

# Outlaws kill 2 AL activists, police informer in two days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

A police informer and two Awami League (AL) activists were murdered by suspected operatives of the outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) in separate incidents in Khulna and Bagerhat districts over the last two days.

Amirul Islam Nira, 27, a drug dealer-cum-police informer was called out of his house late Monday night by two unidentified men who killed him and dumped his body in a bush at South Tootpara under Khulna Police Station, police said.

None came forward to help the victim as he cried out for help. A machete and some leaflets of the PBCP (Janajuddho) were found beside the body.

Residents of West Tootpara said Nira dealt in heroin taking full advantage of his status as a police informer. There was an attempt on his life earlier in September, police said.

Victim's father Nawab Ali lodged an FIR (First Information Report) with Khulna Police yesterday morning accusing five men. Police arrested Akhtaruzzaman Mukta, 30, one of the FIR-named accused from Haji Mohsin road shortly afterwards.

In another incident at Jalalpur under Kotchandpur upazila, Awami league activist Atiur Rahman alias Shanti Mia, 40,

also general secretary of Kotchandpur unit of Palli Biddut Samity was shot dead by unidentified men Sunday night.

Police quoting eyewitnesses said Shanti Mia was killed at around 8:30pm on his way home from Kotchandpur bazaar. Police believes the murder was an act of revenge for Shanti's alleged involvement in the killing of PBCP (M-L) activist Ali Hossain.

Shanti was also reportedly involved in the illegal Hundi business, sources said.

Victim's elder brother Azizur Rahman lodged FIR with the police.

Meanwhile, Jhenidah Police arrested six extremists after an hour-long gun battle and recovered four firearms from their possession at Chaye under Sadar Police Station. The arrested are Modasser, Liton, Akul, Anowar, Zia and Liaquat, police said.

In another incident at Kalshira under Chitalmari upazila of Bagerhat district, Bhupal Chandra Brahmmo, 45, an Awami League activist and owner of a shrimp farm was hacked to death in his house by a group of men Sunday midnight.

Police said Bhupal, a prominent social worker and philanthropist had earlier received death threats from extremists for refusing to pay toll, police said.

The PBCP (M-L) has claimed responsibility for the murder. An FIR was lodged with the police.

## Security guard strangled, garment worker found dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unidentified assailants yesterday strangled a residential security guard at Uttara, and a garment worker allegedly committed suicide at Mohakhali yesterday.

Uttara police recovered the body of guard Liton, 20, from the storeroom of the house of Dr Salah Uddin at road No. 18 in Sector-7 at around 11:00am. They sent the body to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for autopsy.

Police suspect the criminals killed Liton by tying a wire around his neck sometime between 1:00am and 5:00am.

Police said the other security guard is absconding since recovery of the body.

No case was registered till filing of this report at 7:30 last night.

Meanwhile, an auto-rickshaw hijacker injured in a mob beating at Demra on November 4 died at the DMCH yesterday.

Locals caught Rafiqul Islam, 25, when he along with his friends Shamim and Chanchal was trying to snatch a CNG-run three-wheeler at Postogola. His accomplices managed to escape. Police rushed him to the DMCH.

"Shamim and Chanchal allured me by promising a job in the capital and brought me here," Rafiq said Monday, adding that he tangled with them against the crime.

Rafiq's elder brother received his body at the DMCH.

Meanwhile, fellow workers of 18-year-old Lipi discovered her body hanging with her scarf from the ventilator of bathroom of GK Fabrics on the 2nd floor yesterday morning.

Gulshan police, who recovered the body at 11:30am, said Lipi, daughter of one Azimuddin of Kendua, Netrokona, took her own life.

## Sonali Bank

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committee heard the cases.

"We have found that a good borrower is the one who has more stake in his project. Besides, the good borrower also studies the market before starting his business," the official noted. "He also has a specific goal and a clear-cut plan."

