

Two outlaws escape from police custody in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Two PBCP (Purbo Banglar Communist Party) cadres wanted in several criminal and murder cases escaped from DB (Detective Branch) police custody at Chhoto Boyra here yesterday, police said.

Dabirul Islam Dabir, 30, had been arrested Monday night from Jallighat, and Momin Shaikh alias Moyeen, 28, from Chhoto Boyra, said Mahbulul Alam, DC of Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP). Moyeen is one of the chargesheeted accused in the AL mayoral candidate SMARob murder case.

The two men, who had been left unguarded in a police van, escaped at 4:00am as SI Abdur Rashid and ASI Aminul Islam along with some constables went to search for firearms in a house as per confessional statements of the two. Both still had their handcuffs on.

Despite combing operations in the city and all upazilas of the district, none of the escapees could be arrested till filing of this report last night.

Dabir and Moyeen, who are also suspects in the Daulatpur Jute mills rifle loot case, are believed to have come to Khulna town to carry out a murder operation, KMP sources said.

A similar incident happened on January 26 last year when ring-leader of PBCP Abdur Rashid Malitha alias Tapan escaped from police custody at Khulna Judges' Court where he was being taken in connection with AL mayoral candidate SMARob murder case.

Huge amount of polythene bags seized

UNB, Dhaka

Some 250 maunds of banned polythene shopping bags were seized and 11 people arrested in that connection from the city and its outskirts yesterday.

Officials of Environment and Forest Ministry seized the polybags in a series of drives with a view to stop production, marketing and use of polythene bags.

Environment and Forest Minister Shajahan Siraj and State Minister Zafrul Islam Chowdhury were present during the drives at Nimtoli in Kotwali thana and Tongi Bazar.

Some 50 maunds of polythene bags were seized from Khokan Poly Industries of city's Nimtoli and another 200 maunds from 12 wholesale shops at Tongi Bazar.

The environment minister directed the authorities to take legal action against the polythene factories and the arrested shop owners, said an official hand-out.

2 caught at Sonali Bank for fraud

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two people were arrested on charge of fraud while withdrawing cash from the corporate branch of Sonali Bank in Sadarghat.

The arrestees are Rafiqul Islam, 66, of Patla Khan Lane and Firuz Ahmed of Fakirerpool. They were caught by bank officials and later turned over to police.

Rafiq, an account holder, told bank officials on Monday that he had lost his cheque book.

As per the suggestion of bank officials he filed a general diary with the Sutrapur Police Station and a new cheque book was issued to him.

Later Rafiq and Feroz drew about Tk 15 lakh.

The two went to the bank yesterday again and wanted to further withdraw money from Rafiq's account. However, when the cash officer refused on account of his large withdrawal just the previous day, chaos ensued.

At one point the guard closed the bank gates and the bank officials detained the two.

Police, after primary investigation, arrested them. The duty officer of Sutrapur Police Station said they are yet to get any written complaint in this regard.

Senpara, Kazipara in crime warp

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four crime gangs have held traders at Senpara, Sheorpara and Kazipara hostage for months, extorting tolls on a regular basis. But the police are hardly doing anything to stop the criminals, allege locals.

"We have been stalked by the gangsters. Our backs are now pressed to the wall," said a trader of Kazipara, who did not want to be named for fear of reprisal.

Worst still, police themselves are extorting money, many alleged.

The gangs operating in the area are 'Jamal-Kamal group', 'Taj group', 'Munna group' and a faction of 'Kala Jahangir group'.

"Five years ago, the criminals used to send letters demanding money and collect the same through their messengers," recalled an

electronic goods trader of Senpara Parbata. The trader claimed that he had paid the thugs about Tk 2 lakh since opening his shop in 1997.

But now they demand money over phone and threaten of dire consequences if refused.

"The extortionists send tokais to different shops with letters of instructions on how to send them the money," said a trader of Sheorpara.

A trader of Kazipara said last week he paid Tk 20,000 to a group.

Armed extortionists gunned down a contractor, Dolon, in front of his brother's shop at Kazipara in May as he declined to pay toll.

Another group went to an iron rod trader's shop at Kazipara on May 2 last year and shot dead a labourer, Lal Mia. Six days later, the group extracted Tk 50,000 from the shop

owner.

