

In eyes of Gen Shafiullah

FROM PAGE 1
military intelligence directorate that exists today. However, the proposal got stuck at the defence ministry and it was taking time.

It was around this time that a startling information 'accidentally' surfaced, says Shafiullah.

Some time in 1975 before August 15, an NCO was caught in Dhaka Cantonment with leaflets calling for an uprising in the army. The leaflets spewed venom against the newly-formed Rakhi Bahini, arguing that this paramilitary force was set up to replace the army and that army men would lose their jobs.

"I went to the then deputy defence minister Prof Nurul Islam with the leaflet to inform him about it and then we met the president and requested him to approve the portion of Military Intelligence Directorate with priority so that he could at least organise it and train people to put them on their job," says Shafiullah.

He also told the president to shift the DFI under the army headquarters until the proposal is approved.

After a few moments of silence, Sheikh Mujib asked Shafiullah: "Does [Brig Gen] Rouf not keep you posted on intelligence affairs?"

Rouf was then the director general of DFI.

Shafiullah told Bangabandhu that he was not sure if Rouf had informed Bangabandhu about the leaflet found on the NCO and showed it to him. "Bangabandhu did not answer and I took it as a sign that he already knew about it. I was surprised because here was an intelligence gap—here is something that the president knew but I did not although I was the person who was supposed to be the first to get the information," says Shafiullah.

Shafiullah told Bangabandhu that his new intelligence plan had not been approved yet. He said it took a long time for the whole organogram to be approved, the president could at least approve the military intelligence set-up.

The intelligence unit was about to be approved and knocking at the door. But the proposal finally got through only after the killing of Bangabandhu—sometime in September 1975.

Bangabandhu was supposed to be present at the convocation of Dhaka University on August 15, 1975. In the afternoon of August 14, there were some bomb explosions around the university zone where he was supposed to distribute certificates. The then IGP Nurul Islam called Shafiullah and sought army's help as police had no explosive experts. "I sent several detachments to sweep through the zone to detect explosives," says Shafiullah.

On the same day, an Indian helicopter, provided to Bangladesh for overseeing the just growing Shanti Bahini trouble in Chittagong Hill Tracts, crashed in Feni after hitting a culture. All the Indian crew who were going to India to celebrate their Independence Day died in the crash. "I became busy sending the bodies."

After a long and tedious day, it was late in the night when Shafiullah went to bed around 1:30am. Roughly after the time of Fazi prayers, his batman woke him up and he saw the then director of Military Intelligence Col Salahuddin standing outside the door of his room.

"Have you sent the armoured and artillery forces towards the town?" Col Salahuddin asked Shafiullah.

A chill ran down Shafiullah's spine. "No, I have not. Why?" he said.

"The armoured and artillery divisions are heading towards the radio station, Ganabhaban and Bangabandhu's house on Dhanmondi Road-32," Salahuddin said.

"Does the Dhaka brigade commander know about it?" Shafiullah asked.

Col Shafayat Jamil was holding the post at that time.

"I don't know. I have come to you first," Salahuddin replied.

"Go and tell Shafayat Jamil to send 1, 2 and 4 Bengal battalions to stop the advancing artillery and armoured troops," Shafiullah ordered, saying he was also going to phone Shafayat immediately.

In the army, the chief of staff commands the army but not the troops. The brigade commanders command the troops.

Shafiullah picked up the red telephone to warn Sheikh Mujib about the information he received. The line was engaged. He then tried to get Shafayat Jamil, but that line was engaged too.

He then got hold of Col Jamil Uddin Ahmed, who had recently been posted to DFI

from the post of military secretary to the president. Jamil told Shafiullah that Bangabandhu had called him and asked him to go to Bangabandhu's residence as some people were roaming around his house.

Shafiullah asked Jamil, who was killed by the disgruntled army officials in front of the Sobhanbagh mosque on his way to the president's residence, to take Bangabandhu somewhere else.

Shafiullah finally got Shafayat Jamil on the phone at his home. It was around 5:30am. "Do you know why artillery and armoured division troops are going to the city?" he asked Shafayat.

"No."

"I told him, 'Salahuddin has informed me about this...Send your troops of 1, 2 and 4 Bengal regiments to stop them immediately. Try to bring them back,'" says Shafiullah.

