

## 2 held with 4 firearms

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested two people as they were out to sell firearms at Napitkhula Battala Bazar in Lama upazila of Bandarban yesterday.

Arrested Ilias, 35, of Dakkhingona in Cox's Bazar, and Kayes Mia, 22, of Ramu upazila of the same district, are involved in gunrunning for long, said Abdur Rahman, deputy assistant director of Rab-7.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-7 led by Captain Shaikhar Roy conducted a raid at the bazar and nabbed the two as they were going to sell three light guns (LG) and a single-barrel gun, Rab sources said.

The suspected buyers fled the spot sensing Rab presence while the arrestees and the recovered firearms were handed over to police.

Two arms cases -- one with Ramu and another with Sadar police stations in Cox's Bazar -- were filed in this connection.

## BSF kills 1

UNB, Satkhira

The body of a Bangladeshi cattle trader, allegedly stabbed to death by Indian Border Security Force, was seen floating in the bordering Ichhamoti river of Satkhira Sadar upazila yesterday.

The victim was identified as Ruhul Amin, 35, son of Abdur Wahab Ali of Komorpur village of Debhata upazila of the district.

Sources at 41 Battalion of BGB said BSF jawans of Soladana camp chased a group of Bangladeshi cattle traders when they were returning home from India along with their cattle at about 6:00am.

BSF forces caught Ruhul during the chase and stabbed him with rifle bayonet, leaving him dead.

The BSF jawans later dumped the body into Ichhamoti, sources said.

Local people found the body floating at Haraddah border at about 9:00am and informed the police.

The body could not be retrieved as it drifted towards the Indian water territory before the arrival of police, sources added.

Contacted, Shajahan Ali Khan, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station, confirmed the incident.

The body could not be recovered till filing of this report at 5:00pm yesterday.

## Iran's lake

FROM PAGE 20  
by solidifying salt and lamenting that he could not understand why the lake was fading away.

The long lake, home to migrating birds, has shrunk by 60 percent and could disappear entirely in just a few years, experts say.

The first alarm over the lake's shrinking came in late 1990s.

Beyond tourism, the salt-saturated lake threatens agriculture nearby in north-west Iran, as storms sometimes carry the salt far afield.

Official reports blame the drying mainly on a decade-long drought, and peripherally on consumption of water of the feeding rivers for farming.

Nonetheless, the government continued construction of 35 dams on the rivers which feed the lake.

Also completed was a lake-crossing roadway between Oroumieh and Tabriz, cities on the west and east of the lake. No environmental feasibility study was done in the planning for the road, and environmentalists believe the project worsened the lake's health by acting as a barrier to water circulation.

In April, the government announced a three-prong effort to save the lake: a cloud-seeding program to increase rainfall in the area, a lowering of water consumption by irrigation systems, and supplying the lake with remote sources of water.

Some experts termed the weather control portion of the program as only a "symbolic action" by government, saying the best answer would be to release more water currently being held back by dams.

## No indigenous

FROM PAGE 20

then Awami League government to restore calm in the hills.

Lars Anders Baer, special rapporteur of UN, presented the study report titled "Status of implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord of 1997."

"Bangladesh does not have any indigenous population," said Iqbal Ahmed following the presentation, according to a press release of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS).

"The accord has nothing to do with indigenous issues and therefore, the government of Bangladesh reiterates its position that the forum, which is mandated to deal with indigenous issues, need not discuss issues related to the CHT peace accord."

The UN report recommended, among others, developing "a mechanism to strictly monitor and screen the human rights records of [Bangladesh] army personnel prior to allowing them to participate in peacekeeping operations under the auspices of the United Nations."

While working on the report, Lars Anders met with the CHT civil administration and cabinet members including the foreign minister and CHT affairs minister, law

minister and land minister.

He also submitted the report to the government but did not get any response, the press release added.

"We urge upon the UN forum to dedicate its valuable time to discuss issues related to millions of indigenous people all over the world and not waste time on issues politically concocted by some enthusiastic quarters with questionable motives," said Iqbal.

