

Outlaw killed in 'shootout'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

An outlawed party leader was killed in a 'shootout' between his cohorts and police in Ataikula here early yesterday.

The dead, Tikka Khan, 35, was the Ataikula unit chief of Purba Banglar Communist Party (Lal Pataka). Hailing from Haripur village in Ataikula, he was accused in a number of cases, including four for murders, claimed police.

Sources informed law enforcers that some outlaws were moving towards Ataikula from Chandail of Atgharia.

Acting on the information, a team of Ataikula police took position at Shimulchura around 3:30am, said Md Habibul Islam, officer-in-charge of Ataikula Police Station.

Sensing police's presence, the gang opened fire on them forcing retaliation.

Tikka was caught in the shootout and died on the spot, while his associates managed to flee the scene, added the OC.

Over 100 rounds of bullet were traded during the half an hour long gunfight.

Police recovered a sawed-off shotgun and six bullets from the spot. They sent the dead body to Pabna General Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

This was the fourth 'crossfire' incident in the district this year.

Drama at Ctg

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carton that was torn while the container was being carried around 12:30pm, said officials of Chittagong Port Authority and Chittagong Customs.

The cartons were later opened in presence of the officials concerned but nothing was disclosed till 5:00pm. But sources said 12 out of 18 boxes contained "rifle-like objects".

Finally, around 5:30pm, CPA Chairman Commodore Anwarul Islam said they became sure that the goods in the 12 boxes were training equipment imported for Bangladesh Army.

He said the items that looked like rifles are paintball markers. They were imported by a private firm for the director, Military Training, Army Headquarters in Dhaka.

The CPA chairman also said the private firm that imported it for the army did not give prior information about the consignment, resulting in the confusion.

Physical, mental

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students' minds.

The policy will be applicable to government and non-government primary schools, lower secondary schools, higher secondary schools and colleges, vocational institutions, madrasas (up to alim), and all other educational institutions.

The policy also gives directions to teachers, and officials and employees involved in educational institutions not to indulge in such punishable behaviour with students in classrooms or at any other time.

If anyone is found involved directly or indirectly in meting out corporal punishment, the action will be considered as a punishable offence, and punitive actions can be taken against the accused. Actions can also be taken against the accused under the criminal law, the policy stipulates.

It also says the heads of educational institutions must take necessary steps to implement the policy and an earlier circular of the education ministry which banned corporal punishments in educational institutions, and they also must take steps to raise awareness about the disadvantages of such punishments.

Managing committees of educational institutions must take steps to stop corporal punishments, and also raise awareness about it, the policy says adding that managing committees and grassroots level officials of the education administration must regularly monitor and help implementation of the policy.

The policy suggests training of teachers, officials and employees concerned in resisting physical and mental punishments to students. It also suggests making students' parents aware about what kind of punishments are meted out in an institution.

On August 9 last year, the government banned meting out corporal punishments to students at all educational institutions in the country.

Businessman

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shot him at his residence in Merul Badda yesterday.

In the Tongi incident, the dead was identified as Hazrat Ali, 50, a resident of Dattapara in Tongi.

Gazi Ruhul Imam, officer-in-charge of Tongi Police Station, said Ali along with his chauffeur and his one staff was going to his Banani office in a private car around 9:00am.

On nearing National Tube Factory in Tongi, the criminals riding on a motorcycle sprayed bullets on the car and left the scene.

Ali and his chauffeur Mohammad Arif, 32, sustained bullet injuries while the staff escaped the attack unhurt.

Ali was rushed to a local clinic where doctors declared him dead.

The injured driver was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Police are conducting a drive in the area to nab the

killers, the OC said adding that they could not ascertain the reason behind the killing.

Police suspect that the attack might have followed from feuds over trading of land.

Meanwhile in East Merul Badda, a gang of 5 to 6 robbers cut through the metal barricade of one of the rooms and entered the house of Mohammad Ismail, 45, around 4:00am to steal gold ornaments and other valuables.

Sensing the presence of the robbers, Ismail caught one of them and, seeing this, another robber shot Ismail on the stomach and the gang managed to flee, said Ibrahim Hawlader, brother-in-law of Ismail.

Ismail was admitted to DMCH. The value of the gold ornament looted by the robbers is yet to be ascertained, said Hawlader.

