

## 2 Christian families attacked in land-grab bid

ROVING CORRESPONDENT,  
Bonpara, Natore

Armed miscreants in a bid to capture ancestral homesteads of two Christian families, attacked their houses and beat all the inmates including housewives and children at Bonpara Christianpolli in Boraigram upazila in Natore in the early hours of yesterday.

The 40 or so attackers, equipped with firearms and lethal weapons, entered the houses at about 3:30 am by breaking the bamboo fences, the victims told this correspondent during a visit.

They ransacked the houses and looted Tk 28,000, a gold chain and household goods.

The injured are Hamdu Crush, 40, (a day labour), his wife Sundori Koraiya, 35, his sons Sumon, 18, Manik, 14, Ratan, 10, and daughter Ratna, 8; Babul Crush, 28, (a day labour and Hamdu's younger brother), his wife Dipali Gomez, 26, daughters Jui Crush, 7 and Juthi Crush, 3, his sister Nannolina Crush, 32 and Dipali's brother Nilu Gomez.

However, none of them was hospitalised till yesterday.

The attackers were led by one Ershad Ali Master, an alleged smuggler and his sons Quamruzzaman Raju and Ekramuzzaman Biddyt. Police have been deployed in the village as panic gripped the area, police sources said.

Villagers at the Christianpolli told this correspondent that Ershad was not directly involved with any political party. But many of the attackers including Ershad's son Raju are cadres of ruling BNP.

"Ershad Master was shouting at the attackers, saying it will not be a crime to kill two or four Christians", Dipali alleged while describing the incident.

During their one-hour rampage, they also planted some saplings at the courtyard in a bid take possession of the land, they said.

"The attackers tried to snatch the deeds of the land and also to have my finger mark on a blank deed, but failed as I kept the deeds at one of

my relative's house", Babul Crush said.

"They want to capture 31.5 decimal land out of the total 44 decimal which we (the two families) inherited from our father", he said.

"Ershad Master has been threatening for the last few days to evict us from our land. We informed Sayer Uddin, Majhaon UP chairman and Boraigram upazila convener of Jubo Dal about the threats. Sayer Uddin has arranged police vigilance", he added.

When contacted, Ashrafuzzaman, ASP of Boraigram circle, said that one and a half months ago, Ershad lodged a 'partisan suit' with Baraigram upazila judge court claiming that the 31.5 decimal land was sold to him by Babul's sister Sukumari Crush.

Sukumari and his brothers also filed a counter suit claiming that they did not sell their land.

The court formed a one-member commission with a lawyer to probe the matter. The commission was due to visit the spot yesterday, source said.

Eleven people have been accused in the case. Police arrested Ershad Ali Master and his sons Quamruzzaman Raju and Ekramuzzaman Biddyt.

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## Arafat

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1994. But he was buoyed by support Sunday from thousands of Palestinians, some of them armed, who poured into the streets of cities and towns across the West Bank and Gaza Strip to show solidarity with him.

Troops shot dead four Palestinians during the protests.

## Tribal clash

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morgue.

The team continued raids but could neither arrest any attacker nor recover any other body.

After the incident, residents of Rangapanichhara fled home as tension pitched high, locals said.

The row between the anti-peace treaty tribal group and the pro-peace treaty group resulted in several clashes in the past.

## Nine-shooter

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According to police, Babul is facing several criminal charges including those for murder, extortion and possession of automatic firearms.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Kotwali police led by the OC arrested Babul from Islampur Road at Lalbagh in the city on Saturday. He was produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court on Sunday. The court placed him on four days' remand, which will end on Thursday, police said.

Police said Babul used to control 11 ghats on the bank of Buriganga river in Old Dhaka. He used to occupy lands in the Old City on behalf of local influentials.

Babul was photographed in different dailies with a nine-shooter rifle, chasing pickets during a hartal in the city during the tenure of the immediate past Awami League government.

Babul once served as a caretaker at the Waizghat residence of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal leader Noor-e-Alam Ziku. Since then he is called 'Ziku' Babul.

Later, he started working at Haji Selim's business firm Madina Trading. He also joined AL rallies and processions.

Babul's village home is at Daudkandi in Comilla district. He was born and brought up in Keraniganj on the outskirts of Dhaka city. He is married and father of three daughters and one son.

## Shazneen

### case

FROM PAGE 1  
"At about 8 on the night of the incident, I talked to my daughter Shazneen at her bedroom and then went to the first floor where a party was going on. I went to the place of occurrence at about 10:15pm on information from a domestic help, Muslim," Latifur Rahman said. He was present when the inquest report was made, he added.

