

2 YRS OF BLOGGER NILOY MURDER

20 deadlines but no charge sheet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two years have gone by but investigators are yet to complete their probe into the killing of blogger Niladri Chattopadhyay Niloy.

They missed the court's set deadlines for submitting the charge sheet 20 times, frustrating Niloy's widow Asha Moni who has been waiting for justice.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court yesterday asked detectives to submit the probe report by September 17.

"It is really shocking that investigators could not submit the charge sheet even after two years," Asha told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Since the murder, I have been passing days in fear and I do not stay outside for a long time," she said, adding that she always returns home before night-fall.

She said she was not aware of what the investigators were actually doing. "Yet, I believe and hope that the governments will definitely ensure punishment of the killers."

Investigators said it would take more time to submit the charge sheet as they were still looking for six suspects.

On August 7, 2015, Niloy, also an activist of Gonojagoron Mancha, was

hacked to death.

Four men armed with cleavers got into his Goran home, posing as potential tenants, and then killed him in his bedroom.

Banned militant outfit Ansar-al-Islam, Bangladesh chapter of Al Qaeda in Indian Sub-continent (AQIS), claimed responsibility for the murder.

Detective Branch (DB) of police has been investigating the case.

Police have so far arrested eight suspects. Of them, three -- Kawsar Hossain, Kamal Hossain Sarker and Khairul Islam Rifat -- are in jail.

Five others secured bail from the High Court. They are: Saad al Nahiyani, also an accused in the case filed for attacking blogger Asif Mohiuddin, Tariqul Islam, Masud Rana, Mawlana Abdul Gaffar and Morteza Foysal Sakib.

Rifat, the so-called IT expert of ABT, has given a confessional statement before a court under section 164.

He gave a detailed description of the murder and mentioned the names of six other suspects, said Hasan Arafat, DB additional deputy commissioner who is coordinating the investigation.

"We are now looking for the six

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The Port Road wholesale fish market in Barisal has been flooded with hilsa as several trawlers reach the places with over 3,000 maunds of large hilsas from the Bay of Bengal. A taur, a fisherman, said they had been unsuccessful in finding hilsa in rivers and had ventured out to sea, which rewarded them well.

PHOTO: STAR



Biman

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"We could check how many tickets have been sold and to whom those tickets were sold if we got the list. I don't know why Biman is not providing us with the list."

Sources at the hajj agencies said unscrupulous travel agents want to create an artificial ticket crisis to get extra price from the hajj agents.

Biman General Manager (public relations) Shakil Meraj yesterday said the national airliner has so far been forced to cancel 14 hajj flights and failed to send 8,036 pilgrims to Saudi Arabia.

On the other hand, the Saudi Arabian Airlines also cancelled three flights that could carry around 1,200 pilgrims.

On permission to operate extra hajj flights, he said the authorities do not want to disclose information about it due to "strategic reasons."

The religious affairs minister on Saturday said Biman had requested the Saudi authorities to give permission to operate 20 extra hajj flights to carry all pilgrims to Saudi Arabia.

Officials at the Bangladesh Hajj Mission in Saudi Arabia said all hajj agencies would have to submit necessary documents to the Saudi authorities to get the pilgrims' visas by August 17.

The religious affairs secretary said they have already warned the hajj agencies to complete all formalities and apply for visas within the deadline.

Neptune

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Experts say such clouds are normally closer to the poles.

They believe a huge high-pressure, dark vortex anchored deep in the atmosphere may have caused the storm, which is almost as big as Earth.

Gases rising up in the vortex are thought to be cooling and condensing out to form clouds.

Unlike the watery clouds on Earth, those on Neptune consist of methane.

Professor Imke de Pater, from the University of California at Berkeley in the US, said: "Historically, very bright clouds have occasionally been seen on Neptune."

"But usually at latitudes closer to the poles, around 15 to 60 degrees north or south. Never before has a cloud been seen at or so close to the equator, nor has one ever been this bright."

But it may not be linked to a vortex and instead could be a huge convective cloud similar to those seen on other planets, including one detected on Saturn in 2010.