The traders do not inform the police about the criminals in fear of harassment.

Local Ward Commissioner Abdul Kader said he had informed the police of the criminal incidents time and again with no result.

"Some days back, I informed a member of the Rapid Action Team about some local hoodlums being involved in robberies. After three days, one of the hoodlums threatened me of dire consequence for going to the police," he said.

An iron rod trader of Sheorpara alleged that policemen take toll when trucks unload goods at night.

Second Officer of the Kafur Police Station Mostasinur Rahman said four mobile teams patrol the area to check such crimes.

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PHOTO: STAR

A hill in Khagrachhari has been cleared to make way for jhum cultivation. The traditional farming by the indigenous people is now under threat.

Jhum farming loses out to immigrants

REAZ AHMAD, back from Khagrachhari

Loss in per capita land availability and the policies of the government have made it difficult for people of Khagrachhari to keep alive the tradition of jhum cultivation-- the slash-and-burn method of hill farming.

With the plainland immigrants having the upper-hand in getting leases of plots in the upland and the government itself booking some of the more fertile tracts for orchards and tree plantations, local cultivators find it difficult to get enough farm produces from the shrunken areas under slash-and-burn farming.

Official statistics show population in Khagrachhari rose to 5.25 lakh in 2002 from 3.25 lakh in 1992. On the other hand, land area under slash-and-burn declined from 20,000 hectares to

15,000 hectares over the last five years.

Slash-and-burn remains ecologically harmonious only when the population density is low. It requires a lot of land since farmers must move on to newer hills after a season of cultivation. When there are too many farmers, they cannot maintain the system of crop rotation.

In this method, bushes and weeds in hills are slashed and burnt. Crops are grown for a season on the cleared ground, fertilised by the ash and by the accumulated humus. Although it is often blamed for forest destruction and soil erosion, the traditional system is a stable one that allows plenty of time for forests to regenerate.

After harvesting a season's crop, the Jhumiyas (shifting farmers) move to the next hill giving the earlier hill a resting period of five to seven years.

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Police still clueless in Palash killing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police could not unveil till yesterday the motive behind the killing of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) leader Saiful Rasul Palash, murdered on Monday.

Palash's elder brother Moktadur Rahman lodged a case with the Mirpur Police Station at 6:05pm yesterday, but did not accuse anyone. Nor was anybody arrested in this connection till last night.

Unidentified assailants killed Palash, known as SR Palash, general secretary of the city (north) BCL, at a bus-ticket counter at Kalyanpur on Monday. Disabled Bashir Ahmed, peon of a transport company, Sony Enterprise, was also killed in the shootout.

Palash, former president of the Dhaka College unit of the BCL, was buried at the martyred intellectuals' graveyard at Mirpur yesterday.

Earlier, his namaz-e-janaza was held in front of Awami League (AL) central office at the Bangabandhu Avenue. A second namaz-e-janaza was held on Dhaka College campus.

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and AL President Sheikh Hasina and other AL and its front organisation leaders attended the namaz-e-janaza.

Later, Mahila Jubo League brought out a procession from the

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DU teacher's cousin stabbed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ramna police last night arrested one Lipton on charge of stabbing a cousin of renowned Dhaka University teacher Meghna Guha Thakurata.

Sources said Lipton allegedly stabbed Shikha in the left hand and neck at around 10:30pm following an altercation. She was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Lipton, a computer diploma engineer, used to come to their house at the DU staff quarters for last three years to repair computer, the sources added.

A case under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act was filed with the Ramna Police station.

Arms factory of Sarbahara Party found in Ctg

UNB, Chittagong

Police unearthed an arms factory of outlawed Sarbahara Party at Mamun Colony in Bandar Police Station on Monday night.

They also recovered some arms making equipment and arrested one Abdul Hailim, an alleged member of the outlawed party. He was taken on a five-day remand.

During interrogation, Halim, hailing from Bagerhat, told police that he along with other members of the party had been making arms there since last four months.

Police said the outlawed party was engaged in supplying firearms to Khulna and Bagerhat regions.



PHOTO: STAR

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday offers prayers with other frontline AL leaders in front of the coffin of Saiful Rasul Palash, a leader of the Bangladesh Chhatra League, who was shot dead Monday.

