

Falu's quick rise

FALU'S DECLARED WEALTH		2004		2007	
Types of wealth	Taka	Types of wealth	Taka	Types of wealth	Taka
Dairy Farm	8,10,000	Seven flats in a 7-storey building (703 South Shahjahanpur)	39,61,073	One tin-shed house (Tejgunipara)	2,80,85,575
Shares in companies	28,75,000	Enayetur Rahman	1,10,00,000	(Purchasing share and lands)	1,00,00,000
Fish Farm	3,10,000	Lutfur Rahman	50,00,000	(Purchasing share and lands)	50,00,000
Receive in advance for selling of land in Savar	50,00,000	BFC (Purchasing car)	67,72,890		
Dues-of-tenants	3,00,000				
Receive-in-advance-for-selling-flat	8,00,000				

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of shares of different companies (number was not mentioned), and Tk 3,10,000 worth of a fishery farm.
At that time, he had declared liabilities of Tk 61,00,000. His liabilities include Tk 50,00,000 for receiving as advance for selling of land at Savar, Tk 3,00,000 as dues to "tenants" and Tk 8,00,000 as advance received for selling flat. He did not detail which land or flat he wanted to sell.

He showed Tk 64,99,123 as his yearly income in 2004 and Tk 3,63,761 as yearly expenses.
But in a span of only two and a half years, Falu increased his declared wealth to 36,05,93,777 by end-2006, an increase of Tk 33,77,51,160. His wealth includes 118,735 bigha land mostly in Savar (worth Tk 1,51,36,201), 5 katha land at Joar Shahara (worth Tk 60,000), 12.74 katha land at Tejgunipara (worth Tk 1,33,20,000), 4.39 bigha land at Dauting of Dhamrai (worth Tk 5,43,450), 1.52 bigha land at Badogawail of Dhamrai (worth Tk 1,88,700), 6.50 katha land at Badda of Gulshan (worth Tk 5,55,000).

Falu's household properties include a seven-storey building at 797, South Shahjahanpur shown to be worth Tk 54,69,600, a five-storey building at 701/702 South Shahjahanpur shown to be worth Tk 34,45,000, seven apartments at 703 South Shahjahanpur shown to be worth Tk 39,61,073, a tin-shed house at Tejgunipara on an undisclosed area of land shown to be worth Tk 2,80,85,575, and another tin-shed house shown to be worth Tk 51,81,145.

His liabilities at that time stood at Tk 3,27,72,890. The liabilities include outstanding personal loans worth Tk 1,10,00,000 from Md Shahidul Islam, Tk 1,00,00,000 from Enayetur Rahman, and Tk 50,00,000 from Lutfur Rahman—all to purchase shares and land, and Tk 67,72,890 from Bangladesh Finance and Investment Co Ltd to purchase a car.

The biggest hole in his statements is that his declared annual income could never explain even a portion of increase in his income. In 2004, he showed an annual income of Tk 64,99,123 and Tk 1,67,33,124 in 2007. Even if we consider his highest income of Tk 1,67,33,124 as annual source for increasing wealth, he could have a maximum earning of Tk 4,18,32,810 since 2004 in two and a half years. But during this period, his total annual expenditure was Tk 9,09,402 (considering his highest spending of Tk 3,63,761 in 2004). This means Falu could have made a maximum wealth of Tk 4,09,23,408 during those two and a half years. But he showed an increase of Tk 33,77,51,160. This clearly shows Falu has an unexplained Tk 29,68,27,752 increase in wealth.

During these two and a half years, Falu had increased his liabilities by Tk 2,66,72,890. As the accounting system goes, this could add up to his wealth. But even then his statements cannot explain his newly found wealth.

WHERE IS HIS CAR?
Falu in his 2007 statement showed in his liabilities a loan of Tk 67,72,890 for purchase of a car from BFC (it was not made clear what is BFC). But he did not show his car in his wealth statement that excluded household property. The only explanation for this could be he used the money for other purpose which is tantamount to criminal offence.