Among the defaulters who appeared before the committee, three of their enterprises belong to Mannan Group. These enterprises -- Family Style Garments, Shanghai Apparel and Shanghai Fashion -- owe Sonali Bank Tk 42 crore till September 30.

Besides, the bank heard the cases of Baby Fashion Ltd. (Tk 1.5 crore in default loans), Bhushan Apparel (Tk 6.8 crore) and Romeo Garments (Tk 14 crore).

All these enterprises took loans covering between 70 and 80 percent of their investment.

The defaulters explained their problems to the bank and asked for more loans to make their enterprises profitable, which the bank declined. But it offered them interest waiver as a bailout.

Two good borrowers -- East West Industry and Radiant Sweater Industry -- repaid their loans in time. They took loans covering between 60 and 70 percent of investment.

Sonali Bank last month decided to hear its top 50 loan defaulters. These 50 defaulters have blocked Tk 1,135 crore or 32 percent of the total default loans of the bank.

## ISP shares

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to Tk 24.90 yesterday and its volume also rose to 268,000 from 108,000.

Share price of the newly listed Agni Systems increased 15.09 percent to Tk 12.20 while its volume shot up six times yesterday.

Closing price of Bdcorn Online Ltd was Tk 13.30 yesterday, recording a 13.67 percent rise. Its volume rose around eight times.

Share price of Raspit Data Management rose by 12.85 percent yesterday to Tk 7.90. Its volume was six times higher yesterday.

"Share price of Agni, one of the ISP pioneers, was a bit over its face value till Monday and it went up sharply yesterday on investors' perception that ISPs would make more profit because of the new move," said Yawer Sayeed, managing director of Asset and Investment Management Services (AIMS) of Bangladesh Ltd.

Even a few days back the initial public offering (IPO) of a big ISP was undersubscribed.

But the ISPs now hope that internet telephony technically known as voice over internet protocol (VoIP) would make their business more profitable.

"Internet telephony will bring about a massive change in the IT business," said Akhtaruzzaman Manju, president of the ISP Association of Bangladesh. "The VoIP would now become a main source of ISP income."

The VoIP will not only make international calls cheaper but also bring down the cost of intra-country calls to around Tk 1 a minute, he added.

# No respite in JS

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"we can't meet".

Political analysts say if the AL remains unbending on boycott, it will be a repeat of 'parliament-without-opposition' syndrome that appeared in 1991-96 and 1996-2001. After a democratic transition in the post-Ershad period, both fifth and seventh parliaments ran almost half of the tenures with the opposition staying away.

The AL lawmakers walked out of the eighth session of the eighth parliament, which was the last budget session, to protest the switching-off of Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina's microphone by Deputy Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui. It did not join any sitting of the ninth session either.

With the 10th session going into motion on November 16, AL's stance on boycott is clear as its demand for seeking apology from Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, the speaker and a state minister on three issues is still unmet.

The AL demanded an apology from the prime minister for declaring a non-MP BNP newcomer, Shah Mohammad Abu Zafar, a de facto MP in Faridpur. It demanded apology from the speaker

for his comment that parliament runs smoothly without the opposition and from State Minister for Public Works Alamgir Kabir for using derogatory language against Hasina in parliament.

The upcoming short-lived session to be wrapped up before the Eid-ul-Fitr will miss not only the leader of the opposition but the Leader of the House, Khaleda, who will go on a 10-day visit to Saudi Arabia from November 13.

On the anti-government movement, Jalil said, "We don't believe in politics of arms or coups. We'll take to the street and launch a unified movement soon."

On how his party thinks of unseating an elected government only two years into office, a confident Jalil said, "We'll show them (government) the exit, unleashing a mass upsurge as intense as in 1969, 1990 and 1996."

He claims the socio-political situation is more in favour of mass movement than before, reasoning: "We need not mobilise people. They are motivated on their own to come out and build resistance against the government."

# Unionism reigns

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are now keeping an eye on unions to see whether their activities are beyond limits.

