

SOUTH ASIA

Page 4

Pakistan's Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf is faced with riddles that he cannot solve, writes M Abdul Hafiz

COMMENTS

Page 6

The proposed visit of the US president has aroused many hopes. One is that America will now become friendly with India and appreciate the problem of Kashmir, writes Kuldip Nayar

FOCUS

It is not beyond our means to make Bangladesh poverty-free, if we could achieve high equitable economic growth in an uninterrupted way for 10-15 years. Why then our national politics is moving towards self-annihilation, asks Wahiduddin Mahmud in an Open Letter to the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition

Page 7

Police refuse to accept case from Sumon's family

By Staff Correspondent

Police refused to take any case from relatives of Ahmed Hossain Sumon who was killed by DB police in the city Wednesday night.

Sumon, 23, was shot dead and his elder brother Shamim Hossain and niece Tuli, 10, were bullet-hit when two teams of DB police raided their house at Karimullah Bagh under Shyampur thana at about 3:30 am on Wednesday.

Local people brought out several processions through out the day yesterday and demanded trial of the killers of Sumon. A tense situation prevailed in the area till last night.

Most of the shops in the area also remained closed protesting the killing.

Sumon's relatives yesterday said that Shyampur police refused to take any case as DB had already registered a case in connection with the killing.

Police, however, accepted a petition from them and said that it would be attached with the FIR filed by DB after investigations.

The murder case filed by DB

Chronology of DB excesses

By Staff Correspondent

Ahmed Hossain Sumon, a 23-year old young man killed at his Karimullahbagh residence in Shyampur at about 3:30 a.m. on Wednesday is the Detective Branch's third victim in two years.

Shamim Reza Rubel and Jalal Ahmed Shafi were the two other victims.

Rubel, a BBA student, was tortured to death by men from the detective branch on July 23, 1998, while Shafi's battered corpse was found in the water tank on the roof of the branch's office in the city on March 25, 1999.

The branch's latest victim

ranges a number of question.

For example, why were the plainclothes officers who entered Sumon's residence accompanied by masked men?

Are they members of the special outfit that Sumon's neighbours and family said are well-known local hoodlums?

The calibre of bullets found at the scene suggest Detective Branch guns were used in the killing, including their trademark nine shooters used by one of their civilian collaborators during the hartial on January 25, 1999.

The attackers did not have a warrant to arrest Sumon or search his residence. They didn't bother to fill out the general diary at the local police station. The family said the victim

See page 11 col 7

said that Sumon died in a cross-fire between police and some local gangsters.

The DB also brought two charges against Sumon and his family, sources said. The charges are: assault on police and possession of illegal arms.

Normally police file a case when a dead body remains unclaimed. But in this incident, DB filed a case although the killing took place in front of family members, who even went to Shyampur thana on Wednesday to file a case. But the thana refused to accept any case saying that a case had already been filed by DB.

The DB police filed the case hurriedly giving no scope to Sumon's family to register a complaint, sources concerned alleged. As per Section 403 of CrPC, two cases can not be filed under the same Section regarding the same incident.

Soon after the killing, DB had claimed that Sumon died in a shootout while his family said he was shot dead by DB policemen.

The body of Sumon was

buried Wednesday night after autopsy at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, family sources said. The autopsy said that Sumon died of bullet injury, sources said.

When contacted yesterday, DMP Commissioner Matiur Rahman refused to make any comment regarding the incident. He rather asked, "Why don't you contact the DC of DB?"

Sumon's mother at a press conference in the city on Wednesday alleged that during the raid at their house, the DB men were accompanied by about 20 local people who were wearing masks, some of them armed.

She had also identified some of the local people as Abu, Zakkir, Iban, Hossain, Khakon, Mona, Ismail and Nurul Islam.

But none was arrested till writing this report last night.

Meanwhile, the condition of Sumon's elder brother was deteriorating at the DMCH, family sources said. Sumon's niece is also under treatment at the hospital.