In response to questions from defence lawyers, the witness said that his daughters and sons-in-laws were not invited to the party at his house.

Chief cook at his residence Abdul Mannan informed him about an hour after the incident that Shahid (who used to assist Mannan) was not found at the house and a kitchen knife was missing, Rahman told the court.

All the six accused in the case now in jail custody — Shahid, Hasan, Shaniram, Badal, Miru and Parvin — were produced before the court during the hearing yesterday.

Special public prosecutors (PP) Arfanuddin Khan, ABM Sharfuddin Khan Mukul and Saima Khanam and Assistant PP Anisur Rahman appeared for the state while advocates Mohammad Hanif and Anwarul Kabir Babul represented the accused.

Shazneen Tasrim Rahman, 15, who was physically assaulted and murdered, was the youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, Chairman of Transcom.

## Three-wheelers

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took the decision as city commuters have been facing inconveniences due to high fare because of the government ban on around 12,500 two-stroke three-wheelers from September 1. Initially, only 5,000 such vehicles have been allowed to ply the city roads with special BRTA stickers till December 31. Later, another 1,000 two-stroke polluters were allowed to run in view of the transport dearth.

According to officials of the Uttara Motors, the importer of CNG-run three-wheelers, some 1,100 CNG auto-rickshaws have so far been imported and 800 of them have already hit the roads.

A BRTA estimate puts the number of locally assembled four-stroke three-wheeler named Mishuk at around 2,000. As per the government decision, all these CNG-run auto-rickshaws and Mishuk will have to install meters within the next one month.

Besides, the government has permitted a total of 5,000 CNG-run three-wheelers to run on the city roads. It means that some 4,200 more CNG-run three-wheelers are likely to get route permits within the next six months.

Asked whether the Uttara Motors has any plan to import CNG three-wheelers fitted with meters, a high official said, "We do not have any such plan. If the government takes the decision, we will comply with it."

Sources said the government would soon sit with the three-wheeler owners and importers to fix the fare.

## 14 killed in road accidents

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Our correspondent from Comilla reports: At least three people were killed and 10 others injured in separate road accidents in Comilla yesterday.

The first accident occurred at about 10:50am when a Chittagong-bound van (ChattoMetro-TA-11-123) collided with a Dhaka-bound microbus (ChattoMetro-Cha-11-1182) on the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway at Katherpool near the Jute Research Centre under Chandina thana in Comilla district.

The dead were identified as Kuddus Mullah, 55, an officer of the Fisheries Department, microbus driver Md Yusuf, 26, and helper of the van Azhar Uddin, 28.

The injured included Mirul Das Gupta, 50, deputy director of the Fisheries Department, Chittagong Division, its assistant director Kabir Ahmed, 40, Tanvir Islam, Abdus Samad, Zakir Hossain, and Moslem Gazi.

The second accident took place at about 1:40pm at Sagoria in the same upazila when a Dhaka-bound passenger bus (Dhaka Metro-Na-

14-0093) collided with a Comilla-bound pick-up. The injured are Murtaza Begum, Abdur Rahim and Nabir Hassan.

Our correspondent from Mymensingh reports: At least two persons including a woman were killed and 25 injured in a bus accident on the Mymensingh-Tangail Highway at Bechu Khali in Muktagachha upazila at 1:00pm yesterday.

One of the victims was identified as Suraiya, 50, while the other victim, a 35-year old man, could not be identified. Both died on the spot.

Police said the accident occurred when a Mymensingh-bound passenger bus from Pabna skidded off the road and fell into a roadside ditch as the bus driver lost control over the vehicle.

The bodies of the deceased were sent to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) morgue for autopsy.

Of the injured, Haji Abdul Hai, 70, Md Afsar, 60, Abdul Latif, 40, Hiron, 30, and Hamidul, 30, were admitted to the MMCH in critical condition.

## Hawkers hostage

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Mokarram while Gias collects toll from the south side of GPO, said Murof.

He said, Biplob and Saiful Mollah collect toll from the north side of GPO, Khabir from in front of House Building, Nuru from the adjacent areas of Kira Parishad and Ekram, Rahim, Momin and others from the office para of Motjihil.

Some selected persons of Mohammd Hossain, Sarder of about 12 footpath of Newmarket collect toll from in front of the Gausia. He has bought some shops, cars and houses in the city by the money of extortion, alleged Mural. Kadir, Hannan, Bacchu, Sayed Ali, Rafiq, Abul, Shahid and Babul collect tolls from some part of Newmarket, Science Laboratory and Nilkhet area, he said.

