abusing human rights. Recommendations for their repeal are being ignored. The legal system is being manipulated through abuse of Section 54, not only by the government but also by individuals.

"The state of rule of law largely depends on how the government intends to use the courts and laws. On one hand, the country's political system is trying to reduce the space for those not belonging to any political camp while, on the other, the government, by its recent actions against its critics, seems to be sending a message that there should not be any such space.

"A sense of insecurity and fear is gripping the press and other media, and human rights, women and NGO activists."

Such a political division and gradual shrinkage of space for independent thinking were "quite dangerous" for a society, Irene

warned..

The Amnesty chief said lack of tolerance was affecting smooth functioning of democracy.

"The culture of tolerance and a space for difference of opinion have to be there. However, people with different opinions now feel scared due to lack of this space.

"An independent judiciary, effective parliament and rule of law by the executive are must to help democracy grow and thus protect human rights in the country. All black laws should also be repealed and court orders must be respected."

While recognising the country's reputation for promoting women's rights the first woman to head Amnesty regretted that development activists centring women issues were now at a risk.

The coalition government should translate the huge public mandate it got in the elections into "action for people's wellbeing", Irene suggested.

The Amnesty secretary-general regretted that the government did not investigate the post-election violence although she had raised the issue with the prime minister. "This time around, we have raised the recent incidents of human rights violations with the ministries concerned. We will continue to raise such issues for the authorities to address and create pressure on the government through media campaign."

Irene also talked at length on a wide range of issues, including human rights situation in Iraq, Palestine and other conflict-ridden countries and performance of local human rights bodies there, the United States-led war on terrorism

and her organisation's challenges for the new year.

Irene stayed in Dhaka for nearly a month. She met Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, Foreign Minister M Moshed Khan, Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, and state ministers and secretaries of the three ministries.

She also had talks with representatives from some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and women rights organisations, and some victims of recent incidents of human rights violation.

Human rights abuse in one country has impact on others in this era of globalisation, she said. "Human rights are not the privilege of a few in the West but the birthright of all people, wherever they may be. Human rights give people their sense of dignity and worth, it empowers them to take control of their future, to hold their government accountable for the way in which they are treated."

She was very critical of the US-led forces' attack on innocent civilians in Afghanistan, and civilians being victims of the Palestine-Israel conflict and expressed concern at the planned attack on Iraq.

The AI chief said human rights are being violated across the globe on security ground, which is not acceptable. "There could be no national security without human security."

Irene listed the issue of security vs. human rights and socio-economic development of people as Amnesty's challenges for 2003.

The first woman, first Asian and first Muslim at the helm of the human rights watchdog, Irene Zubaida Khan has brought a new

## SC Bar wants

FROM PAGE 1

this ordinance as a parliamentary act. A special emergency general meeting of the Bar raised the demands.

Members of the bar association have urged all lawyers' associations across the country to move effectively to have the ordinance repealed.

The meeting expressed deep resentment over and grievance at the extra-judicial deaths of people and their torture. They demanded judicial investigation into all cases of murders and setting in motion of subsequent legal measures.

By giving immunity to the joint forces for their acts in the Operation Clean Heart, the government has shut the door of justice to people, which is totally against humanity and democracy, the observed.

Observing that the promulgation of the ordinance has trampled the constitution, Barrister Amirul Islam said, "While it is supposed that the disciplined force should have been deployed as per law, they were used rather as private force." None should be given immunity from law for their failure to protect a person in custody, he added.

Questioning the rationale behind the promulgation, Barrister Sigma Huda told the meeting that no-one can take the law in their hand and giving blanket amnesty to a person who has committed offence is

contrary to the law.

Former law minister Abdul Matin Khasru noted that the ordinance is ultra vires the basic structure of the constitution, which even the parliament or the Supreme Court cannot breach.

Later, the lawyers brought out a procession in the city protesting the indemnity ordinance.

Immediately after coming out of the High Court premises, the processionists locked in a scuffle with police who intercepted them as they were approaching towards the National Press Club at about 2:30pm.

However, the agitating lawyers made their way through the police to the press club and held a rally. President of the Supreme Court Bar Association Ozair Farooq addressed the briefly rally.