Local people brought out several processions through out the day yesterday and demanded trial of the killers of Sumon. A tense situation prevailed in the area till last night.

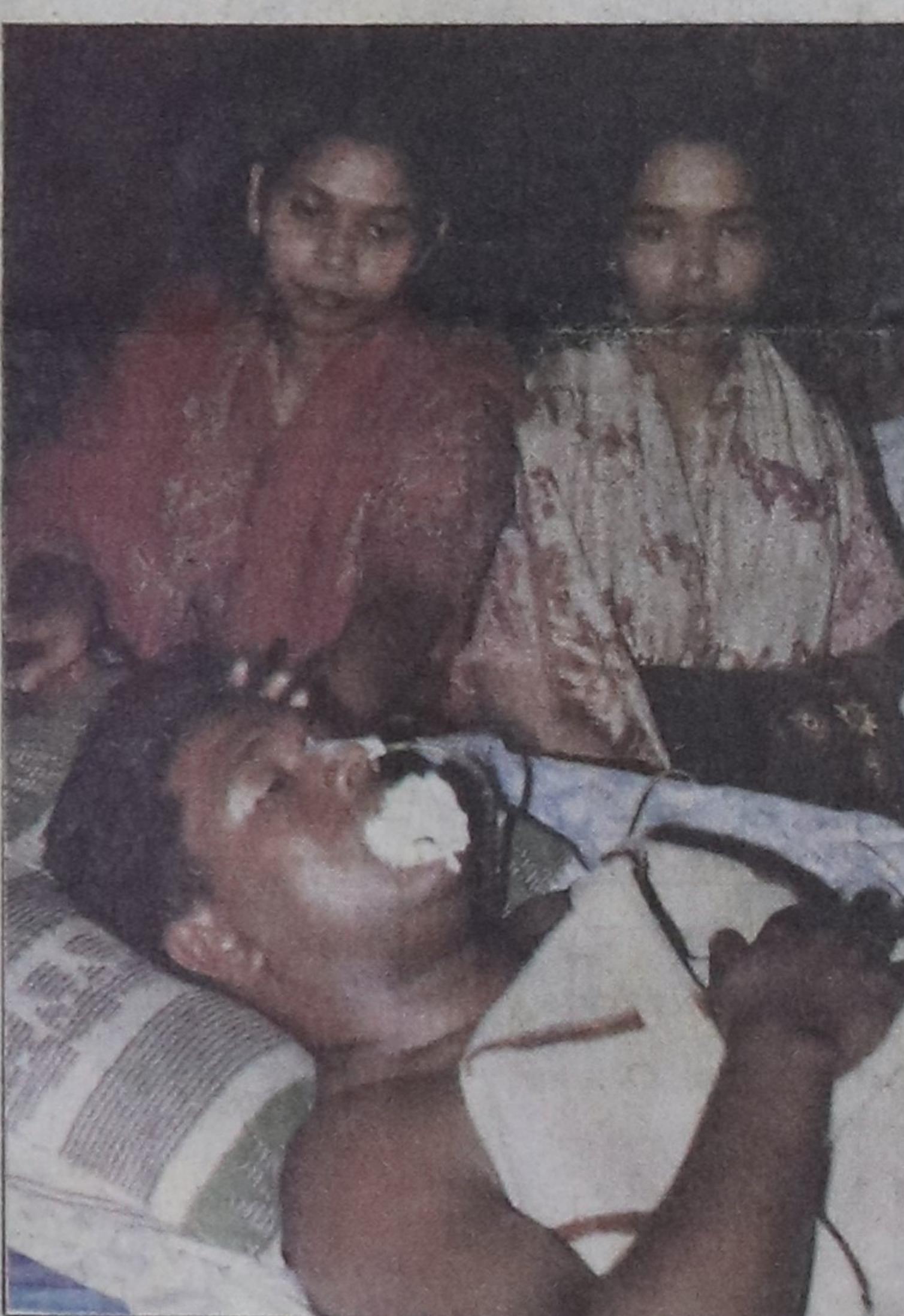
Most of the shops in the area also remained closed protesting the killing.

