Bangabandhu's Assassination

## Global conspiracies linked to it should be probed

Say noted academicians, writers, journalists at a webinar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

International conspiracies connected to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's assassination should be investigated, scholars from home and abroad told a webinar on Thursday.

Giving indemnity to the killers of Father of the Nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was absolutely wrong, they told the event organised by the Center for Research and Information.

The webinar titled "Bangladesh 1975: Setting the clock" was arranged to mark the National Mourning Day and to pay tribute to Bangabandhu and his family members.

men behind [Bangabandhu assassination] would not move without Ziaur Rahman's backing and Zia would not move without American backing. I think it needs to be further investigated," said Lawrence Lifschultz, an investigative journalist who wrote Bangladesh when he was the South Asia correspondent of the Far Eastern Economic Review.

Talking about 1975, the year Bangabandhu was assassinated, Lifschultz said, "Weeks before the coup, Zia was meeting with the senior member of the US embassy, and that we also know was with the CIA station chief in a private meeting in Dhaka. And we also know that there was tremendous tension within the American embassy over what happened with the American ambassador Davis Eugene Boster very disturbed and stressed as he has given instructions that all the embassy staff would have no contact with anyone planning and thinking about a coup. He articulated those six months before the events occurred.

He also said that Zia had met the CIA station chief at a Bangladeshi businessman's house in Dhaka at a

"But the critical factor on that morning [after the assassination], Dhaka Tribune Editor Zafar Sobhan.

"If they [BNP-Jamaat] had not been

directly involved in this attack, had

they put obstacles in this way [of

getting treatment and nabbing the

The PM alleged that carrying out

killings was their habit as they did not

believe in the country's independence

and they did not believe in the

Liberation War spirit. "Power for them

was a tool to make money through

nentioned that the "venom tree"

that was planted by the BNP-Jamaat

clique, Bangladesh is still suffering

from that. "After assuming power,

AL General Secretary Obaidul

The grenade attack was carried

Twenty-four people, including

Quader also spoke at the programme

out on an AL's anti-terrorism rally on

Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital.

then president of Mohila AL and late

president Zillur Rahman's wife Ivy

Rahman, were killed and over 500

others suffered splinter injuries in

the grisly attack and many of them

Hasina, the then opposition leader,

narrowly escaped the attack but

sustained hearing impairment due to

the impact of the repeated grenade

blasts near the truck-dais of the huge

public rally. AL men saved her life

creating a human shield surrounding

by Khaleda before the grisly grenade

Referring to some remarks made

3 cops taken

to the scene, to account for every minute

spent here," said Additional Director

General (operations) of Rab Col Tofayel

Rakshit was brought out first.

With his hands still cuffed, Rakshit

proactively assisted the Rab men in

arranging the barricades in the zigzag

pattern they had on July 31, while

investigation officer Senior Assistant

Superintendent of Police Khayrul

in low tones out of earshot of the

spectators, but Rakshit was overheard

exclaiming, "'Shoot, shoot!' he told

Liaqat was marched out next. A car

was parked in front of the Armed Police

Battalion (APBn) check-post where the

incident happened, to assist Liaqat in

of the car when Sinha's car was pulled

over, and then he moved himself to the

front of the car so that Sinha cannot

just drive away," said the investigation

officer Khayrul. It was from there that

"He told us that he was on the left

"re-enacting" what happened.

he fired the first shot.

Most of the conversation happened

became crippled for life.

her during the attack.

Mustafa Sorwar.

Islam listened.

joined by senior leaders of the party.

we're uprooting those one by one."

In this connection, Hasina

culprits]?" she questioned.

corruption," she said.

Khaleda behind the attack

General Shafiullah wrote, Zia was the key fellow in the army as deputy chief of army staff who held back any other army from going back to Road-32."

After 1975, Bangladesh went under a real military dictatorship which was even more violent than Pakistani rulers. "In my view, psychologically, Ziaur Rahman was also something of a psychopath in his capability to use and betray others and use violence."

PEN International's Writers in Prison Committee Chair Salil Tripathi, who interviewed self-confessed killer Colonel Faruk in 1986, said Faruk was incredibly confident and he can remember the mercilessness in his

Somebody commits a heinous crime and here it was rewarded, he said, referring to the indemnity ordinance.