He said Ismail is the owner of a printing press at Arambagh in Motijheel.

Women policy

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empowerment in the country, she said, adding that at present, education particularly for girls is a priority of the government.

The PM mentioned that the present government has made education free for girls up to class XII, and offers stipends for girls in rural secondary schools.

"Our efforts have been successful in removing gender disparity in primary and secondary schools. We are now planning to provide free education for girls up to degree level," Hasina said.

The prime minister said she firmly believed that the political-economic empowerment is a prerequisite for the development of women.

"They [women] are encouraged to participate in politics and administration, and are recruited in all professions including the armed services," she said.

The PM hoped that the girl students, who will be coming out of this university, would emerge as modern, progressive and matured women, with full of self-confidence, and they would be ready to face challenges of an ever changing complex world.

The government has donated lands to the AUW worth \$ 80 million. This is the first time in the country that the government made such donation to a private university.

Hasina hoped that all the Asian countries and the World Bank would take this contribution of Bangladesh into serious consideration, and come forth with their own financial support to enable

the university to have its own campus with buildings as soon as possible.

She also assured that the government would extend all-out cooperation to the AUW authority whenever required.

Chancellor of the university Cherie Blair, also the former UK first lady, presided over the function.

Blair said that she was very much excited to have the official duty for the AUW and also thanked the prime minister for her utmost cooperation towards the development of the university.

The AUW would be a good example of regional cooperation across the world, she said, adding that Bangladesh has emerged as the bridge between the South Asian and Asean countries.

Some businessmen of Chittagong gave several cheques to the prime minister worth Tk 2 crore as donation to the AUW. Hasina handed over the cheques to the chancellor.

The function was also addressed, among others, by Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni and World Bank Group Managing Director Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala.

Acting Vice Chancellor of the university Kamal Ahmed gave the vote of thanks.

Later, Hasina unveiled the plaque of the foundation stone of AUW, and offered munajat.

The university is going to have its permanent campus constructed in the next two years on an area of 130 acres of land allotted by the government.

Home makes

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As per the directives issued earlier, Abdullah was supposed to submit the petition today (April 27).

On April 19, the metropolitan PP asked him to take necessary steps for withdrawal of charges against all the seven indicted for killing private university student Ashikur Rahman Khan Apu and injuring his two elder brothers in the capital's Wari area.

Sources said the home ministry has stepped back following widespread criticism arising from an investigative report run by The Daily Star on April 25.

It had made several moves in around last 10 months to have the murder case withdrawn on grounds that it was filed to "harass the accused for their political affiliations".

Family members of the victim's family, however, maintain it was a clear-cut case of murder to serve the purpose of one of the accused. And there was nothing political about it.

Besides, they say, none of the three brothers was involved with any political party.

The case was filed with Sutrapur Police Station on May 24, 2008, and in October that year, charges were pressed against the seven-- Monjurul Abedin Russell, Mahbub Alam, Mohammad Ali alias Munna, Nawshad Hossain Mollah alias Robin, Iftekhar Beg alias Jhalak,

Biplob Chandra Das and Atiq Ahmed Shiplu.

Of the accused, Russell, Jhalak and Munna are behind bars, Biplob and Robin on the run, and Mahbub and Shiplu are out on bail.

Shiplu and Biplob are activists of Jubo League, the youth front associated with the ruling Awami League, while Munna is said to be a cousin of Home Minister Sahara Khatun.

Mahbub and Russell are charge-sheeted accused also in a case for a double murder in Tantibazar in 2005, and Jhalak is an accused in an arms case.

Attack on bus in Pakistan kills 13

AFP, Quetta

Armed men attacked and set fire to a passenger bus in Pakistan's troubled southwest, killing at least 13 people, including women and children, officials said yesterday.

The attack took place late Monday in Sibbi town, 180 kilometres southeast of Quetta, capital of the oil- and gas-rich southwestern province of Baluchistan bordering Iran and Afghanistan.

Separate blasts targeting two navy buses killed at least one person and wounded another 17 in the port city of Karachi yesterday, officials said.

Venezuela's Chavez takes Syrian leader's side

AFP, Caracas

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez lent his support to embattled Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad on Monday, blasting what he called attempts by western powers to oust him by force.

