

9 out of 13 accused

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freedom fighter Mozaffar Ahmed Khan

Mozaffar is complainant of the much talked about case filed on Monday against Jamaat leaders. According to him, 13 people including Jamaat Ameer Nizami, Secretary General Mojahid, Senior Assistant Secretary General Muhammed Kamaruzzaman and Assistant Secretary General Abdul Quader Molla were involved in wholesale killings of freedom fighters and locals of Keraniganj on November 25, 1971.

Of the accused, nine were on the spot of killings while the rest were behind the scenes. Of those who carried out the massacre, five are still alive. They are Haji Nazimuddin, aeneer of Keraniganj Jamaat, Abdul Hashem, aeneer of Bhabla district Jamaat, KG Karim Bhabla, Mohammad Yasin and Fayezur Rahman Fayed.

Mozaffar said he has a number of eyewitnesses to testify against the nine and circumstantial evidence against the four who were the brains behind the masskillings.

"I saw Bhabla, a razakar from Keraniganj, standing at the gate of Mohammadpur Physical Centre which was then the camp of Razakar, Al-Badr, and Al-Shams Bahini. At that time, a jeep carrying Nizami and Mojahid entered the camp. I'm talking about November 5, 1971," Mozaffar said recollecting the days in the lead-up to November 25.

He said Karim, the then convenor of Dhaka city Muslim Chhatra League, had joined the Razakar Bahini in 1971.

"He was directly involved in the killings. He along with his family used to live in Hazaribagh then and now they live in Dhanmondi," Mozaffar said.

Legal experts say odds are stacked against the war crimes being proved in a conventional court under the criminal law and so there has been a growing demand for the war criminals to be tried in a special tribunal.

Asked why he lodged the case with a regular court, Mozaffar said, "I am quite hopeful that I would be able to prove the charges. I have enough witnesses and evidence against the accused, nine of whom were on the spot of killings. I can also prove that the killings took place on instructions of Nizami, Mojahid, Quader Molla and Kamaruzzaman."

He said he believes that it would have been even better had the government taken the initiative to bring the war criminals to trial.

He still thinks he would get justice unless the government influences the proceedings in favour of the accused.

Now the commander Dhaka unit Nizami (Sangbad) Mozaffar made the observations in an interview with The Daily Star yesterday afternoon.

He said Jamaat men killed his nephew Osman Gani, fellow freedom fighter Golam Mostafa alias Tukbul Ali and Darbesh Ali on November 25.

Of the accused, four—Abdul Khaleq, Manna Siddique, Dr Joyal and Puine Al-Badr—have been exempted from the charges as they are not guilty.

He said the local Razakars went on a killing spree across four villages at Keraniganj on November 25.

"Some of the villagers who survived the firing squad that day will testify for me," he added.

He however declined to elaborate on the witnesses he has to help him out in the trial. About the evidence he has gathered so far, he said, "All this

Sharif

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imposed a state of emergency on Nov. 3, though he used it to crack down on dissent and purge the judiciary in his favour.

Musharraf has promised that the elections will be free and transparent, and has said allegations of rigging were an attempt by the opposition to create an excuse in case they fare poorly at the ballot box.

Also Monday, a bomber killed nine Pakistani soldiers as they strolled back to barracks after a game of soccer, the army said, the latest in a string of suicide blasts spreading fear ahead of crucial elections.

The suicide bomber struck near an army base in Kohat, about 80 miles west of Islamabad. Maj Gen Waheed Arshad, an army spokesman, said nine troops were killed and four others wounded.

It was the sixth suicide bombing in the past two weeks. At least 32 people have died—20 soldiers and police, and 12 civilians. One of the attacks was carried out by a woman, a first in Pakistan.

No one has claimed responsibility, but officials blame militants linked to the Taliban and al-Qaeda, who have expanded their influence in areas near the Afghan border.

Police, meanwhile, were still searching for a British suspect in an alleged plot to blow up trans-Atlantic jetliners who escaped from police custody over the weekend.

A police official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to talk to media, said two officers have been arrested for negligence and were being probed for possible links with Rauf's two uncles, who also have been taken into custody for questioning.

Britain has been seeking Rauf's extradition, both to question him as a "key person" in the airplane plot and as a suspect in the 2002 killing of his uncle. He has denied involvement in both cases.

Rauf, who is of Pakistani origin, was arrested here in August 2006 on a tip from British investigators. Pakistan described him as a key suspect in a purported plot to blow up airplanes flying from Britain to the United States, prompting a major security alert at airports worldwide and increased restrictions on carry-on items.

Jalil finally sued

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According to the FIR, properties Jalil has illegally accumulated include a three-storey building on eight decimals of land in Naogaon worth Tk 41 lakh and 61 decimals of land worth Tk 40,000 in Bhimpur of Mohadpur.

