

Two set themselves on fire to protest Taiwan N-plant

AFP, Taipei

Two men were in hospital yesterday after setting themselves on fire to protest a nuclear power plant project that is to be debated by Taiwan's parliament today.

One of the men, identified as 50-year-old Huang Ting-fang, unexpectedly doused petrol on himself Monday outside the parliament building and set himself alight, police said.

"Around 02:30 pm (1230 BST) the man dashed toward the protest group and set himself on fire," police bureau chief Wei Ti-kun told reporters.

Wei said it was not clear what prompted the horrific act, but added Huang had distributed a five-page will outlining his strong opposition to the project by the state-run Taiwan

Power Company's (Taipower) to build a fourth nuclear power plant.

Huang was in stable condition after he was rushed to a nearby hospital for emergency treatment, but the event shocked dozens of environmental activists staging a 30-hour sit-in outside the Legislative Yuan, Taiwan's parliament.

"I don't know why this happened," said Cheng Hsien-you, professor of Chinese Culture University, and leader of the protest group, adding he opposed such violence which blurred the focus of the protest.

Separately, 21-year-old Li Wen-ta also set fire to himself in southern Taiwan on Sunday to protest the nuclear plant, state television said.

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PHOTO: STAR

Shikkhak Karmachari Oikya Jote formed a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday in support of their nine-point demand.

Magurchhara case

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the investigation report on the blow-out and the Production Sharing Contract (PSC) with Occidental, a US oil company responsible for the explosion.

But officials, showing various reasons, submit no documents to the committee, they alleged.

In its last meeting, the sub-committee was surprised to see a note from Energy and Mineral Resources Secretary Akmal Hossain that the Prime Minister had suggested not to bring Unocal (previously Occidental) officials before the committee.

Petrobangla was asked to bring the oil company officials before the committee for recording their statement regarding compensation. But, they were not brought to the committee meeting.

Another member of the committee termed activities of Petrobangla and the ministry as "fishy". "Most of the officials in the ministry and the Petrobangla might have been linked with the wrongdoing of the US oil company," he said.

Earlier, Unocal puzzled the sub-committee members as well as Petrobangla by claiming in an official document in early October that the company paid Tk 332.32 crore to different authorities follow-

ing the Magurchhara blow-out.

This followed arguments between Unocal and Petrobangla.

The sub-committee observed that it was still not clear about the actual situation.

Occidental's PSC for blocks 13 and 14 expired on January 10, 1998 due to its failure to fulfil the minimum work it had committed, which included drilling of one exploratory well. The Supplemental Agreement was signed with an understanding that Occidental would gradually pay compensation to all.

One of the investigators of Magurchhara blow-out told a sub-committee meeting in November that the disaster happened due to negligence of Occidental.

The committee repeatedly asked energy ministry officials to submit the probe report on the blow-out, which is still missing after its preparation in June 1997.

The parliamentary committee also expressed dissatisfaction over activities of the ministry and the Petrobangla, saying that after three years of the incident, government officials could not find the cause and get compensation. Rather, the company was "rewarded", it had said.

Bombs hurled on policemen: One killed

UNB Rajbari

Armed miscreants hurled bombs at a police patrol team on Gualanda-Faridpur road in Mukbulpur area yesterday, leaving a constable killed and two others injured.

A group of about 25 attacked the policemen in an attempt to snatch their arms, leaving three critically injured.

The injured policemen were rushed to the local upazila health complex, where Nurul Islam succumbed to his injuries.

The dog story

FROM PAGE 1

dogs in the city. But the Chief Health Officer claimed that at times more than 100 dogs were killed a day.

Asrat Uddin said every time DCC's two-man team with a vehicle goes out on such a drive, two 'professional dogcatchers' are hired. They are paid Tk 15 for catching a dog with 'tongs'. When a dog is caught, it is killed with a lethal injection—potassium sulphide—pushed by DCC's veterinary doctor.

In 1998, DCC had bought 2,000 potassium cyanide tablets for killing dogs but use of those on streets was found too dangerous and the practice was stopped.

"We cannot ensure a steady drive due to lack of manpower," said Ashraf Uddin.

Asked how they keep an estimate of the dogs killed, he said the veterinary doctor has to certify the number before payment is made to the dogcatchers. DCC has only one such doctor for the last 10 years.