"From here we greet president Bashar al-Assad," Chavez said, after witnesses reported that Syrian troops backed by tanks had rolled into the town of Daraa, the epicenter of recent anti-regime protests, killing at least 25 people.

"Terrorists are being infiltrated into Syria and producing violence and death -- and once again, the guilty one is the (Syrian) president, without anyone investigating anything," said Chavez.

He gave no further details to support his claims.

Ministry

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rivers," said Rizwana, who is also a member of the committee the ministry formed yesterday.

The shipping minister, however, contradicts her and says they need further clarification from the HC as to what foreshores are and what rivers are made up of.

Sources said the deputy commissioners told the meeting that in many cases foreshores have been recorded as individuals' lands, and it is very difficult to regain those.

Foreshore is a *Khas* land. Gazipur DC Kamal Uddin Talukder earlier admitted to The Daily Star that successive district administrations had leased out those lands "although they should not have done it".

According to the Land Management Manual, the DCs have no authority to lease out foreshore lands.

The HC in the judgment ordered the DCs of Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur and Munshiganj to demarcate the Buriganga, Shitalakkhya, Turag, Balu and Dhaleswari as per the CS and RS records and retain the eroded area and formed land (shoal) as part of rivers.

Foreshore is defined in the judgment in light of port rules as the soil lying between low-water mark of dry season and high-water mark of monsoon during normal tides.

The shipping minister launched the setting up of boundary pillars along the Turag on April 12.

Coal holds gas

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required for this operation.

The second solution is conducting intervention in the producing gas wells under the Petrobangla. This can be implemented within six months at a cost of around 10 million US dollars.

These two steps alone can increase gas production and supply by 150 mmcf/d to 200 mmcf/d, said Energy Adviser to the prime minister Dr Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury who chaired a meeting on the draft report of the Hydrocarbon Cell yesterday at Petrobangla premises.

The third solution involves work over of several old but producing gas wells of the country to increase output. This would require around \$ 70-80 million. This could be completed by next year and add up to another 300 mmcf/d gas to the national grid.

"We will begin taking steps as soon as the Hydrocarbon Cell submits its final report," Dr Chowdhury said.

"We have already started implementing some of the suggestions given in the draft report. For instance we are installing a seven kilometre pipeline to connect the Titas Gas Field with the Bakhrabad system (which is responsible for gas supplies to Chittagong). This would instantly increase some gas supplies to the Bakhrabad system," he noted.

He added that the Cell is expected to finalise the report soon.

Faster rail runs out of steam

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double track and improve the signalling system. But the government and the project's funding agency Asian Development Bank (ADB) have failed to select a firm to implement it.

The ADB gave \$100 million in loan, half of the total estimated cost of the projects, in April 2007. But the money remained unused, while the delay has pushed the project cost to Tk 1,400 crore from Tk 1,150 crore.

Sources say both railway officials and ADB are responsible for the delay by taking long time to complete their tasks.

The tender to select pre-qualified bidders for the project was floated on December 27, 2007. However, ADB cancelled it in September 2009 suspecting that the firms had submitted bids in connivance with each other, says a railway official.

A fresh tender was floated in April 2010 in which three firms were found technically responsive. Earlier, the technical evaluation committee took six months to prepare its report, while ADB took three months to approve it.

The three firms are China Railway Group Limited, Sino-Hydro Corporation Limited and Samwan-TSO, a joint venture company of Korea and France.

Engineer MA Kashem, project director, said the project has started moving fast. "We have recently done financial evaluation of the responsive firms and sent the report to ADB for approval," he told The Daily Star.

LAKSAM-CHINKI ASTANA DOUBLE-LINE

The Tk 501 crore project, excluding consultant fee, was initiated in July 2006 to establish another track along the 61-kilometre route. However, the railway is still in the process of appointing a consultant for it.

Communications

Minister Syed Abul Hossain last month chastised the railway officials concerned for the slow progress of the project, of which Dilip Kumar Dey is the director.

Remodelling of Chittagong railway station

and rehabilitation and modernisation of Pahartoli workshop are also included in the project. Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

is funding for this project.

AKHAURA-LAKSAM DOUBLE LINE

This project, also initiated in 2007, is in the primary stage too. The World Bank has agreed to provide Tk 13.83 crore to appoint a consultant for the project, but nobody knows from where money would come to execute it.

