

Bid to grab Mannan's Ctg plot: Case filed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A case was filed with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court, Chittagong on Thursday in connection with a reported bid to grab a plot of land leased by Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh Secretary General Abdul Mannan.

A senior manager of Major (retired) Mannan's Sunman Corporation filed the case against Abu Masud Azad, Shamim Ahmad and some others.

CMM Mobarak Hossain has issued a show cause notice to the defendants and directed the concerned officer-in-charge of Panchlaish Police Station to submit a report after an enquiry into the allegations, sources said.

The plaintiff alleged that a group of criminals belonging to local Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) had occupied the plot reportedly aided by a close relative of a local minister. And during the Eid vacation they have started construction work on the commercial plot situated at Nasirabad Housing Society, sources in Sunman Corporation said.

A general diary had been lodged with Panchlaish Police Station

immediately after the incident. But alleged inactivity of police prompted Sunman Corporation to file the lawsuit on Thursday, they said.

Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) leased the plot to Mannan. It was handed over on October 17, 2001, but construction on it could not be started, sources said.

Taking advantage of the situation, local 'hoodlums' with a close relative of a local minister on their side are trying to grab the plot, sources added.

After erecting temporary structures on the plot, the alleged occupiers have appealed for cancellation of the lease, sources added.

Cops in Barisal

FROM PAGE 12

he added. The arrestees are drug addicts and were sent to jail after giving medication, he said.

Mehdi's family condemned the Rab-police joint move and rejected their claim.

They said the meeting was not at all political but law enforcers foiled it without any provocation.

Rab action in Tongi

FROM PAGE 1

Rab-4 allegedly shot Billal Ullah, brother-in-law of listed criminal Kala Jahangir and a man with criminal records, to death after locals beat him up for firing at a teacher of Dhaka College yesterday.

In the Rab operation at Gutia, Najib Ali, 55, his son Shamul Haq, 25, and brother-in-law Delwar, 35, were killed, while Najib's brothers Adam Ali, 40, and Ahmed Ali, 35, and Ahmed's son Kawser Ali, 22, were hit with bullets.

Rab-1 rushed all of them to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared Najib, Shamul and Delwar dead. Doctors said Adam, who received a bullet in the chest, and Kawser, in both legs and abdomen, are in critical conditions. The wounded are being treated at the hospital in Rab custody.

The Rab termed all of them criminals, but some locals and family members claimed them to be innocent.

All the four bodies were at the DMCH morgue until filing of this report at 10:30pm last night.

RAB VERSION
A Rab press release said, tipped off that a gang of 10 to 12 armed criminals were holding a meeting in Delwar's house at Gutia in preparation for a robbery, a team of Rab-1 started from Uttara, Dhaka, at 11:05pm Thursday night and surrounded the house at about 12:15am yesterday.

"When Rab members encircled the house, the gangsters started to fire away at them through a window," the release said, adding the Rab members then retaliated and entered the house breaking through a door.

However, during a spot visit all the doors of the house were found intact.

The Rab release said the gangsters, besides continuing to shoot at the Rab members, also attacked them with sharp weapons when they tried to break in the house critically injuring three people including Rab Nayek Nasir. Nasir is undergoing treatment at Combined Military Hospital, Dhaka, with stab wounds.

According to the release, two or three armed robbers managed to escape.

The Rab team seized two .22-bore revolvers and six bullets, two long knives and a machete from the spot. They also arrested 13 villagers, triggering a panic that made almost all the young villagers to flee.

DELWAR'S FATHER SAYS

Delwar's father Fatik Matbor claimed a local gang of robbers including Haq, Sadu, Subed Ali, Abu Taleb, Mister, Ibrahim, Khokan, Sohail, Azad and Yousuf launched an armed robbery on some houses at Gutia Purbapara at around 11:30pm Thursday.

According to Fatik, the robbers wearing black clothes raided the houses of Gafur, Khorshed, Bachchu, Jahangir and Liton. Frightened by the blank shots fired during the robbery, Najib along with his two sons and two brothers went to the house of Delwar, who is a village arbitrator, to discuss how to resist the robbers, Fatik said.

"Soon after they entered Delwar's house, the robbers knocked at its door. As the people inside refused to let them in for about half an hour, the robbers identified themselves as Rab members and persuaded them to open the door," Fatik went on.