FALU AND HIS OUTLANDISHLY EXPENSIVE CARS

That his statement does not show any car does not mean Falu goes around on foot. In fact, he rides some of the most expensive cars in the world. He rides a Hummer—Hollywood film star Arnold Schwarzenegger owns one—the production of which has been discontinued in the US on the ground that it is a gas-guzzler and environmentally unfriendly, and a BMW, among other vehicles.

But his expenditure statement shows he spends only Tk 24,000 a year on fuel and maintenance. This actually means Falu spends less than Tk 70 on daily fuel and maintenance of his cars. Even if the maintenance cost is overlooked, Tk 70 can buy only about 1.2 litres of octane. A Hummer can run roughly 5.5km and a BMW 14km on this much of fuel.

ENERGY STARVED FALU

Falu's statements also contain the amazing fact that he spends only Tk 6,000 a year on electricity. This means his monthly electricity bill comes to only Tk 500. If the fixed line rent of Tk 150 and Vat are excluded, he consumes only about 140KW (Tk 2.50 per KW) of electricity a month. This means he cannot run any AC or washing machine or use any electrical items such as iron or hair dryer. Any middle class family living in a 1,000 square feet house consumes more than Tk 500 in electricity.

While visiting Falu's Banani residence, this correspondent noticed that many of the flats in the building have air conditioners.

FALU'S MYSTERY APARTMENT
Falu filed his candidature using a Banani apartment address (House-68, Road-5, Old DOHS, Banani). The IFC Bank—of which he is now the chairman—shows the same address as his residence. However, this address is conspicuously missing from the list of household property Falu submitted to the EC. Earlier, he claimed that he does not have any apartment of his own or allocated by any organisation at Banani. In his income tax return, Falu used his Shahjahanpur address.

Sweetmeat shops

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Rokan-ud-Doula fined Banoful sweetmeat shop Tk 20,000 at Pallabi in the capital as the employees of the shop were not using gloves. The standards of the food being sold there was satisfactory, an official of the mobile court said, adding that the shop paid the fine instantly.

The mobile court raided Bishal Bakery at Mirpur-1 and found unhygienic environment there and adulterated oil being used to produce bread, biscuits and other food items. The court filed a case against Kazi Md Ruhul Alam, owner of the bakery, under Pure Food Ordinance and fined him Tk 1 lakh.

Later, the court raided Belal Bakery in the same area and found traces of textile-dye in sweetmeats. They also found vermicelli heaped on the floor to be sold later. The court fined Md Kazi Belal, owner of the shop, Tk 1,20,000.

The court then raided an unnamed baked-food factory in that area. The court found the factory in extremely dirty condition. It sealed the factory off and fined Md Aminullah, owner of the factory, Tk 1 lakh and filed a case against him.

Jaili demands

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staff and Sarwar Hossain, president of AL's Canada unit.

In a statement, Jaili said that the people had welcomed the anti-riem drive since the new caretaker government (CG) assumed office.

"But we think the incidents of arresting innocent citizens who abide by law will hamper the main objective of the drive," Jaili, also the coordinator of the 14-party alliance, said adding that the commoners of the country expect that the CG will arrest those who were involved with criminal activities, killings, lootings and wide scale corruption in the last five years.

The drive will not be a sign of neutrality for the CG any more if the innocent AL leaders are arrested without any reason, he noted.

The AL leader also termed the incident of barring Tanjim Ahmed Sohel Taj, a former AL lawmaker, from travelling to India on January 28 at the airport, 'sad'.
Ghasful, an organisation for children and adolescents, in a statement also demanded that the chief adviser should release Awlad if there is no allegation against him.

Meanwhile, in a separate statement the AL general secretary termed the statement of Nobel Laureate Prof Yunus in which he blamed the country's politicians for the failure to develop the power sector, 'a matter of sorrow.'

"Without specifically accusing the BNP-Jamaat government's failure for the current frail state of the power sector, Dr Yunus has covered up the truth," Jaili said adding that the AL government while in office from 1996 to 2001, raised power production from 1700 MW to 4300 MW by adopting proper planning. A large number of rural people of some 16 thousand villages had been provided with electricity by setting up a total of 54 thousand kilometres of electric lines, he said.

