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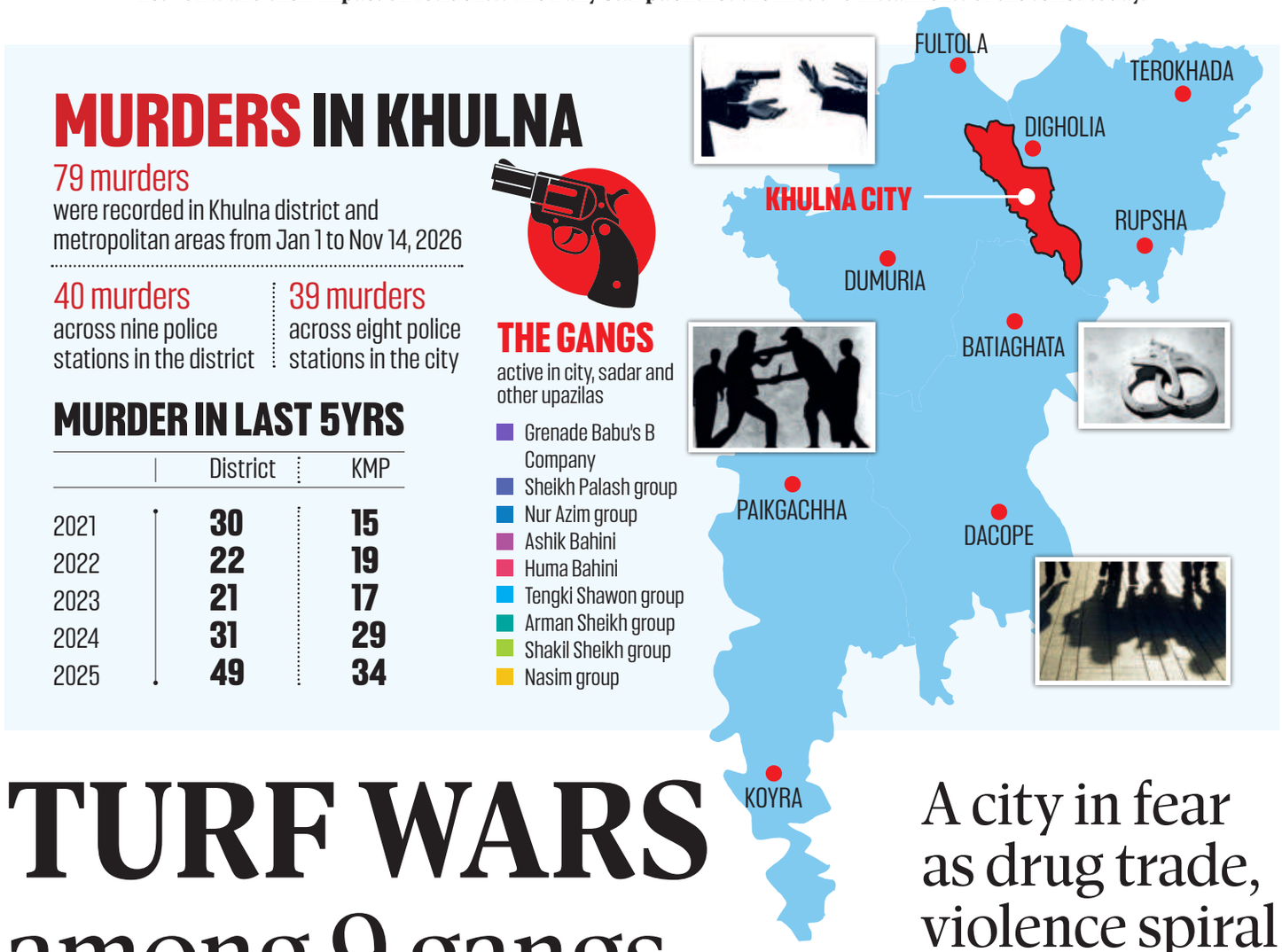
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Khulna's underworld is expanding at an alarming pace, with nine criminal gangs active in the industrial city. Turf wars, drug trafficking, extortion and killings have left residents living in fear. Rival gangs are fighting for territorial control and dominance over the drug trade, fuelling violence across the city. This four-part series examines the activities of the nine gangs, the forces behind the expanding criminal networks and their impact on residents. The Daily Star publishes the first two instalments of the series today.



TURF WARS among 9 gangs turn Khulna deadly

DIPAN NANDY, *back from Khulna*

Nine criminal groups are vying for control of Khulna's underworld, carving out areas of influence and competing over drug trafficking, extortion and businesses. Their rivalries have frequently spilt into deadly violence.

Police and local sources say the groups, once confined to smaller neighbourhoods, have expanded their reach since the political changeover on August 5, 2024, recruiting unemployed youths and teenagers to strengthen their networks.

A senior law enforcement officer, requesting anonymity, said police had been largely ineffective in the immediate aftermath of the political change, allowing criminal groups to expand drug trading and acquire firearms.

The groups that have become more active after the uprising are Grenade Babu's B Company, Sheikh Palash group, Nur Azim group, Ashik Bahini, Humayun Kabir's Huma Bahini, Sheikh Saidur Rahman's Tengki Shawon group, Arman Sheikh group, Shakil Sheikh group and Nasim group.

Although they operate in particular neighbourhoods, they often compete for overlapping areas.

