

ARMS RECOVERY, GUNFIGHT NEAR KOMOLGANJ BORDER

Trial of 2 Indians begins tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Trial of the two sensational cases in connection with the recovery of a huge quantity of arms and explosives and death of six unidentified persons near the Komolganj border in Sylhet on May 26 last year will begin in Sylhet Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal tomorrow.

In the incident, two injured Indian nationals—Rajkanta Dev Varma and Hashir Dev Varma—were arrested after a fierce gunfight involving Rab (Rapid Action Battalion), BDR and criminals on a hill known as Mendi Miar Tilla. The two accused Indians are in jail now. Recording of statements of

prosecution witnesses will begin tomorrow and will continue next day, according to an order by STT Judge Biplob Goswami, passed on January 30.

On a tip-off that a group of Indian nationals had gathered on the hillock, a 60-member Rab team from Dhaka and BDR troops raided the area on the night of May 26 last year.

In a one and a half hours' gunfight, six persons were killed. The law enforcers recovered one SMG, six live grenades, four wireless sets, one country-made LG, 134 bullets, three mobile phones, 8500 Indian rupees and Tk 1394 and arrested the two injured Indians.

Eight suspects were caught from nearby areas.

Deputy Assistant Director of Rab, Abdur Rashid, was also injured in the gunfight.

Later, Lt. Col. Gulzar, Director of Rab, filed two cases, one under the Explosives Act and the other under the Arms Act against the two Indians. The explosives, arms and ammunition were recovered from nearby areas as per statements of the Indians.

Rab officials earlier said that the Indians were members of an organised gang of terrorists, who attempted to enter Bangladesh illegally.



Chawk Bazar area of Patuakhali town during high tide. Inundation of most areas of the town is a normal phenomenon at that time due to lack of a protection embankment.

STAR FILE PHOTO

20,000 cases pending with Satkhira courts

15 posts of judges and magistrates vacant for long

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

About 20,000 cases are pending with courts in Satkhira due to shortage of judges and magistrates.

Many sensational murder cases including that of erstwhile Constituent Assembly member SM Alauddin and Tuhin are pending for long while seven posts of judges and four of First Class Magistrates are vacant for over one and a half months.

Alauddin murder case is pending for ten years and that of Tuhin for six years, court sources said.

Of the cases, over 11,000 are under trial in 14 courts under the district judgship and around 9000 in 10 magistrate courts including the Speedy Trial Court.

The judges and magistrates are facing immense problems in handling of the huge number of cases.

Alongside, litigants are also being deprived of justice and incurring financial losses as cases linger.

The number of pending cases is increasing every day.

Additional District and Sessions Judge Osman Haidar is conducting trial of cases pending with the three Additional District and Sessions Judges courts as two posts of additional district judges are vacant for 18 months.

Four posts of assistant judges are also vacant for over a year.

According to the Yearly Report 2005 of the District Judgship, 10,765 cases are pending due to lack of required number of judges.

Another 9276 cases are pending with the 10 Magistrate courts.

Moreover, due to shortage of First Class Magistrates, hearing of remand of accused, recording their confessional statements and hear-

ing of cases filed under Section 144 of Bangladesh Penal Code (BPC) are also being hampered. Discharge of duty by magistracy is also being hampered greatly as First Class Magistrates have to conduct mobile courts, eviction drives and other administrative jobs.

"Written appeals were made to the Khulna Divisional Commissioner for appointment of four First Class Magistrates several times, but to no effect", said a source.

Advocate Abdur Rahim, a senior lawyer, the bar association also urged the authorities concerned to take steps for appointment of judges and magistrates for speedy trial of cases. People's confidence in the judiciary is being affected by the long trial process, he added.

Three to die for murder in Meherpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Three of a gang of criminals were sentenced to death yesterday in Meherpur for killing a man who witnessed a murder by them earlier.

The convicts are Rustom Ali, son of Wazed ali; Enamul Haq, son of Toaz Ali and Abdur Rahman, son of Mansur Ali, all of Shympur village in Gangi upazila in Meherpur.

According to court sources, the three led by Rustom, chief of notorious gang Rustom Bahini, had picked up one Yunus Ali from a village in Gangi upazila on November 9, 1998, took him on Shympur bridge and shot him dead. One Atiar Rahman witnessed the murder.

Later, the gang picked up Atiar and killed him. Atiar's father Fazlur Rahman filed a case with Gangi thana.

After examining witnesses, Judge Abdul Hamid pronounced the verdict yesterday.

PATUAKHALI TOWN PROTECTION DAM Survey begins after 8 years of planning

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The Water Development Board (WDB) has at last started a survey for construction of the proposed Patuakhali town protection embankment.

