

## 3 to die for harrying Trisha to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Three persons have been sentenced to death by a court in Gaibandha for harrying 10-year old Sadia Sultana Trisha to death.

Mehedi Hasan Modern, Mohammed Shaheen and Ariful Islam Asha, all in their early 20s, broke down in tears in the dock as District and Sessions Judge, AKM Anwar Hossain pronounced the verdict at 10:45am in a crowded courtroom.

A large number of policemen were deployed in and around the court premises to ward off any trouble.

The judge granted the convicts seven days' time to appeal against the verdict before a higher court.

The youngsters used to tease



Sadia Sultana Trisha

Trisha, a student of class four, when she would go to and come

back from school. In the afternoon of July 17, 2002, they chased Trisha, daughter of Abdus Sattar of V-aid road in Gaibandha town, on her way back home from school. She ran for safety and ended up being on the bank of a pond. Running out of options, the hapless girl jumped into the water and drowned.

Local people later caught the three and turned them over to police. Later, her body was recovered from the pond.

A case was filed with the Gaibandha Police Station. Widespread protests followed in Gaibandha and elsewhere in the country and the people demanded punishment to the culprits.

Police pressed charges against

the three youngsters under section 302/34 of the Bangladesh Penal Code. During the trial, the court accepted statements of 26 prosecution witnesses out of a total of 31. And, the hearing on the case ended on September 17.

Trisha's father Abdus Sattar and mother Alema Begum were told The Daily Star that they were happy at the verdict.

Public Prosecutor Jahangir Alam Jinnah said that the Trisha murder case is an instance of fair justice. However, Defence Lawyer Serajul Islam Babu said the accused have been deprived of fair justice. "We will appeal against the verdict in the higher court," he added.

## Death in the paws

### Bears kill zookeeper at Mirpur zoo



PHOTO: AFP

One of the two black bears chews on the shirt of Ismail Howladar after killing the zookeeper at the National Zoo at Mirpur in the city yesterday.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two black bears killed a zookeeper of the National Zoo at Mirpur in the city yesterday.

The bears attacked Ismail Hossain Howladar, when the 45-year old went inside the cage to give them food. He was dragged to the water tank and mauled to death.

"This is the first time in the zoo's history that a zookeeper was killed by an animal," AKM Omar Faruq, curator of the zoo, said.

"Ismail was friendly with the bears and regularly fed them. Maybe, he was careless. We are trying to find out what happened."

At about 2:30pm, Ismail went inside shade No. 35 to feed the bears. He did not take any safety measures.

Usually, the animals are confined when a zookeeper goes inside a cage to give them food.

However, Ismail may have felt no need to take the precaution as he had been working in the zoo for six years and giving the bears food daily, senior officials said.

Just a few days back, he was filmed with the bears for a Bangladesh Television programme. "They are my friends," he had told the programme.

As Ismail inside the cage, the bears turned wild and attacked him. He tried

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## SHADY, SHODDY DEALS

This is the last part of an expose of how Al-Baraka Bank Limited has been put in serious financial difficulties because of mismanagement and curious credit policy.

## Who owns the bank now?

INAM AHMED and SHAHRIAR KARIM

When some 'foreign investors' bought out majority shares of Al-Baraka Bank Limited early this year, it raised a few questions. Why would someone buy a chronically ill financial institution with negative net worth, Tk 324.60 crore in classified loans and an accumulated loss of Tk 86.37 crore as of December 31 last year.

The Jeddah-based Al-Baraka Investment and Development Company and local Amanullah Group, former owner of Pepsi franchise, had major stakes, 34.67 and 40.46 per cent respectively, when Al-Baraka Bank was launched in 1987. The government held 5.78, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) 5.78, public shareholders 7.85 and others 5.46 per cent.

In January this year, some Hong Kong-based investors bought out the shares held by Al-Baraka Investment and Development Company. The Bangladesh Bank was not informed of the share transfers.

Al-Baraka Bank has recently applied to the central bank for change of name. It wants to be renamed Oriental Bank.

The bank management claims that Al-Baraka Investment and Development Company has objected to use of its name and logo. "As per its resolution, no company can use the logo where it does not have 51 per cent share," a top Al-Baraka Bank official told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity.

The question, however, is why a foreign investor put his money in a bank, which, as of June this year, was saddled with Tk 324.60 crore in

classified loans out of a total loan portfolio of Tk 997.21 crore.

With the bulk of its loan unsecured, the bank now faces a provision shortfall of Tk 216.94 crore. As of June 30 this year, its provision requirement was Tk 224.20 crore, of which only Tk 7.26 crore was covered.