Mural said, Dulal, Sarder of Farmgate, him- self collects toll from the area, Hanif, Faruq and Motin from Mauchak while Habib and Belal from collect tolls from

Malibag area. Jahangir and Bacchu collect tolls from the footpaths beside the Gulistan Garden Hotel, Ismail and Shahadat from beside the Golap shah Majar, Mohammad Ali, Babul, Monir, Murad and Bimol Mongol from both sides of T&T, he said.

He alleged Muhammad Ali, who has built a house in the city by the money of extortion, collect his toll from Khaddar Market riding on his car.

Hannan collect toll from in front of Gnis Super market, Kalam from the east side of Osmani Udyan, Salam from in front of Sonali Bank and Agrani Bank and Dulal from Bhashani Stadium area.

He said the Communication Minister at a representative's seminar of the hawkers on September 7 called upon the Federation to provide the name of the extortionists and pledged that the government would take stern action.

He hoped that the names would help the government and said that

Meanwhile, rail police recovered the body of a youth from beside the Mymensingh-Dhaka railway track at Fulpur near Sutia Khali Station Sunday night.

The body was sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

UNB from Pabna reports: Three people including a woman were killed and two others critically injured in a fatal road accident at Kalkapur Degreepara on Pabna-Ishwardi Highway yesterday.

Police said the accident took place at about 12:30pm as a Pabna-bound private car rammed into a bus killing the three people on the spot.

The deceased were identified as car driver Mustafizur Rahman, 22, Sharifa Khatun, 21, and Abdul Halim, 37, of Kathia village in Sathkira.

Two female passengers of the car, who were injured in the accident, were sent to the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

Police seized the bus but the driver and his helper fled the scene.

A case was filed.

the name of the extortionists, they have given, most of them are listed criminals and they were detained several times for extortion.

He alleged that they had submitted allegation to the police several times against the extortionists but failed to get any response from the police. "More over police have threatened us for lodging complaint against them," he said.

He urged the government to fulfil the Communication Minister's pledge at the seminar where he said that the government will rehabilitate the hawkers in 66 thousands acres of abandoned land of the government.

Mural urged the hawkers to unite against the extortionists, so they can uproot the extortion.

Among others Sardar Sahadat Hossain, general secretary of the Federation, leaders Nazmul Islam Pintu, Md. Selim, Md. Idris Khan and Md. Delwar Hossain Mia were present at the press conference.

## Donors echo AL concern

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noted that if the committees had been formed, corruption issues like wheat purchase scam could have been discussed at full length.

Besides, the meeting focussed on 'growing' incidents of violence, political persecution, corruption, raids on opposition leaders' residences without search warrants, campus situation, 'absence' of rule of law and governance and 'sealing off' of the Central Shaheed Minar and delay in disposal of Bangabandhu murder case.

Later, US Deputy Mission Chief Christopher W Webster told waiting reporters, "We had very useful discussion."

Australian High Commissioner Robert Flynn said, "We had a briefing on current political situation, it is very interesting. We listened very, very carefully."

In reply to a question, he said, "Everyone in Bangladesh is concerned at the law-and-order situation" and both the government and the opposition want that "The situation needs to be improved." About parliament, Flynn said they were "concerned at the opposition disallowed to play full role and we discussed which way they should be doing this".

French Ambassador Michael Lummaux said he felt that it was a very good and informative discussion on the overall situation. He told a questioner that he read daily newspapers and felt that there

were some problems with law and order.

Swiss Ambassador Jurg Casserini observed that the present situation has to change. "We have to wait and see... Looking for a positive change."

Briefing newsmen later, SAMS Kibria said AL had conveyed its opinions on law and order, political repression, harassment, obstruction to AL's role in parliament, corruption, economic condition, campus situation etc as the diplomats wanted to listen to the AL's views on these issues.

He said the government had requested the opposition to speak in parliament, "but when we went there, duration of parliament session was made unusually brief and we were not given enough scope to speak on important issues." Kibria pointed out that Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina's microphone was switched off four times while the prime minister and the home minister were conspicuously absent during the discussion on important issue like law and order. "Parliament has been made something like rubber stamp, not a centre of all activities," he said.

Replying to a question, Kibria said development partners are happy to see the opposition back to the parliament and at the same time they are "watching and taking note of how the opposition is facing obstruction in parliament." About the economic situation and

law and order, Kibria said the development partners were worried at the economic situation and "they talked over the issues privately." AL pointed out that the country cannot alleviate poverty without improving law and order and for this the government has to admit first 'deterioration' of the situation.