PDB seeks legal help on AES plan for plants sell-off

SHARIER KHAN

The Power Development Board (PDB) has sought opinions from the law ministry on a proposal of the US company AES to sell its two large power plants to a British government investment company.

In a letter to the Ministry of Energy, Power and Mineral Resources last week, the power board stated that it failed to avail itself of expert advice to deal with the issue that is fraught with serious legal loopholes. The PDB had asked the AES to bear the consultancy fee but the cash-strapped

American company suggested the PDB to turn to its own resources.

"But it is primarily an issue of the AES and the British investor," argued a source, "because the sell-off is contrary to the contract between the AES and the PDB."

Contractually, the AES cannot sell more than 49 per cent of its shares in the 450 MW Meghnaghat and the 360 MW Haripur power projects in the first eight years of commercial operation. The company has been lobbying for relaxing this clause after it reached an understanding with British investor CDC

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US forces scour Baghdad after sniper kills soldier

REUTERS, BAGHDAD

Scores of heavily armed US troops swept through central Baghdad on Tuesday, sealing off roads and searching houses, after a soldier was killed overnight by sniper fire in the north of the lawless city.

A US military spokesman said the soldier was killed on Monday night while on patrol. US forces have been plagued by ambushes in Baghdad and the restive regions nearby. At least 41 soldiers have been killed by hostile action since May 1.

In a separate incident on Monday, a car exploded in western Baghdad, and residents said a

woman and young girl had been killed. They said the blast happened at an intersection where US troops were manning a checkpoint earlier in the day.

There was no explanation for what caused the blast but one US officer said it was a suspected car bomb and that two soldiers had been hurt. A military spokesman said the reports were being checked but could not yet be confirmed.

The red Volkswagen Passat was torn apart by the explosion, with its roof sheared off and its interior shredded.

Earlier on Monday, a car was

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Cops roughed up at old Dhaka market

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some policemen, including two sub-inspectors (SI), were assaulted by businessmen at motor spare parts market at Dholaikhal under the Sutrapur police station yesterday.

A retired government high official filed a case with Mirpur police station after thieves stole his car's parts.

SI Alam went to the Sutrapur police station to ask for an officer to raid a motor parts shop under their jurisdiction. SI Farid of the Sutrapur police station asked him to raid the market at night but the complainant pressed for conducting it just then fearing the trader would hide the parts.

SI Alam went to the market with two arrested accused. The arrested persons pointed a shop.

Police went to the shop and asked for the stolen parts. The shop-owner challenged policemen and that eventually resulted into a brawl. A crowd gathered there and at one stage manhandled the policemen, local sources said.

Sutrapur police said some motor parts traders turned unruly and tried to create a chaotic situation as police went there to search a shop.

Duty officer of the Sutrapur police station said no untoward incident followed as they sent additional forces to bring the situation under control.

| | Sun Rises | Sun Sets |
|---------|-----------|----------|
| June 18 | | 6-48 pm |
| June 19 | 5-11 am | |

| Prayer Timings | | |
|----------------|-------|--------|
| June 18 | | |
| | Azan | Jamaat |
| Fajr | 4-15 | 4-45 |
| Zohr | 12-45 | 1-15 |
| Asr | 5-00 | 5-15 |
| Maghrib | 6-53 | 6-58 |
| Esha | 8-15 | 8-45 |

Source: Islamic Foundation

Flood situation improving

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Flash flood situation is improving as water level of all rivers were coming down, the Water Development Board officials said.

According to the Water Development Board, Surma was 50 centimetres (cm) above danger level at Kanaighat point. Kushiara was 31 cm above danger level at Sheola point, 28 cm at Sherpur point and 9 cm at Amalshid point in Sylhet.

The situation was near danger level at Monu, Railway Bridge point; Surma, Sylhet point; Janijanail point of Kangsha river; Surma, Sunamganj point and Teesta river at Dalia point.

Of 85 monitoring stations, Surma and Kushiara rivers' water levels were above danger level at four points yesterday. Flood forecasting officials acknowledged four rivers were near danger level at five points.

But the situation was improving across the country, officials said.



PHOTO: STAR

Curious people gather in front of the Sadarghat corporate office of the Sonali Bank yesterday as two people were caught on charge of cash withdrawal fraud.