An investigation into the activities of unionists by The Daily Star reveals that the CBAs are virtually more powerful than the management of the NCBs in all spheres.

Authorities lodge complaints with higher authorities about 'the interference, audacity and unruly activities of unionists', but the unionists command such a clout that no action could be taken.

On Sunday, Agrani Bank's Mymensingh region Deputy General Manager (DGM) Shamsul Hossain wrote to the head office that a group of CBA leaders called him names and threatened him with firing if he ordered certain transfer of employees.

Hossain said the head office recently asked him to fill up vacancies through transfers and postings in some branches. But the head office CBA leaders including Mehedi and Shahid have been calling him and threatening him through local employees not to transfer anyone.

On November 8, Mehedi and Shahid, both class three employees, met the DGM at the head office and verbally abused him.

In another incident at the Agrani Bank yesterday, CBA leaders humiliated the bank's transport officer for not providing them with an air-conditioned car. The leaders, who usually use the bank's cars regularly, demanded an AC car to travel outside Dhaka.

The Daily Star investigation found the CBA leaders exercise power in all four NCBs and virtually reign supreme in Sonali and Agrani banks.

"In addition to interfering with transfer and posting of employees, they take bribes from house-building loan seekers and arrange the loans by intimidating officers concerned," a Sonali Bank official alleged.

"Because of the CBA threats, the management cannot take action against employees for theft and illegal activities or cannot downsize manpower,"

Bank drivers are largely involved in systematic theft of fuel from office cars, but the management cannot sack anyone even when they are caught in the act, he added.

Sonali Bank has guards at its warehouses three times beyond necessity, but cannot cut extra jobs because of the CBA pressure.

In Agrani Bank, union leaders jockey for waiver of interest on loans for third parties. As a ruse, general union activists

stage-manage a 'protest' in front of the room of the official concerned when the president and secretary calmly ask the official to consider the case of interest waiver.

In 1998, the government formed a taskforce headed by Khandker Ibrahim Khaled, then deputy governor of the BB, to pore over union activities at the NCBS.

The taskforce came up with its report in February 1999, asking authorities to improve the scenarios.

The cabinet committee on economic affairs approved the taskforce recommendations, but the cabinet shelved the suggestions when a minister objected.

"If the Motijheel area becomes hot, Ibrahim Khaled will not serve us, CBA leaders like Jamaluddin will come in our aid," a source quoted the minister as saying.

Asked to comment, Khaled, who is currently the MD of Pubali Bank, said: "If the taskforce recommendations were implemented, normally would have returned to the banks."

"The government must be committed to improving the conditions of the banks and take initiatives to sever the trade unions' ties with political parties."

## 7 to die

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Mohammad Nasir Uddin, inspector of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police, pressed charges leaving out Asgar Ali, Wajedur Rahman, Liton Moshan, Murad, Farid, Sohrab and Jasim although specific allegations were levelled against them.

The court observed that it could not rule against the seven though prosecution witnesses testified against them during trial. The IO dropped their names from the charge sheet being influenced by them, the judgement added.

Kabul Khan, 27, was killed by assailants led by Asgar Ali, Jubo League leader, on July 20, 1999 at Garpara Chandair.

Motaleb Hossain, leader of Manikganj thana unit Jubo Dal, the ruling BNP's youth wing, filed a murder case with Manikganj Police Station, accusing 14 Jubo League leaders and activists the same day.

The CID pressed charges against nine on May 21, 2000 and made 24 people as prosecution witnesses. The court framed charges against them on October 12, 2002.

Seventeen witnesses were cross-examined during the trial.

# Khilgaon cops

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The magistrate said police informant Delwar Hossain masterminded the mugging incident, but the IO of the case, Inspector Salahuddin of Khilgaon Police Station, dropped his name from the charge sheet on the pretext that Delwar's address was not found.