"Putting a blanket blame on the opposition for deterioration of law and order would not help improve the situation. Rather, such attitude of the government would only enable the criminals to get away with their offences," an AL leader present at the meeting told The Daily Star later.

Raising the issue of government's 'indifference' to Bangabandhu murder case, AL told the donors that this would erode people's confidence in dispensation of justice.

Termining the Central Shaheed Minar a symbol of Bengali culture of secularism and of the freedom struggle, AL expressed deep concern at the way the government has kept it 'off-limits' to people to stage peaceful rallies and hold other programmes.

An AL leader later told this correspondent that the diplomats took note of AL's concerns and views on various crucial issues and hoped to meet the main opposition party time and again in future too.

## Prof. Faiz takes over

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ing the hand-over.

The crucial appointment comes about 10 days before the resumption of classes at the DU on October 3.

The post of the DU VC fell vacant on July 31 this year when the immediate-past VC Prof. Anwarullah Chowdhury stepped down in the face of a student movement demanding his resignation in protest against police atrocities in Shamsunnahar Hall.

During a press briefing after assuming office, Prof. SMA Faiz pledged himself to act neutrality in discharging his duties as the vice-chancellor.

"All students of the university are equal to me irrespective of their political ideology," Prof. Faiz said seeking cooperation of all concerned for ensuring a peaceful campus environment.

The newly appointed DU VC said he would work to uproot major problems of the university including session jams and work towards improving the quality of education.

Replying to a query on administrative actions against those named by the judicial inquiry commission as responsible for the Shamsunnahar Hall incident, Prof. Faiz said a decision in this regard would follow after another probe body of the university, which is currently working on the matter, submits its report.

In this connection, the new VC expressed his regrets about the police atrocities in the women's dormitory, saying the unfortunate incident resulted in the university's closure for over two months. Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof. AFM Yusuf Haider and Proctor of the University ASM Atiqur Rahman assisted the new VC during the press briefing.

Born on December 25, 1947, Prof. SMA Faiz completed his BSc in 1966 and MSc (Research) in 1968 with distinctions from the Dhaka University.

He received his PhD from the University of Aberdeen, UK in 1973 in little over two years as against the

## Govt determined to maintain academic atmosphere: PM

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said those engaged in acts of destroying the genius and merits of our students through instigation to create chaos in the educational institutions, specially the highest seats of learning, in fact, do not want Bangladesh to remain independent and sovereign.

She warned that her government cannot and would not allow the present and the future of our students to become bleak in an era of competition and globalisation of the 21st century.

Addressing a group of eminent personalities in the fields of engineering profession and education who met the prime minister at her office, she said her government would not hesitate to take stern action against those creating trouble in the greater national interest as it has got people's mandate.

The prime minister said the trial of the killers of BUET student Sony would certainly be held.

She expressed her government's determination to maintain congenial academic atmosphere in the educational institutions and sought cooperation of all in this regard.

Those who met the prime minister informed her that BUET situation was engineered by outside instiga-

tion which had further compounded the atmosphere.

Khaleda Zia said educational institutions would run in accordance with their respective rules, regulations and system, upholding their traditions, and assured that there would be no interference from the government in this regard. The government would rather extend full cooperation to the educational institutions as it attaches top-most priority to this sector and had made the highest budgetary allocation for it.

Minister for Water Resources Engr L K Siddiqui, Lt Gen (Retd) Mahbubur Rahman MP, Engr Q I Siddique, president, IEB, Prof Iqbal Mahmud, Professor Emeritus and former Vice Chancellor of BUET, former Vice Chancellor of BUET and present VC of Ahsanullah University of Engineering and Technology Dr M H Khan, Major Gen (ret'd) M A Kader, former engineer in chief of Bangladesh Army, Dr M A K Azad, vice president, IEB, Prof M A Hannan, Rector, Engineering Staff College, VC of BUET Dr Ali Murtaza, Matin Chowdhury, former chief architect, Mahmudur Rahman, Executive Chairman of BOI, and former secretary Engr Al-Hussainy were in the group who met the prime minister.

## Schroeder retains

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parliamentary foreign affairs commission, said he believed Germany would be more independent with Schroeder at the helm.

This was a reference to Schroeder's opposition to US strikes on Baghdad.

But precisely this has offended Washington.

Rumsfeld denounced the conduct of Germany's election campaign, saying it had poisoned German-US relations.