Shafiullah also talked to the chiefs of the air force and navy who also said they did not know anything. A little later he talked to Brig Gen Khaled Mosharraf and Maj Gen Ziaur Rahman and they also expressed their ignorance about the matter.

"Is it?" Zia said when Shafiullah asked him about the troops' advancement towards the city. Shafiullah considered the reply as Zia's sign-off.

He asked both Khaled Mosharraf and Zia to come to his house immediately.

The two appeared within 15-20 minutes. Khaled came in his sleeping gown driving his private car and he was unshaven. Zia was shaven and in uniform even at that early hour. He came in his chauffeur-driven official car.

Before Khaled and Zia reached his house, Shafiullah had once again tried to contact the president's house and this time he got Bangabandhu on the phone.

"When the DMI informed me about the troops it was probably between 5:15am and 5:30am and I talked to Shafayat Jamil between 5:30am and 5:35am. I got Bangabandhu on the phone 20-25 minutes after I had called him first. I do not remember the time of my talking with Bangabandhu but it was definitely before 6:00 in the morning," says Shafiullah.

"Your forces have attacked my residence. They might be going to kill Kamal [Bangabandhu's son]. Send your forces quickly," said Bangabandhu angrily as soon as he recognised Shafiullah's voice.

"Sir, I am doing something. Can you get out of the house?" Shafiullah said.

"Then I went on saying 'hello' as there was no reply from Bangabandhu and just a minute later I heard sounds of firing and then in a few seconds the line went dead," Shafiullah says.

Then Khaled Mosharraf and Zia came and Shafiullah along with the two left for his office.

It had been 10-15 minutes since Shafiullah talked with Shafayat Jamil and there were no movement of troops yet.

Shafiullah asked Khaled Mosharraf to go to 46 Brigade to activate them and report him back.

Shafiullah was sitting in his office with Nasim, Zia and Khaled Mosharraf, who had returned to Shafiullah's office to report that a tank was standing near his office.

A little later, two-three vehicles wheeled into the office compound and Major Shariful Haque Dalim, who had been sacked from the service a few days ago, entered the office accompanied by 15-16 soldiers.

"Where is the chief?" Dalim asked, entering Shafiullah's room.

Dalim and his soldiers had their arms trained on Shafiullah.

"I am used to seeing arms and using arms. If you have come with the intent to use arms, use it. If you have come to talk, talk leaving the arms outside," Shafiullah told Dalim.

"The president has asked you to go to the radio station immediately," Dalim said, lowering his weapon.

A few tense moments passed by and then Shafiullah said, "The president? As I know the president is dead."

When Shafiullah had reached his office, his ADC Capt Kabir informed him that the president was dead.

"You should know that Khandaker Mushtaque is the president now," Dalim roared back.

Shafiullah said, "Khandaker Mushtaque may be your president but not mine."

"Don't force me to do something for which I have not come here," Dalim said.

"You can do whatever you wish but I will not go anywhere with you," Shafiullah told Dalim.

Dalim and his band of sepoys. He went straight to 46 Brigade. But to his surprise, he found that all troops and officers had sided with the coup plotters.

He met there Major Khandaker Abdur Rashid and the then 46 Brigade Major Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, who requested him repeatedly to go to the radio station.

Shafiullah told them that he would not go to the radio station alone.

He thought through the situation. It was clear that a large part of the army in Dhaka had sided with the rebels. It was futile to try anything at that time as none was obeying his command.

"First of all, I have to take my control back," Shafiullah told himself.

At that time the rebels also called Navy chief Rear Admiral MH Khan and Air Force chief Air Vice-Marshal AK Khandker and took the three chiefs to the radio station. He found Khandaker Mushtaque sitting in a room there with the then state minister for information Taheruddin Thakur standing near.

"Shafiullah, congratulations! Your troops have done a wonderful job," a cheerful Mushtaque said as soon as he saw Shafiullah.

"Now do the rest," Mushtaque said.

"What is that?" Shafiullah asked.

"You should know it better," replied Mushtaque.

"In that case, leave it to me," Shafiullah made an immediate reply and turned back to come out of the room.

