

Family wants punishment to killers

Pirojpur village mourns for Niladri

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

The picture at Niladri Chattopadhyay's village home is indeed heart-rending.

His family members were all stunned. They did not know how to express their shock at the death of Niladri, who was known as Nantu among his family and friends.

Niladri's mother Arpana Chattopadhyay had been weeping ever since she came to know about her son's murder. While her relatives and neighbours were trying to console her, she was crying out, "I forbade Nantu to go to Dhaka. But he did not pay any heed to my words."

His father Tarapado Chattopadhyay, however, was speechless. He was sitting in a corner of the front yard at his house in Chalissha village under Tona union of Pirojpur Sadar Upazila.

Niloy's only sister Jayashri Chattopadhyay, who is a first year student of Pirojpur Government Suhrawardi College in the department of English, had a blank look on her face. "Her eyes have dried out," one of her neighbours commented. "What's my brother's fault? They [killers] murdered him brutally. I want an exemplary punishment to the killers of my brother," Jayashri said loudly.

Niladri's neighbours were equally shocked. They also demanded an immediate trial of the killers.

Family sources said that he had visited the village home two weeks ago during the Eid holiday. It was then his mother, having learnt about the death threats, requested her to stay back in the village. But he reassured her saying not to worry about those threats.

Niloy passed the SSC exams from Tezdaskathi High School and his HSC from Pirojpur Government Suhrawardi College. Then he went to Dhaka for higher education, said Niladri's uncle Nirmol Chattopadhyay, who is a lecturer at a college in the upazila.



Blogger Niladri's mother breaks down in tears in her Pirojpur residence after hearing the news of her son's murder. Right, locals and media people throng the narrow passage to the five-storey building on Goran Alley-8 yesterday, where the blogger lived in a rented flat on the top floor.