However, a convective cloud would be expected to 'smear out' significantly over a period of about a week.

UC Berkeley graduate student Ned Molter made the discovery during a dawn test run of the WM Keck Observatory telescope on Maunakea, Hawaii.

Mr Molter, who observed it getting much brighter between 26 June and 2 July, said: "Seeing a storm this bright at such a low latitude is extremely surprising."

Neptune, the fourth biggest planet in the solar system, is the windiest with wind speeds at the equator reaching up to 1,000mph.

In comparison, a Category 5 hurricane on Earth has wind speeds of 156mph and the most powerful tornadoes spin at around 300mph.

HC orders

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It also directed the authorities concerned to launch a probe to find out whether the then sub-inspector of Sutrapur Police Station Zahidul Haque, who conducted the inquest, and Dr Md Maskud, who performed the autopsy, had committed misconduct.

The HC passed the order as Zahidul and Maskud in their reports said the body was bearing only one injury mark although it was found from video footage, media reports, confessional statements of condemned prisoners and other evidence on record that the victim suffered several wounds in the brutal assault by the accused.

The inspector general of police has been asked to investigate Zahidul, while the health secretary, director general of health services department and chairman of Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council have been ordered to probe the allegation against Maskudul.

The HC also asked advocate Manzill Murshid, president of Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh, who moved around 200 public interest litigations, to oversee the inquiries and update the court from time to time.

HC VERDICT

The two BCL activists, whose death sentences were confirmed by the HC, are Rafiqul Islam Shakil and Rajon Talukder.

Rajon is absconding while Shakil is in jail.

The HC upheld the lower court verdict considering the gravity of the offence, Deputy Attorney General Moniruzzaman Rubel told The Daily Star.

Their activities and involvement in the killing corroborated with the inquest and postmortem reports, the confessional statements given by four condemned prisoners and other evidence on record, he said.

They were found guilty as they caused grievous bodily harm to the victim, leading to his death, added Moniruzzaman.

The accused, who took part in the killing by chasing Bishwajit and assisting the prime accused, Rajon and Shakil, have been given life imprisonment, because their assistance and active role caused the death.

The DAG also said the HC acquitted the other accused as it found that the prosecution had not been able to prove the charges brought against them beyond reasonable doubt.

Previously sentenced to death by the trial court -- Mahfuzur Rahman Nahid, Emdadul Haque Emdad, GM Rasheduzzaman Shaon and Noor-e-Alam Limon -- got life imprisonment. Limon is absconding while the other three are behind bars.

Md Saiful Islam and Qayum Mia Tipu, both sentenced to death by the trial court, were acquitted. The HC also acquitted two others -- Golam Mostafa and AHM Kibria, who were earlier given life imprisonment. The four are in jail.

This court, however, refrained from making any comments about 11 people, who were given life imprisonment by the lower court, as they did not move any appeal before the HC.

It can be presumed that the sentence and conviction of the 11, who are on the run, will remain in force until their arrest and filing of appeals by them, the DAG said.

Delivering the verdict, the bench of Justice Md Ruhul Quddus and Justice Bishmadev Chakraborty observed that Bishwajit was not a member of any

political party. He was just an innocent poor boy.

The accused had no pre-plan or motive to kill Bishwajit; he was the victim of their political activities, the court said.

The court also observed that students are sometimes misguided by political leaders, and even teachers are reportedly assaulted by unruly students, which is alarming for the society and the nation.

Details of the verdict will be known when its full text will be released.

Advocate Nazibur Rahman, another deputy attorney general, who stood for the state, told this correspondent that the government will decide about moving appeal before the Supreme Court after receiving the full text of the HC verdict.

Meanwhile, Munusul Hoque Chowdhury, lawyer for Rafiqul Islam Shakil, told this newspaper that his client's family has wished to move an appeal before the apex court.

HC OBSERVATION
The court observed student politics in the country has lost its glory. The use of weapons and narcotics has become an open matter in politics.

Students are getting involved in murder, extortion and other criminal activities that are making them ferocious and dangerous.