Taheruddin Thakur told Mushtaque, "Don't let him go. We have some work left to do with him."

When Shafiullah was coming out he found Dalim and Rashid standing with their troops and they took him and the two other chiefs to another room.

Taheruddin Thakur came in the room and gave Shafiullah a written statement in support of Mushtaque and asked him to read it out. Shafiullah did and it was recorded.

After the recording, Mushtaque announced: "I need my chiefs at the oath-taking ceremony at Bangabhaban."

At the Bangabhaban things happened fast.

When the oath-taking was over Shafiullah wanted to go back to the cantonment, but Mushtaque did not allow him saying the new cabinet would be formed soon.

After the formation of cabinet on August 15 when Shafiullah thought it was time to go home, Taheruddin Thakur asked him not to go because there would be a conference at night.

Shafiullah had to stay in Bangabhaban until August 18. During this time, several sessions of the conference took place there and the main topic of discussion was whether to promulgate martial law.

At the conference, Shafiullah said there should not be any discussion about promulgating martial law because it had already been announced on the radio.

Mushtaque asked who announced the martial law.

Shafiullah said, "Dalim did."

"But Dalim is your [force's] man."

"If Dalim were my man, he would have mentioned my name [while announcing the martial law]. But he mentioned your name," said Shafiullah.

Then Shafiullah suggested looking into the legal aspect of the matter.

Mushtaque said, "All is done. The only formality left is to issue the gazette notification [on promulgating the martial law]."

During August 15-18, Mushtaque once told the conference that he would draft the martial law promulgation and show it to others. The next day, Mushtaque, Shafiullah and air force chief AK Khandker and navy chief MH Khan were sitting together when Mushtaque pulled out a piece of paper from his pocket and handed it to Shafiullah.

"This is the draft promulgation," Mushtaque said, handing it to Shafiullah.

Shafiullah said they would go through it to see if there was any mistake.

"General Shafiullah, I have been working on it for the last three months," said Mushtaque.

Shafiullah said, "In that case, it must be flawless." He then handed the paper to AK Khandker to check.

On August 15, Shafiullah had asked Mushtaque about where to bury Bangabandhu.

"Bury him anywhere but not in Dhaka," was Mushtaque's start reply.

On August 18, Shafiullah returned to the cantonment and the next day he held a

conference of officers there "to bring all the troops under control".

At that time, Zia repeatedly told Shafiullah, "The Indian army might attack us."

"Zia wanted me to mobilise troops towards the border instead of bringing them back to the cantonment," Shafiullah says.

He called the conference explaining this backdrop and asked troops to return to barracks from Bangabhaban.

Abdur Rashid and Farooq Rahman, two of the killers of Bangabandhu, attended the conference after coming back from Bangabhaban.

Shafayat Jamil stood up at the meeting and, pointing at Rashid and Farooq, said, "These are the persons responsible for the whole situation and they should be tried in court martial."

Soon the conference ended and the two killers went back to Bangabhaban where their cohorts were staying.

On August 22, Shafiullah asked Mushtaque to return the officers from Bangabhaban. Mushtaque told him that the officers are still scared and they need some time to recover.

On August 24, Shafiullah heard a bulletin on the radio that Gen MAG Osmani had been appointed the defence adviser to the president.

Immediately after the announcement, Mushtaque called Shafiullah and asked, "Did you like it?"

"Yes, it was good," said Shafiullah.

"I need you at 5:30pm," Mushtaque said.

As he reached Bangabhaban in the afternoon, an army officer asked him to meet Osmani first.

Seeing Shafiullah, Osmani started lauding him for his role in the army and the Liberation War. "We now need your service abroad," Osmani said.

Shafiullah understood that it was a farewell speech to him. He was then taken to Mushtaque who also repeated similar praises for him. Mushtaque told him that Shafiullah should go abroad to render his service.

"I am not ready to go abroad," said Shafiullah.

"Don't you know what happened to Sheikh Mujib and his family?" an angry Mushtaque barked.

"I left my family in the care of Allah during the war," Shafiullah said and left for home.

But even before he reached his residence, Shafiullah came to know that Ziaur Rahman replaced him as the army chief. The authorities asked Shafiullah not to leave home without permission.