Meanwhile, various human rights organisations continued demanding immediate repeal of the ordinance as they said it is anti-human rights.

President and Director of Odkhar Dr Tasnim Siddiquy and Masud Alam Ragib said in a statement yesterday that the ordinance goes against the international human rights charter.

Moreover, Jatiya Ainjibi Samity and Progressive Students' Unity also demanded repeal of the ordinance.

## More vacancies

FROM PAGE 12 promoting at least 500 senior assistant secretaries to defuse the rankour.

The government is already facing legal battles over the recent promotions of deputy secretaries to the posts of joint secretary. Those not promoted filed separate writ petitions with the High Court Division.

They also feel uncertain as nobody seems to know what would be the criteria for future promotion or when the next promotion will be made, sources said.

Officials alleged that one of the assistant private secretaries (APS) of the prime minister, who exercises a great deal of influence on decision making, is dictating who is to be promoted and who is not.

They said most of the senior and junior officials are highly annoyed with the activities of the APS for his interference in administrative activities, particularly promotions, transfers and postings.

The officials said the APS is trying to get his own men promoted at the cost of deserving officials.

A senior bureaucrat, who preferred not to be named, said he has suggested the policymakers to

create more vacancies at the deputy secretary and joint secretary levels by promoting officials at the higher tier.

But, he said continued extensions of contractual appointments in key administrative posts are creating serious backlog in promotion.

Meanwhile, sources said a good number of senior assistant secretaries of different batches are preparing to take recourse to law should they be superseded by their juniors.

The government is also worried about a possible furore in the administration over the issue of promotion. Senior ministers have suggested to the prime minister to promote officials according to seniority until the examination system is introduced.

## Gas burners

FROM PAGE 1 gone down to zero.

The Titas MD said, "In the last one year, gas demand under the Titas system has increased dramatically. This year we are facing problems. But we hope the situation would not persist next year as a number of gas pipeline projects are underway."

## Reform police admn

FROM PAGE 12 rather encourage misuse of power from upper levels down to the bottom.

Communications Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda, who inaugurated the workshop, however, defended as an imperative the ordinance issued on January 9. "What else the government could do?" Increasing incidence of murder and violence necessitates deployment of army and the step helped tackle the situation, he said, admitting that "some losses" might have taken place in greater public interest.

Keynote speaker and executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh Manzoor Hasan said lack of institutional reform, severe confrontational politics, "criminalisation" of politics, deterioration of law and order and fatal haemorrhage due to exceptionally high levels of pervasive and endemic corruption hindered sustainable economic growth in Bangladesh in '80s and '90s.

These factors, he said, have given rise to fiscal deficit and pressure on foreign currency reserve, a drop in investment, a very high level of dissatisfaction of citizens in terms of service-delivery institutions, dysfunctional watchdog agencies and deterioration of financial institutions.

"So it seems that Bangladesh, despite its high potential and a reasonable track record, has come up against a mis-governance-brick-wall," Manzoor said. He felt the magnitude of loss would keep increasing unless the "brick-wall" is dismantled.

The TIB executive referred to diagnostic studies that revealed how unusual delay in granting permission from Prime Minister's Office (PMO) handicaps the Bureau of Anti-corruption (BAC) in dealing with administrative and political corruption cases. "The PMO has a maximum six-month time-limit to grant such permission, but obtaining such permission took four to nine years to carry out investigations of certain cases," he said, quoting a TIB survey.

Up to March 2001, the duration of cases filed with BAC and awaiting approval from the PMO ran between 1 and 6 years, he pointed out.

World Bank country chief Temple reminded the ruling BNP of its election manifesto that promised an independent commission, and hoped the government would act on its commitment.

Among other things, Temple

suggested speedy reforms in the police and judiciary, including separation of the judiciary from the executive.

While it is easy to blame the police, one should also remember that they are overworked, underpaid, vulnerable to reprisals from criminals, and enmeshed in a network of corruption of which they are just a part, the World Bank executive noted.