Moreover, Mohammad Harun, the complainant of the case, knew Delwar and mentioned Delwar's address in the FIR. If the IO was sincere about finding out the address, he could have been successful, the court observed.

Charges were pressed against seven former policemen of Khilgaon Police Station and an Ansar member after it was proved that they mugged two businessmen at Meradia, Goran on October 31.

The IO submitted the charge sheet to the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka Monday, 10 days after the incident.

Of the seven policemen who stand accused of mugging, Sub-Inspector (SI) Shahjahan Sabuj and constables Habibur Rahman, Abul Khair Mollah and Mohammad Faruq are absconding.

The four others -- SI Shamsul Haque, constables Mohammad Azhar and Helal Uddin and Ansar Mohammad Azad Hossain, are now in Dhaka Central Jail. Mohammad Harun, a businessman,

filed a case under the Law and Order (Disruption) Speedy Trial Act on October 31 against the eight law enforcers and the police informant soon after they robbed two Jhuk (garment by-products) traders of Tk 2 lakh.

Immediately afterwards, locals caught four policemen and recovered Tk 1.46 lakh from SI Shamsul Haq.

## Ex-Buet teacher

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Nurul Islam filed a case with Ramna Police Station on Monday.

Police sources said Dr Anwarul allegedly manhandled Justice Naimuddin in an altercation between them on the night of November 8 when Dr Karim went to Paribagh Petrol Pump for refueling his private car.

Dr Karim's car blocked the way of other vehicles as he was looking for the radiator cap that was missing, causing a long queue of vehicles.

As driver Nurul Islam asked the ex-Buet teacher to drive his car aside, Dr Karim got furious and argued with Nurul Islam, prompting Justice Naimuddin to get out of his car and pick an altercation.

Dr Karim pushed and manhandled him, Ramna police said quoting the complaint.

## 6 get life for abduction in Barisal

BSS, *Barisal*

A court here yesterday sentenced six people, including a woman, to life imprisonment in an abduction case.

Judge Muhammad Nurul Haque of the Special Tribunal for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Barisal, delivered the judgement in presence of the convicts in a crowded courtroom.

The convicts are Masum, 24, Shakhawat Hossain, 25, Abdul Hannan, 25, Nasir Hossain, 26, Ibrahim Khalilullah alias Sohag, 25, and Rehana Akhter alias Pakhi, 23.

The court also fined the convicts Tk 10,000 each, in default, they are to suffer six more months in jail.

According to the prosecution, the convicts abducted Tania, 4, from Shyamoli in Dhaka on November 13, 2002 and took her to Barisal town. They wrote a letter to victim's father Mohammad Salamat Ullah demanding Tk 1 lakh in ransom to get back his daughter. Salamat, came to Barisal on November 18 and informed the police of the matter.

Police along with detectives rescued the girl from the house of one Jinnat at Chawkbazaar in the town on November 19, 2002. A case was registered with Kotwali Police Station the same day.

Public Prosecutor Md. Mohsin Montu defended the state while Advocate Mazibur Rahman Nantu stood for the accused.

## HRC accuses Khulna customs of harassment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

The HRC Shipping Lines has accused Khulna customs of harassing it by making a fuss over the recovery of M-16 rifles in the sealed bonded locker of its vessel MV Banga Lanka.

The shipping lines is reported to have decided not to send any of its vessels to Mongla Port in future to avoid unnecessary harassment.

It has submitted all relevant documents of the vessel to Chittagong customs and Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) required for investigation into the recent seizure of weapons from the ship, said an official of the shipping lines at its Khulna office.

Khandakar Sirajuddin, one of the directors of the HRC, has sent documents to Rashidul Hasan, commissioner of Chittagong customs. Mongla sea customs is expected to receive the same documents tomorrow or day after tomorrow.

## Last ODI

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bowled out below 150.

Now it will be their last chance to avoid another whitewash that England captain Michael Vaughan promised at the outset.