But the BNP led alliance government cancelled all the activities taken by the AL government for developing the power sector, Jaili said adding that the power production fell drastically due to widespread corruption and mismanagement of the previous government.

"Only to demonstrate so-called neutrality, Dr Yunus has accused all the politicians indiscriminately and declined to note the contribution of those who have worked for the people," the AL general secretary added.

Rejoinder

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OUR REPLY
As quoted in the report, it was Ittefakur Ahmed, a manager of the High Speed Group, who said at the site of eviction, "The chairman of High Speed Group KM Mahmudur Rahman stays at the house but his sister-in-law owns it."

Contacted on receiving the rejoinder, Administrative Officer of the High Speed Group of Companies Azad Islam reconfirmed the connection saying that Nilufar Mustafa is sister-in-law of Mahmudur Rahman. She is wife of late KM Abu Mahmud Mustafa, who was brother of KM Mahmudur Rahman and a director of High Speed Group.

"High Speed Group has been using the house as a rest house since 1983. Ever since, the house has been occupying the additional land into the lake," Mahfuzul Haq, a general manager of High Speed Group, had said when the demolition was on.

Azad Islam, on the other hand, said, "It is actually not a guest house but we who work at High Speed Group stay here."

Their legal counsel advocate MA Wadud, who was present at the demolition site, said, "Rajuk allots additional land to all the lakeside plot owners. Why shouldn't it give us?"

In defending the encroachment by the owner of the lakeside house, officials including the aforesaid general manager, manager and administrative officer of High Speed Group of Companies repeatedly appealed to the on-duty magistrate and the executive engineer of Rajuk to stop demolition referring to the name of the group's Chairman KM Mahmudur Rahman in front of a host of other media representatives.

Aid flow thinned

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donor-funded development projects only compounded the situation.
He said things have gone from bad to worse because of the political turmoil that followed President Iajuddin Ahmed's taking over as the chief of the caretaker government.

ERD sources said the countries and bilateral partners that did not give any aid to Bangladesh in the first six months included the US, UK, European Union (EU), Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Finland, Italy, Norway, Sweden, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Unicef.

However, encouraged by some recent moves of the interim administration, the donor countries have showed interest in releasing aid for different development projects. They have suggested that the caretaker government arrange a meeting on Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) implementation in Dhaka by March to find ways of quick disbursement.

An ERD official said around \$7.06 billion in foreign aid was in the pipeline as per data as of December 2006 and the donors might still initiate measures to disburse the amount if the government acts to that end.

Envoys of different countries and officials of donor agencies met the chief adviser and finance adviser in the last few days and pledged support in the development projects.

After a meeting with the finance adviser on January 28, US Ambassador Patricia Bulenitis told the press that her government had raised the annual assistance to Bangladesh by 10 percent and such support would be increased even more in the next fiscal year.

The same day, British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury told the journalists that he had discussed with the finance adviser how to continue the existing projects so that their progress is not hindered.

Officials of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) too held meetings with the government high-ups and pledged increased support in the coming days.

On Wednesday, ERD Secretary Md Aminul Islam Bhuiyan led a government delegation at a meeting with the local consultative group (LCG) of donors.
He apprised the LCG of the present caretaker government's commitment to reforms and speeding up the development programmes. He also called on them to release funds already in the pipeline to accelerate implementation of the donor-funded

ADP programmes.
At the meet, the LCG asked for a progress report on the 11-point action plan agreed by the government and its development partners to implement before the next PRSP Implementation Forum Meeting (PIFM).

The LCG delegation led by USAID country chief Gene George also proposed convening the fourth meeting of the Joint Committee for Monitoring the Implementation of PRSPs in the third week of February.

Sources said a committee comprising members from the donors and the government will meet later this month to monitor implementation and progress of the PRSPs.