He claimed the robbers entered the house and caused the casualties.

According to his story, "After the robbery, the gangsters phoned the Rab and after about an hour some 80 Rab members came to the spot, fired blank shots and ordered all of us to stay indoors over a loudspeaker."

"Rab members came and knocked at my door. And I opened it. They then forced me to sign a paper and left the village," claimed the 65-year-old man.

Fatik, whose four other sons work in Saudi Arabia, said unknown

Flyover yet to be made off-limits to predestrians

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The newly opened flyover at Mohakhali lies unrestricted raising the fear of pedestrian accidents as ordinary people continue to gather on the bridge that virtually does not have any footpath.

Earlier on November 4 the prime minister opened the flyover that is 1.12 km long and 17.9 metre wide and the first of its kind in Bangladesh. Soon after the opening, jubilant crowds raced up the overpass. Although the flyover was supposed to be off-limits to pedestrians, enthusiasts including children walked on it for pleasure.

It was bursting with pedestrians and rickshaws following the recent transport strike when motorised vehicles remained off the city streets.

Dhaka City Corporation Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka said, "There's no footpath except a narrow strip that can at best allow a person to walk. As it has been just opened and is the first of its kind, people flock to see it and it's understandable. But if it continues for a long time, steps will be taken to discourage people from walking on the flyover."

An official of Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB) said any structure across the entrances to the flyover to stop people walking on it is not a viable option because it will block the vehicular movement as well. But pedestrian movement on the flyover will have to be controlled later by police.

The four-lane flyover was constructed by a Chinese firm at a cost of Tk 113 crore with the financial assistance of the World Bank. Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP) oversaw the project aimed at easing traffic congestion in the capital.

Some of the villagers said Ayub and Delwar, both being landbrokers, had a longstanding rivalry that infected their families too.

They said Ayub was also involved in various criminal activities. Local police however could not give any detail of his criminal record immediately.

"Ayub grabbed two-bigha land of us resulting in a feud between our families," said Najib's brother Ahmed, who was injured yesterday.

He said Ayub's family and relatives blamed his family for Ayub's death. Ahmed's family on the other hand enjoyed Delwar's support.

"As Ayub's brothers and relatives, all notorious in the locality as criminals, raided and started robbing our houses, we went to take shelter in Delwar's house. But soon they attacked that house too," Ahmed went on.

Locals said, after the shootout, Ayub's brothers and male relatives went into hiding.

The village was found gripped with panic, but no law enforcers were seen deployed.

MIRPUR KILLING
Billal Ullah and his gang allegedly shot and injured Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Dhaka College, in front of a mosque at Maddhya Pikepara in Mirpur at 5:35am yesterday.

Azad, 57, is undergoing treatment with bullet-wounds at the DMCH.

Azad, also president of Maddhya Pikepara Central Samajshaba Parishad, went to the mosque to say his Fajr prayers when a gang of three pounced on him pointing a gun at his chest, said Mahmudul Hasan, Azad's son and a lecturer of Sociology at Asian University.

He said, "Billal, who held the gun, was in disguise wearing fake beard and moustache, and shot my father point blank."

Azad grabbed the hand, with which Billal was holding the gun, and twisted it so that the bullet hit his right leg instead of the chest, said another witness. Hearing the gunshot, locals rushed to the spot and caught Billal.

Billal's accomplices fired another shot that hit Azad in the hip and then fled the scene.

The angry locals started to beat up Billal. They came to identify Billal, who was in disguise, when his elder brother Faizul Ullah Faiz rushed to the scene to save him.

Witnesses and police sources said a team of Rab-4 then appeared at the spot and shot Billal before taking him away. The Rab team also recovered a pistol with two bullets from the spot and arrested Faiz with a chapati (machete) in his possession.

Mirpur police sent a critically injured Billal to the DMCH at 7:30am where doctors declared him dead. In the death register of the hospital, the reason for his death is stated as bullet-injury.

A Rab press release however said Billal was not killed by their members but lynched.

Billal is accused in several cases including four for murders with Mirpur Police Station, said the officer-in-charge of the station.

Locals of Pikepara took out a protest rally after juma prayers yesterday and demanded punishment of the attackers on Azad.