The joint forces detained both Jalil and Altaf on May 28.

After arrest Jalil was taken on remand. He was admitted to Gangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University on June 4 as he fell ill and was later shifted to Labaid Cardiac Hospital as his condition deteriorated.

In a letter sent to Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, Jalil pleaded with the government for his release on health grounds. In the letter dated July 2, Jalil said he would quit politics if necessary.

The AL raised questions over the authenticity of the letter and wanted to hear about it from a "free" Jalil.

The AL general secretary has been detained under the Special Powers Act and no charges were brought against him until yesterday.

"We have started for my home on November 23. But on my way I saw KG Karim and learned from others that he was there trying to track down me and other freedom fighters to kill. At that instant I changed my decision and came back to my camp at Koltala union at Keraniganj," he went on.

The Razakars had asked Osman and Mostafa about my whereabouts and the location of our camp. But as the two did not disclose anything, they shot them dead."

At around the same time at Ghatar Char village, they killed Darbesh Ali.

Mozaffar and his men wanted to move to the villages to avenge the killings. "But as the collaborators had already asked for Pakistani forces, we changed our decision. Considering the strength of the occupying army, we found it wise to fight them," he said.

Later in the day, Pakistani troops aided and abetted by the local Razakars committed mass killings across several villages of Keraniganj, he said, adding that around five thousand people were killed that day.

He said at least 70 activists of Razakar, Al-Badr, and Al-Shams Bahini took part in the killings, torching and looting in Keraniganj on November 25.

In the FIR, he mentioned that the accused had formed the paramilitary forces to exterminate the freedom fighters.

Nizami was the Al-Badr commander of Pakistan while Mojahid headed its East Pakistani wing, the complainant said adding that Quader and Kamaruzzaman too were in the top echelon of the Al-Badr Bahini.

He said names of some of the accused were in the gazette notification published in 1972 carrying the names of collaborators.

Mozaffar was a student of Ati Bhawali High School in Keraniganj before joining the Liberation War in May. He was 17-year-old and a candidate for matriculation examination.

As a scout, he would initially conduct physical trainings for freedom fighters at different camps in Agartala. Later, he went to Assam for arms training. On completion of the training, he came back to Melaghar in Agartala in July and got enrolled as a freedom fighter.

Mozaffar said he joined sector 2 under the command of Khaled Mosharraf, who was later replaced by Haider.

He returned to Keraniganj in August as the commander of a 15-member team.

He set up his camp at Koltala Union. But as he was a small unit, he merged his group with that of former lawmaker and Gono Forum leader Mostafa Mohsin Montu.

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meant to be placed before the court only."

Mozaffar said in the morning of November 25, Razakars killed his 22-year-old nephew and his fellow freedom fighter Mostafa at their homes in Bhawali Khan Bari village. Osman and Mostafa went there the night before to visit their family.

"I had asked them not to go home as I feared they might be killed by the anti-liberation forces," he continued.

Asked what was the basis of his fear, he said he too had wanted to visit his family at the Boro Bhawali Village.

"I even started for my home on November 23. But on my way I saw KG Karim and learned from others that he was there trying to track down me and other freedom fighters to kill. At that instant I changed my decision and came back to my camp at Koltala union at Keraniganj," he went on.

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Global food crisis

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to conflicts and disasters. In addition, food security is being adversely affected by unprecedented price hikes of basic food, driven by historically low food stocks, droughts and floods linked to climate change, high oil prices and growing demand for bio-fuels. High international cereal prices have already sparked food riots in several countries.

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SSC exams

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The important public examinations were scheduled to start from February 27 next year under the caretaker government's plan of advancing the date and publication of results of the examinations in phases.

"However, the SSC and its equivalent examinations of 2009 will begin from February 15 while that of 2010 from February 1 according to the previous decision of the government," said the announcement.

The November 15 cyclone caused colossal damage to life and property in the country's coastal areas. The violent storm damaged educational institutions, books and other study materials of the students in the affected areas.

Youth held

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three youths traded over 100 round of bullets in Maddhya Badda in the capital. Soon after the gunfight, the crime busters arrested Abi Beruni alias Sabuj alias Rony, who claimed to be an organiser of an unknown Islamist group, Islamic Dal.

Meanwhile, Rab officials said the three youths have no link with any Islamist militant outfit.

"After interrogating Rony intensively we learned that they were criminals," Rab Legal and Media Wing Director Commander SMAK Azad told The Daily Star.

He said Rony also admitted that they used to rent the firearms, recovered from their possession, to criminals in the capital.

Siddiqui Rahman, owner of the house where the gunfight took place, quoted Rony as telling Rab that they were members of banned Islamist militant outfit Harkatul Jihad Al Islami (Huji) working to form Islamic Dal.