On the autopsy and inquest report, the court said an unclear investigation may cause disaster. Therefore, a probe is needed to identify whether the people who prepared the reports were negligent in their duty.

THE MURDER

On the morning of December 9, 2012, a number of bombs exploded in front of Bahadur Shah Park as the 18-party opposition alliance enforced a road blockade.

Hearing the sounds, pro-government BCL men of Jagannath University unit rushed to the spot, wielding sticks and chased some people suspecting them to be pickets.

At one stage, they caught Bishwajit Das, 24, proprietor of Amantron Tailors in Sutrapur, who was passing through the area.

For about five minutes, they beat up and hacked him indiscriminately, dragging him down to the streets. Some of them continued pounding on him as he tried to escape.

Bishwajit did manage to break free and cross the road, but collapsed.

Some onlookers then put him on a rickshaw that took him to Mitford Hospital in about 10 minutes. He gasped for air in the hospital for 15-17 minutes and then died.

Family members say Bishwajit was not involved with any political party.

The trial began in July 2013.

On December 18, 2013, Judge ABM Nizamul Haque of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-4 sentenced eight BCL activists to death and 13 others to life in prison.

Fourteen appeals were filed with the HC by the convicted accused challenging the lower court verdict.

3 pro-AL

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significant role in resolving any conflict between the judiciary and the executive.

Yusuf said that at the meeting he expressed opinion that some of the observations the SC made in its 16th amendment verdict were irrelevant, and those were being used politically.

Khasru told reporters that everybody should be cautious about making statements so that the rule of law and the image and dignity of the judiciary were protected.

'ABT man' arrested in India

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A statement issued by the ATS said during interrogation, Abdullah disclosed that his primary job was to help ABT members get settled in India.

Indian police were searching three districts of Uttar Pradesh to see if there were any ABT sleeper cells there, the statement added.

Abdullah was living in the area for the last one month. He had told his neighbours that he was from Assam.

Before this, he had been residing in Darul Ulum Deoband, a leading Islamic seminary in Asia, in the Uttar Pradesh since 2011, said sources in the National Investigation Agency (NIA) of India.

Uttar Pradesh police chief Asim Arun said, "Abdullah also got his multi-purpose Aadhaar identity card and passport prepared on fake identity."

He said, "Abdullah is associated with the ABT outfit and was involved in preparing fake identity proofs for terrorists, especially from Bangladesh, and he helped them get safe hideouts in India."

Police claimed that they recovered four fake stamps and 13 fake ID cards from Abdullah's Muzaffarnagar home and that they were trying to locate those in whose names the cards were made.

Three others were being interrogated in this connection, an NIA official said.

An Al Qaeda inspired Islamist outfit, ABT was banned by Bangladesh on May 27, 2015 for its militant and anti-state activities. It has been accused of a series of attacks on secular writers, bloggers and publishers.

In 2015, the group published a hit-list of international bloggers and activists. Nine of the people named were UK citizens and two were from the USA.

IG Arun said during interrogation, Abdullah told ATS detectives that he used to prepare fake identity proofs with the help of Faizan, a resident of Deoband and a Bangladeshi.

Based on this information, Faizan's house in Deoband was searched but he was not there, the ATS official said.

He claimed that Bangla 'jihadi' literature, literature on how to make bombs, a colour printer and a number of fake IDs were recovered from there.

It has come to light that Faizan was also associated with ABT, said Arun.

Uttar Pradesh Police ATS Additional Superintendent Brijesh Srivastava said hunt was on for Faizan.

Abdullah will be produced before

a court today, said police.

CITIC SHARING INFO

"We are exchanging information about Abdullah with the Indian intelligence agencies through informal channels," said an official of CITIC unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

"We are checking whether he has any links with any of the listed militants particularly Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) or Ansar Al Islam members," the official told The Daily Star wishing anonymity.

Meanwhile, Mymensingh Superintendent of Police (SP) Syed Nurul Islam said Abdullah's mother told police that Abdullah started helzo (memorising the Quran) when he was around seven years old at a local madrasa.