Project Director Md Abu Taher said the consultant will conduct a feasibility study and prepare a design of the new rail track and assess its cost.

Purchase of 15 MG locomotives, 50 MG coaches and rehabilitation of the existing 71-kilometre track between Akhaura and Laksam are also included in this project.

The project to construct double-line bridges on the Bhairab and Titas rivers has also failed to make any headway.

Insiders say implementation of the projects would increase capacity of the track as well as the number of trains.

People of the eastern zone will make train journey as their first choice if the projects are implemented, they add.

Fakhruddin

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sent to the two yesterday, the House body sought their version of the incident that took place during the last caretaker government rule.

These were the second such letters to them in a month.

On behalf of the JS probe body, the parliament secretariat sent the letters to their addresses in the United States where they have been staying for over a year now.

"Copies of the letters were sent to the Cabinet Division and Armed Forces Division, a committee source told The Daily Star adding that soft copies of the letters have been e-mailed to Fakhruddin and Moeen.

Earlier on March 29, the probe committee issued the first letters to the duo, asking them to be present at the committee meeting at the parliament building on April 18.

Instead of appearing before the sub-committee, the former chief adviser and army chief sent written statements.

Both claimed they had tried their best to defuse the situation. They, however, did not mention anything about the alleged torture on students and teachers in the aftermath.

Describing the statements as incomplete and meaningless, the committee decided to ask them to be at the committee meeting slated for June 5.

The parliamentary standing committee on the education ministry formed the four-member sub-committee in August 2010.

On August 20, 2007, a violent protest broke out on the DU campus over a brawl between an army man and a student at a football match on the university playground.

BG Press

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the press employees as they came to withdraw their food allowance from the BG Press office at Tejaon in the city around 11:00am.

The three had destroyed the dignity of the press by leaking out test papers for recruitment of assistant teachers of public high schools, said the employees, who also chanted slogans demanding exemplary punishment to them.

Another accused, Abdul Jalil, a proof pressman who was accompanying the three, escaped the scene soon after the scuffle began.

However, police rescued the three around 1:00pm and took them to Tejaon Industrial Police station.

Citing Rangpur district Chief Judicial Court's order, BG Press Deputy Director Jakir Hossain said Mostafa and Laboni had obtained bail. He could not say anything about Shahidul.

Police said Mostafa and Laboni were granted bail while Shahidul was on the run.

Talking to The Daily Star at the police station, Shahidul denied his involvement with the scam.

Asked why he remained a fugitive and came to withdraw the allowance after 10 months, he said, "I had been suffering from jaundice for two months and was receiving treatment at Khulna Medical College Hospital."

Mostafa and Laboni declined to say anything.

Duty Officer Faruk Bhuiyan of the police station said a meeting was being held with the authorities concerned on the issue.

On July 8 last year, Rangpur police arrested 167 people in Gangachhara upazila in connection with the question paper leak.

The probe committee formed by the education ministry primarily identified 11 people, including the four, to be directly involved with the incident.

Hasina joins constitution talks

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proposed retaining Islam as state religion, keeping the phrase BISMILLAH-AR-RAHMAN-AR-RAHIM above the preamble of the constitution and imposing no ban religion-based political parties.

Workers Party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Ganotanri Party and National Awami Party strongly opposed the Jatiya Party proposals.

Theses four parties' stance on the issues reflected the views of eminent jurists who joined the talks with the special committee on Sunday. The jurists also opposed the existing provision allowing former chief justices to head caretaker governments.

Against this backdrop, Hasina, also prime minister

and leader of the grand alliance, is expected to give her views on the issues at the talks she was invited to on April 20.

The AL president along with some of her party leaders is scheduled to take part in the talks at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban this noon.

Contacted over the telephone yesterday, some senior AL leaders said the party chief will clarify its stance on the crucial issues in the light of the prevailing political situation.

They however expressed ignorance about the party chief's views since she did not consult them nor held any meeting of party any forum to discuss the issues.

Citing previous talks with the prime minister, several members of the special

committee, however, said she is in favour of keeping Islam as state religion and the phrase BISMILLAH-AR-RAHMAN-AR-RAHIM above of the preamble of the constitution, and allowing political parties based on religion.

