

## 2 shot dead as terrorists open fire on villagers in Jhenidah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Two persons were shot dead when a gang of terrorists opened fire on villagers at village Shakharidah under Horinakunda upazila on Monday night.

The dead were identified as Saheb Ali, 17, and Alamgir, 20.

Police and witnesses said a gang of 16 terrorists went to the village in search of Shariful Islam Khokan, leader of an outlawed party at about 8 pm.

As the villagers tried to resist the attackers, they opened fire, leaving Saheb Ali dead on the spot and Alamgir injured.

Alamgir succumbed to bullet injuries on way to Dhaka.

Police yesterday arrested one person, identified as Babul, for his alleged involvement in the incident.



Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon forms a human chain at Ashulia yesterday, protesting the real estate builders' move to fill the Ashulia Lake on the outskirts of the capital.

## Save Ashulia lake, halt encroachment

NGOs, environmentalists demand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different socio-cultural organisations and NGOs under the banner of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (BPA) held a rally and formed a human chain on the Dhaka-Tangail highway at Ashulia yesterday protesting filling of Ashulia lake illegally by some real estate companies for building residential plots.

Ashulia lake on the outskirts of the city is a popular recreation spot. People in their thousands flock there particularly in the wet season for a cruise in the vast lake.

Addressing the rally BPA leaders said, to have clean and safe environment is part of human rights.

They leaders demanded a halt to encroachment of Ashulia lake, immediate eviction of encroachers and their trial.

They called for building a movement to save the lake.

Prof Abdullah Abu Syed of Bishwa Sahitta Kendra termed the Ashulia lake a blessing of god for the city dwellers. People go there with families for a respite from the polluted air and a breath in fresh air, he said.

He said encroachers are grabbing Ashulia lake; rivers like Burigonga, Turag and Kornafuli and others water bodies violating law but the government is doing nothing

to check this.

There is a law prohibiting filling of any water body, but it is not being enforced, he said.

He urged the local people to join the movement to save the Ashulia lake.

He blamed RAJUK authorities for not taking necessary steps to save the Ashulia lake from encroachers.

Noted economist Dr Atiar Rahman said vested quarters are grabbing public property in connivance with some unscrupulous government officials.

He urged all political parties to come forward to protect water bodies and the environment.

Prof Muzzafar Ahmed said unplanned urbanisation in the country is destroying the ecological balance. This has to be stopped. Urbanisation can take place by maintaining ecological balance if done in a planned way, he said.

He said air pollution in Dhaka city has crossed all limits and about Tk 500 crore is spent annually in the country for treatment of diseases caused by the pollution.

Among others, Al Beroni, Mofizul Huq Khan, Abdullah Ferdous, Dr Bodiul Alam and Abu Naser Khan spoke at the rally.

## Christmas celebrated

BSS, Dhaka

The Christians in the country and around the world yesterday celebrated the Merry Christmas amid fun and religious fervour.

The Christians shared the joy with the members of their families, friends and neighbours and wished them a bright future on the occasion of Christmas, the birthday of Jesus Christ.

The Christians in new dresses visited churches in the city and at other places of the country to offer special prayers and hymns welcoming the arrival of Lord Jesus, the Messiah on this earth to serve the distressed and oppressed humanity.

The day's programmes also included cutting Christmas cakes, the Santa Claus presenting gifts to children, illumination and decoration of houses, yards, churches and the international hotels with X-mass tress, family reunions and distribution of gifts and sweets among the poor community members.

President Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury hosted a reception for the members of the Christian community at the Bangabhaban yesterday.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

## Workers clash in CSD godown area in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Two groups of handling workers backed by Awami League and BNP clashed in Boyra CSD godown area yesterday morning for capturing leadership.

According to witnesses, both the groups hired armed cadres and took position at different strategic points armed the godown.

Traffic on Khulna-Jessore road remained halt for an hour during the clash between the two rival groups in the morning.

Police have been deployed in the area apprehending bloody clashes between the two groups.

## Pintu refutes allegations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ruling BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu yesterday refuted the allegation that he tried to snatch auction documents of a bankrupt property scheduled to go on auction on Thursday.

The Receiver of Bankruptcy Court had refrained from selling bid documents of Bengal Leather Industries to a section of prospective bidders including him with an ulterior motive, said Pintu, a MP elected from the Dhaka8 constituency, to reporters at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club.

He said a section of media have published misleading reports involving him with alleged snatching of auction documents.