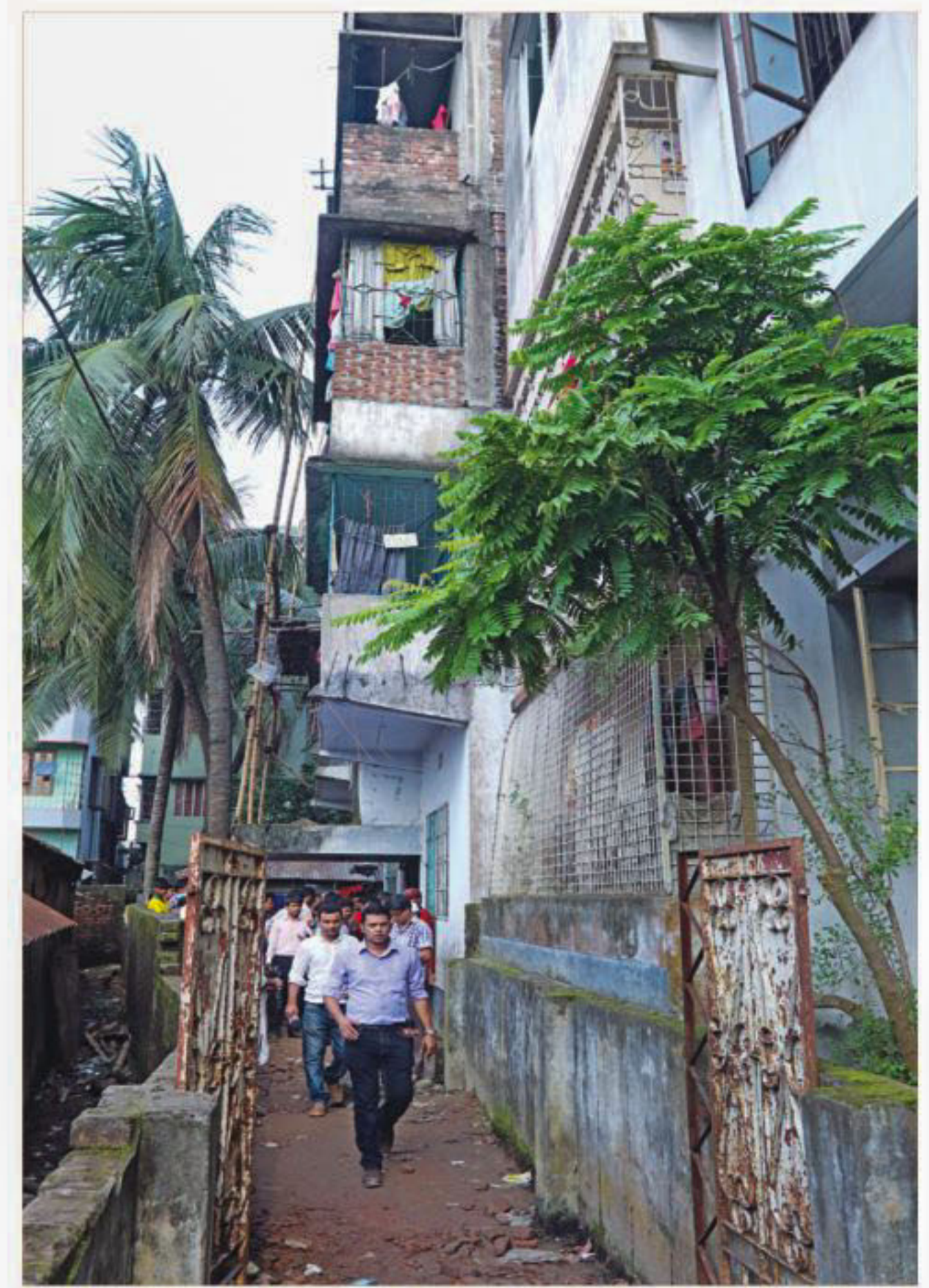


PHOTO: STAR

Blogger killed once again

FROM PAGE 1

Allah (swt) and His Messenger (peace & blessings be upon him), whose name is Niloy Chowdhury Neel."

The sender identified himself as Mufti Abdullah Ashraf and claimed to be the spokesperson of "Ansar Al Islam (al-Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent, Bangladesh Chapter)".

Contacted, police said they had no clue as to who this Ashraf was.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police Joint Commissioner Krishnapada Roy said it was a planned murder and bore the hallmarks of the previous murders of other bloggers.

The time of the murder was carefully picked, as most men were at mosques attending Jumma prayers then, he told reporters at the scene.

Earlier this year, suspected militants killed three secular bloggers and writers -- Avijit Roy in February, Oyasiqur Rahman in March and Ananta Bijoy Das in May.

All three were hacked to death with cleavers, but outside their homes.

Various extremist groups claimed responsibilities for their murders through tweets. However, law enforcers are yet to verify the authenticity of those claims.

Criminologists and fellow activists say police failure in cracking the murder cases of secular bloggers and writers has apparently boosted the morale of religious extremists as they continue to go after their targets one after another.

Niloy's wife Asha Moni said her husband received threats over the phone and in Facebook several times and was followed by some men on a number of occasions lately. He sought law enforcers' help in this regard in vain. Of late, he was desperately trying to leave the country.

Niloy and Asha were married for two years.

She said a man in black T-shirt and jeans came to their top-floor flat in the five-storey building after 1:00pm. The man, carrying a bag, requested her to allow him in for having a look around

the flat as he was looking for a flat there to rent.

Asha walked the man through the flat, but became suspicious as he was continuously sending messages through his cell phone. She then asked the man to leave right away, but three more youths, brandishing machetes, had entered the house by this time.

The four, all aged around 30, then ran straight to the bedroom where Niloy was and started hacking him indiscriminately, as they shouted: "Allahu Akbar."

One of them held Asha at gunpoint and locked her sister Isratun Tonni in the kitchen from outside.

The Daily Star correspondents saw blood splattered on the bedroom walls and the book shelf.

All the while, Asha screamed for help but no one from the neighbourhood responded.

The killers left within five minutes before the next door neighbour, Md Shamim, could come out to help.

On their way out, the assailants

locked the flat from outside.

"I saw three of the youths carrying bloodstained machetes going down the stairs," said Shamim.

"They took revenge with cleavers because they failed to counter his writings through logic," said a wailing Asha.

After completing his master's in philosophy from Dhaka University last year, Niloy had been working as a researcher at Research and Development Collective, a local NGO.

Condemning the murder, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) Executive Director Sultana Kamal in an email to this newspaper said, "ASK is appalled at the state of affairs which gives reasons to believe that the law and order forces are not acting seriously enough to stop such violence on free thinkers."

Niloy's friend Dipok Sil said they were classmates in Tejdaskathi High School in Pirojpur from where they did their SSC in 2005. Niloy regularly wrote on Facebook and a blog named

"Istishon" under the name of Niloy Neel.

In February 2013, he became an activist of Gonojagoron Mancha, which champions the demand for the capital punishment for war criminals. He was also involved with Science and Rationalist Association of Bangladesh.

His write-ups were largely secular, based on logic, and often took a dig at Jamaat-e-Islami, war criminals and Jamaat leaders for their role as Pakistani collaborators during the country's 1971 Liberation War.