Rajuk, BIWTA

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The Rajuk eviction team yesterday started their drive at Sukanya Tower near Priyangan Shopping centre on Mirpur road. The owner of Sukanya Tower was using the ground, first and second floors for business purposes while the original Rajuk approved design mentioned it as a car park. The Rajuk team vacated those floors and instructed the owner to use it as a car park.

Rajuk demolished illegal newspaper stands, fruit shops and extension of buildings on Mirpur road. The law enforcers, who accompanied the Rajuk team, beat up a number of local youths as they tried to resist the eviction when the team reached Kalabagan.

The Rajuk drive ended around 5:45pm.

BIWTA DRIVE
The BIWTA eviction team yesterday demolished 224 structures, scheduled to be torn-down yesterday, at Mitford, Champatali, Charkalganj and Islambagh areas along the Buriganga riverbank.

At Mitford, they demolished 66 structures of which 40 were made of concrete. During the drive, the eviction team also demolished a number of others illegal structures which were not earmarked to be demolished yesterday.

However, BIWTA did not file any cases against the encroachers.

"We are not filing any cases against them, just demolishing the structures," said Sharif Afzal Hossain, a BIWTA official. The authorities are trying to protect the Buriganga bank, he added.

New rules for govt officials' foreign trip

UNB, Dhaka

The caretaker government yesterday issued a new order regulating foreign travel by top officials of the ministries, departments, directorates and autonomous bodies.

Under the new rule, all secretaries, Bangladesh Bank governor, secretaries-in-charge, members of the Planning Commission, additional secretaries, deputy governors of Bangladesh Bank, divisional commissioners, DIGs (Police), police commissioners, DCs and SPs will be required to take approval of the chief adviser (CA) for going abroad.

In the changed perspective, heads of directorates and officials under pay scale 1 and 2 of the autonomous bodies will also have to take the CA's prior approval for travelling abroad.

Approval of the advisers of the ministries concerned will be required for the officials enjoying pay scale 5 and above of the ministries, departments, directorates and autonomous bodies for foreign trip.

In case of the chief adviser's office, officials having pay scale 6 to 9 need to get prior permission from the principal secretary, and in other cases, they will need approval from their secretaries concerned.

"In all other cases, heads of the directorates and autonomous bodies will be the authority to give permission to officials for foreign trips," says the order.

It says that subject to funding, the speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad, the chief justice, the chief election commissioner, the chairman of the Anti-Corruption Commission, the comptroller and auditor general, PSC chairman, and the tax ombudsman will give permission to officials of their respective departments for foreign trip.

Excepting deputy governors, the Bangladesh Bank governor will give approval to other officials of the central bank for travelling abroad.

The CA's approval will be required for foreign tour by the mayors of city corporations, chairmen of CHT local government, council and Hill Tracts district councils.

The vice-chancellors will have authority to approve foreign trips by university teachers and officials for not more than three months, "if the cost is not linked to government funds or foreign credits".

Mamun arrested

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held shortly after coming out of the AL president's Shudha Sadan residence Wednesday evening, has been taken to an undisclosed place, said sources.

That he was released a couple of hours after the arrest was learnt to have been wrong yesterday. As of last night, he was not produced before a court or handed over to the police.

Like him, former leader of Bangladesh Chhatra League Jahangir Sattar Tinku, who was arrested on January 24, too has yet to be produced before any court or shifted to police custody.

Our Rangamati correspondent reports: Joint forces picked up district BNP Secretary Zahir Ahmed and another leader from Kathatali in the town Wednesday evening.

Arrested at 7:30pm, the two were handed over to Kowpali police in the early hours yesterday.

5 lakh sacks

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and BMK Traders. Magistrate Atique said former Awami League lawmaker Haji Selim owns Baghdad Traders while Haji Amin owns Razzak Brothers.

The joint forces also seized three trucks loaded with 600 sacks of TSP fertiliser and arrested the drivers of the trucks—Yunus, Yusuf and Dulal.

Fog disrupts

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Padma with passengers and other transport vehicles for several hours.

