

# Woman murdered

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They have two sons -- Saidul Ahmed, currently in staying Russia and Mainul Ahmed Jhinuk, the younger son who lives with his mother in the 3rd floor apartment of Add Pearl on Road 3/A at Dhanmondi.

Mumina's 10-year-old domestic help Mamata witnessed the murder while the widow's younger son Jhinuk was at his office at Banani.

When asked to describe what she had witnessed, Mamata told The Daily Star, "Faruq came to the house at around 12:30pm, had lunch, watched television and read newspaper. At some point he killed Nanu [Mumina]."

"Hearing her scream, I looked into Nanu's bedroom and saw her laying in the bed while Faruq was attacking her, sitting on top her," she said adding, "Then I ran downstairs on the 2nd floor where my mother works and told my mother and the lady of the house about the incident. They informed the security guards of the incident."

While talking to The Daily Star at the office of Detective Branch (DB), Faruq, from Dhumaitari in Sundargang upazila of Gaibandha district, said, "I wanted my aunt to give me Tk 300-400 for the dining charge, but she refused to give me the money. Instead, she asked me not to demand any money from her anymore. This made me angry and so I killed her."

Faruq also said that the deceased widow used to give him money every now and then to cover his educational expenses.

Members of police, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and DB arrived at the crime scene soon after the incident and the DB took Faruq in their custody for interrogation.

Maj Ehsan of Rab 2 said even though Faruq has admitted to killing the 56-year-old woman, we are also looking into the possibility of anyone else's involvement in the killing.

Abdul Alim, one of the security guards of the building who caught Faruq while fleeing the scene, told this correspondent, "Soon after I was informed of the incident over the intercom, I rushed to the elevator and saw Faruq coming out of it. I then grabbed him and yelled for help from the other security guard on duty."

"Faruq's hands were bloody when I caught him," said the guard from BSS -- a private security service provider.

According to family sources, Mumina is author of several books including 'Boiver Pran', 'Bhuter Kalpo', 'School Library' and 'Jhalochona: Prekhit Bangladesh'.

## Loan recovery

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percent against Tk 275 crore and Rupali realised Tk 39 crore or 59 percent against a target of Tk 66 crore.

The data also showed that classified loans of the banks increased by 1 to 14 percentage point last year due to poor recovery and new defaulted loans.

Classified loan of Sonali Bank rose to 35.36 percent in 2007, which was 9.77 percentage point up from that in 2006, classified loan of Janata reached 17.21 percent, 4.01 percentage point higher than that in the previous year, Agrani's classified loan rose to 28.67 percent, 0.57 percentage point up from that a year ago and Rupali's classified loan increased to 40.51 percent, which was 14.48 percentage point higher than in 2006.

The SCBs' operating costs also went up during the year though the central bank had asked them to reduce that by five percent.

Sonali Bank's operating expenses increased by 18 percent, Janata's eight percent, Agrani's five percent and Rupali's four percent in 2007 compared to those in 2006.

The SCB officials said reducing yearly operating cost is not practical at the moment because this would require the banks to go for drastic job cut.

'Karotaley Kantok' and 'Boichitro'.

When asked if the victim had any dispute with anyone, Firoz Chowdhury, husband of one of Mumina's nieces, said she was fighting a court battle with Anwar Hossain, owner of Byatkrum Prokashoni, over the royalty of her book 'Boiver Pran' and the hearing of the case was scheduled to be held tomorrow [Tuesday].

However, "we are not sure whether this has any link with the killing," he added.

## Yunus

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launched its micro-credit project in different states in the US.

The Grameen model of micro-credit programme has already been recognised and received acclamation across the globe.

Many have submitted their applications for getting loans from Grameen's Jackson Heights outlet as the micro-credit programme has already become very popular among millions of Spanish-speaking people as well as south Asians in the area.

The New York Times had already published two reports on the Grameen micro-credit project. The popular US daily in its report mentioned that the micro-credit project would help improve the living standards of low-income groups in New York.

However, the living standards of a large number of Bangladeshis residing in New York remain very poor, as they don't have enough access to bank loans. It is expected that they would be benefited through micro-credit project.

## Rising power

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supposed to enforce a daily load shedding schedule, allocating one-hour load shedding for each area in one time. But in reality, load shedding in many areas stretch up to two hours and the authorities do not even respond to any complaints.

