

Killed for a meter

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An electrician was beaten to death in front of his seven-year-old son in Khilgaon yesterday for failing to buy neighbours an electric meter.

When Golam Mostafa, 35, lay dead, his killers hung him with a rope to make his death appear a case of suicide.

Police arrested three neighbours Zahirul Islam, Mojibur Rahman and his wife Farzana for the murder.

The victim's brother, Monir Hossain, told The Daily Star that Rashed, a youth living next door, called Mostafa from his house at East Nandipara at 1:00am yesterday and took him to one Mojibur's house nearby. Mostafa's seven-year-old son Russell followed his father to what was to become his untimely death.

When he arrived to the house, assailants accosted Mostafa and bound with ropes, then started beating him with sticks. As Russell watched in horror, the assailants ordered him to call his mother.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

CATTLE BONE EXPORT

Tk 25cr lost a year to bureaucratic sloth

ASHIQUIR RAHMAN

A yearly earning of at least Tk 25 crore from exporting cattle bones and horns has been stalled since 2001, with the finance ministry putting off payment of only 15,000 euros to get a certificate clearing Bangladesh's name as a mad cow disease-infected country.

"Bangladesh was wrongly put on an international list of mad cow disease-prone countries back in 2001," said Dhaka Bone and Fertiliser Industry Managing Director Ajabbar Khan.

Ever since the mad cow disease scare shook the world, the Tk 25 crore annual earning from exporting cattle bones and horns virtually stopped, although there has been no report of spotting this disease in

Bangladesh.

According to the Export Promotion Bureau, earning from cattle bone export was only Tk 55 lakh in fiscal year 2003-04, which explains why the 10 bone-processing plants in the country are virtually idle now.

Exporters said if the government had taken an active interest, this unconventional export item would continue to earn the substantial amount of foreign exchange.

But the government appears not to take the issue seriously enough, while other South Asian countries promptly wiped off their names from the list, Khan mentioned.

He said, "In the wake of continued pressure from exporters, the government in 2003 asked the Brussels-based World Organisation

for Animal Health (OIE) to certify whether Bangladesh has the disease or not."

In response, the OIE requested Bangladesh to pay up about 10,500 euros in dues to maintain its OIE membership and another 4,500 euros as the fee for the certification. "But", Khan regretted, "the finance ministry is yet to grant this amount."

To end the standstill, bone exporters even offered to pay the OIE money on its behalf, but the government did not permit them, Khan told The Daily Star.

Importing countries use the bones and horns as raw materials for bone grit, bone meal etc used to produce medicine, fertiliser, cosmetics, poultry feed and baby food, besides many other things.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6



PHOTO: STAR

Bomb scare makes even the thin audience gathered at the National Poetry Festival yesterday to prefer standing to sitting on chairs, believing it would lessen the chances of getting hit in case of a bomb blast.

LANGUAGE MOVEMENT

Unesco website yet to add background

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

Although the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) declared February 21 as International Mother Language Day (IMLD) in recognition of 1952's Language Movement, it has yet to officially record the movement's historical background on its website.

Unesco's General Conference proclaimed February 21 as IMLD in November 1999, and it was celebrated for the first time across the globe in 2000.

Wolfgang Vollmann, the Director and Unesco Representative in Bangladesh, told The Daily Star that the background of February 21 could be placed as an example of a nation's sacrifice for their mother language.

"But the offer should come from the government of Bangladesh," he added.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Space for liberal thoughts shrinking in Bangladesh

Says Amnesty chief on rise of fundamentalism in South Asia

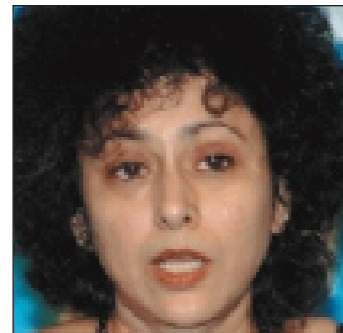
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, New Delhi

A wave of fundamentalism is sweeping the world, endangering fundamental rights and civil liberties, says Irene Khan, the chief of the rights watchdog Amnesty International.

"There is the Christian right in the US, there is Muslim fundamentalism in Pakistan and Bangladesh, and there is Hindu fundamentalism in India," Irene told IANS here in an exclusive interview.

"The space for liberal thought is being squeezed in Bangladesh. The rise of fundamentalism is very dangerous for civil society and for women," Irene added.