The embankment project is still awaiting approval by the ECNEC (Executive Committee of National Economic Council).

WDB has engaged a consulting firm for the survey, which began work on Thursday.

The consulting firm, Centre for Environment and Geographic Information Service (CEGIS), will submit the survey report by March 30, its officials told this correspondent. The survey team comprise three officials land use specialist Abu Muhammad Ibrahim, engineer Md. Waji Ullah and geologist ATM Shamsul Alam.

The team also talked to local people during their survey on Wednesday and Thursday and later exchanged views with journalists at Patuakhali Press Club.

"I will submit the report to the Ministry of Water Resources by March

30," Abu Muhammad told journalist.

Patuakhali WDB Executive Engineer Abdul Majid Molla, who was present at the press briefing said the ECNEC may approve the embankment project after the survey.

The Tk 17.27 crore Patuakhali town protection embankment project was taken up in 1997 following a visit to Patuakhali by the then agriculture minister Majid-ul-Haque.

The project includes construction of 4.20 km flood control embankment, eight sluice gates for drainage of water, 38 outlets, one kilometre protection wall and installation of four power pumps.

The project was designed to protect the town from flash flood, inundation during high tide, erosion by Patuakhali river and remove stagnant water.

Most of the town is inundated even after a shower or a normal rise in water level of Patuakhali and Lohalia rivers during high tide in rainy season every year.

The town is surrounded by Patuakhali river on the north and Lohalia river on the east. Waters from the rivers surge into the town whenever they rise.

Verdict of Khulna jurno Haroon murder case today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Judge Abdus Samad of Khulna Speedy Trial Tribunal will deliver the verdict in journalist Haroon-ar-Rashid Khokan murder case today.

This will be the first verdict in a case for journalist murder in Khulna.

Shaikh Haroon-ar-Rashid, a senior reporter of the Dainik Purbanchal was gunned down at 7:30pm on March 2 in 2002 near Mujgunni Nesaria Madrasa under Khalishpur thana in Khulna city.

On the following day, his brother-in-law lodged an FIR with Khalishpur thana without naming any one for the murder. The case was later transferred to CID for investigation.

ASP Mawla Bux of CID who investigated the case submitted charge sheet against three terror-

ists on March 3 last year. They are Amjad Hossain alias Kala Amjad, Moktar Hossain Baby and Shahin Molla. Kala Amjad was killed by unidentified assailants at Daulatpur on July 12 last year.

Mokter Hossain Baby is now on bail while Shahin is the lone charge-sheeted accused now in jail.

A total of 13 persons including eight alleged terrorists were arrested as suspects in the murder. But ten out of 13 arrestees have been left out of the charge sheet.

The case was transferred to Speedy Trial Tribunal (STT) on September 29 last year from the court of Additional District and Sessions Judge-2.

Sources in STT said statements of 12 out of 29 prosecution witnesses were recorded during the trial.

Commerce Minister's PA faces extortion charge

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Two criminal cases were filed with a Patuakhali Magistrate court on Sunday accusing Khalilur Rahman, Personal Assistant (PA) of Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, for extortion.

Another case was filed against Dumki Upazila BNP President Prof Baha Uddin Bahar yesterday with the same court, charging him for alleged extortion.

All three cases were sent to the Officer-in-Charge of Dumki thana for 'necessary action', court and police sources said.

The sources said, Baha Uddin Bahar had filed a case with the Magistrate Court on February 5 against Khalilur Rahman and 13 others for alleged extortion.

In the case, Bahar alleged that 13 people, ordered by Khalilur Rahman, attacked him in front of Dumki Janata College Thursday evening, snatched Tk 20,000 and demanded Tk 6 lakh toll from him.

On the same day, Golam Mortuza Sukkur, Chairman of Angaria Chowdhury,

Union Parishad, also a local BNP leader, filed a case with the same court accusing the 14 including Khalilur Rahman.

In the case, Sukkur alleged that they attacked him near Taltala Bazar at about 2 pm on Thursday, snatched money and assaulted him.

On Monday Saiful Alam Mridha president of Dumki Jubo Dal upazila, filed another case accusing 11 persons including Prof Baha Uddin Bahar, president of Dumki upazila BNP for attacking him and demanding Tk one lakh toll.

Mentionably, Saiful Alam Mridha was defeated in Labukhali Union Parishad by-polls held on January 31, allegedly because he was not supported by party men led by Baha Uddin and Khalilur Rahman.

On Thursday at Dumki upazila headquarters, UP chairman Golam Mortuza Sukkur was attacked, allegedly by Saiful Alam and his men when he was going to attend a public meeting of Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury.

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