On August 24 night, a letter reached him saying he was removed from the post of army chief.

Note: After the jail killing on November 3, Shafiullah changed his mind and went to Malaysia as an ambassador.

Criminal killed

FROM PAGE 1
The canal serves tens of thousands of people along its route. Commuters regularly travel between Ati Bazar and Sawarighat on merchandise boats there. The route is about to meet its certain end at Waaspur.

Moreover, farmers of the area use the canal for irrigation and transport of goods to city markets.

Deputy Commissioner of Dhaka Zillar Rahman told The Daily Star that he was not aware of the project and would look into the matter.

Meanwhile, Save the Environment Movement on Wednesday formed a human chain in front of the National Press Club demanding protection of Atir Khal and Haikar Khal.

Atir Khal

Arges found

FROM PAGE 1
Pakku, a former police informer, collected the grenade from Kamar Dafadar who was sacked from the job of village police for criminal activities, sources said.

On Tuesday, the gang informed Rab over phone that there were arms at the house of Abdul Hakim and following the information a Rab team raided the house but they could not find any arms.

On suspicion, Rab men arrested Pakku at 10:00 pm on Friday and following Pakku's confessional statement, they arrested other members of the gang. They confessed to their involvement in the incident.

The Rab men along with the arrestees went to the house of the BNP leader and recovered the grenade from its ceiling. The arrestees were being interrogated till filing of this report in the afternoon.

Captain Mohammad Mahfuzul Haque, Rab camp commander in Jamalpur, told The Daily Star that the grenade seems to be an Arges. A team of experts from Dhaka will arrive at Sherpur to identify it, he added.

On October 10, Rab recovered 10 Arges grenades during a drive in a bordering village of Sherpur district and arrested three people, including two tribal youths, in this connection.

The grenades were similar to those used at the Awami League rally at Bangabandhu Avenue in 2004.

Police claimed that Billal went to the university campus Thursday morning, a day after Khasru was arrested and organised his men. They put up a blockade on the Kushtia-Khulna highway for about two hours and padlocked the university main gate and administration building.

Police produced Billal before the district judicial magistrate court and sought a five-day remand. The court sent him to jail.

Climate change

FROM PAGE 1
Speakers suggested revision of the existing policies and policy instruments as well as generating firsthand data on climate change and its impact on health.

Health 21 Director Mubina Asaf said policy provisions must be brought under a legal framework.

"Planned urban development is imperative to address impending health risks arising from impacts of climate change," she said.

Khairul Islam, country representative of Water Aid Bangladesh, said scarcity and excess of water, and salinity constitute three fundamental risks for human health in the wake of climate change.

He regretted that no government project has yet been taken to save around two crore people in coastal areas, badly hit by cyclones Aila and Sidr, from penetration of saline water into sweet water bodies.

Lack of fresh water, salinity, and extreme climatic disasters including flood, cyclone, drought and erratic rainfall due to climate change will pose serious health hazards, particularly for the poor.

Dr Rashid-E-Mahbub said poorest of the poor will be the worst affected and pattern of diseases and mortality will change following the impacts of climate change.

Mitigation of the impacts and adaptation to climate change should be done simultaneously, said Sardar Arif.

Prof Omar Rahman of Independent University of Bangladesh said a correlation exists between climate change and its effect on human health.

There is lack of specific data to ascertain the precise consequences of climate change, he said.

"We need to generate and collect more reliable data on the matter," said Prof Omar Rahman.

Editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam, who presided over the discussion, said the actions aimed at tackling enormous impacts of climate change on health must be carried out in an integrated way.

Dr Abu Jamil Faysel of Engender Health moderated the discussion.

Prof Md Sharfuiddin Ahmed, secretary general of Bangladesh Medical Association, Dr Md Saikhul Islam Helal of health and family welfare ministry, Dr

BNP moves

FROM PAGE 1
According to the party decision the programme will be arranged in Dhaka, Chittagong, Mymensingh, Cox's Bazar, Khulna, Jessore, Rajshahi, Bogra and Barisal. Four divisional units -- Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi, however, will hold two meetings each.

BNP's senior Joint Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir said apart from senior leaders of the party a number of renowned professionals would attend the meetings to decide on the future strategies of the party in consultation with the field level leaders and workers.