Azad told The Daily Star Billal's father Mohammad Ullah was once the imam of the mosque. He was sacked for trying to grab a 64 decimal plot of land behind the mosque.

Some of the locals said a group led by one of the city's top criminals has been trying to grab the plot and that might have led to the attack on Azad, who has been struggling to resist the attempt.

Human chain spells

FROM PAGE 1

local leaders and workers as well as the masses for the programme," said Al-General Secretary Abdul Jalil.

But, a rift is there within the left alliance over joining the AL-led antigovernment movement, while the main opposition suffers at the moment from poor organisational strength at district and upazila levels.

Though the major components of the 11-party alliance have agreed with the common nine-point charter of demands announced Thursday, two members -- Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) led by Khalequzzaman and Krishok Sramik Samajbadi Dal led by Nirmol Sen -- have kept themselves aloof.

The AL leaders and workers plunged into frustration after the April 30 deadline it set for the coalition government to step down ended in a fiasco. The party also failed to launch any vigorous movement after the August 21 gruesome grenade attacks, due, according to some insiders, to lack of organisational strength.

AL sources said the party plans to use the human chain as a springboard for consolidating its local units across the country. In other words, central leaders of the party will utilise the occasion to shake off its organisational weakness and lethargy by motivating local leaders and workers during their field visits.

"We need programmes to revive the morale of party leaders and workers, specially at the grassroots, and the human chain might prove to be such a one," said a senior AL leader.

He said the party's antigovernment programmes in the past failed to get enough momentum due to a lack of strong organisational presence at the grassroots. So, "the hearties and other programmes usually remained confined to the areas adjacent to the party headquarters and a few other places," he added.

The AL high command will also call its local leaders to Dhaka to brief them and give some guideline ahead of the programme.

The AL leaders believe the December 11 programme will gener-

ate an all-out uprising that eventually would force the present government to resign.

This time the main opposition and its allies will remain alert to any government drive of mass arrest to foil the programme, they added.

JSD President Hasanul Haq Inu said the opposition leaders will meet tomorrow (Sunday) to finalise the strategies and tour schedule ahead of the human chain.

RIFT WITHIN 11-PARTY

BSD (Khalequzzaman) leader Bazlur Rashid told The Daily Star that like others they too are fighting against the present 'misrule'. But, "building any unified political alliance with Awami League is not on our agenda."

He said the BSD would work to strengthen the platform of left-leaning parties against both the ruling coalition and the AL.

The 11-party alliance turned into a combine of 10 parties long ago when Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) led by AFM Mahbubul Haq broke away from it.

Ruling party

FROM PAGE 12

Barisal Port Road and is running a restaurant there.

Meanwhile, Hanif and Shukur claimed that the district administration had leased the land to them long ago.

Different parts of the same channel have already been leased to different shopkeepers, pro-government drivers' association, the Red Crescent and others, sources said.

Abdul Monaf Patoari, deputy commissioner of Barisal, said he knew nothing about the illegal occupancy of Bhatar Khal.

Filling of Bhatar Khal, one of the city's sewerage channels linking the administrative and posh residential areas with Kirtankhola river is likely to create serious water logging during the rains.

A shattering blow

FROM PAGE 12

financed URCs are not getting salary since December 2003.

"We, with our families, are now living in subhuman conditions," said an official of a Norad-funded URC.

"How can the government even think of discontinuing with such an important project," he wondered.

Meanwhile, sources in the Primary Education Directorate said Sida, the main financier of the Ideal Project, is reluctant to go ahead with the project.

Recently, the Planning Commission has informed the primary and mass education ministry that they, like the donor agencies, are 'no more interested in the project.'

One assistant upazila education officer, one instructor, one computer operator and one night guard were appointed at each such URC.

Although the Ideal Project is set to expire by the end of the year, the authorities are yet to supply necessary equipment to the URCs. The government did not construct any separate building required for the URC and the staff work at local upazila model schools.

Sources said the government will have to bear a cost of Tk 1 crore a month if the officials and employees are brought under the revenue budget.

"Without donors' financing, the government finds it difficult to have the URC staff on public salary," said an official of Ideal Project requesting

anonymity.

The Planning Commission agrees to extend the project only on condition of not bearing the cost, the official added.

The Ideal Project, started in 1996 and originally planned to expire by June this year, had been extended for six more months.