For instance, a part of the Baridhara diplomatic zone went out of power yesterday morning for more than two and a half hours. When residents tried to reach Desco (Dhaka Electricity Supply Company) officials, they refused to listen to the complaints saying they are "busy".

Meanwhile, tired of frequent power cuts a section of people are allegedly using gas-fired small power generators without taking permission from the authorities to generate power at home. Sources said these people are connecting the generators to their domestic gas connection.

On the other hand, gas supply constraint is currently causing various power plants to produce less power. "Right now, gas constraint is responsible for non-generation of 499MW power. The plants of Raazan, Ghorashal, Shahjibazar, Sikabaha, Haripur, Siddhirganj and Mymensingh are producing less power than their capability," said a PDB official.

"The situation might have improved a bit, if the new 90MW Fenchuganj power plant came into operation this month as per the schedule. But, due to a feud between the plant's Chinese builder Harbin and the National Board of Revenue (NBR) over exemption of import duties worth Tk 50 crore, the plant's operation is still uncertain," he said.

Among other power plants, the two-unit 250MW coal-fired Barapukuria power plant is producing only 100MW using just one unit. "There is adequate coal supply, but this poorly built plant can not go for full generation when we need it most, due to technical glitches," he added.

## Zoo animals

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Meanwhile, terming the situation as a mild heat wave, the met office said yesterday that the current situation would prevail for one or two more days.

The mercury rose to 39.8 degrees Celsius yesterday, the highest rise so far this season. Regular load shedding, several times a day in most places in the city, has worsened the overall situation for city dwellers.

The temperature in the capital was 36.6 degrees Celsius yesterday while the highest temperature in the country was recorded in Rajshahi at 39.9 degrees Celsius.

## Govt asked

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in the formal dialogue together with Jamaat-e-Islami and other anti-liberation war elements.

The meeting with CPB started at 12 noon and lasted for about two hours. Led by acting president Shahidullah Chowdhury, the five-member CPB team placed 13-point proposal to the panel of advisers during the meeting.

"We have proposed displaying election countdown on public billboards (digital) to dispel doubts among people over holding of the election as per the electoral roadmap," CPB General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim told reporters after the meeting.

The party's 13-point proposal also includes restoring democratic rights of people, holding the national elections before the local government body polls and forming special tribunal to try the war criminals.

"We also informed the advisers that the government has deviated from its previous strong position on anti-corruption drive," he said.

The people now believe that the anti-corruption drive is being largely used as part of implement-ing some 'game plan,' Selim added.

About local government elections, the CPB leader said that though it is an important issue, it is not the number one task of the government.

At around 2.00pm at the same venue, the advisers sat with the five-member Workers Party team led by general secretary Bimal Biswas.

During the one and a half hours long talks, the Workers Party team urged the government for taking immediate steps to rein in the spiralling prices of essentials.

Talking to the reporters after the meetings, Hossain Zillur Rahman said that they would move on to the formal dialogues with the parties shortly after holding the informal talks with some other political parties.

It is important to create an environment of trust for holding a credible election, he said.

Political culture, process and structures are also important alongside the qualitative change in politics, the commerce adviser added.

## Hasina lawyer

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Barrister Shafique made this submission when charge-framing hearing against detained Awami League chief Hasina and seven others was scheduled yesterday.

But the hearing in connection with the barge-mounted power plant graft case has been deferred until April 24 due to her illness.

Only detained accused in the case former secretary Dr Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury was produced before the court. He was arrested a few days ago on way to home after he was released on bail.

Referring to the incident of Tawfiq, Barrister Shafique said though the Appellate Division granted him bail in two cases, police arrested him making a false statement.

Shafique said the police accused Tawfiq of violating the Emergency Power Rules by making provocative statements on Panthapath after he was released.

The lawyer claimed Tawfiq never went to Panthapath, adding that this is high-handedness in a society of rule of law.

Judge Mohammad Firoz Alam, however, did not make any observation following submission of Hasina's counsel.

Earlier on April 19, Hasina was committed to Square Hospital for the second time while in detention. On September 2 last year, Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Deputy Director Sabir Hasan filed the case with Tejjagon Police Station, accusing Hasina and six others of using their influence through mutual understanding in helping a foreign company and its local partners win a deal for setting up barge-mounted power plants in Haripur, Khulna and Shikabaha, depriving the lowest bidder.