About 450 vehicles from Dhaka lined up at Paturia in Manikganj, 500 vehicles at Daulatdia in Rajbari, and 50 vehicles at Nagarbari terminal in Pabna district.

Manjoor Rahim

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Foreign Service, he had served as a lecturer of History in Chittagong University from 1975 to 1979. He graduated and obtained his master's degree from Dhaka University.

In the course of his diplomatic career, Manjoor had served in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Bangladesh missions in Rome, Seoul, Stockholm, Jeddah, and the Permanent Mission in New York.

Bishwa Ijtema

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Ahead of the Ijtema, the law enforcers arrested 90 pickpockets yesterday and the day before.

A devotee named Advocate Abur Rahim died of cardiac arrest early yesterday. Eight devotees, who fell sick, were admitted to Tongi Hospital.

Meanwhile, President Iajuddin Ahmed, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina in separate messages have greeted the devotees.

They hoped that the Ijtema would help strengthen the unity of the Muslim Ummah and contribute to the world peace and stability.

Interim govt

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government and that is common-sense, there will be some policy matters as well as some initiatives to solve the day-to-day problems.

Ittefakur said the caretaker government is overcoming the situation that prevailed before the state of emergency. In this context, he said Bangladesh's development partners are coming forward to assist the initiatives taken by the government.

Referring to his series of meetings with foreign diplomats, the foreign affairs adviser said, "Every foreign diplomat is a friend of Bangladesh. They also realise that they should not be involved unwarranted into internal affairs of Bangladesh, neither they nor the people of Bangladesh want it."

On free, fair and credible elections, he said the caretaker government primarily discussed with a number of countries for assisting the Election Commission (EC). "The issue of transparent ballot boxes was discussed in particular with the European Commission. The new Election Commission will carry on this discussion," he added.

Asked about the schedule of the stalled elections, the adviser refused to comment. "We are passing the first stage of our reform through reconstitution of the Election Commission," he said, adding that the elections would depend on how quick the new EC could complete its assigned tasks.

Replying to a query about the Washington Post and the Economist's articles about a disguised military rule in Bangladesh and the possible expulsion of Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia, the foreign affairs adviser dismissed it for being speculative.

Asked if there was any move from the government to bring back Bangladeshi criminals who reportedly took refuge in India, Ittefakur said the government is analysing whether this type of incident had taken place.

"There is contact at tactical level

[through agencies] of the two countries. The government will take up the issue if the relevant agencies say so in their reports," he said.

Turning to South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc), the foreign affairs adviser said Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee will arrive here this month to invite Bangladesh to attend the 14th Saarc summit scheduled for April 3-4 in New Delhi.

He said Chief Adviser of the Caretaker Government Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed will lead the Bangladesh delegation to the summit. Bangladesh holds the current chair of Saarc.

Speaking about establishing enhanced diplomatic ties, Ittefakur said Bangladesh would establish diplomatic ties with Macedonia and San Marino.

He also said Spain is likely to open its mission in Dhaka within the next few months.

Replying to a question about diplomatic ties with Israel, he said the main reason for conflict in the Middle East is the Palestine issue and Bangladesh wants quick resolution of this problem.

"Bangladesh has pronounced its principled position on Palestine. We shall do everything possible at bilateral, national and international levels to resolve this issue if we can," he said.

Replying to a question about opening a Bangladesh mission in Afghanistan, he said the relationship between the two countries is excellent. Afghanistan became the member of Saarc and thus the government is considering opening a mission in Kabul, he added.

He lauded the media in Bangladesh and said, "Currently the media is the parliament."

CA calls for graft-free

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"Ekushey teaches us to resist repression, deprivation and inequality," the CA said adding "I believe, the citizens collectively inspired by the spirit of Ekushey would take us to our long cherished goal."

Fakhruddin also observed that the establishment of a just and knowledge-based society is most important at this moment of crisis in the country.

"Some are building mountains of wealth without any sort of accountability, while some others remain in abject poverty. This disorder and disparity cannot be allowed to continue," the CA said. "That is why accountability, transparency and balance must be maintained in all spheres of society. To this end, the establishment of mass awareness and public consensus are equally important," he added.

