

2 outlaws gunned down in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Two cadres belonging to 'Jabbar Group' of outlawed New Biplobi Communist Party (NBCP), were gunned down at village Rajapur in Dumuria upazila at around 5:30 pm yesterday.

The slain outlaws were identified as Abul Kashem, 40, and Yunus Gazi, 38.

According to police, a group of armed cadres of Biplobi Communist Party (BCP) swooped on the house of one Khalilur Rahman at Rajapur village in Sharapur union.

They dragged Kashem and Yunus out of Khalil's house and shot them point blank. They died on the spot.

The murders were committed in presence of about one hundred people who were attending a marriage ceremony in a house near the place of occurrence.

According to witnesses, the killers were carrying sawn-off rifles. Police recovered four used bullets from the spot.

Many villagers have already moved to safer places, fearing reprisals by rivals of the alleged killers, said AI leader and chairman of Sharapur union parishad Nooruddin AlMasud.

He said the entire Dumuria is in grip of armed cadres of outlawed organisations.

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Maid murder Key accused surrenders to police

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shahrier Mahmood Kabir, the key accused in killing of housemaid Halima Begum in the city, surrendered to police yesterday.

Kabir turned up to the Motijheel Police Station with a family friend and was arrested there in the case filed by her father Mohammad Ilyus.

The maid was killed at Kabir's Shajahanpur Railway Colony residence on Thursday.

SM Mohiuddin, officer-in-charge (OC) of the police station, hoped that they would be able to make quick headway in the case with the arrest of the key accused.

Quoting witnesses, he said Kabir returned home at about 10:00am on the day of the incident with at least two accomplices.

He had left home at 7:15am before anyone else of the family, the OC said referring to the statement of his parents.

Police grilled Kabir's parents on Thursday night and yesterday morning to know the whereabouts of their son and motive for the killing.

They, however, admitted that Kabir's statement differed from his parents' on the timing of his leaving home.

"Halima was raped before being killed," said Sub-Inspector Sved Montul Ahsan, investigation officer (IO) of the case.

Police seized a diary of the accused, but could not decode his

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Khaleque 'offers money' to the aggrieved

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling BNP lawmaker accused of grabbing the land of ten families to construct a building in Mirpur allegedly offered money to the aggrieved in compensation yesterday.

SA Khaleque occupied the land of seven Hindu and three Muslim families at Rishipara in Mirpur to lay foundations of the Khaleque Tower, alleged locals.

"He sent his men and they offered us money. They also wanted to settle the matter through negotiations. But we want our land, not money," said a Hindu cobbler who lost his land to the construction.

The lawmaker said he did not send any person for negotiations nor did he offer money. "We are on friendly terms. Someone else is trying to make our relations sore," he said. "They are six in number, but I am alone. How can I grab their land when there is the law?"

Khaleque's workers were digging the land for construction yesterday, one of the residents, who lost land, told The Daily Star.

Nor'westers kill nine in three districts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nor'westers swept across many parts of the country Thursday night, leaving at least nine people killed and more than 150 injured in Pabna, Narsingdi and Manikganj districts.

The nor'westers flattened hundreds of shanties, damaged crops and uprooted trees and electricpoles.

The country has been hit by a series of nor'westers and twisters this year.

In Pabna, the nor'wester lasted

for more than half an hour, killing six people. It damaged thatched and semi-pucca houses and uprooted trees in Sadar, Sujaganar, Bera, Atgharia and Ishwardi upazila, according to hospital and local sources.

A boatman from Raipur in Sujaganar upazila drowned in the Padma. He was catching fish in the river when the nor'wester struck.

Siddique, 45, of Ulat also in Sujaganar and another unidentified man aged about 40 died in a house collapse.

Zaheda Begum, 60, of Bangabaria and Halima Khatun,

55, of Kesmot Protappur, both in Sadar upazila, were killed in a house collapse, while Tajuddin Sheikh, 50, of Raninagar in Bera, lost his life when he was hit by a flying corrugated iron sheet (CI sheet).

Over 200 houses, banana plantations and lichi groves in Sadar and Ishwardi upazila were badly damaged by the nor'wester, which also destroyed papaya plants and jackfruit trees.

Our correspondent reports that the nor'wester caused traffic blockage on the Dhaka-Pabna highway for several hours in the night as

uprooted trees were lying on it.

As a good number of electric poles broke down, electric supply in many area was disrupted throughout the day yesterday.

Thousands of homeless people are living under the open sky in miserable condition following the nor'wester in Hemayetpur, Harazbaria, Shalgaria and many other places of Sadar upazila.

Local MPs Moulana Abdus Sobhan and AKM Selim Reza Habib have urged the government to provide immediate relief to the

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Little development since CHT accord: Larma

13-point charter of demands placed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Adivasi Forum yesterday sought 'a separate policy' for tribal people's development.