His remarks were clearly aimed at Schroeder whose Social Democratic Party's campaign featured blunt opposition to US military action against Iraq and a comparison of President George W Bush's tactics to those of Hitler.

Washington was also angered by reported remarks of German Justice Minister Herta Daeubler-Gmelin in comparing the president's methods on Iraq to those of

Hitler.

The EU's rotating presidency, currently held by Denmark, expressed confidence that key EU aims including enlargement would remain on track.

Some commentators warned that Schroeder's razor-thin majority could weaken his hand in promoting reforms, both at home and in the EU.

The margin was so close that both parties were credited with 38.5 per cent of the popular vote. But given Germany's mix of direct and proportional voting, the SPD went narrowly ahead in terms of seats in the 603-member Bundestag, or lower house of parliament, taking 251 places compared with 248 for the CDU/CSU.

Fischer's Greens cemented the coalition's victory with a surprisingly strong 8.6 per cent, up 1.9 per cent from the last election in 1998, giving them 55 seats.

## Khasru refutes

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Rahman Chowdhury and Justice Chowdhury ATM Masud were the judges."

He said these judges were appointed as per article 98 of the constitution.

"So, Moudud Ahmed's logic for not appointing ad hoc judges is ill-intended. He (Moudud) is a veteran lawyer and also the law and justice minister. It is not credible that he does not know these facts," he said.

Earlier, Moudud said only one ad hoc judge could be appointed to the Appellate Division under the article 98 of the constitution. But he said at least two judges need to be appointed on ad hoc basis to make a bench of three to hear the leave to appeal for the Bangabandhu Murder Case.

Moudud also said the Awami League wants to get political mileage out of the case by delaying its disposal.

Khasru in his rebuttal said it is the task of the judiciary to dispense

justice and the executive wing's task is to assist the judiciary, not to intervene.

"Why should the Awami League not dispose of the case?" asked Khasru. "We have reasons to believe that the government is in a conspiracy regarding the case. Even if Moudud's claim is true, then why the government did not act when only one ad hoc judge was needed to complete the bench in October last year?"

He said the then chief justice (CJ) had also sent the name of a judge to be appointed to the division, but the request was then ignored.

At present, only the CJ can hear the case and six other judges of the appellate division could do so due to technical reasons. Four of them earlier made it known to the CJ that they would feel embarrassed to hear the case. The rest two sat in the High Court bench that delivered the verdict of the case. As such, they cannot hear the appeal now.

## Textbook deal

FROM PAGE 1  
position to supply any books to BRAC this year because the tender for printing the books could not be floated.

As its students have been attending classes without the textbooks for the last few months, BRAC approached the education ministry for permission to only print the books it requires.

BRAC said since the books are being printed for exclusive use and not for sale, the question of floating a tender in this regard does not arise at all. Royalty is usually charged where books are printed for profit, it added.

However, the state minister for education said the entire deal took place secretly. "I was kept in the dark about the matter although I supervise National Curriculum and Textbook Board affairs. I only came to know about it from newspaper reports."

"Whoever involved cannot exempt royalty depriving the government of several crore taka. On the other hand, there were risks of more losses if the NGO printed more books than the number specified in the order."

An administrative letter of the education ministry says BRAC is permitted to publish books for

religious education and English for class III and all books for class IV and V for academic year 2003.

"There is no need of any further permission," said a brief letter of the ministry addressed to BRAC Executive Director Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury.

The primary-level books are distributed free to government primary schools. But NGOs and kindergarten schools are required to buy the books from the textbook board in exchange of a 15 per cent royalty.

## DMP drive

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Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Anwarul Islam Tarek, member of the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) Faruq Talukder Sohel, managing director of Shohag Paribahan (Pvt) Limited also spoke at the meeting.

Speakers suggested that drivers strictly comply with traffic signals.

Anwarul Islam Tarek said a practical and comprehensive policy is a must for the transport sector.

Faruq Talukder said a decision is necessary for a change in the transport sector.

## Kiwis crush Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 12  
New Zealand, helped by Matthew Sinclair's 70, posted 244-9 before bundling Bangladesh out in just 19.3 overs on a slow wicket.

Bangladesh's lowest-ever total of 76 in one-day internationals also came at this venue, against Sri Lanka last month.

Seamers Jacob Oram (2-32) and Kyle Mills (2-13) and left-arm spinner Daniel Vettori (2-10) also struck it rich as Bangladesh suffered their 52nd defeat in 55 one-day international matches.

They have beaten Pakistan in the 1999 World Cup in England for their only win against a Test-playing nation.