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Custodial deaths dim rights gains

Speakers observe at World Human Rights Day discussion

Rights not protected
Says Justice Habibur Rahman
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rani Akhter at least found her husband's body and had the chance to bury him.

"I count myself lucky when I see many people these days do not find the traces of their dear ones picked up by law enforcers," she says.

A Rapid Action Battalion team held Rani and her husband Shahidullah Sumon, a jhut (garment waste) trader, in the capital's Amin Bazar around 11:30pm on April 14 this year, the Bangla New Year's day.

The crime busters first took them to the Rab-4 camp at Nabinagar in Savar, Rani told The

Daily Star recently, recollecting day that turned her life upside down.

The following morning, the two were brought to Rab-4 camp at Paikpara in the capital's Mirpur area. There, Rani could hear her husband screaming in pain in another room, said Rani, adding that a female officer later told her Sumon had been put on an "electric chair".

Rani was let go on April 16, but Sumon was kept in Rab custody. The next time when she saw her husband he was reduced to a body riddled with bullets.

The body was found dumped near the

The country's executive branch does not have the skills and power to protect human rights, former chief justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman yesterday observed.

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Expressway's projected cost comes down to 1/3 Bidder to be picked tomorrow

TAWFIQUE ALI

A private investor will finally be selected tomorrow for the 26km Dhaka Elevated Expressway.

Meanwhile, local experts have estimated per kilometre construction cost down to one-third of what the project's foreign consultant had projected.

The government aims to award the project (signing the agreement) by the first week of January, said Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, secretary to Bangladesh Bridge Authority. The concessionaire, the investor, has to begin construction work within three months of the signing.

Out of the four short-listed, two bidders including Ital-Thai Development Company (Italy-Thailand) and Sikder-KCC JV (Bangla-

desh-South Korea) showed up for final bidding for the expressway project.

Though short-listed, Gammon-Bougyes JV (India-France), a globally reputed company, and China Railway International Ltd (China) did not take part in the final bidding.

The construction period is three years from the signing of the agreement and the concession period is 25 years including construction period, said Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, head of the tender evaluation committee for the project.

A bidder had to score an average of 80 percent on technical competence and final selection would depend on how much financial benefit it offers to the government, said Jamilur Reza.

Nobel Peace Prize given to Xiaobo in absentia

REUTERS, Oslo

China could face economic and social crises if it fails to embrace full civil rights, with consequences for the whole world, the Nobel Committee said yesterday in prepared remarks for a ceremony awarding the Peace Prize to Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo.

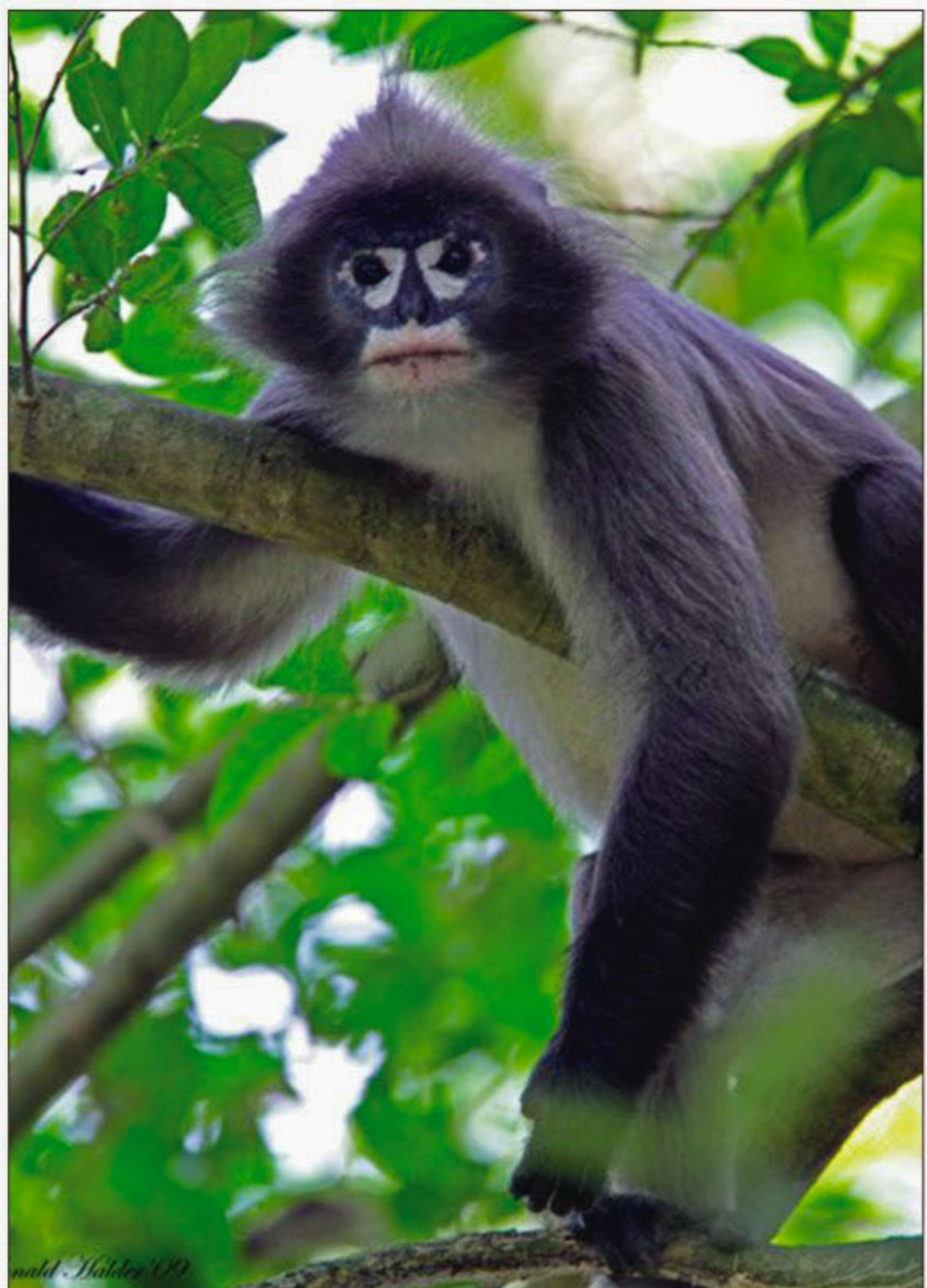
The awarding of the prize to Liu, serving an 11-year sentence for subversion, has infuriated Beijing as the rising Asian power becomes more assertive on the world stage. It has attempted to use diplomatic pressure to discourage