"Any crimes against humanity need justice, need some sort of legal remedy. Anything indemnifying violence of this nature simply has no place ideally in any society.

He said that serious questions have to be asked about whether Bangladesh is staying in line with the values of 1971. "You know bloggers are being threatened, being killed, photographers and writers are being put in jail and there are uses of the digital securities act.'

Bangladeshi journalist Syed Badrul Ahsan said the August 15 assassination of Bangabandhu inaugurated the illegal extra-constitutional seizure of

Mohammed Economist Farashuddin Ahmed who was private secretary to Bangabandhu until August 12, 1975, and former Dhaka University pro-vice chancellor Nasreen Ahmed, who was the next door neighbour of Bangabandhu on August 15, narrated the horror of the fateful dav.

The discussion was moderated by

attack and planting of twin bombs -

one of 76 kg and another of 84 kg -- in

Gopalganj's Kotalipara, the PM said,

"Before every attack, Khaleda used to

say AL won't be able to go to power in

100 years. And right before the grenade

attack, she said even Hasina can never

be the leader of the opposition, let

alone the prime minister, as she knew

beforehand, I would be killed on

the evidence of the gruesome attack

while an army officer lost his job as

ne wanted to preserve an unexploded

"They tried to erase all the evidence of

Hasina said one army officer wanted

to keep one unexploded grenade

for evidence and then Khaleda Zia

government sent that officer on forced

drama by the government," she said,

pointing to the Joj Mia issue which

did not allow the AL to discuss the

matter at parliament although many

of the injured were lawmakers and she

Hasina said they were also

hatching a conspiracy to kill her son

Sajeeb Wazed Joy after kidnapping.

It was revealed by US FBI in their

and convicted. The names of BNP

leaders Mahbubur Rahman and

Shafiq Rehman also came up in the

positions of the night -- he was simply

marched up and down the street twice,

hands cuffed and arms held tightly by

two Rab men, while cameras rolled and

Was he simply put on exhibition in front of the public? Possibly.

Did the public think it was

The crowd roared slangs and slurs

A few cried out asking that he be left

alone with them for five minutes. "We

never thought this day would happen

A BNP leader there was accused

was the leader of the opposition.

The PM said the ruling BNP-Jamaat

"And all know about a staged

grenade used in the attack, she said.

The then government destroyed

August 21," she said.

retirement.

investigation.

people watched.

metaphorical justice? Yes.

verdict.

was later proved false.



There is water everywhere underneath the trellis, but the creepers have died and dried in the sun after the water ruined their roots. The photo was taken yesterday in Kaisharchar area of Savar where recent floods have ravaged many farms. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

# Body count high, not just in Teknaf FROM PAGE 1 Specific details about how it happened dead of the night, and usually beside in the middle of the night, a gang war

Specific details about how it happened are completely missing from all the interviews given by the Rab-7 commanders to this paper's journalists.

The rest of the deaths due to "gunfights" in the region happened with a handful of police stations such as Kotwali Police Station, Bayezid Bostami Police Station, Pahartali Police Station, and Khulshi Police Station, each of which is involved in the killing of one to three people in this two-year period.

The capital city and surrounding areas had a similar body count to that of Chattogram district, and according to this newspaper's reports, a vast majority of the deaths happened at the hands of Rab-1 and Rab-2

Rab-1 was responsible for 17 deaths due to "shootouts" in this two-year period, while Rab-2 was responsible for 18.

In addition, 10 deaths happened at the hands of the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police. The rest were a smattering of police stations with one or two deaths each.

For some of these cases, this newspaper reported contradictory information to the elite force's explanation, including claims by families that the dead were picked up beforehand.

But one case stands out because of the sheer amount of evidence found.

Syed Iqbal Ahmed, 42, allegedly died in a "gunfight" with Rab-2 on January 12 this year in front of the Malibagh bus counters. The incident happened around 7:00am and the area was covered by CCTV cameras of various shops and businesses nearby -- but shopkeepers interviewed by The Daily Star said Rab officials came in and deleted the footage and didn't let anyone see what had been recorded.

