

BCL leader, outlaw killed in 'crossfire'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) leader and an outlaw were killed in 'crossfire' during separate incidents of 'shootout' between the law enforcers and the outlaws in Kushtia and Chuadanga early yesterday.

BCL leader Mustafa Hasan Titas, 33, was killed in Kushtia while Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-ML) cadre Asadul Islam alias Palash, 41, in Chuadanga, police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) sources said.

According to a Rab statement, Rab-6 unit arrested Titas, former joint secretary of the Kushtia district unit of BCL, and vice-president of Kushtia Islamia College Students Union, in the district town on Tuesday at about 9:00pm.

Later, during interrogation at the Rab-6 office, Titas confessed to his involvement with the underground political party Gono Mukti Fouz (GMF) and to having firearms hidden at different places in the district.

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# Defiant Saddam pleads not guilty as trial starts

AGENCIES, Baghdad

Toppled Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein pleaded not guilty at his trial on Wednesday on charges of crimes against humanity over a 1982 massacre of Shiite villagers.

"I said what I said, I am not guilty, I am innocent," Saddam told the court after the charges were read.

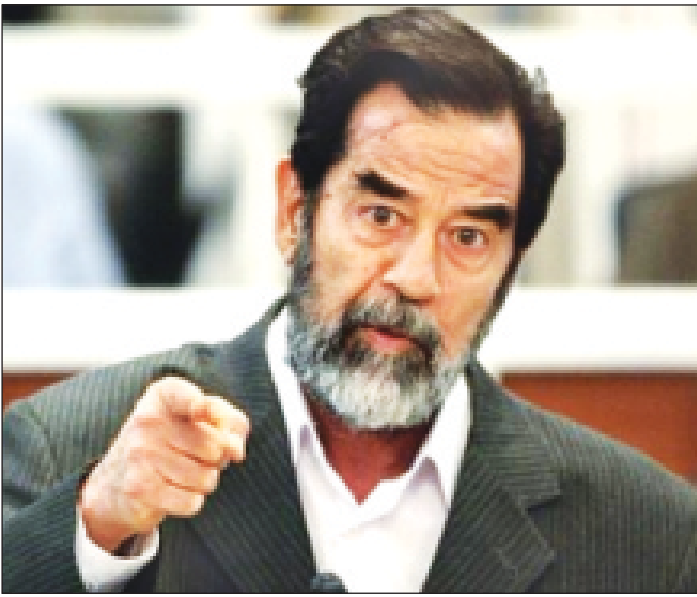
All other seven defendants also declared they were "innocent." They face the death penalty if convicted.

"They are charged with murder, forced expulsion, imprisonment, failure to comply with international law and torture," chief judge Rizkar Mohammed Amin told the eight.

Earlier a defiant Saddam Hussein went on trial on Wednesday for crimes against humanity over the killing of more than 140 Shias more than two decades ago.

Saddam, grey-bearded, wearing

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Saddam Hussein defiantly speaks to the presiding judge as his trial begins in a heavily fortified courthouse in Baghdad's Green Zone October 15, 2005.

PHOTO: AFP

Hasina hails TIB call to disclose her, PM's assets

UNB, Dhaka

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday hailed the Transparency International Bangladesh's (TIB) call to disclose the total assets of both the prime minister and the opposition leader.

"I am a regular taxpayer and the people of the country know how much assets I have," she said talking to the family members of late Sumon Ahmed Jiban at her residence.

Jiban, general secretary of ward no 60 of Awami Swechhasebak League city unit, died in police custody on August 18 this year.

Hasina, also the president of the Awami League, handed over a cheque for Tk 100,000 to Jiban's family. His father Abdul Malek, wife Shahnaaj Akhter Dolly, sisters Rani Alam and Sathi and only son Rohan were present.

She, however, said the information about the prime minister might not be ascertained at all. "Why would only the prime minister's wealth be under consideration? Why won't her sons and relatives be taken under the counting?" she said.

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# Minister powerless to overcome power crisis

He says in face of JS body criticism

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Faced with severe criticism by the ruling BNP lawmakers yesterday at a parliamentary body meeting on the acute electricity crisis, the state minister for power tried to defend by terming himself as "powerless" to overcome the crisis.

While members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry blasted the state minister for the crisis, the state minis-

ter put the blame on a high-powered government committee, which takes "all the decisions" on the sector, meeting sources said.

"I can do nothing directly as I do not have any power. Decisions come from high levels. A committee takes all decisions bypassing me," State Minister for Power Iqbal Hassan Mahmood told the meeting.

He would soon launch drive to improve the power situation by checking system losses, the state

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# Saarc members want a meaningful summit

Says Morshed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday said all the leaders of the Saarc nations are determined to make the Dhaka summit "successful and meaningful."

"There is a great understanding among the Saarc leaders and everybody wants to hold the summit. The leaders are convinced that time has come for greater cooperation to resolve the problems of the region," he said while talking to diplomatic

correspondents at his office.

Morshed said the November 12-13 summit is a big challenge for the government and it will not be a truncated one as no substantial programme was cut down. "It will be a full-fledged summit," he added.

Expressing gratitude to the leaderships of Pakistan and India for agreeing to attend the summit despite the devastating October 8 earthquake that hit the two countries, he said, "We have taken

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

A rickshaw-puller perched on his seat browses through the dresses put on display by a roadside vendor at Basabo in the city, looking for an Eid garment for his daughter.