Although England decided to rest, the home team spent hours at nets in the afternoon. The batsmen mostly practised how to deal with the short-pitched stuff that the tourists applied successfully from the second Test onwards.

Bangladesh are expected to make one change but the team management would not disclose anything before the start of the match.

However, it was learnt that top order batsman Habibul Bashar was set to return to the side after sitting out the second game. In that case opener Nafees Iqbal, who failed in both matches, will be dropped.

## Saudi bombings

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Press yesterday.

Saudi and US officials already had blamed the attack on al-Qaeda, which opposes the United States and the Saudi ruling family. The attack, the officials say, was similar to previous al-Qaeda strikes.

Al-Majalla magazine began receiving e-mails from Al-Abjal earlier this year. A US counter-terrorism official has said Al-Abjal was believed to be a leading al-Qaeda figure also known as Abu Bakr.

The latest Al-Abjal e-mail addressed criticism that Saturday's strike hurt Arabs and Muslims, not Americans, saying al-Qaeda also believed "working with Americans and mixing with them" was forbidden.

## Pakistan invites

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In what analysts saw as a symbolic gesture, Vajpayee delayed his departure for an official visit to Russia, Tajikistan and Syria to open the third South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) information ministers conference.

Leaders of the seven-nation grouping -- which is struggling for relevance -- are due to meet in Islamabad in January for a summit delayed a year by tensions between leading members India and Pakistan which brought them close to war over Kashmir.

Vajpayee's presence in Islamabad is widely seen as critical to advancing the peace process he started in Kashmir in April, which was taken forward by Pakistan before bogging down over continued violence in Kashmir and the pace of progress.

# Call charges

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Akhtaruzzaman Manju, president of the Internet Service Providers Association (ISPA), told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said call charges would be higher if the government set high fees for licences and higher security deposit and suggested bank guarantee instead of security deposit.

The concern came after the government Monday decided to legalise internet telephony on a set of conditions.

The move however will bring down overseas call charges to a third of the rate fixed by the landline phone monopoly Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTB).

The telecoms watchdog, Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC), is likely to prepare a set of criteria for enabling entrepreneurs to launch internet telephony by the year-end or early next year, a top official said.

"We are thinking of framing a set of criteria so that entrepreneurs can launch VoIP by next March," BTRC Chairman Syed Marghub Murshed told reporters.

The state-owned BTB has recently proposed lowering its international call charges to catch up with VoIP.

"We have sent a proposal to the post and telecommunications ministry to reduce the call charges to stay competitive with VoIP," a BTB official said.

But cellphone operators have expressed concern over the cabinet's decision that all calls generating and terminating from the internet would go through BTB's international gateway. "It is against the BTRC proposal," said an official with a leading cellphone operator.

BTRC officials, however, said an internet gateway would be commissioned exclusively for internet telephony by the BTRC, which will award licences and oversee the operation of VoIP operators.

The cellphone operators have a plan to terminate international incoming calls to 'cellphone-to-cellphone' subscribers accounting for 70 percent of the country's 1.5 million mobile phone users.

The government did not legalise VoIP before fearing that the public

## Clash at Mirpur

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around 11:15am, said her husband Nazimuddin, a garment worker.

"A group of 6-7 youths chasing another group and shooting at them, but Sheuli failed to leave the area in time and was hit in the chest by a stray bullet," Nazimuddin said, quoting the victim.

Mirpur Police arrested Jewel, Amir, Hossain, Tajul and Nasir during a raid in the area shortly after the incident. Police said all are local criminals and members of the infamous 'Taj Group'.

Locals said one of the rival groups are loyal to Kala Jahangir and the other is the 'Taj Group'.

Police said none of the arrested confessed to being involved in the gunfight.

"We will produce them before the court tomorrow," duty officer at Mirpur Police Station said at 8:30 last night, adding that no case was filed.