After his comment, government delegations from Denmark and Guatemala, representatives of international indigenous population and international human rights groups emphasised that Bangladesh has not done enough to implement the peace deal.

"Failure to implement the peace accord could cause renewed instability in the region. Denmark would like to encourage the government of Bangladesh to set up a roadmap with a timeframe to implement the remaining parts of the accord," said Steen Hansen, representative of Danish government.

A high-level delegation led by state minister for CHT affairs Dipankar Talukdar cancelled the trip to New York at the last minute.

## Gas explosion

FROM PAGE 1

four-storey building at Mirpur-2 when they switched on the lights of a room that has been closed for a while.

On that small section of the floor was a beauty parlour which was closed three months ago. Two months ago Atiqullah rented the section to use it as an office of the Samannay Officers' Bahumukhi Samabai Samiti but the office did not open that time.

Yesterday, when they switched on the lights, the explosion occurred and soon fire engulfed the area. The three managed to come out with burn injuries. The next flat that housed a small garment factory was heavily damaged by the explosion.

Parts of bricks and window panes of the building injured four construction workers who were at an adjacent building.

"The explosion caused an earthquake-like situation around the building," said neighbour Mamtaj Begum. The shaking lasted for around 10 seconds damaging windows and furniture of two floors of the building.

The doors and windows of two adjacent buildings were also damaged, she said.

A bomb disposal team led by Assistant Commissioner of Detective Branch of police Sanwar Hossain visited the spot.

Hossain said the explosion could have been caused by gas that leaked from air coolers in the flat and got stuck as it was closed. "Somehow this gas exploded..."

The team did not find any evidence of bomb blast there, but would conduct chemical tests to find out the cause.

## Lightning

FROM PAGE 20

upazila and Mazedur Rahman, 22, Babu, 20, of Paharpur village.

The identity of the other deceased could not be known immediately.

Rafiqul Islam Khan, chairman of Laohati Union Parishad, said they heard peals of thunderbolt at about 2:00pm.

The lightning struck a group of people, who were harvesting Boro paddy in a field. Six of them including Toaz, Afaz, Hossain, Kalu and Mazedur died on the spot," Rafiqul said adding that ten others were also injured in the incident.

The injured were admitted to different hospitals in the district.

Babu died in another incident of lightning while he was harvesting Boro in a field at Paharpur village in the upazila.

## 7 killed

FROM PAGE 1

taken to Gaibandha General Hospital and Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

Bashudev Banik, superintendent of police of Gaibandha, said the driver's assistant was driving the truck instead of the driver and he could not control the vehicle.

## Asma Kibria

FROM PAGE 1

"nothing is going to be changed as the charge sheet was prepared after four years of investigation."

"I made a phone call to Mazid and told him that his comment about the charge sheet was improper," she told The Daily Star over the phone.

"To my knowledge, the charge sheet only identified the hired killers, not the mastermind. It is in the interest of the party and the country that the mastermind is unearthed. The case needs to be investigated further for that," she said.

The supplementary charge sheet was supposed to be submitted on Wednesday but was delayed for further scrutiny.

Kibria, also a former AL lawmaker from Habiganj, was killed in a grenade attack on a rally in Baidyer Bazar in Habiganj on January 27, 2005.

Mazid filed two cases -- one for murder and the other under the Explosive Substances Act -- with the Habiganj Police Station the next day.

## Toxic tannery

FROM PAGE 20

Failing to do so, the government had filed a petition with the HC seeking two more years for the job.

The HC then extended the time till August 28 the same year asking the industries ministry to submit a report within six months on the actions taken to move those out of the city's residential areas.

But the government again failed to do the job and kept on seeking more time from the court every six months.

"We're trying our level best. But I'm not sure when they will be relocated," said Mahbubur Rahman, project director of Savar Leather Estate of Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC), who is also responsible for implementing the relocation.

Asked why they are taking so much time, he said, "It took nearly one year to complete the technical evaluation of the central effluent treatment plant (ETP) and submit it to the government."

"But surely, things are progressing. We've recommended four ETPs with five million cubic metres of toxic waste treatment facilities for 155 industrial units."