He said they would also discuss party's plans for the development of the country, which they would implement if voted to power.

BNP's standing committee member Mirza Abbas has been assigned to coordinate the programmes in Chittagong while vice-chairmen Abdullah Al Noman in Khulna and Selima Rahman in Barisal, joint secretaries general Amanullah Aman in Dhaka, Ilyas Ali in Sylhet and Mizanur Rahman Minu in Rajshahi.

Besides, the party is also conducting its second-phase reorganisation process aiming to complete councils of 23 organisational district units that could not hold council before the party's fifth national council on December 8 last year.

Of the 23 organisational units, Dinajpur and Chandpur district units have already held their councils while Brahmanbaria council was foiled due to intra-party feud.

Pinaki Bhattacharya of Popular Pharmaceuticals, Dr Nauzia Yasmin of State University of Bangladesh, Dr Shaheen Akter, vice chairman and director of Health 21 and Dr Rumana Dowla also spoke.

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Gandhi

FROM PAGE 1
He said.

A radical nationalist shot Gandhi on January 30, 1948 in India, just months after he led the country to independence from Britain. He was cremated according to Hindu custom.

Normally, ashes are immersed in rivers or the sea within days, but Gandhi's ashes were divided and put in several urns and sent around India and across the globe so his followers could hold memorials.

One urn came to South Africa, where Gandhi had come to practise law in 1893, living in the country on and off for 21 years.

A family friend, Vilas Mehta, helped with the arrangements for the prayers, and the ashes were immersed after 10 days, according to the Gandhi Development Trust in Durban.

Unknown to the family, Mehta kept a few remnants of the ashes, and guarded them in secret for the rest of her life, the Trust said.

She "decided to take a little bit of the ashes and keep it in safekeeping as a memento of that occasion, not realizing that it is our custom to immerse them," said Gandhi.

When Mehta passed on, her daughter-in-law decided to return them to the Gandhi family.

DMP on court

FROM PAGE 1
Orders. They didn't do anything illegal or unlawful by serving the summons, he added.

The DMP commissioner was talking to reporters at Rajarbagh Police Lines School and College where he went to attend the annual sports as chief guest.

Earlier on Friday, Farroque at a press briefing said sending police with summons to Khaleda Zia's residence at 3:20am was an undignified gesture of the government towards the leader of the opposition and former prime minister.

Replying to a query about the arrest of Shahiduzzaman Parash alias Pasha, who was photographed carrying a gun during the January 18 violence on Dhaka University campus, the city police boss said he had instructed officers to recover the gun, which was used in the fight between Jatityabadi Chhatra Dal factions.

"I have also directed them to arrest the others suspected to have participated in the fighting."

China freezes military

FROM PAGE 1
Further development ties with China.

"It will let Taiwan feel more confident and secure so we can have more interactions with China," Ma was quoted by Taiwan's Central News Agency as saying.

Taiwan's defence ministry was also upbeat, saying, "The defence ministry welcomes and thanks the US decision.... This would enable Taiwan to be more confident in seeking reconciliation with China and help peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait."

The various defensive weapons provided by the US will also facilitate the transformation and modernisation of our national defence," the Taiwanese ministry said.

In Beijing, however, the deal's approval set in motion a flurry of angry activity.

Chinese Vice Foreign Minister He Yafei made an urgent official protest to the US ambassador in Beijing, Jon Huntsman, Chinese officials told AFP.

The Chinese defence ministry also summoned the US Embassy's defence attache on Saturday afternoon to notify Washington military ties had been suspended, Xinhua reported.

In the statement delivered to Huntsman, He urged Washington to cancel the deal, which he said would "inevitably damage China-US relations... causing results that both sides do not want to see".

The deal constituted "crude interference in China's internal affairs that seriously endangers China's national security and damages China's peaceful reunification", he said.

The sale marks Obama's most divisive act in China-US relations, after devoting his first year to broadening ties with Beijing despite discord on areas such as trade, human rights, internet censorship and climate change.

The United States since 1979 has recognised Beijing as China's sole government. But Congress at the same time required the United States to sell Taiwan weapons for its self-

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