Irene, a Bangladeshi national who became the first Asian, the first woman and the first Muslim to head the human rights body in August



Irene Khan

2001, was here after a visit to Nepal where she assessed the situation after the royal coup.

Although she was appointed to the job earlier, she took charge of her new assignment as Amnesty chief in London one day after the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Man, nephew die in police action

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A middle-aged man and his nephew, both with long criminal records, were killed in an 'encounter' with police in Keraniganj yesterday.

Families of Habibur Rahman, alias Lengra Habib, 57, and his nephew Rana, 27, claimed, however, that the police killed the two in a premeditated attack over a long-standing conflict with a local lawmaker.

Keraniganj police arrested Habib, his son Bappi and his nephew Rana from the Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge at Postogola at 3:00pm on Friday, as the three were en route to a wedding ceremony at Hasnabad Community Centre.

"While arresting him (Habib), police slapped his wife, took away three mobile phones and gold ornaments weighing over 15 tolas that they were taking to present as a gift to the new couple," said a rela-

tive who witnessed the arrest. According to Keraniganj police, Habib was the commander of a criminal gang and had 11 cases filed against him, most of them for murder. Rana, one of Habib's top cadres, had 15 cases filed against him for various charges.

Following an interrogation at the police station, police raided Habib's village of Doleshwar hoping to net his accomplices, and recovered several deadly weapons, police said. Police then took Habib and Rana to Habib's fish enclosure in South Khetpar village at 2:15am, where unknown assailants opened fire on them, prompting them to retaliate, according to police.

Habib was shot three times while Rana sustained four bullet wounds in the head and chest. Both died on the spot.

After the operation, police left

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Dhaka deemed a role model of liberal democracy

Reaz tells on return from US

UNB, Dhaka

The US administration considers Bangladesh as an important partner and a role model of liberal democracy in a moderate Muslim nation, foreign ministry's Advisor Reaz Rahman said yesterday on his return from the United States.

Talking to reporters at his office on the outcome of his meetings with US Assistant Secretary for South Asian Affairs Christina Rocca and Under Secretary for Political Affairs Marc Grossman in Washington, Reaz said he apprised them of the Bangladesh government's positions on issues like terrorism, grenade attacks, extremism and corruption.

Reaz told them that there is no religious radicalism in Bangladesh, where people of all faiths have for

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

AL protests attacks, price hike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) leaders at a rally in the capital yesterday accused the alliance government of infringing on the most basic rights of people.

They said the government by 'allowing a price hike of essentials as well as bomb and grenade attacks' is 'pushing the people's lives towards great uncertainty'.

AL City unit organised the rally to protest the price hike of essentials and to demand neutral investigations into all the bomb and grenade attacks.

"The police under the instructions of the tyrant government are oppressing the AL leaders and activists attending the rallies. It seems as if we don't even have the right to protest the lawlessness," said AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil.

He called on the countrymen to unite in opposition to the government and force it to step down.

AL Presidium Member Tofail Ahmed said the religious extremists are gaining ground in the northern districts right under the nose of the government.

He described the seizure of books from the residence of former information minister Abu Sayeed as a gross violation of human rights.

AL Presidium Member Amir Hossain Amu speaking as the chief guest said, "No neutral probe is possible under this despotic government."

"Baton-charges and attacks won't succeed in desisting us from hartals," he said urging all to gear up for the 'oust-government movement'.

AL City Unit President Mohammad Hanif said people in thousands would take to the city streets on the occasion of AL's March 2 rally in the Palltan Maidan.

AL leaders Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

4 highway robbers 'lynched'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A mob lynched four highway robbers in Tarapur in Puthia upazila Friday night, according to police.

The robbers are Dulal, 35, and Sumon, 20, of Madaripur, Zakir, 20, of Gopalganj and Azizul, 19, of Khulna. Dulal gave identity of himself and other robbers before he succumbed to his injuries at Puthia hospital.

Doctors said two robbers bore the marks of hanging around their necks and their legs were also tied.

Residents of Tarapur, however, said three robbers died one and a

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

Ashura today

UNB, Dhaka

The holy Ashura, commemorating the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hossain (R), grandson of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM), will be observed today with due religious solemnity.

On the 10th Muharram in 61 Hijri year, Hazrat Imam Hossain (RA), along with his family members and companions, embraced martyrdom at the hands of Yazid's forces in the desert of Karbala to uphold the cause of Islam and the teachings of the prophet.

The day is a public holiday. Special prayers will be offered on

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Prayer Timing		
February 20		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-20	5-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-03	6-07
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation