



The 2nd half of the 16th century, Catholics were prominent in Hosehepur in Mymensingh and Sripur near Sonargaon. Among the churches erected by the Augustinians were at Nagori (1675) and Tejgaon (1677). In 1834, the Vicariate Apostolic was created under the jurisdiction of the Sacred Congregation for Propoganda Fide. In 1850 it was divided to the Vicariates Apostolic of Eastern and Western Bengal. Western Bengal's headquarters were in Dhaka.

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Repression on domestic workers on alarming rise

NOVERA DEEPTA

A patrol team of police last Sunday midnight found a lost girl, crying alone on the street at Fatullah. The girl, a runaway domestic help, could only tell her name -- she couldn't tell her home address or the place where she used to work. The 12-year-old girl, Shathi (not her real name), can remember all the horrors she underwent at her employer's house, where her grandfather brought her as a domestic help a month ago. The employer's wife hardly showed any sympathy to Shathi and used to beat her up almost every day. Unable to bear the torture any more, the little girl left the house for Mymensingh thinking she can manage to return home by herself. But she lost her way. After she wandered around for two days in the streets of

Dhaka, the police found her and took her to the shelter home of Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), a human rights and legal aid protection organisation. "This is not an unusual case in this city. Torture of domestic workers, especially children is now such a common and frequent incident that newspaper readers do not even read these news any more," said Gita Chakrobarty of ASK. The statistical report on violence against child domestic workers compiled by ASK proves her statement to be true. The number of such incidents is rising alarmingly. According to the ASK report, 80 reports on violence against child domestic workers were published in newspapers in 2003 and the number rose to 87 in 2004. And this year, a staggering number of 165 cases were reported until November 15.

The incidents take place mostly in the capital city. "The victims survive if they are taken to any shelter home run by an NGO, but if their destiny is any of the government vagrant homes, they would remain there for years almost like prisoners," said Ila Chanda of ASK. "We kept Shathi at our shelter home for a few days. She is already left for home with her father," she added. ASK has a programme to help the missing or tortured children return home or take shelter in safe custody. The report also shows that the number of cases filed is fewer than the actual number of incidents. The cases of physical torture filed with different police stations have increased in last two years. The number of cases was 46 in 2003, 68 in 2004 and 99 in 2005. Ila Chanda explained: "The main reasons behind the fewer

number of cases filed comparing to the actual number of incidents, are threats from the employers, insecurity of the victims and their family, and political influences." She also pointed out that because of the high tolerance level and ignorance of law, the parents of the torture victims sometimes discourage the human rights activists to take any move against the crime. "The parents have taken it for granted that the employers can beat up the child workers as their guardians," Ila Chanda observed. There is no specific law for protecting the child domestic workers in the country, but Bangladesh is one of the first countries to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) that assures protection of such children's rights. Ila Chanda said the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000 assures

STATISTICAL REPORT ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILD DOMESTIC WORKERS DOCUMENTATION UNIT, AIN O SALISH KENDRA

| JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2003 | | | | | | |
|--|-----|------|-------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Age/Nature of torture | 0-6 | 7-12 | 13-18 | Age not mentioned | Grand total | Cases filed |
| Physical torture | - | 14 | 07 | 05 | 26 | 09 |
| Raped | - | 01 | 01 | 01 | 03 | 03 |
| Murder (nature of torture not mentioned) | - | 04 | 29 | 06 | 39 | 24 |
| Murder after physical torture | - | 03 | 07 | 02 | 12 | 10 |
| Total | - | 22 | 44 | 14 | 80 | 46 |

| JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2004 | | | | | | |
|--|-----|------|-------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Age/Nature of torture | 0-6 | 7-12 | 13-18 | Age not mentioned | Grand total | Cases filed |
| Physical torture | - | 14 | 16 | 02 | 32 | 22 |
| Raped | - | 02 | 11 | 03 | 16 | 11 |
| Murder (nature of torture not mentioned) | - | 01 | 14 | 02 | 17 | 12 |
| Murder after physical torture | - | 08 | 12 | 02 | 22 | 22 |
| Total | - | 25 | 53 | 09 | 87 | 68 |

| JANUARY TO NOVEMBER (01-15) 2005 | | | | | | |
|--|-----|------|-------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Age/Nature of torture | 0-6 | 7-12 | 13-18 | Age not mentioned | Grand total | Cases filed |
| Physical torture | 02 | 13 | 04 | 03 | 58 | 30 |
| Raped | - | 02 | 17 | 04 | 23 | 14 |
| Murder (nature of torture not mentioned) | - | 01 | 23 | 02 | 26 | 15 |
| Murder after physical torture | - | 12 | 23 | 03 | 38 | 34 |
| Missing | - | 02 | - | 01 | 03 | - |
| Suspicious Death | - | - | 12 | - | 12 | 05 |
| Pregnancy after rape | - | - | 01 | - | 01 | - |
| Suicide | - | - | 04 | - | 04 | - |
| Total | 02 | 48 | 102 | 13 | 165 | 99 |

Source: Prothom Alo, Bhorer Kagoi, Sangbad, Ittefaq, Janakantha, Inqilab, Dinkal, Banglabazar, Sangram, The Daily Star, STAR GRAPHICS

the protection of child workers, although there is no specific provision for the child domestic workers. "The problem also lies in the enforcement of the laws. Because of lengthy process of trial, justice for these children is never assured," she noted. Asked, a high official of the

Ministry of Women and Children Affairs on condition of anonymity said, "There is much difference between theory and practice in our country. That's why implementation of laws to ensure such children's rights was never guaranteed."

Wasa disconnection drive successful but billing process questioned

IMRUL HASAN

Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) collected about Tk 15 crore in water bill arrears from the defaulters during the last three month's disconnection drive, but questions have been raised about the transparency in the billing process. "Usually we collect Tk 30 crore a year on average, but we hope to collect Tk 60 crore this fiscal year (2005-06)," said a high official of Wasa. "We have started this drive to collect the arrears so that we can improve the service to those who pay bills regularly," he said. Wasa officials said they are facing problem while collecting the arrears from the defaulters

during the drive. On the other hand, most of the subscribers complain that they do not receive bills regularly or receive inflated bills. When a Wasa mobile team disconnected the supply line of a six-storey building on Topkhana Road recently for Tk 34-lakh unpaid bills, some of the tenants burst out in anger and said the Wasa employees are responsible for the huge arrears. "How could the water bill of a single building reach Tk 34 lakh? What was Wasa doing when the bills were not paid regularly for the last 12 years? There must be a huge corruption by the Wasa officials who let the bills to accumulate," said one of the tenants. The structure houses a hotel and a number of offices

including the office of a major left-leaning political party. As the owner of the building, Aftab Uddin, was not present during the drive, the mobile court filed a certificate case against the owner. The government and private organisations owe Tk 200 crore in water bills to Wasa, of which Tk 45 crore is unpaid by

government offices and the rest by private organisations. "We are sending letters to the defaulter government offices requesting them to pay the arrears as soon as possible," said a Wasa high official. "But it is unlikely that the government offices will pay the bills by this fiscal year," he added.

However, the government bodies are under pressure from the donors to clear all the utility bills and if the pressure continues, it will be easier for Wasa to collect the arrears, he said. A Wasa official said it has become very difficult for them to realise big amount of arrears from the defaulters who are very influential or backed by politicians. The Wasa team led by a magistrate started the drive on August 23 to snap illegal connections and take action against bill defaulters. Asked about collection of bills from the domestic level subscribers, Kazi Wasiuddin, metropolitan magistrate working with Dhaka Wasa, said: "Our team is going to subscribers of all levels. In most cases

their reaction is positive." "After this drive we will not allow non-payment of water bills for more than four months according to the Wasa rules," said Wasiuddin. A high official of Wasa said: "Our magistrates were threatened by the defaulters during the previous drives. But this time the situation is better because we get strong support from the higher level of the government." According to Wasa's list of bill defaulters, the major defaulters are in the commercial and industrial areas such as Tejgaon, Shyampur, Motijheel and Dilkusha. A number of textile mills, dyeing and printing plants and engineering firms are on the list.

The structure houses a hotel and a number of offices including the office of a major left-leaning political party. In the absence of the owner the mobile court filed a certificate case against him

city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

"People cannot betray the blood of those who were killed by Islamist militants."

-- Sheikh Hasina
Leader of the Opposition and Awami League (AL) president
Told a grand rally organized by the 14-party combine on the Khulna circuit grounds, on Friday.
Source: The Daily Star

"To establish 1kg of Islam it takes one maund of knowledge; they (JMB bombers) do not have even one gram of it."

-- Maulana Obaidul Haque
Khatib, Baitul Mukarram National Mosque
Told devotees at a sermon at Jumma prayers, on Friday.
Source: Prothom Alo

"Terrorist acts are happening very fast, but we are falling behind, being unable to keep pace with them."

-- M Saifur Rahman
Finance Minister
Told a high-powered meeting to adopt specific measures to stop money laundering, on Thursday.
Source: The Daily Star

"They say bomb blasts will stop if the government resigns, are they involved in the bomb blasts?"

-- Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan
BNP Secretary General and LGRD Minister
Told a rally organised by the BNP at Muktagang in the city, on Tuesday.
Source: The Daily Star

"I am pleased to see such a progress to bridge the digital divide and grow the software industry in an emerging market like Bangladesh."

-- Bill Gates
Microsoft Chairman and Chief Architect
Told journalists after his meeting with the Prime Minister on his 12-hour visit to Bangladesh with his wife, Melinda, on Monday.
Source: The Daily Star

"Dad asked me to do well in my exams. I have kept my promise. But I couldn't tell him so."

-- Shiplu
11-year-old son of Haider Khan who died in the Netrakona blast
Told journalists on his return home from school to only find his father killed in the blast, on Thursday.
Source: The Daily Star

HEALTHCARE SERVICES ON SHOW



The third International Medical Exposition (MedExpo) 2005 kicked off in the capital on December 9 with a call for improving the quality of healthcare services. Foreign and local hospitals are showcasing their healthcare facilities, exclusive offers and extending the facilities of referral centers in Bangladesh to make easier seeking their treatment options. During the occasion, doctors from foreign hospitals are providing consultations. Different screening packages are offered by these hospitals as well. Cutting-edge medical technology providers are offering the latest products to local healthcare providers, which can help us to build quality medicare services.