

Criminals shoot two policemen

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna
Suspected criminals shot two police officials apparently to avoid being frisked by them in Dangergram in the district's Atgharia upazila yesterday. Injured sub-inspectors Md Monirul Islam and Tofazzal Hossain of Atgharia Police Station were undergoing treatment at two hospitals. Police said Monirul and Tofazzal in plainclothes were riding a motor-bike towards Ekdanta. Reaching the Dangergram area around 11:30am, they saw a car being driven suspiciously in the same direction. As the SIs, aged about 40, signaled the car driver to pull over, the vehicle stopped. Some five passengers got down from it and one of them fired two shots at the cops. The attackers soon fled the scene, leaving the car behind, said Md Faruk Hossain, officer-in-charge of Atgharia Police Station. Police sent the injured cops to Pabna Medical College Hospital. SI Monirul, who was shot in the throat, was later shifted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital. In the afternoon, law enforcers seized the car and five arms on the spot, said the OC, adding that they could not identify the attackers until last night. Talking to The Daily Star, Superintendent Jihadul Kabir of Pabna police said they would use the seized car as a clue to identify the criminals.

Punish those

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recommended forming a separate body like NCTB and a separate education board for primary education. Soon after the government started distributing some 36.21 crore copies of textbooks among 4.26 crore students of pre-primary, primary and secondary students on January 1, a sizeable number of errors and anomalies, including spelling mistakes, wrong arrangements of paragraphs and omission of articles, made newspaper headlines. The issue also triggered a firestorm of protests on Facebook and other social media platforms. Many alleged that some poems and prose have been dropped from Bangla textbooks of different classes as demanded by Hefajat-e-Islam, a Qawmi madrasa-based organisation, and Bangladesh Awami Olema League as those were written by "Hindu" writers and "atheists". Faced with a volley of criticism, the government made two officers of NCTB Officer on Special Duty (OSD) and suspended its artist/designer. Two separate committees were formed to find out the errors and the people responsible for the mistakes. Meanwhile, eminent citizens at a roundtable yesterday demanded that the government bring back old pieces in textbooks and remove new additions, alleging that the changes in the textbooks went against the spirit of the Liberation War. An independent probe commission, comprising noted educationists and experts, needs to be formed to find out the people behind the changes, they said in a five-point demand placed at the roundtable. Claiming that the textbook changes were a part of conspiracy, they urged the government to find the conspirators and bring them to book. Sammito Sangskritik Jote (SSJ), a platform of cultural organisations, arranged the roundtable at the capital's Liberation War Museum (LWM). Speaking at the roundtable, eminent cultural personality Kamal Lohani said they have to gather people from different professions and wage a movement against the culprits. A section of educationalists only took money and their names were printed in books. They did not care about the contents, he alleged. "What a shame!" he said, adding that these so-called educationalists were not concerned about what the children were learning. Terming changes in the textbooks a "consequence of recent militant attacks", noted theatre personality Nasiruddin Yousuff said the changes rang alarm bells among people. Among others, cultural personalities Hasan Islam, Ramendu Majumdar, Mamunur Rashid, columnist Syed Abul Maksud, SSJ President Golam Kuddus and Shyamoli Nasrin Chowdhury, widow of Shaheed Dr Alim Chowdhury, spoke at the event.