When asked why Rab did this, the company commander at the time said they had collected the footage from the

Satkhira, Bagerhat and the region around the Sundarbans, are other areas where deaths due to "gunfights" happened a lot -- most of which were at the hands of Rab-6 and Rab-8, as per The Daily Star reports.

At least 46 deaths due to this occurred in this region in the last two

This newspaper reported that at least 22 were killed in so-called gunfights with Rab-6 as the battalion raided secret meeting spots of criminals, while 18 died in encounters involving Rab-8.

All these incidents happened in the

some canals in the Sundarbans.

For example, on October 16 last year, 26-year-old Monish Saha was killed along with three others beside Koyra Khal at 2:00am.

Rab-6 special company commander, Tofazzal Hossain, then told this paper's correspondent that they raided the area at that time of night on a tip-off that robbers were staying there.

"Sensing our presence, the robbers entered the jungles of the Sundarbans and took position with arms. Then, they opened fire on the Rab team, forcing us to retaliate. The gunfight continued in several phases until morning. Some members of the gang fled the scene when day broke, leaving behind the four injured. The four were rushed to Koyra Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared them dead," said Tofazzal.

This was one of the rarer occasions

where a family member of the dead spoke to this paper's correspondent.

Monish's brother Mithun claimed,

Some plainclothes policemen picked up my brother from our residence at Aichgati in Khulna's Rupsha upazila on October 1. On October 10, we informed Rab-6 about it. We came to know about his death as a robber of the Sundarbans today. But he was a small businessman."

Interestingly, while Rab almost unanimously reported getting attacked or ambushed, Satkhira Sadar Police Station, responsible for at least five deaths in the area, said they all happened due to "gunfights" between two rival gangs. Meanwhile in Kushtia and Meherpur,

the police are responsible for most of the deaths, similar to Teknaf. At least 37 deaths due to "gunfights" with the law enforcers were reported by this newspaper -- save for two, all of these involved police personnel.

In spite of the fact that there are nine upazilas in these two districts, each with many police camps and their own police stations, only three police stations reported most of these deaths - Kushtia Model Police Station, Gangni Police Station, and Meherpur Sadar Police Station.

Almost consistently, the deaths were reported to have happened as a result of infighting between two gangs in the middle of the night, raising the question -- are there truly so many gang wars happening openly in the streets in these districts?

Most of the interviews given to the journalists by officers-in-charge is this:

took place between two rival factions, the police rushed to the spot, the criminals ran away seeing the police, leaving behind a bullet-ridden body.

Similarly, in Jashore -- including Benapole -- 19 deaths due to "gunfights" with the law enforcers were reported by this newspaper, where all, save for two, were by the police. Of them, Jashore Kotwali Police Station reported the most deaths due to "gunfights".

Of these instances, two encounters by the Jashore Detective Branch were documented by this newspaper, and in both cases, this paper's correspondent reported that the victim was picked up before the "gunfight".

Jashore police also almost always reported that they "discovered" bulletridden bodies after hearing about a gang war, and going to the spot.

While the law enforcers sometimes claimed that their personnel too had been hurt, neither could this newspaper independently verify the claims nor were details ever provided about the exact nature of the injuries.

While "criminals" were killed in "gunfights" every other day during these two years, casualties among law enforcers was quite unusual.

Looking over news coverage during this period, it was found that The Daily Star recorded only one death of a law enforcer -- that of 45-year-old Havildar Akmol Hossain, from BGB Battalion-21, who was critically injured at a "gunfight" with suspected drug peddlers in Benapole, Jashore on June 26 last year.

Lt Colonel Imran Ullah Sarkar, commanding officer of this paper's Battalion-21, told correspondent that Akmol and a team conducted a drive at Agrobhulot border area around 4:00am. Sensing the presence of the law enforcers, the drug dealers opened fire and hurled bombs towards the BGB team prompting them to retaliate, triggering a gunfight.