"We have to come forward to create an environment where the most knowledgeable, skilful, talented and competent people can stand up with their heads held high and can establish themselves in society," Fakhruddin observed.

The CA urged the authorities concerned to dedicate themselves to the task of writing down the true and objective history of the country.

He also stressed the need for commitment to "Promoting national culture, conserving cultural unique-

ness and development of Bangla language."

The CA called on the authorities concerned to immediately initiate the process to outline a National Book Policy. He also asked the Bangla Academy authorities for taking steps to make soft copies of all of their published books and other important documents and make them available online in future.

"I call on all concerned to create new readership for books, eliminate illiteracy, improve education rates and strengthen the library system," Fakhruddin further said.

The CA observed that the present age demands growth and expansion of publication industry, marketing of books, quality publication at affordable price and increase in readership.

He also expressed his profound belief that the martyrs of the language movement would remain a source of unending inspiration for the Bangladeshis and would illuminate paths to build a just and honest society and country, free from repression.

The CA also praised the historic book fair for being the intellectual hub of the nation and the central forum for the youth, writers, poets and intelligentsia.

US senators unite

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Pulosi, who led a bipartisan delegation of lawmakers just back from Afghanistan and Iraq, said they had briefed the president on their findings.

"We found a number of areas where we agree, there are some areas of discussion," said Republican Representative David Hobson, also at the meeting.

In Baghdad, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, in an interview with CNN, warned the United States and Iran to take their quarrel elsewhere, saying he would not permit his battered country to be caught in the crossfire.

"There is a struggle between Iran and America, and we have told the Iranians and Americans, we know that you have a problem with each other," Maliki said, speaking through a translator.

"But we're asking you please, solve your problems outside of Iraq. We do not want the American forces to take Iraq as a field to attack Iran or Syria, and we will not accept Iran to use Iraq to attack the American forces."

Bush last week issued orders allowing US forces to capture or kill Iranian agents in operating in Iraq. Washington accuses Tehran of arming and training Shia militias.

"We will not let Iran play a role against the American army and not allow America to play a role against the Iranian army," Maliki said. "Everyone should respect the sovereignty of Iraq."

US defence officials meanwhile said they were investigating whether Iranian agents were involved in a January 20 raid on an Iraqi compound in Karbala where five US soldiers were killed.

A senior US defence official said the investigation was incomplete and no conclusions had been reached.

A second defence official confirmed that investigators were looking for an Iranian connection in part because the operation was a so sophisticated, involving an elaborate ruse to penetrate the compound's security.

of Irbil in which five Iranians were detained over protests by Tehran that they were members of its consular staff.

Meanwhile, at least nine people were killed in Baghdad Thursday as a bomb tore through a minibus in a predominantly Shia commercial district and mortars hit a Sunni area, officials said.

The bombing of the minibus killed at least six and wounded eight, police said. It struck at noon in the district of Karradah, which has been hit by several bombings in recent weeks as insurgents try to maximise the number of people killed before a planned US-security crackdown.

A suicide car bombing devastated the area less than a week ago, killing some 30 people.

Mortar rounds slammed into a Sunni neighbourhood in Baghdad for the third day in a row, killing at least three people and wounding 10, hospital officials said.

Five mortar rounds struck the streets of the northern area of Azamiyah on Thursday morning, according to officials who gave the casualty toll.

The Sunni area has been hit daily by mortar attacks since Tuesday, when at least five people were killed and 20 wounded in apparent retaliation for insurgent bombings against predominantly Shia areas coinciding with the Shia holy day of Ashura.

Four people were killed in an afternoon mortar attack Wednesday in Azamiyah.

Elsewhere, the US military said that a soldier died Thursday of wounds sustained in fighting in Anbar province.

The soldier assigned to Multi National Force West was killed after being wounded in fighting on Tuesday in the Sunni insurgent stronghold west of Baghdad, the military said in a statement.

The soldier was not identified pending notification of relatives.