Dark Age kingdom

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But further excavation has revealed that it "was a place of religious, cultural and political innovation whose contribution to culture in Scotland has perhaps not been given due recognition," according to the dig's co-director, Dr David Bowles. Researchers now believe the site could have been the ancient Kingdom of Rheged's seat of power, although this is yet to be confirmed. The kingdom is said to have been ruled by King Urien, who appears in Arthurian legends. In some of the ancient stories he marries King Arthur's sister Morgan le Fay, although their marriage is not portrayed as a happy one. In one legend, Morgan plots to take the sword Excalibur, kill Urien and Arthur, and place herself and her lover Accolon on the throne. Despite its historical importance, the Kingdom's location has been unknown since medieval times. It was previously thought to have been in Cumbria. Excavation at the current site began in 2012, but a book on the site, The Lost Dark Age Kingdom of Rheged, was released this month by Dr Bowles and his fellow archaeologist, Ronan Toolis. "Trusty's Hill was likely the royal seat of Rheged, a kingdom that had Galloway as its heartland," said Dr Bowles, a Scottish Borders Council archaeologist. "This was a place of religious, cultural and political innovation whose contribution to culture in Scotland has perhaps not been given due recognition. Yet the influence of Rheged, with Trusty's Hill at its secular heart ... and Urien its most famous king, has nevertheless rippled through the history and literature of Scotland and beyond." An excavation of the site found Trusty's Hill was a complex type of fort, dating to 600AD, with a layout consistent with a settlement of high status during that period of history. Royal inauguration ceremonies are also believed to have taken place at the site, suggesting its inhabitants were at the top of the social hierarchy. However, the settlement was destroyed by a rival group in the early seventh century.

Cheated

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returned in 2011-12 and got a contract to transport urea fertiliser from Chittagong Port and Karnaphuli Fertiliser Company Ltd (Kafco) to the corporation's warehouses across the country, according to sources and documents. Elias got the work order for transporting 39,884 tonnes. However, in the last five years, he transported 32,612 tonnes. According to the contract, all the fertiliser was to be delivered within 21 days but he took four years. He did not deliver the rest 7,272 tonnes worth Tk 31.81 crore. He was served several notices and warnings over the years but he ignored those. Elias and his company then disappeared again. BCIC officials concerned had given Elias the work order even without the required security deposit of Tk 9 crore. He only deposited around Tk 1 crore as security money to take part in the bidding and withdrew the amount immediately after getting the contract. Interestingly, both the BCIC and government audits failed to find these anomalies until 2015, added the sources. Not only did the company steal fertiliser, it also delivered shortweight bags filled with sub-standard fertiliser. Each fertiliser sack is supposed to have 50kg. The in-charges of four BCIC warehouses at that time wrote more than 12 letters to the BCIC general manager [marketing] that the sacks Nur Trading delivered were shortweight and contained sub-standard product. Responsible officials, mainly the then BCIC general manager [marketing] Syed Zakir Hossain Kazi and his associates in the marketing department [transport section], and high-ups in the industries ministry, did not enquire about the disappearance of this huge quantity of fertiliser. Syed retired in 2014 and withdrew his retirement benefits in full after that. No probe body was formed. No action was taken and Nur Trading went scot-free. Syed Zakir Hossain Kazi could not be reached for comments. Sources said Elias had good relations with the then minister Dilip Barua as both were from the same area, an allegation Dilip Barua denies. Elias is from Rangadia of Anwara upazila in Chittagong. Elias resurfaced last month and managed to become the lowest bidder for transporting 1.75 lakh tonnes of fertiliser. The contract was worth Tk 27.89 crore. But the technical evaluation committee and the BCIC Board, headed by its chairman, did not approve the bid. The committee and the board labelled Nur Trading a non-responsive bidder and asked a bank to freeze around Tk 1.40 crore Elias had deposited as security. But Elias was able to prevent the BCIC from taking his money. He obtained a court stay order on the BCIC request, an official concerned said. Until yesterday, neither the BCIC nor Elias could withdraw this money from the bank. Kamrul Ashraf Khan Poton, chairman of Bangladesh Fertiliser Association (BFA), confirmed Nur Trading's fertiliser mishandling to The Daily Star. Elias, however, could not be contacted. The Daily Star yesterday visited the address he mentioned as his office in Chittagong. There is only a timber warehouse there. Even the BCIC can't find him when it needs him. Officials visited his Chittagong home, but he was not there, sources said. "The company was issued several warnings, but it did not respond. So the decision to file a case against it has been made at a recent board meeting," said an official seeking anonymity. Another official said some BCIC top officials received kickbacks from Nur Trading and over the years they allowed it to return and harm the BCIC. Contacted, BCIC Chairman Mohammad Iqbal said he has been trying to save the institution from this kind of traders. "Measures will be taken to ensure that companies like this can't do business with the BCIC anymore," he told The Daily Star at his office recently. Asked about favouring some companies based in Chittagong for kickbacks, former industries minister Dilip Barua told The Daily Star he did not even know any company from Chittagong. If anyone received kickbacks, the person could be from the BCIC or lower-level officials, he said, adding that the BCIC deals with overall aspects of fertiliser, including importing and transportation. "We were totally unaware. The BCIC was responsible for this. We did not monitor [fertiliser transportation] physically." In the last eight years, at least 2.58 lakh tonnes of the key agro input valued over Tk 900 crore went missing and had never reached the buffer warehouses of the state-run BCIC.