One person received mortal gunshot wounds, dying during the gunfight, while Akmol sustained critical injuries. He was shifted to Combined Military Hospital in the capital where he succumbed to his injuries three days

During their visit to Cox's Bazar, the police chief and army chief had said that Maj (retd) Sinha Rashed Md Khan's death in a police shooting was "an isolated incident".

But that's not what the numbers say.

## Rayhan finally released, flies home today

#### Rayhan's lawyer in Malaysia Sumita

Santini Kisna also communicated the updates to The Daily Star before the flight yesterday. She said Rayhan was taken straight to the airport from the Putrajaya immigration office on Friday afternoon. After completing all the procedures, he boarded a plane at 11:00pm local time in Malaysia.

Earlier, he had tested negative for Covid-19. Since the Malaysian police have not filed any complaint against Raihan, he did not face any legal troubles in coming back home.

Rayhan's father Shah Alam told The Daily Star, "He is on the way to airport. We are eagerly waiting for our Rayhan to come to us. I can't explain this joy.'

On July 3, Al Jazeera published an investigative documentary titled "Locked Up in Malaysia's Lockdown". It raised the issue of the government's repressive treatment of migrant workers in Malaysia during the lockdown. In the

documentary, along with the citizens of did not commit any crime. I did not lie. many other countries, Rayhan gave an interview, which angered the Malaysian authorities. A warrant was issued against Rayhan

Kabir and he was arrested by Malaysian police on the evening of July 24. After 14 days of interrogation, the police produced him before court on August 8. The court granted a 13-day remand

after the police wanted a 14-day remand. After the remand ended on Wednesday, police said there were no charges against him. Immigration police then decided to

send him back to Bangladesh. Rayhan was informed on Friday morning that he would be sent back to

the country at night. Rayhan's luggage and other necessary items were brought there and his ticket was confirmed.

Before his arrest, Rayhan sent a WhatsApp message where he said, "I I have only talked about discrimination against the migrants. I want the dignity of migrants and my country ensured. I believe all migrants and Bangladesh will stand with me.

Even during interrogation, Rayhan told the Immigration Police that he spoke about what he had seen and that was his own observation. But he did not want to hurt Malaysians.

Various international Bangladeshi organisations, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, condemned the arrest and demanded Rayhan's immediate

Rayhan's family of four lives in Narayanganj's Bandar upazila. Locals said Rayhan tried to help everyone. He used to help the students with his books and money. He was very vocal against drug abuse in the area.

The writer is a freelance journalist.

## Extreme poverty may hit 100m

. he 'did' several 'crossfires' and I heard Teknaf is worse," said a frail old man who had come to watch.

custody of Rab since August 18. At midnight on Thursday, Ramu Police Station handed the seized electronic items of Sinha and his group

These three cops have been in the

over to Rab. Those 29 items included cell phones, external hard disks and a laptop. Besides, Tk 2 lakh in cash was given to Rab's Senior ASP Biman Chandra Karmakar, said OC Abul Khayer of

Ramu Police Station. On August 19, Senior Judicial Magistrate Tamanna Farah ordered police to hand the goods to Rab after hearing a petition filed by the force.

The Washington-based development lender previously estimated that 60 million people would fall into extreme poverty, but the new estimate puts the deterioration at 70 to 100 million, and he said "that number could go higher" if the pandemic worsens or drags on, which is possible.

Meanwhile, the death toll from the virus in Latin America surged past 250,000.

Nine months after the virus began sweeping across the world from China last December, the pandemic has hit the Americas harder than anywhere else.

recorded nearly 6.5 million infections and 250,969 deaths. Globally, the virus has claimed at least 793,000 lives.

Brazil is the region's worstaffected country with 3.5 million cases and more than 112,000 deaths. The South American giant is second only to the United States as the world's worst-hit country.

Peru, where figures released Thursday showed a 30 percent fall in GDP in the second quarter, has registered more than 26,000 deaths. **ECONOMIC TOLL** 

The crushing economic damage has sprung not just from the virus

Latin America and the Caribbean itself but also from the lockdowns that largely halted business activity across the world.

The United States -- where 174,000 people have died -- continues to bear the brunt in health terms and is suffering grim economic fallout.

The number of Americans filing claims for joblessness each week topped one million again, US officials said on Thursday, an increase on the previous week's figures.