The relocation process started nearly 10 years ago following a HC verdict in 2001. The government undertook a project to develop the leather estate at Harinbari in Savar at the cost of Tk 500 more than five years ago. The estate, however, remains unused and empty.

Sources say the relocation is being delayed as the government and the tannery owners could not reach any consensus about compensation and bank loan.

Even the project director is unaware about the compensation and loan issues -- two major demands of the tannery owners.

The polluters who earn around Tk 1,600 crore by exporting leather goods remain adamant demanding compensation of Tk 1,090 crore from the govern-

ment along with soft loan and readymade central ETPs at taxpayers' money.

"We're asking Tk 1,090 crore in compensation. But we haven't heard anything from the government yet," said Shahin Ahmed, president of Bangladesh Tanners' Association.

Now the government proposes for sharing the cost of setting up the central ETPs, which will require more than Tk 300 crore.

"But we signed a memorandum of understanding in 2003 with the government, and the government agreed to set up ETPs at its cost," said Shahin.

He also said they demand the compensation, as they will have to build new infrastructures and repair machinery that will be damaged during relocation.

Although the environmental protection laws require the tanners to set up ETPs in their factories, they never did so causing serious environmental peril.

The residents of the city's western part continue to suffer from adverse effects of pollution caused by tanneries in Hazaribagh, Dhanmondi, Basila, Kamrangirchar and surrounding areas.

The dreadful stink of the tanneries can be smelt from miles away in residential areas like Rayerbazar and Zigatola.

Hazaribagh tanneries, an export-oriented cluster of industries, produce some 20,000 cubic metres of toxic waste laden with chromium and at least 30 other toxins every day. The toxic waters flow into the Buriganga through the Rayerbazar sluiceway.

Locals allege they frequently require treatment for skin diseases, fever, cough, gastroenteritis, asthma and diabetes.

A tanner said the major obstacle to the relocation is that most of the land and property is mortgaged against bank loans. Until the banks release the mortgaged property, it is impossible to move their factories.

## EC wants firm grip

FROM PAGE 1

administration officials on poll duty for misconduct or negligence.

The current legal provision only empowers the EC to withdraw such officials from electoral duties and refer the matter to the authorities concerned for taking disciplinary and other actions.

The officials' appointing authorities or departments very often take no punitive action against the officials due to alleged political affiliation or other pressure, alleged EC officials.

Under such a situation, the EC now wants to have the authority to withdraw and suspend any officer performing any duty in the elections.

In case of suspension, it also seeks the power to take action against the official under "Election Official (special provision) 1991" law.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the EC proposals for electoral reforms.

"If any election officer is found to have wilfully refused or failed to comply with the orders or directions of the commission or returning officer, as the case may be, or wilfully violated any provision of any electoral law or committed any offence under any such law, would be deemed to have committed misconduct which would be treated as punishable offence and appropriate action would be taken against him in accordance with the provision of the 'Election Official (special provision) 1991,'" says the EC proposal.

According to the Electoral Official (special provision), 1991, an official might be dismissed or removed or be sent on forced retirement for misconduct or negligence in election duties. His promotion or salary hike might be withheld for two years. He also may be punished up to one-year imprisonment and fined Tk 5,000.

The EC said, "The changes have been proposed to keep the election officials more alert about performing their duties." Election Commissioner Muhamed Sohul Husein has said the proposed changes

are required to have a stronger EC for holding free and fair parliamentary elections.

"If the changes are made into laws, the Election Commission will have more authority to control the election officials. And the election officials will have no alternative but to obey the commission's order to perform neutrally for holding a fair election," Sohul told The Daily Star yesterday over telephone.

In the past, biased role of many civil administration officials and their failure to perform neutrally contributed a lot to making an election controversial. In many cases, the EC was seen helpless in controlling the civil servants, particularly when elected political governments were in power.

Electoral experts have long been demanding such law as the EC can exercise full control over the election officials.

EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATES Besides, the EC seeks to empower executive magistrates, who are also civil servants, to try electoral offences during the parliamentary polls.