Fellow blogger Parvez Alam said apparently all the targets were free thinkers who spoke against the fundamentalists opposing Bangladesh's birth.

While Parvez and other bloggers fear that they might be the next targets, the Islamists in their email sent out to the media warned: "If your 'Freedom of Speech' maintains no limits, then widen your chest for 'Freedom of our Machetes'."

BCL activist hacked to death by rivals

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A BCL activist was stabbed to death and another injured allegedly by their rivals in Barisal's Agailjhara upazila yesterday afternoon.

The dead, Russell Bepari, 22, was a member of Gournadi upazila unit BCL, the pro-Awami League student wing. Critically injured Rintu Sarkar, a member of Agailjhara upazila unit BCL, was being treated at Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital.

Russell and Rintu were going to visit Sagar Serniabad, another member of the Agailjhara upazila unit BCL, by a motorbike as Sagar asked them to come to his house in Sheral to collect some money from him, said Nurul Islam, father of Russell.

He alleged that Sagar's supporters hacked Russell and Rintu indiscriminately on their way around 5:30pm, leaving them critically injured.

Russell was declared dead at Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital.

SM Aktaruzzaman, superintendent of police in Barisal district, said the incident might have happened over the distribution of profit coming from drug trading.

Both Russell and Rintu were accused in several criminal cases, according to police.

His plea for security went unheeded

FROM PAGE 1

recorded the general diary and given him security," she said.

Niladri's friend Devjyoti Rudro, who accompanied the blogger to the police stations, also made similar allegations. He also provided The Daily Star with a copy of the draft of the GD that Niladri wanted to file on May 14.

In a Facebook post on May 15, Niladri mentioned about the police's refusal to accept his application. He also talked about it in an interview with the UK-based newspaper Guardian the same month.

However, the officers-in-charge of both police stations refuted the allegations.

Mostafiz Bhuiyan, OC of Khilgaon Police Station, told The Daily Star that no blogger had contacted him for filing a GD with the police station.

Expressing surprise at the allegation of refusal to record the complaint, OC Mehedi Hasan of Shahjahanpur Police Station, said, "I don't know anything about the matter."

Meanwhile, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal told BBC Bangla Service that the slain blogger didn't go to police to file a GD.

"As far as I know, he [Niladri] didn't tell anyone about his insecurity. He also didn't inform the police," said the minister.

Rudro told The Daily Star that Niladri had received threats over his cell phone around three months ago and on Facebook several times.

He gave an account of how Niladri was followed by two unknown men on May 13 evening.

Around 7:00pm, Niladri boarded a



bus to go to Gulistan after attending a programme at Shahbagh to protest the murder of blogger Ananta Bijoy Das. He sensed that two men, who were also aboard the bus, were following him.

He got off at Gulistan and took a human-haulier. He then spotted one of the two men inside the vehicle.

He got down from it midway and entered an alley looking for a place to hide. As he found that the two were still following him, he hid inside a mosque in Shahjahanpur Amtoli area.

Later, he phoned one of his friends and asked him to come to the mosque. He then returned home with his friend.

The following day, Niladri along

with Rudro went to Khilgaon Police Station to file a general diary but found that the OC was not there. Rudro called the OC over mobile phone and gave him details of the incident. The OC told him to talk to the duty officer.

When they requested the duty officer to record the GD, he asked them to go to Shahjahanpur Police Station, saying the place of the incident was in Shahjahanpur.

On May 15, they went to Shahjahanpur Police Station. The duty officer there declined to file the GD. He asked them to go back to Khilgaon Police Station, saying Niladri's house was in Khilgaon.

Frustrated, they left the police station. Later, Niladri talked to several police officials of his acquaintance, and one of them asked him to leave the country, said Rudro.

He, however, couldn't name any of the police officers whom Niladri had contacted.

Talking to The Daily Star, Asha Moni said her husband had been in a state of panic after the incident and tried to go abroad. He even convinced his boss to transfer him to the Chapainawabganj office of Research and Development Collective.

But he returned to the capital after two weeks, as he couldn't adjust to the weather there, she said. "He was in fear all the time."

In an interview with Guardian in May, Niladri said he was scared that "he would be killed and that he had tried to file reports with local police about continued harassment". He claimed his complaints were not taken seriously.

18 rescued while being trafficked

A CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Police yesterday rescued 18 people, including women and children, from Bagerhat town when they were being taken to the border in Satkhira to be trafficked to India.