The donor agency's country chief observed that lack of punishment helps corruption flourish in Bangladesh. "I am confident corruption would be reduced in Bangladesh if known defaulters, corrupt politicians and businessmen and criminals were to be prosecuted successfully and incarcerated," he said.

He prescribed 10 remedies that also include introduction of information technology in governance to reduce discretionary powers of public servants and make transactions impersonal.

Temple hoped political leadership would have the courage to take steps for fulfilling aspirations of the people, who are preoccupied with poor governance, corruption and weak law and order.

The communications minister said the government was well aware of all the commitments it made as regards human rights commission, anti-corruption commission, separation of judiciary and so on. But the government should be given time, he said, promising to take some unpleasant steps in their first two years.

He however said he doubts if creation of a new institution like anti-corruption commission would bring results, taking the same set of people, when corruption persists even in anti-corruption organisations. "Would we then have to look for foreign consultant to chair it?" he quipped.

Laws are in plenty and if these are enforced, corruption can be curbed, he commented. Constitution guarantees independence of higher judiciary, even though separation of the judiciary has not yet been done, he told the function.

News Network Editor Shahiduzzaman moderated the inaugural session of the daylong workshop, where former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria and development economist Dr Quazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad were scheduled to speak in the closing session.

## AL: Scrap ordinance

FROM PAGE 1 bers and now Khaleda Zia is trying to indemnify herself from the responsibility of murder of 50 people in the name of Operation Clean Heart", it said.

The AL protested promulgation of the ordinance bypassing the parliament and expressed deep concern at the "denial of the right to justice" to 50 victims of custodial deaths and others who became lame or were harassed during the joint drive.

It blamed the ruling alliance for the law and order situation, created due to its cadres' post-polls violence and release of 45,000 identified criminals from jails.

The AL Presidium said, though the 87-day anti-crime drive brought some relief to the people, 50 deaths in army custody and physical and mental torture on thousands of people created a frightening situation in the country. It alleged that the ruling alliance used the army-led operation to oppress leaders and workers of Awami League and other opposition parties.

It said the prime minister on October 10 last year had claimed improvement in law and order. What happened within the next six days that she had to call in army on the night of October 16? The government did not explain under what law it deployed army in anti-crime operation, the resolution said.

In a separate resolution, AL alleged that the army was taken back to barracks hurriedly so that ruling alliance's criminals win the

upcoming Union Parishad polls by staffing false votes and capturing polling centres.

It noted that the Election Commission was forced to reschedule the polls to allow the government to continue the army drive. But when the Election Commission declared deployment of army to ensure fair polls, it was denied the constitutional authority and army was pulled back to barracks, it said.

The AL Presidium urged the people to make success its January 16 countrywide eight-hour hartal to protest price hike of fuel and other essentials.

Party sources said some more names for AL Advisory Council were proposed and discussed at the meeting. Names of 15 advisors will be announced soon, they said. AL so far announced names of 18 members of its Advisory Council.

## BGMEA polls

FROM PAGE 12

BGMEA source.

And if the election is deferred for a long time, the term of the existing leadership will expire, he added.

Two panels are contesting the election: the Sammilito Parishad Forum led by Kazi Moniruzzaman and Anisul Huq and the Oikya Jote led by Engineer FazlulAzim.

## India bounce back

FROM PAGE 1 Sharfaraz Rasool scoring after the break.

India, who tasted their first ever defeat (1-0) against bitter rivals Pakistan in the opening match of the eight-nation regional meet, made light work of an inexperienced Afghanistan team that has returned to international soccer after a long time. They led the first half 1-0.

Ashim Biswas, opened the Indian scoring tapping a Jo Paul Anchery back-header from close. It was the first international goal for the young striker, who made his international debut only in the previous match.

The 19-year-old forward from Kolkata then doubled the margin in the 63rd minute with an excellent headwork from a long throw from substitute Abhay Kumar.

Substituting Venkatesh in the 72nd minute, Alvito then struck twice within a space of eight minutes. The Mumbai midfielder gave a perfect finishing touch to an Ashim minus in the 77th minute with his lethal left foot. His left foot did the scoring once more when he blasted the ball home from the top of the box in the 85th minute.

Veteran striker IM Vijayan had a