The EC drafted some proposals to reduce the punishment for many electoral offences so that executive magistrates can be deployed for trials of those offences.

After separation of the judiciary at the end of the year 2007, the executive magistrates lost the authority to hold trials. In the face of their demand, the mobile court law was enacted empowering them to hold trials of some offences alongside judicial magistrates. The executive magistrates running mobile courts now can sentence an individual up to two years' imprisonment.

In the RPO, there are many electoral offences for which an individual could be punished for up to seven years' imprisonment.

In the last parliamentary elections held on December 29, 2008, the EC faced difficulties deploying executive magistrates for trials of offences. Instead, judicial magistrates were deployed for the job.

## Blake meets Khaleda

FROM PAGE 1

become partisan. When a respectable person like Prof Yunus is deprived from fair justice how the commoners would get justice, she said.

Meanwhile, Khaleda met Tony Blinken, adviser for National Security Policy for the US vice president, at White House and discussed entire range of Dhaka-Washington bilateral relations.

During the meeting that lasted more than an hour, Blinken wanted to know from Khaleda what will be the special steps and planning regarding institutionalisation of democracy and socio-economic development if her party BNP returns to power in future.

Khaleda told Blinken that to institutionalise democracy her party will strengthen the Election Commission and make it completely independent, ensure independence of the judiciary and mass media.

BNP Vice-president Shamsur Mobin Chowdhury told UNB over phone that Blinken recalled former prime minister's significant role in flourishing democracy and women empowerment in Bangladesh while she was in power.

Khaleda, also the leader of the opposition in parliament, said if BNP returns to power, it will restore people's confidence in democracy as people have lost trust in democratic dispensation following the present government's 'misrule and misdeeds' committed in the past two years.

On counter-terrorism, the BNP chairperson said BNP's clear stand to fight against terrorism nationally and internationally would remain unchanged and militancy would not be allowed in Bangladesh.

The BNP chairperson is scheduled to return home tomorrow concluding her weeklong visit to USA.

## BNP moves

FROM PAGE 1

be treated as anti-organisational activity which the party won't tolerate.

The letter also pointed out that none can express annoyance publicly against any of his/her party colleagues. If there is any complaint against any party man, the secretary general must be informed to resolve it.

Nobody would be allowed to stay on the stage of any political programme without the permission of the chair, stated the letter.

Recent internal clashes in and outside the capital irked party Chairperson Khaleda Zia and she directed senior leaders to send the letters.

Activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and Swechchasebok Dal locked horns in presence of central leaders after an anti-

government rally on May 9 at Nayapalatan.

In another incident on the same day, rival activists hacked BNP's Assistant Organising Secretary Nazrul Islam Rajon while he was on way to Barisal from Bhola after attending a party programme.

As a big political party, BNP always instructs its leaders through letters to ensure discipline at all tiers, said Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, acting secretary general. He termed it a normal organisational activity.

Sohrab Uddin, general secretary of Kushtia district BNP, said he has already received the letter and will implement the guidelines.

Officials at central office said they are sending the letters in phases and leaders concerned will receive it soon.

## 10 hurt

FROM PAGE 20

engulfed in flames.

Panicked, patients, attendants and staff of the hospital started coming out of the seven-storey building in a rush and sustained injuries, witnesses said.

Jamal, an attendant, told The Daily Star that he was on the third floor visiting a relative when the fire broke out. Hearing people scream, he immediately hurried out.

Much of the operating theatre room, patient recovery room and surgeon dressing room was burnt, Farid said.

Two units from Agrabad fire station doused the fire within an hour.

## 1 killed

FROM PAGE 20

Kamruzzaman, a sub-inspector at Boalmari Police Station, said a brawl took place between the supporters of AL-backed chairman candidate Abul Kalam Azad and BNP-supported candidate Polash at Char Shekhor village at about 1:30pm.

Later, both the groups armed with sharp weapons got into a clash, leaving Momrez, a supporter of Polash, dead on the spot and the five others from both the sides injured.

The injured were taken to Boalmari Upazila Health Complex.