Hasina blasts Yunus

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Without mentioning any name, the PM in parliament alleged that Yunus, pioneer of microcredit and social business initiative, evaded tax on his fixed deposit income and also tax of some 40 to 50 companies that have links with Grameen Bank. In response to a supplementary query of Jatiya Party lawmaker AKM Mayeedul Islam, she asked Finance Minister AMA Muhith to look into the matter and take action. Earlier, the JP lawmaker demanded a probe to find out whether Yunus, former managing director of Grameen Bank, is involved in "a deep conspiracy against the country." Mayeedul, also former chief of naval staff, said, "This man set up Grameenphone using Bangladesh Railway's optical fibre. Instead of taking action against petty criminals, catch him with an iron hand as he laundered thousands of crores of taka." About giving licence to Grameenphone, the PM said, "When we came to power in 1996, he used to visit me and request for licence to set up Grameenphone. He committed that profits of Grameenphone would go to Grameen Bank, which would use it for giving loans to general people, and Grameen Bank would grow stronger. "I believed him and gave licence to set up Grameenphone, as there was only one telecom operator at that time. We also wanted to make telecom service available to the general people. "Grameenphone was third in the bidding process and was not supposed to get the licence. But we gave it licence, thinking that the profits would go to the poor people through Grameen bank. "It is unfortunate that he sold a good portion of the shares which ought to go to the state. He had turned Grameenphone into his personal property. About 30 percent of Grameenphone shares was in his hand and the rest was sold to others. "He had cheated, as profits of Grameenphone were not given to Grameen Bank. "He is lucky that he didn't take flak for any of his deeds." The PM also blamed Yunus and "the editor of a famous newspaper" for the World Bank's withdrawal of funding for the Padma Bridge project. "Following his defeat in the legal battle [challenging his removal from the post of Grameen Bank MD], he got angry with us. He and the editor of a famous newspaper together met the World Bank president and also lobbied with Hillary Clinton [the then US secretary of state] to stop funding for the Padma Bridge project. "The World Bank later brought the allegation of a corruption conspiracy centring the project and suspended its funding." Terming Yunus a "usurer", Hasina alleged that he made money and a fortune by fleecing poor people. During the 1998 flood, 70 percent of the country was under water but Grameen Bank staffs tortured people for weekly instalment. "At that time, we asked the bank not to collect weekly instalment. Our government provided Tk 400 crore to the bank to run its activities." Hasina further said Yunus and the editor together moved to launch a party. "But people didn't respond to the call of the usurer." She claimed that Yunus was behind "the harassment, repression and torture" of her son, daughter, sister and her cabinet members by US intelligence agencies in the name of probing corruption allegations against them. "But they [US intelligence agencies] didn't find anything." The PM said she had nothing to do with Yunus' removal from the post of Grameen Bank MD; it was the law that didn't permit him to keep the post after the age of 60. "When he [Yunus] crossed 70, our Finance Minister Mr Muhith and my foreign affairs adviser met him and offered him the post of the adviser emeritus to the bank provided that he left the managing director's post. "But he went to court and filed two cases -- one against Bangladesh Bank and the other against the government. But he lost both the cases." Following his request, the then US secretary of state Hilary Clinton phoned Hasina and questioned her why Yunus had been removed from the post of MD. "I told her [Hillary] that he lost the