The other accused were former energy secretary Dr Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, former Power Development Board (PDB) chairman Noor Uddin Mahmud Kamal, Managing Director of Summit Industries and Mercantile Corporation Private Ltd Aziz Khan, Director Farid Khan, United Group Chairman Hasan Mahmud Raja and Director Abul Kalam Azad.

ACC Deputy Director Morshed Alam submitted the charge sheet in the case on January 10 and included the name of Bangabandhu Memorial Trust (BMT) Curator Siddiqur Rahman.

# Women, HR bodies

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adviser announced the Women Development Policy, 2008 on March 8, the committee said and added that the government failed to take any action against the organisations and remains lenient towards them.

"During the past few decades, this specific group has opposed and created obstacles to not only women's human rights but also to women's social development programmes," read the memo signed by Ayesha Khanam, president of Bangladesh Mahila Samity, on behalf of the committee.

"This is the identified group that has been opposing almost all women and social development work including women's education, work, participation in social activities, free movement and family planning," the memo said. The committee said the April 11 violent demonstrations of the organisations prove that their objective is something else, not opposing the women development policy.

When people recently raised the issue of trial of war criminals and the group's murky role, this group tried to mount pressure on the government by destabilising the situation on different pretexts for strengthening their political position, it said.

"We condemn these violent activities."

"How could the group run criminal activities from a place of worship," the memo said, adding, "This is not only the issue of women movement, it is deeply linked to the future of Bangladesh's democracy and stability."

The committee questioned the rationality of forming a committee to review the policy 15 days after the chief adviser had announced it.

"If a discussion was so urgent, it could have involved adviser for women and children affairs ministry and women's rights and rights organisations, development organisations and representatives of citizens' bodies. Discussion may have also been on how to implement the policy. But, why the com-

mittee was formed with the Khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque as the head?" the memo read.

Saying that the review committee's recommendations would virtually push back society to the middle age, the memo said, "Members of the committee are trying to establish fundamentalist policies that go against the spirit of the Liberation War of Bangladesh and its constitution."

Asking for an explanation on how a few advisers formed the review committee, the memo said many negative reactions can be seen across country due to such "controversial and weak roles".

It said there are attempts being made from different mosques across the country to propagate untrue and abusive statements and impose restrictions on women, the memo said the weak role of some members of the present government has created the ground to push the progress of equal rights for women 50 years back.

A total of 139 women and rights activists signed the memorandum.

## HC's EPR verdict

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petitions by persons seeking bails in criminal cases under the stringent Emergency Power Rules (EPR).

The HC verdict came following an application on March 29 last year by an oil trader of Khulna, Majjuddin Sikder, who sought bail in a case, filed under the EPR for supplying adulterated oil.

## BPC

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decreasing trend for the last one year.

The April 16 data on LIBOR showed that the rate was 2.64 percent for the past 12 months, while it was 5.33 percent before that.

"So the IDB has set a new rate saying that total interest rate would not go below 5.5 percent," an official said, adding that as per the April 16 LIBOR, the interest rate on IDB loans stands at 4.39 percent.

## CHT arson attack

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Local administration has deployed police and security forces in the village after the incident.

However some tension still prevails between the Bengalis and indigenous people inhabiting the village.

Quoting witnesses, police said that a group of unidentified assailants, numbering about 150, equipped with weapons and sticks attacked the village on Sunday night.

The assailants beat up the villagers mercilessly, attacking some with sharp weapons, injuring at least nine people. They also burnt down 132 houses in the villages; 79 belonging to Bengalis and 53 to indigenous inhabitants.

The injured were released after first aid from the Baghaichhari upazila health complex, police said.

The reason behind the attack is not clear. The identities of the attackers also remain unclear with counter allegations from the Bengalis and the indigenous villagers, police said.

Locals say that this is a rare incident as the locality has been relatively peaceful until now. Some others pointed out that there has been some resentment amongst locals about encroachment on land in the area.

Khagrachhari Hill District Council Chairman Monindra Lal Tripura, Deputy Commissioner of Rangamati Md Nurul Amin, Rangamati Police Super Md Abdul Baten and other high government officials visited the spot yesterday.

They asked for calm and assured the victims of compensation for their losses.

