

2 murdered, another dies in blast while making bombs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kushtia*

Three people were killed in separate incidents in Kushtia and Chuadanga on Wednesday night and yesterday.

They were identified as BCL leader Anisur Rahman Anis and Jamaat leader Amirul Islam of Kushtia, and a BNP activist Mansur Ali of Chuadanga.

Police also arrested an outlawed party cadre with bombs.

In Kushtia, unidentified gunmen shot Anis, former general secretary of Halsha Degree College Chhatra Sangsad and secretary of the college Chhatra League, when he was supervising construction work at railway gate in Halsha bazar under Mirpur upazila at about 9:30am yesterday.

Critically injured Anis, also a con-

tractor, was first taken to Kushtia General Hospital.

From there the doctors shifted him to Dhaka where he died at a hospital at about 3:30pm.

In another incident, Amirul Islam, an activist of local Jamaat-e-Islami, was slaughtered at village Kachbaria under Mirpur upazila. Amirul was also a rice trader.

Police said a gang of eight miscreants went to the house of Amirul at around 1:00am and took him to Khairpur where he was slaughtered.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Kushtia General Hospital for autopsy.

Separate cases have been filed with Mirpur Police Station.

In Chuadanga, Mansur was killed

at Bamanagar village under Alamdanga upazila on Wednesday evening.

According to police, Mansur was making bombs along with his accomplices at a bush when two bombs were exploded at about 5:30pm. He died instantly.

Police rushed to the spot and arrested one injured Ikhtiar Ali, a cadre of outlawed Red flag, one of the factions of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP).

During interrogation, Ikhtiar admitted that Mansur was an expert in making bomb and he often supplied them bombs.

Police also recovered seven bombs from the spot.

Judicial probe

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complainant advocate ASM Iqbal Hossain.

Three other witnesses also appeared before the court but their statements could not be taken due to time constraints.

On December 10, another court ordered a judicial inquiry after Iqbal filed a criminal case against Moudud with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka.

In his yesterday's statement, Iqbal told the magistrate that the then Major Ziaur Rahman of the Army, in his lifetime, did not declare himself as the announcer of the independence.

But Moudud announced that Zia made the historic declaration of independence from Kalurghat radio station in Chittagong as leader of the war of resistance, Iqbal said.

The complainant also told the magistrate that he demanded exemplary punishment to accused Moudud as he, with his knowledge,

distorted the history about the proclamation of independence.

In his complaint on December 10, Iqbal mentioned that Moudud, while holding his former portfolio, in the preface to the publication of the constitution printed on August 1 this year, said Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the national leader of the majority party, was arrested from his residence and taken to the then West Pakistan.

"The elected political leadership failed to give directions to the people at that critical moment.

"In that situation, in response to the indispensable demand of time, the then Major Ziaur Rahman of the Army, made the historic declaration of independence from Kalurghat radio station in Chittagong as leader of the war of resistance."

Moudud's statement is contrary to the fact regarding the proclamation of the independence and nothing but a lie, the complainant said.

Nagorik Committee worried

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Court stay order on a High Court verdict on collecting and making public relevant information of the national election candidates by the Election Commission (EC).

"Given the stay order issued by the vacation bench, it would be convenient for unscrupulous candidates with muscle power and those who have black money to get elected," said a press statement jointly signed by the members of the platform of the country's eminent citizens.

"In view of the upcoming elections, it [Nagorik Committee 2006] reiterates that its demand for right to information about the candidates contesting in the general elections be ensured," it said.

The Nagorik Committee has been campaigning for honest and clean candidates in the next parliamentary election.

Its press release said, "The vacation bench of the appellate division of Bangladesh Supreme Court recently stayed the High Court verdict ordering the Election Commission to collect and make public relevant information about the candidates contesting in the general elections. The solicited information included: candidate's educational and professional background, source of income, asset statement owned by him/her or dependents, any previous criminal record and/or default of bank loans and so forth.

"The verdict would have helped the voters to know all the relevant information about the candidates and make their choice accordingly. At the same time, it would have reduced the opportunity for incompetent, dishonest and corrupt candidates to get elected by concealing information about them.

"It is to be noted that a large number of participants who had taken part in the regional dialogues, organised by CPD across the country over the last nine months, have been exceedingly vocal about electing clean and competent candidates and access to relevant information about all the candidates. Members of the Nagorik

Committee 2006 also spoke strongly in favour of the right to information about the contesting candidates. Given the stay order issued by the vacation bench, it would be convenient for unscrupulous candidates with muscle power and those who have black money to get elected."