As fear of job losses looms large, about 2000 URC staff, both from the Ideal Project and the Norad-funded project, wait eagerly for government intervention.

"The government many a time assured us that jobs of officials and employees of URCs would be brought under revenue budget," said an official of a URC.

A top official of Directorate of Primary Education said, "Generally jobs under any project are expired with the end of that project. But we are trying to bring them under revenue budget."

Arrested militant

FROM PAGE 12

the China-made A-1 detonators was supposed to be used for bombs.

Tension is brewing in Bogra and Gaibandha in the wake of the seizure of the explosives and detonators. Security measures have been beefed up at all key points of the districts.

Gaibandha Awami League, left-leaning 11-party alliance, cultural organisation Udichi in separate statements expressed deep concern at the recovery of explosives.

Manmohan's move

FROM PAGE 12

"We do hope the prime minister will make some very important announcements insofar as opening talks with the militant groups operating in the region are concerned," Gogoi added.

Around 30 rebel outfits are operating in the northeast, seeking secession, greater autonomy or independence. They say New Delhi exploits the region which is rich in oil, tea and timber.

Officials said federal soldiers had been put on maximum alert after several separatist outfits called a "boycott" of the visit, Singh's first to the region since becoming prime minister in May.

The outlawed Revolutionary People's Front (RPF) of Manipur has called for a 24-hour "public curfew" to coincide with the visit.

"We urge the people of Manipur to remain indoors and boycott the prime minister," a RPF statement said.

"There is no reason to celebrate the visit of the prime minister of a country that had forcibly annexed Manipur," Singh is scheduled to arrive in Manipur's capital Imphal on Saturday afternoon and then proceed to Guwahati on Sunday.

The premier is scheduled to meet civil society groups in Manipur, address students, lay the foundation stone for construction of a railway head to the remote region, as well as formally hand over to the local government the Kangla Fort, a symbol of the state's rich culture and traditions.

The Fort, headquarters of the paramilitary Assam Rifles, was the palace of the Manipuri royalty when in 1891 the British forces defeated the local king and converted it into a garrison.

In Assam, Singh is to attend at least three functions on Sunday, including the golden jubilee celebrations of a local newspaper.

Police and intelligence officials said they had unearthed a plot by the banned United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) to carry out a series of strikes during the visit.

Meanwhile, a separatist group in India's northeastern state of Assam

Jagrata Muslim Janata

reorganising BCL leader killed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Cadres of Bangla Bhai, commander of Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), have killed a BCL leader, as they are reorganising the Islamist outfit in the northwest-ern region, sources said.

Several witnesses claimed Bangla Bhai was present during the killing.

The JMJB cadres killed Ziaul Haq Zia, 30, a leader of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), in Chhatardighi Bazar of Raninagar in Naogaon in broad daylight on November 13.

Some 20 cadres led by Sariattullah alias Simar, Samad Babu Babur and Mostafizur Rahman Khaza abducted Zia from his Abadpukur house.

Zia's wife Farsia Bakul alleged police did not stop or arrest the killers although they left the scene brandishing firearms from near Chhatardighi police camp. Sub-inspector Masud, the camp in-charge, was asked to explain his alleged neglect of duty, police sources said.

Zia's father Jasim Uddin said JMJB activists demanded tolls from him before the Eid and threatened to kill his son if they were not paid.

Sources said Bangla Bhai had a secret meeting with about 25 followers at the house of JMJB leader Kadir Sheikh in Basbari of Raninagar on November 17.

The nightlong meeting with local leaders Akhter, Habibur, Mukul, Rahman, Dulal and Ismail Sheikh discussed reorganisation of the party, the sources added.

Locals said Bangla Bhai, dressed as before, went to Raninagar with over 10 associates in two microbuses and was also seen on November 18.

Top police officials said they are unaware of reappearance of Bangla Bhai.

Indian census to identify foreigners

PTI, Sonapat

The Indian government is undertaking a census work for identifying foreigners Federal Minister of State for Home Manikrao H Govind said yesterday.

The federal government, in an effort to check infiltration has already identified about 30 lakh foreigners and collected their data in the first phase of the survey, he told reporters here adding the exercise is expected to cost around Rs 100 billion.

Identification cards will be issued to them to check further infiltration and to help the government keep a track on the foreigners, he said.