The forum put forward a 13-point charter of demands to the government and donors for consideration.

"The current policy is not friendly to tribal people. The government has received crores of taka from donors over the last few decades. But we didn't find its reflection in our lives," Jotirindra Bodhipriyo Larma alias Santu Larma, president of the forum, told a press conference at the Jatiya

Press Club yesterday.

Larma's statement came before a meeting of the Bangladesh Development Forum, slated for May 17 and 18.

Larma, also chairman of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council, said many basic conditions of the CHT peace accord are still unimplemented.

Although some schemes were taken up, the tribal people did not see much development in their region, said Larma.

He accused the government of adopting a 'divide and rule' policy to weaken the tribesmen. The denial of



Santu Larma

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PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Illegal parking is one of the reasons for traffic jam in Dhaka. Buses, trucks, auto-rickshaws and rickshaws get stuck in a long traffic tailback because of illegal parking of cargo lorries on the Biswa Road at Mugda yesterday.

Clean fuel scheme stumbles again

BRTC refuses to buy buses at high interest rate

SHARIER KHAN

The Dhaka Clean Fuel project stumbles again as the Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) refuses to buy 200 CNG buses under this scheme at a high interest rate.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has offered the government a loan at 1.5 per cent interest to purchase 200 CNG buses for the BRTC but the rate spirals up to 12 per cent due to the absurd internal rerouting of funds, sources said.

The rerouting maze starts with the government providing the fund to the Rupantarita Prakritik Gas Company Ltd. (RPGCL) at 4.5 per cent interest. Taking its share of 8 per cent interest, the RPGCL then gives it to the state-owned BRTC through Janata Bank. Adding Janata Bank's 4 per cent interest, the rate eventually goes up to 12 per cent, a proposition

that the BRTC finds totally unacceptable.

The ADB was at a loss when it came to know about the development on the Clean Fuel Project at a meeting with the Petrobangla last week.

ADB's Project Officer Mats Elerud asked Petrobangla officials should the BRTC be unwilling to purchase the buses now, then why in the first place did the government sign the agreement. He said his understanding was that all components of this project were sorted out when both parties penned the deal.

Until this deadlock was over, the ADB would not start disbursing the finances for the \$113.4 million project that also includes installation of a pipeline system for gas distribution companies of Petrobangla and setting up of a robust Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) distribution system for

Dhaka and its outskirts.

The project, which is already five months behind schedule owing to the government's dilly-dallying before agreeing to the ADB terms and conditions, was signed late last year.

"If things go on like this, I don't think this project would be complete before December 2005 instead of December 2004," observed a Petrobangla source, adding that ADB would now take feedback from the finance ministry in this regard.

The government has agreed to fulfil some of the conditions attached to the ADB loan. As per the agreement, three affiliates of Petrobangla-- Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd (TGTDC), RPGCL and Gas Transmission Company Ltd

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Indo-Pak MPs agree to isolate fundamentalists

AFP, New Delhi

Indian and Pakistani parliamentarians yesterday agreed to isolate fundamentalists in both countries in a bid to pave the way towards the normalisation of bilateral relations.

The decision was taken at a meeting between a 13-member Pakistani delegation and a group of Indian MPs in New Delhi.

"Both sides agreed that fundamentalist forces existed in the two countries and were hampering the process of establishment of peace," Communist MP Somnath Chatterjee, who hosted the meeting, was quoted as saying by the Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency.

"These forces should be isolated," Chatterjee said.

He said the discussions were "very friendly" and "we had a

heart-to-heart talk" on various issues.

Both groups felt there was no reason why peace, friendship and mutual cooperation between India and Pakistan could not be re-established, Chatterjee said, adding they also sought increased people-to-people contacts.

The delegation, who are on a week-long unofficial visit, arrived in India on Thursday through the Wagah border point, the only legal land crossing between the countries.

On their arrival in New Delhi late Thursday, the delegation was greeted with garlands, posters with messages calling for peace between the countries and traditional Indian sweets, reports said.

The visit, organised by the Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy, a non-government, non-profit voluntary

association with representatives from both countries, comes amid a sudden thaw in bilateral relations.

In the past few days the Indian and Pakistani governments have announced the resumption of diplomatic and air links, severed in December 2001 after a deadly attack on India's parliament which New Delhi blamed on gunmen backed by Islamabad.

The attack triggered the mobilisation of a million troops to their common border and brought the countries to the brink of war.

India and Pakistan are bitterly divided over the Himalayan territory of Kashmir, which they both control in part but claim in whole.