By holding talks with the AL chief, the special committee will wrap up its three-day consultation that began on Sunday.

Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia boycotted the talks on Monday terming the consultation "conspiratorial".

The special committee will hold a press briefing on the outcome of the consultation when it ends, Co-chair of the committee Suranjit Sengupta told this correspondent yesterday.

BCL men clash at DU

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number of them took shelter in the TV room of the dorm but to no avail.

Dormitory sources said the hall authorities and Chhatra League leaders calmed down the clashing students after an hour. They claimed the factions had been ready with arms for the fight since Monday night.

Chhatra League sources said a row between the two factions had been brewing over a programme held last week inside the dorm.

They said Ali and Mohiuddin factions attacked the Mahi faction

because Mahi was becoming stronger than the other two groups and it had boycotted the programme last week.

Police recovered a pistol, two bullets and sharp weapons including large machetes from inside the dormitory compound during and after the clash.

Meanwhile, the ruling Awami League backed Chhatra League Dhaka university unit suspended its Mohsin Hall unit committee and expelled its president Ali and 10 others from the organisation in connection with their involvement

in the clash.

DU Proctor KM Saiful Islam said a three-member enquiry committee headed by house tutor Abu Taleb has been formed to investigate the incident. The committee has been asked to submit its report in seven working days.

The proctor said stern action would be taken against the students found involved in the incident.

The university authorities last night filed a case in this connection against Ali, Mohiuddin and 10 others with Shahbagh Police Station.

GB says all transactions

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The government-appointed committee, headed by Prof AK Monaw-war Uddin Ahmad of Dhaka University, submitted the report to the finance minister on Monday.

Although the report has not been officially published, the country's press and electronic media ran news items on some irregularities in Grameen Bank.

The microcredit organisation said in a statement the irregularities mentioned in the review report are administrative issues, which can be solved with appropriate executive actions.

Grameen Bank said the report does not contain any allegations of corruption and misuse of aid funds by the microfinance bank, Dr Yunus or anyone working in the bank.

Charges of mishandling of donor funds surfaced over Grameen Bank and its founder after the Norwegian state television aired a documentary last year accusing him of transferring funds in 1996 without prior approval.

"The Grameen family is gratified that the report confirms that there was no wrongdoing with regard to NORAD funds. We are also happy to note that the report

recognises that Grameen's interest rate is the lowest among microfinance organisations in Bangladesh," the statement said.

"We appreciate the committee's conclusion that Grameen Bank and its sister organisations have had a profoundly positive impact on the socio-economic condition of Bangladesh."

Grameen insisted the report did not contain any suggestion that the review committee had been misled in its review process by Grameen Bank and any of its officers, rather it recognised that the bank's officers had fully cooperated with the review process.

"The report does not contain anything to suggest that Prof Yunus or his family members or any other person involved has profited personally, whether financially or in any other way," the statement said.

"We are glad to know that Grameen Bank has been cleared of the unfounded allegations of improper lending activity and that the bank's core functions have been given a clean bill of health."

The Nobel-winning organisation said some peo-

ple in the country's media community took advantage of the occasion of submission of the report, and ran misleading stories of their own-making.

"We are deeply concerned about these statements published in several newspapers against Grameen Bank and Prof Yunus on the occasion of the submission of the report."

The bank said Grameen and its sister organisations are working to solve the myriad socio-economic challenges faced by the country.

"In trying to find solutions, Grameen has come up with effective and innovative means through which we may achieve the goal of poverty alleviation in Bangladesh," the Grameen statement said.

"Everything that we have done in our decades of operation has taken place in good faith and transparency."

Grameen also said it is fully committed to taking all possible measures to protect the greater interest of its 83 lakh borrowers, 25,000 employees and other stakeholders.

It appealed to all concerned to refrain from making any unfounded statements that will affect the independence and effectiveness of the country's best known institution.

Limon

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Jhalakathi District Judge Faruk Ahmed rejected a review petition of police seeking continuation of investigation in the cases filed by Rab against Limon.

On March 23, Rab shot the HSC examinee in the left leg while he was on his way to bring his cows back home in Chhaturia village of Rajapur. Later, the leg was amputated.