## 8-yr-old sued

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peddler Ripon on Sunday while they were on their way to the Jaikhana ferryghat by rickshaw with twenty bottles of Phensidyle brought from Bhomra border of Sathkira. The law enforcers seized the bottles from Arifa who strapped those to her legs and waist.

During questioning at Khulna Police Station, she told the police that she had earlier carried phensidyl to Khulna from Sathkira by bus thrice in the last two months.

She said taking advantage of the poor financial condition of her father, drug peddler Ripon used her for carrying phensidyl. In exchange, her father would get Tk 200 each time from Ripon.

Arifa requested the law enforcers to release her, saying that she had been compelled to carry the bottles.

But the policemen produced her before a court that sent her to jail yesterday.

Sub-inspector Ashim Kumar Das of Detective Branch of Khulna Metropolitan Police filed a first information report (FIR) against the two arrestees.

## Boeing deal today

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international destinations. Biman won flies to 18 international destinations, competing with over 20 local and foreign airlines, which together dominate about 70 percent of the total market.

Emirates, Singapore Airlines, Thai Airways, and Gulf Air are the global players operating in the Bangladesh aviation market estimated to be growing at a rate of over 7.5 percent a year.

## Freedom Fighters

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"Sometimes a huge number of projects are taken on but those cannot be implemented for lack of financing," he told the chief accounting officers of ministries beyond mid-term budgetary framework (MTBF) at the pre-budget meeting.

Early this month, the finance adviser held another pre-budget meeting with the secretaries.

Talking to reporters after the meeting, Mirza Aziz said he asked the secretaries to undertake realistic projects, both under revenue and development budget, which could be implemented in time. "If a project can't be implemented timely, it increases cost and prolongs the implementation period. As a result, utility of the project loses its meaning."

He advised the secretaries to develop ownership of the budget based on the additional powers given to them in implementing the projects and also instructed them to do impact analysis after a project's implementation.

Replying to a question, the finance adviser said the economy with its present development status demands many projects, but the demand must be consistent with the ability, both in terms of resources and implementation capacity.

Mirza Aziz said the secretaries informed him of the implementation problem due to unusual price-hike of construction materials, while he told the secretaries that a report in this regard has already been drafted and he would take a decision soon.

## US ELECTION

# Economy the top worry, but barely affecting votes

AP, Washington

The economy has soared past Iraq as the top problem on the minds of voters.

But do the growing economic worries give a particular edge to any presidential candidate? Not so far, according to an Associated Press-Yahoo News poll released Monday.

With growing layoffs, tight credit and an ailing housing market, 67 percent say the economy is an extremely important issue, up from 46 percent in November. Gasoline prices follow close behind at 59 percent.

The war in Iraq the dominant issue for several years stands at 48 percent.

"With our property taxes and the cost of gas and the cost of food now, it just seems like the economy is getting out of control," said Joan Sabers, 62, a retired computer programmer from Mechanicsburg, Pa.

Economic Woes - How extremely important are these issues to you?

About two-thirds of those making under \$100,000 annually attach extreme importance to the economy, as do nearly six in 10 earning more. Six in 10 Republicans and three-quarters of Democrats do the same.

Yet those who have become extremely concerned about the economy since last fall show no significant difference from everyone else in backing a presidential candidate. Both groups divide about evenly between Republican John McCain and Democrat Barack Obama, and between McCain and the other Democrat, Hillary Rodham Clinton.

In addition, those who expressed most concern about their personal financial situations have done just what those less concerned have done: they are a bit likelier to back McCain now than they were to prefer a Republican candidate in last November's AP-Yahoo News poll.

People calling the economy

# Hamas willing to accept Israel as its neighbour

AP, Jerusalem

Former President Carter said yesterday that Hamas the Islamic militant group that has called for the destruction of Israel is prepared to accept the right of the Jewish state to "live as a neighbor next door in peace."

But Carter warned that there would not be peace if Israel and the U.S. continue to shut out Hamas and its main backer, Syria.

The Democratic former president spoke in Jerusalem after meeting last week with top Hamas leader, Khaled Mashaal, and his deputy in Syria. It capped a nine-day visit to the Mideast aimed at breaking the deadlock between Israel and Hamas militants who rule the Gaza Strip.

"They (Hamas) said that they would accept a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders, if approved by Palestinians and that they would accept the right of Israel to live as a neighbor next door in peace," Carter said.