Allegations have it that a local businessman, who owes the bank crores in defaulted loans and has total control over its policymaking board, is behind the deal.

Immediate-past managing director of Al-Baraka Bank AHM Shawkat Ali Chowdhury says he has also heard the rumour. "I cannot comment on this. It is beyond my knowledge. If anybody in disguise do anything it is beyond our jurisdiction."

The bank's chairman, Masum

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## Shaheed Minar rule Battle line drawn

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tension is running high as the Bikkhubda Nagorik Samaj (BNS) is firm to hold its planned rally at the Central Shaheed Minar today without taking permission from Dhaka University authorities.

Fuelling the stand-off, Jatayatbadi Samajik Sangskritik Sangstha (JASAS), a cultural front of ruling BNP began its three-day programme there yesterday afternoon with permission from the DU authorities. JASAS is celebrating

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## Trophy shared as rain ruins final

REUTERS, Colombo

India and Sri Lanka won their maiden titles as joint winners of the ICC Champions Trophy after rain had washed out their replayed final.

The all-Asian clash in the prestigious 12-team event looked set for an exciting finish before steady drizzle, followed by thunder and lightning, forced play to be halted and later called off.

India, losing finalists in Nairobi two years ago, and Sri Lanka shared the trophy and a winners purse of 300,000 dollars.

The match had been forced into Monday's reserve day after Sunday's final was abandoned because of rain.

The anti-climax at the end of the 18-day tournament left a sell-out home crowd and millions of Indian fans disappointed and debating what might have been in the clash of familiar rivals.

India were 38 for one in 8.4 overs chasing a modest but challenging target of 223 when players were forced off the field in the day-night game at the Premadasa stadium.

Opener Virender Sehwag had hit 25 from 22 balls, including a stunning six

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PHOTO: AFP

Sri Lankan captain Sanath Jayasuriya (L) and his Indian counterpart Sourav Ganguly hold the ICC Champions Trophy during the presentation ceremony yesterday.

## Arsenic project lives on despite govt-WB rift

NAIMUL HAQ

The government has decided to continue with the Bangladesh Arsenic Mitigation Water Supply Project (BAMWSP), which expired yesterday, by injecting Tk 32 crore from the public exchequer.

The Tk 189 crore project has so far failed to meet most of its targets as millions of arsenic-affected people continue to suffer.

The government refused to give in to the pressure by the World Bank (WB) to retain the project director it replaced a week ago.

A WB high official indicated that the four-year project would not continue. However, the bank took

no decision in this regard till filing of this report at 10:45pm.

A meeting was supposed to be held between the WB and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development yesterday. However, it fell through as the state minister for local government and rural development ministry declined to meet the WB officials.

The project, launched in February 1998 and jointly financed by the government, Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) and the WB, aimed to find and provide alternative sources of safe drinking water in the face of naturally occurring arsenic contamination.

"The bank officials expressed reluctance in financing the project any longer as it did not produce expected output. In four years the project utilised \$6.74 million which is 21 per cent of the total money for mitigation activities which virtually did not reach the target people."

"Besides, the pace of the work was too slow and our development partners were not happy with the progress," said a WB official, requesting anonymity.

Earlier, last month the government had urged the World Bank to extend the project till June 2003. But the bank agreed to extend it up to March.

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## More reforms sans safety net untenable

### Saifur tells WB meeting

UNB, Dhaka

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman has cautioned donors that further reforms in Bangladesh "may not be socially acceptable" unless additional resources can be mobilised for safety net, investment on physical infrastructure and human resource development.

He sounded the caution at a meeting of the Board of Governors of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington on Sunday as some major reforms in recent times proved painful due to lack of adequate safety net and retraining and re-employment facilities.

The Bangladesh finance minister also urged the rich countries to unilaterally come forward with pro-trade policies by removing non-trade barriers, including unrealistic labour standards tagged with exports from the developing nations, for equitable sharing of the benefits of globalisation.

"Low-income countries should be allowed duty-free and quota-free market access in industrial countries," he told the Board of Governors of the two multilateral donor agencies -- the World Bank and the IMF.

Saifur Rahman said globalisation must be embedded in democratic institutions both nationally and globally and further democ-

ratiation of multilateral financial institutions should be explored.

About the declining trend in the flow of resources to developing countries, he said the past practice of aid allocation must be reviewed and more resources must flow to countries where most of the poor live in order to implement the Millennium Development Goal.

Pointing to the post-September 11 global economy, Saifur said the world economic recovery "is likely to be weak, vulnerable to shocks and confined to a few countries".

He noted that oil prices are displaying disturbing upward trend and the terms of trade for developing countries like Bangladesh signifi-

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