The signatories include Rehman Sobhan, convenor of Nagorik Committee and chairman of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD); M Syeduzzaman, co-convenor of the committee and chairman of Bank Asia; Laila Rahman Kabir, co-convenor of Nagorik Committee and former president of MCCI; Fazle Hasan Abed, chairperson of Brac; Abul Ahsan, former foreign secretary; Anisuzzaman, former professor of Bangla, Dhaka University (DU); Samson H Chowdhury, chairman of Square Group; Maj Gen (retd) Moinul Hossain Chowdhury, BB, former adviser to caretaker government; Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, former adviser to caretaker government; Syed Manzur Elahi, former adviser to caretaker government; Angela Gomes, executive director of Banchte Sekha; M Mujibul Huq, former cabinet secretary; Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, chairman of Department of Electronics and Computer Science, Shahjalal Science and Technology University; Mahmuda Islam, Department of Sociology, DU; Mahmudul Islam, former attorney general; Prof Emeritus Jamal Nazrul Islam; Sultana Kamal, former adviser to caretaker government and executive director of Ain O Salish Kendra; M Hafizuddin Khan, former adviser to caretaker government; Iqbal Mahmud, former vice-chancellor of Buett; Wahiduddin Mahmud, former adviser to caretaker government; Latifur Rahman, president of MCCI; Abdullah Abu Sayeed, president of Bishwa Shahitya Kendra; ASM Shahjahan, former adviser to caretaker government; and Debapriya Bhattacharya, member secretary of Nagorik Committee and executive director of CPD.

Rising sea sinks

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islands on the Indian side of the vast Sunderbans, where the Ganges and Brahmaputra empty into the Bay of Bengal.

But scientists have been able to map only 100 islands and found the other two have been swallowed up, says Sugata Hazra, director of Kolkata's School of Oceanography Studies at Jadavpur University.

Fifty-two of the islands are inhabited with a population of more than 1.8 million people.

"Two islands, Suparibhanga and Lohacharra, which have gone under water could not be sighted in satellite imagery. The disappearance of the two islands have rendered over 10,000 people homeless," says Hazra.

"A dozen others on the western end of the inner estuary delta are threatened.

"As the islands sink, nearly 100,000 people will have to be evacuated from the islands in the next decade," Hazra tells the news agency at his office on the university campus.

He blames global warming and the depletion of mangrove areas for the rising sea levels in the world's biggest delta.

The Sunderbans -- or beautiful forest in Bengali -- covers a total of nearly 6,000 square kilometres (2,300 square miles).

The islands, separated by a complex network of hundreds of tidal rivers and creeks, form an important buffer shielding millions from cyclonic storms and tidal waves in the Bay of Bengal.

The report by the oceanography scientists has recently been sent to the federal government as part of India's input for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Changes.

"The study shows several changes in physical, biological and social components and the temperature of the group of islands has risen by over one degree centigrade," since 1965, Hazra said.

The annual number of cyclones has fallen, but they are more intense now due to global warming and this means more coastal flooding, erosion and more saline water moving in on the islands, he adds.

While rainfall has risen only marginally over the years, most of the rain no longer falls during the traditional monsoon periods.

"Rainfall has shifted to the post-monsoon period and this shifting is a definite indicator of climate change," he said.

The study shows that the temperature in this area is expected to rise by one degree centigrade by 2050.

Hazra says the relative mean sea level in the Bay of Bengal is rising at a rate of 3.14 millimetres a year due to global warming.

"And if this trend continues, the rising sea will devour nearly 15 per cent of the islands in the Sunderbans," he adds.

Sunderbans Biosphere Reserve director Atanu Raha, who also studied satellite images of the last 20 years, agreed two of the islands have sunk and a dozen more are under threat of submergence.

"Things like a rise in temperature, in sea level is a highly alarming trend and it needs more study to tackle the situation," he said.

To add to the fears, a study published earlier this month in the journal Science found that global warming may lift sea levels faster than previously expected.

The study by Stefan Rahmstorf, professor of ocean physics at Potsdam University, said rising temperatures could boost sea levels by as much as 1.4 meters (4.6 feet) by 2100 -- almost twice the rate previously forecast.

Climatologists so far agree that sea levels will increase 9-88 centimeters (4-35 inches) over 1990 levels by the end of the century.

But Rahmstorf suggests the range could be much higher, 50-140 centimeters (20-55 inches).