cases and we had nothing to do with it," the PM added. SHAMIM, FEROS SLAM 3 EDITORS
Awami League MP Shamim Osman and Jatiya Party MP Feroz Rashid slated Prothom Alo, The Daily Star and The Daily Observer and their editors for what they said was publication of false news against ministers and MPs. Shamim demanded that the House enact a law with a provision for punitive action against media outlets for assassinating characters of ministers, MPs and political leaders by publishing false news. The two were speaking on the thanksgiving motion on the president's speech. Amid thumping of desks by MPs of both the treasury and the opposition benches, they demanded that the House summon Prothom Alo Editor Matiur Rahman, The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam and The Daily Observer Editor Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, and quiz them for "their involvement in yellow journalism and maligning image of MPs", including Shamim and slain Gaibandha AL MP Manzurul Islam Liton. Following Shamim's demand for issuing a ruling, Deputy Speaker Fazle Rabbi Miah, who was presiding over the sitting, said, "If you could raise this issue as per the rules of procedure of parliament, I could issue a ruling. "If you do so, I will surely issue a ruling given that I chair the sitting at that time," Rabbi told the ALMP. The deputy speaker also said he was mesmerised by Shamim's speech. In his speech, Shamim castigated The Daily Star and Prothom Alo for publishing "false" news on AL MP Liton and "assassinating" his character. "The Daily Star and Prothom Alo are assassinating characters of MPs. Who are they? They published news items based on anonymous sources." The influential MP from Narayanganj said Prothom Alo published a news report against him over the Narayanganj seven-murder, labelling him as a killer. Shamim lambasted the AL leaders, who attended a cake cutting programme held on The Daily Star's founding anniversary. He, however, didn't mention the date. Feroz Rashid said Shamim's speech was a reflection of the views of the 350 MPs.

Two notches up, 15th

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Among the 176 countries surveyed, Bangladesh ranked 145th from the top, and 15th from the bottom -- two steps up from the 13th position among 169 countries surveyed in 2015. This time, it scored 26 out of 100 points, one point higher than last year's. Bangladesh's score hovered between 25 and 27 and its rank between 13th and 16th since the TI introduced '0 to 100' score scale in 2012, instead of '0 to 10' scale. The countries are arranged from least corrupt to worst corrupt in the index, and the one with the highest score is the least corrupt and sits at its top. Transparency International, Bangladesh shared the findings of the global survey at a press conference at its office in the capital's Dhanmondi yesterday. Asked about the reason behind the country's almost static position, TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman said the main reason for failing to move upward faster is that the institutional, legal and policy structures created to strengthen the state's anti-corruption potentials remain far from being effectively enforced and practised. "Corrupt people, especially those having links with power and politics enjoy collusive protection and hence an informal impunity," Iftekharuzzaman told The Daily Star. Other institutions meant for ensuring accountability under the national integrity system have been weakened by a monopolisation of political space, he said. "The space for freedom of speech and opinion is also perceived to have been curtailed which is counterproductive to democratic practice and conducive to flourishing of corruption and culture of impunity," he added. The TI has been publishing the report every year since 1995. The index is based on perceived level of corruption in public sectors and misuse of public office or position. Bangladesh was included in the index in 2001. The country was at the bottom of the TI scale for five years from 2001 to 2005. CPI-2016 At the press conference, Iftekharuzzaman said Denmark and New Zealand scored the highest -- 90 - to top the 2016 list of least corrupt countries. As in the previous year, Somalia became the worst corrupt country with a score of only 10. In South Asia, Bangladesh remained second after Afghanistan from the bottom, and shared its position with Cameroon, Gambia, Kenya, Madagascar and Nicaragua. Iftekharuzzaman said Bangladesh is still far from achieving the global average score of 43. "Our position is not good. I say it's alarming. Our position is only better than Afghanistan in South Asia which is embarrassing for us. We must overcome the situation," he said. TIB Chairperson Sultana Kamal said, "It gives us a bit of relief that we have not gone backwards. But we should not take the fight against corruption lightly because we are not in a position to be happy."