TIB REPORT ON GRAFT

JS body asks Huda to furnish documents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliamentary probe body formed to enquire the base of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) report that labeled communication sector the most corrupt has asked the communications minister to furnish all the documents related to the TIB report.

"I have asked the communications minister in a letter to send all the documents that counter the TIB report as soon as possible," Convenor of the probe body Syed Manjur Hossain MP told The Daily Star yesterday.

The parliamentary subcommittee formed on October 2 at a meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on the communications ministry decided to probe the base of the TIB report in a month.

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda at the meeting

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MOMIN KILLING

5-day remand sought for ex-OC Rafiq

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID), at a Dhaka court yesterday, sought remand for the suspended officer-in-charge (OC) of Motijheel Police Station in the Kamrul Islam Momin murder case.

Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Abdus Sabur submitted a five-day remand prayer for OC AKM Rafiqul Islam to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka.

The OC was sent to jail on October 16 as he surrendered to the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka seeking ad-interim bail.

The forwarding report placed

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PREMIER BANK

Dr Iqbal gets bail in share scam case

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday granted anticipatory bail for three months to Premier Bank Chairman and former lawmaker Dr HBM Iqbal in a share scam case.

After hearing a bail petition filed by Iqbal, a division bench of the court comprising Justice Khademul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Emdadul Haque Azad passed the order.

On October 3, Mizanur Rahman, a removed director of the Premier Bank, filed a case against Dr Iqbal, chairman of the bank's board of directors, with Motijheel Police Station accusing him of adopting forged means while offering public shares by opening a huge beneficiary owners (BO) accounts.

Iqbal appeared before the court and sought bail yesterday.

Advocate Abdul Baset Majumder assisted by advocate Sayed Ahmed Raja moved the petition before the court.

ASIAN HIGHWAY

# Dhaka wants change of route before ratifying

RAFIQ HASAN

Bangladesh wants an amendment made to the Asian Highway's routes across its territory before ratifying the agreement on the highway connecting 42 Asian countries with Europe.

All its neighbours, including India, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore and Malaysia, have already ratified the agreement spawned by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap). The deadline for ratifying the agreement is December 31.

The main reason for Dhaka's reluctance to join the Asian Highway club is its reservations about giving transit to India, communications ministry sources said.

They said the roads proposed as part of the Asian Highway come into Bangladesh from India and also returns to it. So, they observed, if

Dhaka ratifies the agreement with the present conditions in place, it would be most likely to provide transit facilities to India.

The main Asian Highway route proposed across Bangladesh starts from Benapole and ends at Tamabil via Dhaka. Another route is also in the map running from Banglabandha to Tamabil via Dhaka.

But Bangladesh strongly wants to include Dhaka-Yangon via Teknaf route to be also declared as part of the highway. Bangladesh has already undertaken an initiative to develop the route and constructed a road up to Myanmar border.

Dhaka also has extended technical and financial assistance to Yangon for developing the route, including constructing 23 kilometre road inside Myanmar.

But Myanmar is yet to sign any formal agreement with Bangladesh on

construction of the proposed Dhaka-Yangon road. A high-powered Bangladeshi delegation last month visited Myanmar but failed to get any agreement signed in this regard.

Dhaka is also trying to persuade Myanmar and Thailand to recognise the Dhaka-Yangon highway as a useful part of the Asian Highway.

Meanwhile, urged by the foreign ministry to try to convince the countries concerned for bringing in the desired changes in the highway routes and to ratify the agreement, the communications ministry has called an inter-ministerial meeting to discuss the issue next week.

To ratify the agreement, the ministry will have to get an approval from the cabinet. So, a proposal for signing the agreement would be placed before the cabinet soon, the sources said.

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# AL to rid TI tag if voted to power

Says Jalil, sees conspiracy in first-time branding

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday said it will take measures to bring back the money siphoned out of the country through massive corruption by the BNP-Jamaat coalition government if it comes to power again.

At a press briefing at the Dhanmondi party office, AL leaders said they will bring to justice the corrupt ministers, MPs and bureaucrats of the coalition and their family members, because of whom Bangladesh has been perceived as the most corrupt country in the world for the fifth consecutive time.

They said they will restore the image of the country by ridding it of the

brand of "the most corrupt country."

"Bangladesh has been recognised as the most corrupt country for four consecutive years during the BNP-Jamaat coalition rule, which has brought shame to the nation," AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said at the press briefing.

He said both BNP and Jamaat and the prime minister herself promised before the 2001 elections to build a corruption-free country. "But now corruption has become the main policy of the government," Jalil added.

"There is no sector where the government and its avaricious ministers and MPs have not laid their ugly hands. Trade, foreign

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Fair probe would give a different picture of graft

Morshed reacts to TI report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday said a fair investigation following proper method would definitely give a different picture of Bangladesh's corruption.

"Bangladesh would not be among the 50 most corrupt countries if any fair investigation is made," he said talking to diplomatic correspondents at his office.

"I don't want to make any value judgement about the Transparency International's (TI) report whose basis is newspaper reports here," he added.

Morshed said newspapers in Bangladesh are enjoying full freedom and they publish whatever reports they want.

He said massive corruption exists in many countries but their names are not on the TI list because

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