He said the identity cards would contain the details about the individual, including the place of residence, educational qualification, date of birth and family background.

Schoolboy flees abductors

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A schoolboy kidnapped in Dhaka yesterday escaped the grip of abductors in CK Ghosh Road in the town.

Raisul Islam Sohan, 14, son of Reazur Rahman, a resident of Khilgaon Tilapara in the capital, said five men picked up him at 9:00am. A student of class ten at Motiheel Model High School, Sohan was going to his private tutor's house in North Shahjahanpur.

The abductors drugged him unconscious and he gained his consciousness in a train's compartment at Mymensingh Railway Station. They threatened him to remain silent and forced him to follow them.

But he slipped from his captors and rushed into a confectionery shop on CK Ghosh Road. The employees of the shop took him to Mymensingh Press Club. Later, press club authorities informed his father of the matter by cellphone.

Bhuiyan

FROM PAGE 1

that of the opposition parties regarding issues like expelling godfathers from the party but the government will not resign before its tenure is over," he said.

"Awami League (AL) harboured godfathers during their tenure and they (AL) did not expel them from the party," the minister told BBC.

Regarding opposition demand for tackling fundamentalism in the country, Bhuiyan said the country is now in a state of communal harmony.

"People are free to observe their rituals irrespective of religion and the government has taken actions against criminals," Bhuiyan said.

He also said the opposition parties have no issue in their hands for launching movement against the government.

"We also support some of their (opposition parties) demands. As people don't support their movement against the government, they should cooperate with us to realise some of their demands," the BNP secretary general said.

Signals on Kashmir

FROM PAGE 12

Musharraf was lukewarm on the retreat of an Indian battalion from a northern Kashmir town on Wednesday.

"These are good optics, but they are not striking at the strategic issue of moving forward on a resolution."

"If out of 600 or 700,000 troops, 40,000 troops are removed, well we welcome it, it's a step forward, but however it is a tactical step forward."

Musharraf, 61, said he held out hope for something positive from next week's talks between Singh and Pakistani prime minister Shaukat Aziz.

"Kashmir obviously will feature very importantly (in the talks), because we seek clarification on what is this happening? I proposed something else. I'm saying that there's light at the end of the tunnel. Should we put that light off?"

Musharraf in recent months has indicated Islamabad could roll back its lifelong demand for a plebiscite for Kashmiris to choose between rule by Pakistan or India. But he felt India had failed to reciprocate in climbing down from its own traditional stance, such as not changing the de-facto border separating the Pakistani and Indian portions.

"Why leave the plebiscite (demand) when the vibe on the other side is they don't want to move an inch beyond their stated position?"

"We will only leave (the plebiscite demand) if India is prepared to show flexibility... At the moment, no sir, we don't see that."

Musharraf, who has ruled Pakistan with a firm hand since overthrowing an elected government in October 1999, said his reasons for resisting calls to give up his army post to become a civilian were tied in with the peace process with India, plus Pakistan's front-line role in the war on terror and his campaign to eradicate Islamic extremism.

"We have set the country on a certain course... our diplomatic relations, our foreign policy, we have set it on a certain course of fighting terrorism in the region. We want that to be sustained," he said.

"We have set a course towards bringing a societal reformation in Pakistan, where I believe that the extremists are holding sway. We want to make sure that they are sup-

pressed, and the vast majority moderates are brought up."

"Now there's a transformation, a renaissance... that we are going through. We want that process to be sustained and that is what is creating the doubts in my mind."

The general, a former commando who saw action in the 1965 war with India, conceded that he had promised on national television last December to shed his uniform.

But the current environment required otherwise, he said as he expounded on his belief that it is his destiny to save Pakistan from extremism.

"I believe that there is something like destiny. I would like to take this country forward, get rid of all this extremism which is sapping us, sapping our real potential."

"I think it is (my destiny), because I am in this position... So I think I am here and I need to perform and I need to deliver for this nation."

Sea port

FROM PAGE 12

leading to Akram Point is less than 25 feet.

The Moheshkhali channel leading to Kutubdia has enough depth and currently many mother vessels takes shelter there, he added.

Meanwhile, State Minister for Communications Salahuddin Ahmed is trying to convince the government high-ups for setting up the port at Moheshkhali channel which is near the Chittagong seaport.