Pintu said he had gone to see the Receiver's office after a section of prospective bidders had complained to him that there had been some irregularities in the selling of bid documents.

Meanwhile, Md. Jahangir Alam Khan, receiver of the Bankruptcy Court, when contacted yesterday termed Pintu's statement 'absolutely false'. He said the BNP lawmaker and his accomplices came to his office at about 4:15 p.m. and tried to grab bidding documents.

Khan also alleged said Pintu and his accomplices had misbehaved with him and threatened him.

## AL leader chopped at Kushtia

UNB, Kushtia

An Awami League leader was chopped by a gang of miscreants near Mirpur bus stand in the town yesterday.

Witnesses said the victim Syed Nizam Uddin, joint secretary of AL district unit, came under attack while he was returning home after morning walk at 7 am. The miscreants chopped him indiscriminately.

Local people rescued him in a critical condition and rushed him to General Hospital.

He sustained injuries in his chest, legs and several other parts of the body.

Local Awami League blamed BNP for the attack.

However, BNP denied the charge and said it was a sequel to intra-party conflict. Local BNP lawmaker Prof Shahidul Islam also condemned the attack.

## Govt unleashing torture on Shahriar, says Samad Azad

UNB, Dhaka

Visiting the dejected family of the imprisoned journalist-writer Shahriar Kabir yesterday, Acting Awami League president Abdus Samad Azad accused the government of pursuing politics of vengeance to nail its opponents.

"The government couldn't bring any proofs or evidences but is harassing the journalist and unleashing torture on him," he told newsmen during the visit to Shahriar Kabir's residence in the city's Mohakhali area.

The AL acting president talked to

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

## Mugging: 4 JCD activists held in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Police have arrested four JCD activists from Sylhet town for their alleged involvement in a mugging on airport road on Monday.

Abul Hasan Chowdhury, a leading businessman, came under attack on airport road while he was going to his residence from Sylhet airport in a private car in the afternoon. Abul Hasan returned from Dhaka by a Biman flight.

The miscreants intercepted his car near Manik Pic Tila and tried to snatch away a leather bag. They fired several gunshots. Chowdhury also opened fire, leaving two of the muggers injured.

The miscreants snatched the bag containing taka one and a half lakh. They also took away the car and fled the scene.

However, police later recovered the car from a nearby place. Chowdhury took first aid from the hospital and later filed a case with the Kotwali police.

Meanwhile, JCD Sylhet district unit expelled four of its activists - Oliur Rahman Dany, Sayem Ahmed, Samad Ahmed and Sujat Miah the same night.

## Dacoity at 2 houses in Demra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Robbers looted two houses in the city's Demra area in the early hours of yesterday.

The loot grabbed from the two houses, including money and gold ornaments, is worth about Tk 2.5 lakh.

At about 2:30am, as many as 25 robbers entered the house of Ibrulul Haq, a businessman, at Dhalpur, Demra, breaking its door open.

The valuables, including money and ten tolas of gold, are worth about Tk 95,000. The landlord filed a case with Demra Police Station.

The same gang entered an apartment on the first floor of a building at Dakhin Kazla, Naya Nagar, in Demra area, breaking open its door.

The gang broke open the collapsible gate on the ground floor of the building owned by Abu Siddik, head assistant of Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board, Gulshan Zone.

The valuables, including money and 12 tolas of gold, are worth about Tk 1.55 lakh.

Siddik filed a case with Demra Police Station in this regard.

## No formal move yet to bring AL to parliament

REAZ AHMAD

There has been no formal political initiative to bring opposition Awami League to the Eighth Jatiya Sangsad.

The parliament is likely to go into its second session later next month.

Its maiden session suffered frequent quorum crises due to irregular presence of the ruling alliance's lawmakers and abstention by those belonging to AL alleging "crude rigging" in the October 1 parliamentary election.

The BNP-led alliance got two-thirds majority in the House in the polls.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Deputy Leader of the Opposition Advocate Abdul Hamid said, "There has been no formal initiative by the ruling party for our participation in parliament proceed-

ings." "We have been elected by people to represent them in parliament. We want to participate but for that the government must create a congenial atmosphere first. Unfortunately, I don't see any initiative as yet."

Asked about President Badruddoza Chowdhury's post-Eid visit to acting AL chief Abdus Samad Azad, Hamid said, "The President made the visit just to justify his visit to the Prime Minister after Eid-ul-Fitr."

After the visit, Abdus Samad Azad had told newsmen that the President did not make any formal proposal to AL for joining parliament sittings.