POSITION OF SAACR COUNTRIES	
NAME	RANK from top
Bhutan	27
India	79
Sri Lanka	95
Maldives	95
Pakistan	116
Nepal	131
Bangladesh	145
Afghanistan	169

TOP FIVE MOST CORRUPT	
LEAST CORRUPT	
Somalia	Denmark
South Sudan	New Zealand
North Korea	Finland
Syria	Sweden
Yemen	Switzerland

SOURCE: TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL

"But we could have done better," he said. The reasons why Bangladesh remains "at low level" include non-fulfilment of the government commitment to curb corruption, weakening institutions of accountability due to monopolisation of political space, deficit in effectiveness and independence of the Anti-Corruption Commission, shrinking space for the media and civil society, and absence of trial of cases of corrupt high-profile persons. He, however, said the ACC is now more active under the new chairman. In order to do better, the government and the other stakeholders have to show political will to deliver on the pledges and bring the corrupt people to justice irrespective of their status or identity, said Iftekharuzzaman. Effective institutions, professional integrity and impartiality of public service, administration and law-enforcement agencies, and strong law and policy to control conflict of interest are also essential. Increased space has to be ensured for citizens, the media, civil society and NGOs so that they can raise voice against corruption, he added. TIB trustees M Hafizuddin Khan and Ali Imam Majumder, Deputy Executive Director Sumaiya Khair and Director (outreach and communication) Rezwan-ul-Alam were also present.

LITON MURDER Family worried as killers still not traced

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha
Family members of slain Awami League lawmaker Manzurul Islam Liton have expressed concern as law enforcers are yet to find his killers even though 25 days have gone by. "There is no development or progress in arresting the masterminds behind Liton's killing," the victim's elder sister Afroza Bari said at a press conference held by the victim's family at Gaibandha Press Club yesterday. "We don't know why the killers chose Liton's own home to kill him and how they made it into the living room of the house without revealing their identity. "Where were his two pet Shepherds [dogs] on that evening? Why did neither relatives nor party men rush to the spot even after five bullets were fired? We need answers," Afroza said. "We will never get our brother back but his soul would get peace if the killers are brought to justice." She said the family remains hopeful as the prime minister herself is looking into the matter.

Khaleda sued

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be the prime minister of undivided Pakistan rather than leading Bangladesh (the then East Pakistan) to independence. Moreover, in the name of development, the Awami League government looted a large amount of money by delaying the work of flyovers and Padma Bridge. The BNP chief had made the remarks at the 38th founding anniversary of Jatiyatbadi Chhatra Dal at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh in Dhaka. Such remark had defamed the image of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as well as of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The plaintiff appealed to the court to issue an arrest warrant against the BNP chief. Meanwhile, Khaleda will not appear today before the makeshift court at Bakshibazar Alia Madrasa to place her self-defence statements in connection with Zia Charitable Trust and Zia Orphanage Trust graft cases due to hartal, said her lawyer Sanaullah Mia.

Patients bear

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verdicts for avoiding "lengthy process of courts", said Abdul Mannan, president of Bangladesh Clinic and Diagnostic Owners' Association, Rajshahi chapter. "The court gave its verdict in moments, but we don't see the same speed when we file an appeal," he said. He said he never experienced any clinic owner challenging a mobile court verdict to the higher court. "Our raids followed the law of the land. The clinics' authorities have the right to challenge the court's decisions," said Sarwar Alam, executive magistrate of the mobile court. "At the clinics we found surgical materials which expired four years ago and those must cause infections, even deaths if administered to patients. Such activities of putting lives in danger cannot be measured by any amount of fines." "Clinic owners' movement protesting the verdict is unethical. They should be rather sorry for what they did," he said. The association called off the strike at 4:00pm yesterday following a meeting with the district administration at the office of Rajshahi Deputy Commissioner. The association leaders claimed the administration assured them such raids would not be conducted in future. However, Ashish Kumar Saha, director of health, Rajshahi division, said no such assurance was given. "We asked them to understand the reality and the government's intention to improve the quality of health services," he said.

4 killed

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Ramakrishna High School were going to a picnic in Dinajpur. The bus overturned in Danbox area on the road around 9:15pm after it crashed into a roadside tree as its driver lost his control over the steering, leaving Jahurul and Milton dead on the spot and 20 other picnickers injured. The injured were taken to the hospital. The bus was driven by a 35-year-old driver. Six of the badly injured were later shifted to Jessore General Hospital, he said.