Germany will need to take on yet more debt in 2021 to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus on the economy, Finance Minister Olaf Scholz said.

## UNHCR calls for lasting solutions for Rohingyas

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

UN Refugee Agency has called for renewed support and lasting solutions for the displaced Rohingya communities both within and outside of Myanmar.

"The international community must not only maintain support for refugees and their host communities, but also adapt to critical needs and expand the search for solutions," UNHCR Spokesperson Andrej Mahecic said in a press briefing in Geneva yesterday.

Challenges persist and continue to evolve three years on from the latest exodus of Rohingyas who fled Myanmar and sought sanctuary in Bangladesh from August 2017 onwards, UNHCR said, adding that the Covid-19 pandemic has added additional complexities to the Rohingyas.

Rohingya communities estimate that up to three-quarters of the Rohingya people are living outside of Myanmar today. UNHCR and Bangladesh have individually registered over 860,000 Rohingya refugees in the refugee settlements in Cox's Bazar. "Bangladesh has demonstrated a

profound humanitarian commitment to Rohingya refugees, ensured their protection and extended life-saving humanitarian support, and now hosts nine out of 10 Rohingya refugees registered in the Asia-Pacific region, said Andrej.

generosity must acknowledged through continued investment in both Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi host communities.

Ultimately, the solution to the plight of the Rohingya lies in Myanmar, and in comprehensively implementing the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, to which the Government of Myanmar has committed, he said.

Creating conditions that are conducive to the Rohingya people's safe and sustainable return will require whole of society engagement, resuming and enhancing the dialogue between the Myanmar authorities and Rohingya refugees, as well as other measures that help inspire trust, the UN Refugee Agency said.

### Gas crisis

FROM PAGE 1

this situation might continue for the next two days and they were asking all maritime ports to continue hoisting their local cautionary signal number-3.

Explaining the situation, Rana Akbar Hyderi, director of operations of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company, said the ships carrying LNG were jolted by the high waves, prompting officials to suspend supplying gas through pipelines.

"Had they not stopped the supply, t could have caused a blast," he said.

He added that they usually get 1,800 million cubic feet (mmcfd) gas supply per day from Gas Transmission Company Limited (GTCL) and around 500 to 570 million cubic feet per day (mmcfd) comes from LNG.

But they are getting 70 mmcfd gas supply fewer from them now due to rough weather, he said.

Rana Akbar said they were supplying over 300 mmcfd gas per day to Dhaka city now, against the demand of around 450 mmcfd gas.

He said power and fertiliser companies got first priority and then they supplied gas to other industrial zones and domestic uses in Dhaka.

Seeking anonymity, an official of Rupantarita Prakritik Gas Company Limited, which looks after LNG import and supply, said the LNG transfer was delayed on three dates on August 12, 17, and 18.

"It's a common phenomenon during monsoon," he added.

The government has purchasing LNG from Qatar on a government-to-government since 2018 and it now gets around 600 mmcfd gas per day.

#### Only 4pc FROM PAGE 1 coronavirus infection in the country

in 24 hours till 8:30am yesterday, the release added. Thirty-six of them breathed their

ast at hospitals and three at home. The death toll now stands at 3,861.

In the 24 hours, 13,155 samples were collected at 91 labs. Some 12,943 samples were tested and 2,401 were found positive.

The infection rate is now 18.55 percent and the death rate 1.62 Bangladesh is currently the 16th in

the list of worst-affected countries in the world in terms of the number of cases.

The position is one step behind Pakistan and one step ahead of Italy, according to worldometers.info.

Meanwhile, 3,624 more Covid-19 patients recovered in the 24 hours. The total number of recoveries has

is 59.45 percent. About 580 people were put under isolation in the 24 hours, the release

reached 1,72,615 and the recovery rate

and 12 females. So far, 3,046 males and 815 females have died from coronavirus infection in the country. The thirty-nine victims were aged

Of the 39 deceased, 27 were males

between 21 and above 60. Dhaka division has the highest

death toll -- 1,854. With 863 deaths, Chattogram stood second.

#### Even though Pradeep was brought out, he was not asked to re-enact his