# Nepal's king

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Maoist chief Prachanda yesterday met Indian Ambassador to Nepal Shiv Shanker Mukherjee apparently to discuss a "graceful exit" for King Gyanendra after the party won the landmark Constituent Assembly election.

CPN-Maoist's third-in-rank leader Ram Bahadur Thapa Badal has said that the King should better leave the palace gracefully after the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly implements the decision on a republic.

"If the King does not abide by the people's mandate the government will forcefully vacate the palace," Badal warned.

The vote count is expected to end on Tuesday, and the Maoists are expected to win at least 240 seats in a 601-member constitutional assembly -- making them the dominant party and just short of holding an outright majority.

The ultra-leftists say they intend to abolish Nepal's 240-year-old monarchy as quickly as possible, and have called on Gyanendra to leave the palace "gracefully" rather than be forcibly evicted.

Maoist leader Prachanda has said he wants to talk with the king, to persuade him to leave of his own accord, rather than be booted out.

"In history, monarchs have been beheaded and also had to flee. Let that not be repeated in Nepal," the school teacher-turned-revolutionary said late last week.

The Maoists have warned the king that he faces "a trial and strong punishment" if he refuses to accept life as a commoner in one of the world's poorest nations.

extremely important lean toward the two Democratic presidential contenders, while those less concerned prefer McCain. The partisan divide helps explain that, as does income.

Of those most worried about the economy, people earning under \$50,000 a year prefer the two Democrats over McCain, middle-income earners are divided evenly, and McCain wins the most affluent.

Democrats divide between Obama and Clinton about the same whether or not they are extremely concerned about the economy.

The survey's findings echo exit polls of voters in more than two dozen Democratic and GOP presidential primaries: the economy is the top problem, but so far it's not driving votes.

"That's not going to be a deal-breaker for me," Robert Michael, 62, a Republican from Fort Collins, Colo., said of how economic issues will affect his presidential vote. "I'm not sure what any candidate can do to improve the job situation."

The survey of 1,844 adults was conducted from April 2-14 and had an overall margin of sampling error of plus or minus 2.3 percentage points. Included were interviews with 863 Democrats and 668 Republicans, for whom the margins of sampling error were plus or minus 3.3 points and 3.8 points respectively.

The poll was conducted over the Internet by Knowledge Networks, which initially contacted people using traditional telephone polling methods and followed with online interviews. People chosen for the study who had no Internet access were given it for free.

## RMG workers

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police and witnesses said.

The law enforcers responded with baton charge that triggered a mad dash for the exit. Several workers were injured in the melee and police action.

Later, police chased away the agitating workers and foiled their attempt to barricade Dhaka-Tangail Road.

In retaliation, the workers hurled bricks at police, leaving several policemen injured.

Vehicular movement on the road remained suspended for about half an hour due to chase and counter-chase.

Officer-in-Charge of Ashulia Police Station Kamrul Islam said seven to eight policemen suffered injuries during the clashes.

Three workers' leaders--Monira Begum, Josna and Salmawere hauled in from the scene for quizzing.

Additional Superintendent of Police Nazmul Hussain told reporters that a case would be filed against those involved in the violence.

The factory officials said 93 workers were fired on April 5 on charge of disrupting operation of the factory. But those dismissed did not stage any demonstration as the authorities paid them all their dues and benefits as per the labour law.

They said they have no plan to go for further retrenchment. The officials suspect that someone from outside might have incited the workers to violence.

# Nasreen Huq's death

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conduct further investigation since her family is not ready to accept that she died in an accident," a home ministry official said quoting yesterday's discussions at a meeting of the ministry's monitoring cell that oversees sensational cases.

Ten sensational cases were discussed during the meeting presided over by Home Adviser Maj Gen (ret'd) MA Matin.

On April 24, 2006, Nasreen succumbed to her injuries at Combined Military Hospital, Dhaka after she was hit by her own car, driven by driver Zakir Hossain, at the car park of her residence the same day.

Nasreen's husband Nurul Islam Bhuiyan Chhoton filed a criminal case with Dhanmondi Police Station accusing car driver Zakir of killing Nasreen by reckless driving. Zakir first rammed his wife with the vehicle and then dashed an open door of the car against her, leaving her severely injured in the knees, the husband said in the first information report.