# Vajpayee urges

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"Asean is an old example of the triumph of economic cooperation over political differences. We can also see how post-cold war Europe has forgotten its former political divides and accept differential economic development while expanding the European Union," Vajpayee said.

Countering the contention that unequal sizes and economic strengths of Saarc countries came in the way of equal cooperation among them, Vajpayee said "these very factors can be turned to mutual economic advantage by creating inter-linkages which can enhance confidence and trust".

He referred to India's special trading arrangements with Nepal and Bhutan and said: "With Sri Lanka, we have gone a considerable distance down that road and we are making a beginning with Bangladesh also."

Calling for a free flow of information among Saarc countries, Vajpayee said revolution in communications presents great opportunities to the region in ensuring that populations have free access to all the media platforms so that they stay updated on major political events, economic, cultural and socio-logical trends.

He suggested that national TV and radio channels of Saarc member-countries regularly carry regional news programmes. Vajpayee also proposed that information on developmental programmes and cultural events in individual Saarc countries be aired in all other countries of the region and said: "This free flow of information, news, views and perspectives can do more for regional cooperation than any political extortion."

Pointing out that technological changes have led to an explosive expansion in media platforms, the Indian prime minister called for using communication technology rather than suppressing them.

He offered Saarc countries 12 seats

operator BTB may lose revenues. A third of BTB's average annual income of Tk 1,500 crore comes from overseas calls.

Internet telephony will help local IT entrepreneurs set up call centres and medical transcript and tele-medicine business.

VoIP service minutes are expected to leap to 600 billion from 0.325 billion in the Asia-Pacific, generating \$48 billion in revenue by 2006, up from \$78 million in 1999, according to a report.

The region formed 29.4 percent of the world market in terms of revenue in 1999 and is expected to constitute nearly 37 percent by 2006.

"We will earn more than \$2 billion till 2006, if we could grab a fraction of the region's calls through VoIP," the ISPA president said.

Earlier, the Infrastructure Investment Facilitation Centre recommended licence fees ranging between Tk 30 lakh and Tk 40 lakh.

But sources said the cabinet asked the BTRC to set a higher licence fee to discourage shady firms.

The ISPA suggested that the authorities should not impose too much of financial load on VoIP licences to keep the service within the easy reach.

## Rejoinder

Chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on expatriates welfare and overseas employment Nazir Hossain disagreed with the report The Daily Star ran in its November 8 edition headlined, "20 ministries embroiled in graft, irregularities".

The chairman said in a press release that the parliamentary standing committee never passed any negative remarks in its first meeting held on September 23 or in the second one on November 9.

Rather, all members appreciated the performance of the newly created ministry in spite of its acute shortage of manpower and logistics.

## Lankan president

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prime minister -- who are elected separately -- since the crisis erupted last week when Kumaratunga sacked the defense, interior and media ministers and suspended parliament until November 19.

Her office said the meeting was "to discuss the current political situation" and to get Wickremesinghe's views "on her call for a Grand Alliance of all national and patriotic forces, with the objective of forming a Government of National Reconstruction and Reconciliation."

Peiris said Monday that Wickremesinghe would ask the president to take over the peace process if she did not restore the ministries.

With Wickremesinghe confident of his popular support and of keeping his majority in parliament, he will be under pressure from his own party to stand firm in the contest of wills with the president.

For Kumaratunga, who has vast powers under the constitution, giving back the ministries would be an admission of weakness after last week's power grab, but agreeing to handle the peace process would alienate her from her left-wings supporters.

# Eid spending

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manager of Excellence Shoes, Md Shahjahan at Chowrangi Bhaban and added, "Our sale is usually higher than many others as we take care of customers' requirements and hope that the sale will go further up towards the end of Ramadan."

Masuda Begum from Paribagh came to shop at the Elephant Road for her grand daughters from her three daughters, and had bought shirts for her sons-in-law from Eastern Plaza, she said, "I will come again along with my daughters-in-law in the evening to buy them Eid gifts."