Later, he went to a madrasa in Kishoreganj and then moved to another madrasa in Jatrabari. Before leaving for India he went to another madrasa in Mohammadpur.

Officer-in-Charge Mazharul Haque of Tarakandi Police Station said his mother told police that Abdullah used to call her every few days. He last called her three to four days ago and enquired about her health.

Asked whether police found his link with local militants, SP Nurul Islam said they were yet to get any such information.

Protect the four rivers of Dhaka

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Change was approved at the meeting.

PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed journalists after the meeting.

Putting emphasis on carrying out development activities in a planned way protecting cultivable land, forest and water bodies, she said green afforestation had to be strengthened in the coastal and northern regions.

The PM stressed the need for ensuring the use of effluent treatment plant in the industries and Strategic Transport Plan alongside improvement of the sewerage system.

She also gave directives once again to keep water bodies free while implementing any housing scheme and setting up infrastructure in the industrial areas.

On the recent trend of excessive rain in the country, including the capital, Hasina said though people have to suffer a lot due to heavy rain, this also helps free rivers from pollution, reduce

salinity and recharge the underground water level.

She also alleged that except the tenure of the Awami League, canals and lakes in the city were filled, which is the main reason behind the waterlogging.

About the world's largest mangrove forest Sundarbans, Hasina said the Sundarbans is a gift from the Almighty Allah.

The PM also mentioned various steps of her government for the protection of the forest, adding that Bangladesh is one of the first among the least developed countries to form Climate Change Trust Fund not relying on others.

Hasina said after assuming office in 1996, her government took initiatives to protect the environment and water bodies while a provision has also been kept in the 15th amendment to the constitution for protecting the environment. Besides, the Bangladesh Environment Court Act was enacted in

2010.

Recalling the contributions of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for protecting the environment, she said Bangabandhu had promulgated the Water Pollution Control Ordinance in 1973.

Yesterday's meeting also approved the draft of the National Environment Policy-2017 as well as the draft of the Country Investment Plan on environment, forests and climate change.

The meeting also gave nod to a proposal in principle for setting up environment-friendly industries in Mongla.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith, Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, Environment and Forests Minister Anwar Hossain, Disaster Management and Relief Minister Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Water Resources Minister Anisul Islam Mahmud, and Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, among others, were present at the meeting.

Diving for a living

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Dhaka and its surrounding areas for work but now those days are long gone and they have to travel to distant areas in search of work.

While sharing his experience, Molla Nasir Uddin Duburi said "We stay out of home around a month when we visit far-off places in search of work. Generally, we travel to districts like Barisal, Khulna and Satkhira where there are still a good number of jobs."

He also informed that they get one to two thousand takas for finding gold objects such as necklaces. If it is a diamond necklace, they demand six to seven times more as their service charge. He further added that they still get around eight to nine jobs every month.

Another *duburi*, Mehedi Hasan, said that they go from home to home

in villages to look for work. "We get response from those who have lost their ornaments. In distant villages, we spend our nights at mosques or the balconies of schools. We don't have any problems with that," he added.

The *duburis* use a scoop shaped like a partially enclosed triangular shovel and a garden rack to find lost ornaments. They dive around 10 to 15 feet deep into the water, fill up the basket with the sediment by means of the rack, bring the sediment to the surface and look for the ornament in it.

Interestingly, they sometimes find something else while looking for the lost ornaments and generally share the object with the owner.

The *duburis* observe a number of myth-based rituals before they get into the pond. Before diving in, they offer sweets and bananas to the mon-

sters likely to be living deep in the pond. The *duburis* still believe that such offerings are necessary for the job to be done safely.

"Offerings must be given otherwise a mishap might occur at any moment. Once, we dived into a pond in Sonargaon and a water monster snatched away our scoop, which we never found. We will die if we don't provide offerings to the monsters," Molla Nasir Uddin said.

The number of professional *duburis* is declining; there were 30 *duburis* in the Signboard area even 10 years ago but now the number stands at only 5.

Even the *duburis* themselves do not want to continue with the profession and they want their next generation to be educated and established members of society.