The victims are inhabitants of villages in Morrelganj upazila of the district. The alleged trafficker, Abbas Hawlader, 40, of Chaltebunia village of the same upazila, was held.

A police team stopped a Satkhira-bound flatbed truck from Morrelganj near Dartana bridge around 9:30am, said Sub-Inspector Yunus Ali, in-charge of Bagerhat Sadar police outpost.

The law enforcers then found the victims in the truck. Some of the rescued people told the police that they were going to India in search of good jobs there, the police official said.

Driver and helper of the vehicle were also detained.

"Trafficker" Abbas' job was to collect people from different areas of Bagerhat and Pirojpur and hand them over to other human traffickers in border areas of Satkhira, said Tozammel Haque, officer-in-charge of Bagerhat Model Police Station.

Abbas said he was taking the people to Kalarua border area in Satkhira for Tk 5,000 per person (except for the children). Those people could have entered India after they were handed over twice to other traffickers.

Not a single case made headway

FROM PAGE 1

writer and blogger of Bangladesh origin, but law enforcers haven't been able to make any headway in the probe yet.

Detectives investigating the case claimed they have identified seven persons and collected their nicknames and photos but could not arrest anyone yet.

"We are trying our best to find and arrest the killers," said Mashrukure Rahman, deputy commissioner of Detective Branch (South).

He hoped that the case would see some progress once they got the evidence collected by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The FBI has been assisting detective police in the Avijit murder case and one of its team already visited Dhaka.

Talking to The Daily Star, Avijit's

father Prof Ajay Roy said, "I have also heard of such claims of identifying some people and I do hope that they would be arrested. But I wonder why they are not yet arrested if police have really identified them. Is it their lack of efficiency?" he asked.

Earlier, law enforcers arrested Shafiqur Rahman Farabi, a former Hizb ut-Tahrir leader, in connection with Avijit's murder. But they haven't yet been able to establish Farabi's link with the murder.

Avijit was hacked to death near the Dhaka University's TSC on February 26 after he and his wife came out of the Ekushey Boi Mela. His wife Rafida Ahmed Bonya was badly wounded in the attack.

The status of investigation in Ananta Bijoy Das's case is no different.

Blogger Ananta, an activist of Sylhet Gonojagaran Mancha, was hacked to death by a group of assailants in broad daylight at Subid Bazar Bankalpara in Sylhet on May 12. His elder brother filed a murder case on that night.

The case was transferred to Criminal Investigation Department three weeks after the murder, but there hasn't been any progress as none of the killers was detected yet.

A CID team arrested Idris, a photo-journalist of the Daily Sabuj Sylhet, as a suspect. But they could not get any breakthrough from him during his remand.

"The investigation is on, but there is no mentionable progress in the case yet," CID Special Superintendent (organised crime) Mirza Abdullal Baqui told The Daily Star.

Ananta's elder brother Ratneshwar Roy said they only want the killers be arrested as immediately as possible.

Blogger and online activist Oyasiqur Rahman's case, however, saw some progress. Two people -- Zikurullah and Ariful Islam -- were arrested while they were fleeing the spot after the attack, but that was also done with the help of locals and a hijra.

Police arrested another suspect Saiful Islam, a madrasa teacher, from a checkpoint in Saidabad area days before the assault on 27-year-old Oyasiqur. He was shown arrested in the Oyasiqur murder case after Zikurullah confessed that Saiful was also part of the group that came to kill Oyasiqur.

But the masterminds in all the cases still remain undetected. Oyasiqur too

was hacked to death in broad daylight in the capital's Tejgaon area on March 30.

Law enforcers showed some signs of success only in the case of blogger Ahmed Rajib Haider's case.

They detected the killers and masterminds and pressed charges against the main accused Mufti Jasimuddin Rahmani, chief of militant group Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), and seven ABT members and students of North South University.

The case is now under trial. Rajib, an activist of the Shahbagh movement, was hacked to death in the capital's Pallabi on February 15, 2013.

However, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal claimed the government has not failed to check attacks on bloggers and law enforce-

ment agencies remain active to identify the militant outfits responsible for those killings.

"It is not true that we have failed to stop bloggers' killings. The militants are very desperate but we have arrested many of them. We are also taking action against the others," he told BBC Bengali Service yesterday.

Referring to the slain blogger Niladri Chattopadhyay, the minister said the militants could kill him taking advantage of the time when the people were saying their Juma prayers.

"We hope to identify and arrest the killers as the DB, Rab and intelligence agencies are working to that end," he added.

Kamal said police are ensuring security of the bloggers and other citizens when they ask for it.