Advocate Abdul Hamid referred to some recent incidents like withdrawal of the special security for Hasina, police "excesses" in dealing with AL leaders and workers during

its recent hartal in the city and cancellation of public holidays on Bangabandhu's birth and death anniversaries and said, "It appears to me that the government does not want us to see in parliament."

Asked whether AL will not take part in parliament proceedings at all, the former Speaker said, "At a certain time, if the situation permits, we may join (parliament sittings) as part of our political strategy, no matter whether the government approaches us or not."

When contacted, Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid also said there has been no formal approach from the ruling party to bring AL to

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3



The usual pressure of rickshaws on the Panthapath Road has trickled down to Green Road with its long stretch dug out, although the road was nearly empty due to holiday yesterday.

## Panthapath

## Alternative roads in a sorry state

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

While the Panthapath road in the city turns into off-limits for rickshaws, alternative lanes and by-lanes to this important east-west thoroughfare are in a sorry state, making life more difficult for residents of the area.

Police on Monday made the Panthapath a rickshaw-free zone and said that rickshaws would only be allowed to use lanes in Rajabazar and Kalabagan areas.

But the state of these lanes and by-lanes inside Rajabazar and Kalabagan are so bad that it is a terrible experience for rickshawpullers and passengers. At many places there are potholes left after recent road digging for laying of underground drainage pipes.

In Rajabazar area, local residents and traders said rickshaw traffic has

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

## WB for another agency to oversee use of proceeds from gas export

UNB, Dhaka

The World Bank has recently suggested formation of yet another agency to oversee whether proceeds from gas export are used in public interest.

In a recent policy-brief on economic reforms, presented to the government, the bank suggested that the government "seriously consider" gas export to mobilise foreign-exchange resources that are required for higher investment to accelerate economic growth.

"Gas exports could generate the foreign exchange necessary to underpin a higher level of investment," the WB said in the policy brief, intended to prescribe the new government a roadmap for economic growth.

The influential lending agency, however, seems to be enough cau

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

## Poultry trader murdered in Chittagong

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chandgaon thana police recovered the body of a poultry trader from an abandoned house near Osmania Glass Sheet Factory at Kalurghat in the city on Monday evening.

The dead was identified as Russel, 22, son of Abdus Shukkur of Mohra, Kalurghat.

Police arrested Russel's friend Absar from the same house for his alleged involvement in the killing.

## 'Polybags to go by Feb next'



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will do everything possible to ban thin polythene shopping bags in the capital from the first day of the coming year and in other parts of the country in the next two months, Environment and Forest Minister Shahjahan Siraj said yesterday.

"We also plan to launch a similar drive against emission of black smoke by motor vehicles from February (2002) to free the capital from environmental pollution," he told a press conference at the PID conference room of the National Secretariat.

Initially, the government would go on an extensive campaign spotlighting the environmental disaster caused by polythene bags and persuading the people to dispense with such harmful bags, the minister said.

To this end, his ministry would send teams to the city markets in a couple of days and sponsor media campaigns highlighting the harms by polythene bags and urging the people to use environment-friendly shopping bags made of jute, cloth, paper etc, he further said.

"We won't hesitate to enforce the existing environment preservation law for execution of the ban on polythene bags once our motivation campaign fails," the minister said.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

## Lashkar-e-Taiba shuts office in Pakistan

AP, Islamabad

The militant Islamic organisation Lashkar-e-Taiba, declared a terrorist group by the United States, said yesterday it has closed its office in the Pakistan capital and plans to operate only in the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir.

Lashkar-e-Taiba a key guerrilla organisation fighting to end Indian rule in Kashmir - shut its Islamabad operation yesterday. Major Islamic guerrilla groups now have no official presence in Pakistan, organisation sources said.

Pakistani police have arrested Maulana Masood Azhar, head of Jaish-e-Mohammad, a senior government official said yesterday. "He has been arrested for violating a ban on making provocative speeches and inciting people to create law and order," said the official who did not want to be identified, reports AFP.

Two other groups - Jaish-e-Mohammed and Harkat-ul-Mujahadeen - closed their Pakistan offices shortly after the Sept. 11 terrorist strikes in America.

The closures illustrate a major shift in the strategy of Islamic groups previously allowed to openly collect donations and recruit volunteers in Pakistan.

Under orders from Pakistani security agencies, the groups have pledged to remove their billboards, banners and flags from major cities and agreed to stop soliciting donations, senior Interior Ministry officials said.

In recent months, the military-led government has moved slowly against the militant organisations.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1