Sumon's relatives yesterday said that Shyampur police refused to take any case as DB had already registered a case in connection with the killing.

Police, however, accepted a petition from them and said that it would be attached with the FIR filed by DB after investigations.

The murder case filed by DB

See page 11 col 7



Duel with death
Sumon is dead while his brother struggles to stay alive at the DMCH. Star photo: A K M Mohsin

BCL's latest trick

Trees at SM Hall cut and sold to enrich leaders' coffers

By Staff Correspondent

Criminal activities on the Dhaka University campus aside, activists of ruling party-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) have allegedly started a new business.

As part of their latest way of collecting funds, the BCL activists have begun cutting trees of Salimullah Hall (SM Hall) of the university and selling them to timber traders in broad daylight.

Campus sources said that the BCL men at SM Hall had cut down and sold at least five big trees belonging to the hall during the last one month. Surprisingly, the authorities are unaware of the incidents.

The BCL activists cut down two trees early last month, but they began to cut trees one after another as there was nobody to interrupt them, alleged a number of residents of the hall.

The students said Sheikh Rezaul Islam Reza and Rashedul Bashir Dollar, the president and general secretary of Salimullah Hall unit of BCL, were

involved in the incident as they were seen instructing men to fell trees.

"They (Reza and Dollar) are cutting down the trees without any interruption and using the money gathered by selling these trees to meet their personal ends like cocktail parties," the students said.

They are having resort to such heinous acts right under the nose of the hall authorities, but no action has been taken against them so far, resident students pointed out, adding they were doing this with the help of a group of outsiders. These outsiders allegedly come and reside inside the hall quite again.

The act was a counter-action of BCL central leaders, who had launched a 15-day tree plantation programme on the university campus last year. Unlike DU authorities the BCL leaders were also found reluctant to take action against their fellow-party activists.

Reza, an MA student of International Relations, and Dollar, a student of Geography are alleged to be involved in various crimes on the campus, including snatching, kidnapping and eve-teasing.

Reza and Dollar, said to be the mastermind of various criminal offences on the campus, had begun their 'new business' as they were not being able

Prayer Timings

February 11

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:45	6:15
Juma	12:15	1:20
Asr	4:15	4:30
Magrib	6:00	6:05
Esha	7:15	7:45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Due to unavoidable circumstances, today's issue of The Daily Star has been truncated to 16 pages. With the Weekend Magazine, the price will be Tk 9.00. We regret the inconvenience to our valuable readers.

Notice

Due to unavoidable circumstances, today's issue of The Daily Star has been truncated to 16 pages. With the Weekend Magazine, the price will be Tk 9.00. We regret the inconvenience to our valuable readers.

Wishing the
BEST for the
3rd Millennium



A river bleeds

Chemical wastes from several textile and garment industries in Savar flows freely into the Dhaleswari, killing the river slowly but surely. The Department of Environment (DoE) still struggles to enforce the laws. Star photo: Sk Enamul Haq

Dhaleswari dying

By Shehab Ahmed

The Department of Environment (DoE), the environmental watchdog, is finding it difficult to enforce laws for protecting the environment due to shortage of manpower and support from other government departments.

The DoE has served final notices to more than a dozen industries in Savar area on charges of directly releasing chemicals and dyes into the Dhaleswari river, but these notices appear to have been ignored.

The industries, mainly textiles and garments-cum-dyeing factories, sprang up in this area without setting up of waste treatment units during the past decade.

A portion of the Dhaleswari has become 'septic', with incessant flow of chemicals and dyes and its water has assumed the colour of dark red wine, completely wiping out aquatic life, including fish, over a large area.

It has even affected fishermen and farmers who use the river water for tending their fields in the area.