Seven shops gutted in Manikganj

UNB, Manikganj

A devastating fire gutted 7 wholesale shops and three poultry farms at Ghoraihat in Ghoraihat on Sunday morning.

Police and witnesses said the fire was originated from a wholesale shop of Motilal Chowhan. The extent of damage was estimated at Tk 20 lakh.

Local people extinguished the flame after one and half hours of frantic efforts as the fire fighters reached the spot after two hours of the incident.

The fire fighters, however, said that they were late due to the thick fog that besieged the road.

The victim shop owners Ranjit Chowhan, Ashim Datta, Khandaker Delwar Hossain, Baten and Shahidul Islam said over 500 chickens of poultry farms were charred.

Editor's Letter to the Readers

FROM PAGE 1

forward urgent development priorities.

Ours was ten years of journalism of passion. Our readers call us "The paper with a conscience", and we are proud to say that our conscience lies with the poor, the disadvantaged and the oppressed. Our hearts went out to the victims of acid throwing, of fatwa against women, and to the victims of exploitation. We said what we felt, and tried to feel what concerned the people. We never shied away from taking strong positions on issues of national importance and vigorously raised our voice against corruption, abuse of power and partisanship. We wrote as much from dispassionate analysis of facts as from heart-felt reaction to events.

Ours was ten years of professionalism and ethical journalism. We will never claim that we did not go wrong but we will certainly claim that there was never any malice or prejudice in what we wrote. It was an article of faith with us never to denigrate or defame a person or an institution and whatever negative was written was fully backed by hard proof, cross-checked from multiple sources. It was our habit to err on the side of caution even at the expense of missing a news. We never chose expediency over hard work and our stories always contained a constructive thread even in the gloomiest of circumstances.

And finally, ours was journalism in pursuit of a dream the dream of being a global partner with dignity. We constantly underscored the need for self-respect to replace the habit of self-denigration on the one side and self-praise on the other. The absence of work ethics in the government and proliferation of corruption in every aspect of our life vitiated the growth of a strong national character that historically formed the core of a nation's growth. A people that waged a Liberation War to gain independence found itself in the grip of criminalised politics and self-serving bureaucracy that destroyed our self-confidence and crushed our hope for the future. However none of this could lessen our enthusiastic dream for a future Bangladesh of strengthened democracy, miracle performing farmers, stunning IT sector and steady economic growth.

Dear Readers, on this auspicious occasion of our 10th Anniversary we conclude by expressing our most sincere gratitude and our deepest respect to you but for whose continued support and ever expanding base *The Daily Star* could not have served you as it did. We pledge our sincere efforts to serve you even better in the coming years. As our first step we begin by presenting you with a completely new format and layout from today's issue. We promise to come before you with some more interesting changes geared to serving you better. Please let us know how you like our new look and what other changes you would like to see. Once again, please accept our grateful thanks for your generous support. We are humbled by your confidence in us.

For our future plans please see Editorial

Our story will not be completed if we do not add that ours was also ten years of journalism that had its share of mistakes, flaws, distortions, oversights and downright sloppy work. There were important stories that were missed, significant developments that were not followed up and fundamental issues not hammered strongly enough. But throughout it all we continued to learn. We spared no effort to serve our readers better and with each mistake our effort was redoubled and our determination recharged to make *The Daily Star* a better newspaper. Our learning shall never end. But we are pledge bound that our shortcomings will.

We take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to our Board of Directors. Their total commitment to editorial freedom and deep respect for the profession of journalism has made *The Daily Star* a journalist's dream paper to work for. At the same time their strict adherence to the highest standards of financial accountability and managerial discipline made this paper economically viable at the shortest possible time.

Sources believe that an amicable

settlement of the dispute as per the maritime border agreement signed between the two countries in 1966 and renewed in 1980 would defuse the tension.

Clause 5 of the agreement on the Naf river says, "The contracting

parties agree that neither party shall conduct river training, river training work or utilise the flow of the Naf river or its waters on its own side of the international boundary for industrial purpose, drainage, water conservancy, irrigation, generation of hydroelectric power and the like to such an extent as to prejudice the interest of the other party."

Bangladesh Rifles and Nasaka, Myanmar's border forces, traded fire for several hours on January 8 as the latter tried to proceed with construction of an embankment on their side of the Naf.

Although work on the embankment remains abandoned ever since, tension has intensified in the area following massing of nearly 20,000 Myanmar troops close to Bangladesh's south-eastern border.

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