India accuses Pakistan of funding and supporting Islamic militants and pushing them into its sector to fight the security forces

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Dialogue in Sylhet today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A daylong discussion on administrative reform, development of energy sector and urban management will be held in Sylhet today, organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), the Prothom Alo and The Daily Star.

CPD Executive Director Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya will moderate the discussion to be held at the auditorium of Hotel Polash. Editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam will deliver the welcome address and Joint Editor of the Prothom Alo Abdul Qaiyum will also attend it.

Economists, academics, public

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3 burnt alive as house set ablaze in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Three women of a family were burnt alive when miscreants set their house ablaze at Banskhalhi in the early hours of yesterday.

They were identified as Aratibala Devi, 40, her daughter Champamoyi Devi, 14, and mother Junubala Devi, 70.

Neighbours are suspected to have been involved in the crime.

Police said unidentified miscreants set fire to Aratibala's house at Nathpara of Chambol union under Banskhalhi Police Station, after spraying kerosene on the house at midnight. Arati, her school-going daughter Champamoyi, and her mother, who had come to visit them from Kutubdia, were trapped inside the house. However, Arati's son Sanjib Nath, 20, and a relative

Dulal Karmaker, 42, could come out of the burning house.

State minister for Forest and Environment Jafarul Islam Chowdhury, Additional DIG Nayeem Ahmed, Deputy Commissioner Shafiqul Islam, SP Motiur Rahman and other high officials visited the spot in the morning. The minister directed the officials to take immediate steps to arrest and punish the people responsible for the deaths.

Two persons identified as Dulal and Tutul were held in this connection.

Sources said local people were angry with Arati for her activities and failure to abide by religious rites since her husband died twelve years back. Attempts to set her house on fire were made twice in the past, including one in 1998.

Rajbari BNP leader murdered: 2 arrested

BSS, Rajbari

Shamsuddin alias Shamsu Master, 60, a leader of BNP district unit, was stabbed to death by a gang of miscreants in front of his family members at Daulatdia under Goolondo upazila of the district Thursday night.

Goolondo police arrested two persons in connection with the murder.

Police said a gang of miscreants numbering five to eight stormed into the victim's residence at about 8:30 pm with sharp weapons and stabbed him indiscriminately. The elderly BNP leader died on the spot.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Rajbari Hospital morgue for autopsy.

The deputy commissioner and the superintendent of police visited the slain leader's house.

A case was filed soon after the murder.

Trolley-pushing gang holds patients hostage at DMCH

NAIMUL HAQ

A gang of about 12 men controls all trolleys meant for free use by patients of the emergency room at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) to realise hefty charges.

The gangsters keep away the trolleys, earmarked for wheeling patients to different wards from the room, and sell the service at a charge of about Tk 50 to Tk 100 per patient.

Emergency room records show that 50 to 100 patients are admitted to different wards of the hospital from there every day.

The gang makes between Tk 5000 to 10,000 a day except for Fridays when their earnings climb further as the main outpatient

department remains closed and all patients get admission through the emergency room.

Poor people, who can not pay the gang, have to carry their patients, many down with serious wounds and burns, on shoulder or with hands, exposing them to further sufferings.

Hospital authorities, however, said ten trolleys were on hand at the emergency room gate-- a claim contradicted by patients and most hospital staff.

They said the gangsters, none of them hospital staff, run the 'trolley trade' for about 16 hours a day in two shifts.

Trolleys are available only when someone agrees to pay the trolley-pushers, otherwise those

become a rarity," said an emergency room nurse.

None of the seven seriously injured patients who turned out between 11:30am and 2:15pm on Thursday, got trolleys.

Even policemen, who carried a seriously injured patient, had to quarrel with the gang for some time to get one.

There was no ward boys or nursing staff at the emergency gate on Thursday morning. "As the gang controls the trolley-pushing trade, none dares to stand at the entrance and offer help," explained a hospital official.

They warn everyone with serious

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PHOTO: STAR

A gang now controls all trolleys at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) to pocket sums from patients. Relatives help a man with severe burns to the emergency medical officer's room at the DMCH yesterday in absence of trolleys.

IDB team arrives today

BSS, Dhaka

A three-member delegation of Islamic Development Bank (IDB) arrives in Dhaka today on a five-day visit to Bangladesh.

During their stay here, members of the delegation, led by Nabil Nassief, Advisor-in-Charge of IDB, will exchange views with a number of government functionaries and private entrepreneurs, a press release said.

They are expected to discuss the possible investment opportunities in various sectors in Bangladesh in collaboration with Shamil Bank of Bahrain EC, the only foreign Islamic Bank operating in Bangladesh.

IDB has established an Assent Management Department (AMD) to manage the private sector funds, Islamic Bank Portfolio (IBP), IDB Unit Investment Fund (IDB-UIF) and Awqaf Properties Investment Funds (APIF).