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Testing time for forests

Govt bends wildlife rule to allow gas exploration close to Lawachhara; impact assessment done at cost of explorer, green campaigners concerned



PINAKI ROY

The government has permitted Chevron Bangladesh, a US-based energy corporation, to drill three wells and extract gas in block-14 within the periphery of Lawachhara reserve forest.

The environment and forest ministry approved the Chevron project in August.

Nearly 460 species of flora and fauna thrive in an area of merely 1,250 hectares in the Lawachhara reserve forest, one of the last patches of tropical forests in Bangladesh, say environmentalists and researchers.

One of the three wells falls within 500 metres of the periphery of the Lawachhara National Park where drilling or exploration of any kind is a violation of Wildlife (Preservation) Order 1973.

Article 23 (3) of the Bangladesh Wildlife (Preservation) Order 1973 says, "Firing any gun or doing any other act which may disturb any wild animal or doing any act which may interfere with the breeding places of any wild animal is prohibited."

The law specified that the government might relax the prohibition, "for scientific purposes or for betterment of the national park or for aesthetic enjoyment of scenery." Here "scientific purpose" refers to research on forest and wildlife or biodiversity.

Petrobangla formed an upazila-level committee to assess whether the drilling of wells would cause any harm to wildlife in the forest.

The committee observed a small hill between the Chevron well at the Gilachhara Tea Garden and the forest

Life for this critically endangered hoolock gibbons is going to be harder in the days to come as the government has allowed pumping out natural gas from three wells in Lawachhara reserve forest area, the gibbons' home. PHOTO COURTESY: RONALD HALDER

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Indian film star Shahrukh Khan and Rani Mukherjee dazzle the audience with their performance at the Army Stadium in Dhaka last night. PHOTO: MUMIT M

BNP leader stabbed to death in Bogra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A BNP leader was stabbed to death at Dhupchachia upazila in Bogra last night.

The deceased, Abdul Latif, 45, was former president of Dhupchachia municipality BNP.

Witnesses said a gang of unidentified men swooped on Latif in front of his house near Dhupchachia police station at around 8:00pm. They stabbed him in the abdomen and fled the scene.

Bleeding profusely, he was rushed to the Bogra Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital, but doctors there declared him dead on arrival.

Ashrafur Islam, assistant superintendent of police (circle-B), said they suspect the BNP leader might have been killed following a feud over a land at Beerkedar village under Kahalu upazila.

Latif had come under another attack six months ago and two cases were filed in that connection, said the ASP.

KHALEDA'S WEALTH PM told a tale

Delwar terms her comments at 'semi-Bakshali' JS untrue, baseless

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday strongly protested Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's remarks about the wealth of party Chairperson Khaleda Zia, and termed those untrue, baseless and indecorous.

At a press briefing at the BNP central office, Delwar said the prime minister had violated the parliamentary norms and traditions by making such "scurrilous" remarks at the "semi-Bakshali" parliament in absence of the leader of the opposition.

In her concluding speech at the seventh session of parliament on Thursday, Hasina questioned the BNP chief's sources of wealth.

She also asked the authorities concerned to check if the former prime minister's actual wealth tallies with the asset statement she submitted during the last caretaker government rule.

At the briefing, Delwar termed untrue the prime minister's description about Khaleda's furniture in the Dhaka cantonment house.

He said such remarks prove that her call for the opposition to join parliament is nothing but an attempt to mislead people.

In fact, the government does not want BNP and allies to join parliament, he added.

Referring to the withdrawal of 15 corruption cases against Hasina, the BNP secretary general said the cases cannot be false as those were filed by Fakhruddin-Moinuddin government, which Awami League itself claims is the outcome of their movement.

Time will come when Sudha Sadan in Dhanmondi, three houses in London and income tax files of businesses at home and abroad will be examined, he observed.

TRAIN COLLISION Probe body gets 3 more days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The committee formed by the home ministry to probe Wednesday's train collision in Narsingdi has been given three more days, as drivers of one of the trains are undergoing treatment.

Committee chief Yusuf Ali Mridha, chief engineer of Bangladesh Railway, told The Daily Star the time was extended till December 13, considering the critical condition of Chattola Express driver Rafiquddin and his assistant Mainuddin. The two are undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

According to the committee's initial findings, they were driving the train violating the signal, Yusuf said, adding, they are yet to know why they did so.

"As they are the accused, we should talk to them and take their statements," said the

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