It was after The Daily Star focused on the situation through an investigative report late last year that the DoE served notices to the factories to stop discharging wastes before treating them.

But these notices went largely unheeded. While some

See page 11 col 7

JS body raises controversy

Rahman's case may encourage loan defaulters, critics say

By Inam Ahmed and M Shamsur Rahman

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance and the ministry are on a collision course over a meeting last month about Fazlur Rahman, a top loan defaulter.

The standing committee held a meeting on January 23 to deal with a petition filed by Rahman. He wanted to know why he was denied loans and other facilities.

S.A.M.S. Kibria, the finance minister, sent a letter to the standing committee's chairman that stated the committee didn't have the power to address Rahman's case without a parliamentary referral.

I have discussed the legal aspects of the issue that was discussed on January 23, 2000, with the attorney general. After going through the Constitution and the parliamentary rules of procedure, he told me the committee didn't have the power to consider the applicant's case.

The committee could only discuss or investigate the issue if the matter was referred to the committee by Parliament. The attorney general is going

through the relevant articles of the constitution. I am also going through the article 76 of the Constitution that states the committee could only discuss such issues if the parliament refers it.

The committee has asked Kibria to meet with it on Sunday to discuss the contents of the letter.

This isn't the first time the standing committee has become embroiled in controversy. Legal and banking experts feel loan defaulters are using it to intimidate financial institutions into giving them loans.

The name of a big defaulter group has come up in this connection which is alleged to be lobbying the Rahman group's cause in the committee.

Experts said the meeting about Rahman was extremely unusual, since it addressed the case of one single defaulter.

The committee's recommendations also surprised banking circles. They felt the recommendations put pressure on the Bangladesh Bank to violate the Banking Company Act.

The committee said Sonali Bank would ask the Bangladesh Bank to reconsider its decision about the Rahman Group. The committee said Sonali would also ask the Bangladesh Bank to give the Rahman group more loans and other special deals, such as loan rescheduling, interest waivers and extension of loan limits.

The Bangladesh Bank would then reconsider its decision on Fazlur Rahman.

These recommendations are tantamount to asking the Bangladesh Bank to violate the law, which clearly states that no loan can be rescheduled without a 10 per cent down payment. The group failed to make such a payment with the stipulated time.

Experts said that if this process of taking shelter of the parliamentary standing committee continues, the banking laws passed by the parliament would be useless and reform of the banking sector would be stalled.

This is a test case for defaulter bankers said. If Sonali Bank and the Bangladesh Bank

are forced to give fresh loans to Rahman Group, the defaulters will take it as precedence and apply it to bend laws.

In addition, a Bangladesh Bank investigation revealed the Rahman Group loans from the Sonali Bank were extremely irregular.

Rahman group owed Sonali Bank Tk 129.80 crore in outstanding loans as of June 30, 1999, of which Tk 46.16 crore loans were classified as bad.

Rahman also failed to pay a ten per cent down payment by January 31, 2000.

Sonali Bank, as part of its preparation to file case against the defaulter, served a final notice to Rahman to make a ten per cent rescheduling payment by January 22.

MP Ali Ashraf, the head of the committee, said he hasn't flouted any rules since the letter convening the January 23 meeting was sent by the parliamentary secretariat.

Had it been without any lawful basis, the secretariat would not have sent it, he said.

PSA not a Money Bill

Jurists' memo to President

In a memorandum to the President, country's eminent jurists contend that the Public Safety Act did not fall within the definition of money bill given in Article 81 of the Constitution, reports UNB.

Syed Iftaque Ahmed and Dr Kamal Hossain made the observations while submitting the memorandum to President Shahabuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday.

It (memorandum) was signed by the former Advisor of caretaker government, Barrister Iftaque Ahmed, former Foreign Minister Dr Kamal Hossain and president of the Supreme Court Bar Association Barrister M Saifque Ahmed.

The President had better refer the matter to