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FIREARMS RECOVERED

Khulna District Police (Jan–Oct 31, 2026)
- 26 firearms recovered
- 18 cases filed
- 38 people accused

Khulna Metropolitan Police (Jan–Oct 31, 2026)
- 51 firearms recovered
- 48 cases filed under the Arms Act
- 81 people arrested

A city in fear as drug trade, violence spiral

DIPAN NANDY, *back from Khulna*

At around 12:30pm on November 9, a padlock hung from the door of a house in Durjanimahal village of Khulna's Rupsha upazila. Its courtyard was deserted, as the family moved elsewhere.

Among the residents of the house was 27-year-old Joy Dhali, who was killed in an attack on August 15. Just 51 days later, on October 5, his father, Akhtar Dhali, 55, was shot dead.

The family of six, including Joy's younger brother Prince Dhali, was involved in fish and shrimp farming in enclosures, locally known as ghers. The surviving family members left the house in fear.

Locals told this correspondent that Joy and his father were involved in the drug trade and used their political influence to maintain control over it.

Akhtar was involved with the BNP, they said.

Police and local sources said their alleged involvement in the drug trade brought them into conflict with B Company, a criminal gang led by Roni Chowdhury, alias Grenade Babu.

They suspect that the rivalry eventually led to the killings after the group had initially threatened the family.

An officer at Rupsha Police Station who is familiar with the investigation said Joy was killed over establishing supremacy in the narcotics trade.

Akhtar named some of his rivals in the

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25,000 bodycams gather dust as police resist scrutiny

TOUSIF KAIUM

Despite repeated directives from Police Headquarters (PHQ), most police members are reluctant to use body-worn cameras that were procured for about Tk 100 crore before the February election to improve transparency and accountability in policing.

Ahead of the 13th parliamentary polls, the interim government announced plans to procure 40,000 body-worn cameras for police.

The force ultimately purchased 20,000 devices and already had around 5,000 usable cameras, bringing the total number of operational devices to about 25,000, The Daily Star has learnt from PHQ officials.

The cameras were intended to help prevent crime, maintain law and order, and create a record of police interactions with the public. The PHQ also established a central data centre under its Operations Unit to monitor their use.

"We discuss the use of these cameras at our meetings regularly. Officials from district and metropolitan units say they will monitor the matter, but there has been no improvement," said a senior PHQ official.

Data from the central monitoring system show that only 314 online body-worn cameras were used between October 4 and 10.



Our force does not want to be accountable -- we have issued instructions repeatedly, but they do not use the cameras.

Additional Inspector General
Khandaker Rafiqul Islam

During the same period, 2,800 offline cameras were used, according to the PHQ Media Wing.

Additional Inspector General (Operations) Saidur Rahman acknowledged that body-worn cameras have remained limited outside major occasions.

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Govt vows debt transparency

Decides to publish regular debt data as repayment costs rise; Khosru outlines reforms as Bangladesh moves to launch sovereign bond

REJAUL KARIM BYRON, *from Cox's Bazar*

Bangladesh will start publishing detailed public debt data regularly as the government seeks to restore investor confidence and contain rising repayment costs ahead of the country's graduation from the UN's list of least developed countries.

Speaking at the country's first international conference on sovereign debt management in Cox's Bazar yesterday, Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury said the finance ministry was working on medium-term debt management strategies, regular debt sustainability assessments, and public debt bulletins.

It will also publish its first annual borrowing plan this fiscal year.

"The government is committed to strengthening public debt management institutions, enhancing transparency, and adopting forward-looking financing strategies," he said.

The reform agenda includes clearer debt records and reporting, better assessment of debt risks, a deeper domestic capital market, and diversified funding sources.

The government also plans to improve coordination among agencies handling debt and fiscal policy and align debt management, including state guarantees, with international best practices.

Khosru said the government will also publish a list of state guarantees and a fiscal risk statement, introduce caps and fees on new guarantees, clear unpaid subsidy bills, establish a single debt management office, and revise the public debt law.

The push comes as loans taken under the previous Awami League government fall due.

Bangladesh spent $4.5 billion servicing its foreign debt in FY2025-26, and the annual bill is expected to peak at around $5.5 billion in FY2029-30, according to Khosru.

Finance Secretary Khairuzzaman Mozumder said the annual borrowing plan would make government financing "more predictable and transparent".

The ministry will also provide fuller reports on domestic and external debt repayments and improve Treasury bill and bond auctions.

Nazma Mobarek, secretary of the Financial Institutions Division, said annual interest payments on foreign debt, in taka terms, would more than double between FY2024-25 and FY2028-29.

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CHAOS IN GOPALGANJ

AL supporters go on the rampage

Take out armed procession and damage police, public properties

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Gopalganj*

Gopalganj town descended into chaos yesterday as supporters of the Awami League and its affiliated organisations, many carrying sticks and other local weapons, marched through the district headquarters and vandalised police and public property.

Among the targets were a police armoured personnel carrier (APC), a police box, the July Monument and Hadi Square. Protesters also removed and replaced signboards at several institutions and reopened the local Awami League office.

Later in the day, there were reports of attacks on houses of BNP leaders and activists in other parts of the district.

All activities of the AL and its associated and affiliated organisations were banned last year, under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

Gopalganj DC Md Arif-Uz-Zaman was withdrawn and replaced by Habiganj DC GM Sharfaraz, while Gopalganj SP Md Habibullah was transferred and replaced by Feni SP Pratyush Kumar Majumdar.

Amid the unrest, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) personnel were

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Hundreds of Awami League leaders and activists, many carrying wooden poles and oars known locally as "logi-boitha", take to the streets of Gopalganj town yesterday, chanting slogans in support of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina. The procession, which began near BSCIC Bridge, breached police barricades and disrupted traffic as activists later set fires on several roads. PHOTO: STAR