



Rubel



Mithun

Teasing ended

FROM PAGE 1
house her father rushed to her room and asked her not to come out until she was told to. Rubel passed SSC from Iti's school Kalachandpur High School and College in 2001 and HSC from Mirpur Bangla College.

Locals said he used to keep bad company and would take drugs. After Wednesday's incident Rubel's family and relatives went into hiding.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) Kamal Uddin of Gulshan Police Station said Abul Hossain, a relative of the victim family, filed a case against Rubel and Mithun.

Police on Wednesday picked up Mithun's mother from her house at Nadda for interrogation. Mithun is reportedly a local hooligan who accompanied Rubel during the incident.

Kamal Uddin added Rubel might have a relationship with

Neutral trial

FROM PAGE 1
MA Hasan, convener of War Crimes Facts Finding Committee, said the people involved in the process need intensive training, as they never dealt with international laws.

He suggested forming an advisory committee comprising experienced persons to assist in the process.

Asif Munier, son of martyred intellectual Munier Chowdhury, expects the trial process to continue in its own way but not to be prolonged.

Asif, also the vice president of Projomo '71, an organisation of the children of the Liberation War martyrs, said the International Crimes (Tribunal) Act, should be revised taking other international laws into consideration to gain worldwide acceptance.

He said the government should let people know about steps and progress of the trial.

Awami League Presidium Member Obaidul Quader said, "We will certainly implement our pledge to hold trial of war crimes." He suggested that ministers work more and speak less while starting the trial.

March

FROM PAGE 16
Jatiya Muktiyoddha Parishad Moslem Uddin, who was introduced as a freedom fighter at a public function in the capital yesterday, stunned the audience with his knowledge of history of the Liberation War.

"This is the month of March, the month of our victory, we have earned our independence after the war in this month," Moslem Uddin started his speech by saying this at the function where Dhaka city unit Jamaat handed over financial assistance to some insolvent freedom fighters.

Back in 1971, the Parishad's parent organisation Jamaat had not only opposed liberation of the country but also actively participated in genocide and other war crimes collaborating with the Pakistani occupation forces, historical records and newspaper reports of that time say.

Miners' strike

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staff along with their family members were staying in the complex.

State Minister for Mineral Resources Enamul Haq and State Minister for Land Mostafizur Rahman Fizar, Secretary of Mineral Resources Mezbah Uddin and Petrobangla Chairman Md. Hossain Monsur held meeting with the local miners that ended at 9:30 without any outcome.

Earlier in the afternoon, they held two meetings with BCMCL authorities and contractor companies CMC and XMC. The agitating miners with the help of villagers have encircled the BCMCL complex with sticks from outside and resisted any movement of its officials and staff.

The deal recommends 8 percent salary increase of the miners each February but it did not happen accordingly last February, the miners said.

Additional police and Rapid Action Battalion men have been deployed in the area to avoid any untoward incident.

Iti but she broke up with him when his involvement with crime and drug addiction came to light.

Major Mustak of Rab-1 who is investigating the killings said the murders took place, as the couple became a hurdle for Rubel.

The Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) expressed its concern over the killing of Bangladesh Nursery Owners Association general secretary Sadequr Rahman and his wife.

Human activists of Mohila Parishad also formed a human chain in front of the victims' residence demanding arrest of the killers.

Late Col Jamil

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In the early hours of August 15, 1975, Col Jamil informed Bangabandhu of the attack on him and his family members at Dhanmondi residence over phone, said an Inter Service Public Relations (ISPR) release yesterday.

Jamil instantly contacted with various persons for taking necessary steps to save Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members. At about 4:30am, Jamil himself left his place for Dhanmondi residence but he was barred and shot dead at Sobhanbagh, it said.

The government has given the promotion to Jamil recognising his "outstanding sense of duty and appropriate worthiness," said ISPR.

AL factions

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welcoming ceremony on his return from China as an entourage member of the prime minister, and a group of people broke the arches erected for the ceremony.

Khaleq's group blamed Mokbul Hossain's group for this. To protest, Mokbul with his cohorts brought out a procession on Wednesday and at one stage, both the factions were locked in a clash leaving about 50 others injured.

Yesterday's clash erupted after a few men of Sahiduzzaman's group beat up Anarul, an activist of Mokbul's group, at bazaar area at 12:00 noon. In the following one and half hours, both the factions blasted homemade bombs and exchanged gunshots leaving around 50 injured.

Police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Gyanendra's statement on monarchy a daydream

Say Nepali leaders

ANI, Kathmandu

Most Nepali leaders have described a recent statement by former Nepal monarch King Gyanendra that "the monarchy hasn't completely ended" as a daydream.

Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal said on Thursday: "It is only a day dream to say that the monarchy still exists in the country. So, the meeting did not discuss about his remarks."

Tarai Madhes Loktantrik Party (TMLP) Chairman Mahantha Thakur expressed surprise over the former king's remark and joked that the former king might have made such remarks in delusion.

Meanwhile, UCPN (Maoist) Chairman Narayan Kaji Shrestha claimed that the latest statement by former King Gyanendra has made it clear that counter revolutionaries are conspiring in the country.

"The deposed king gave his recent statement with the support from counter revolutionary forces, Kantipur quoted him as saying.

He remarked that yesterday's statement of the ex-monarch that the monarchy could resurrect is an audacious attempt to disrespect the people.

Former king in an interview with a private television channel on Wednesday said it is hypothetical to say that the monarchy has been abolished in the country.

Black Night

FROM PAGE 1
government is set to start the process of trying war criminals. Now, the nation waits for quick completion of the trial, for which it has cried last 39 years seeking justice to the genocide of 1971, the most tragic chapters in the global history of genocide.

People from all walks of life, holding rallies, meetings and processions yesterday urged the government to remain alert so that anti-liberation forces cannot obstruct the trial process.

The nation passed a time of uncertainty and worry until the government formally launched the process of trial yesterday afternoon.

Different organisations including Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee brought out torch and candle-light processions from Central Shaheed Minar yesterday afternoon before paying tribute to Jagannath Hall Baddhabhumi.

Sector Commanders Forum also observed the night at Shikha Chirantan of Suhrawardy Udyan in the city from 10:00pm to 12:00am.

Every year the Black Night of March 25, 1971 evokes the painful memories of how thousands of unarmed and innocent Bengalees were slaughtered by the Pakistani invading forces in 1971.

On this night, the Pakistani military rulers launched the "Operation Search Light", leaving some 7,000 Bengalees killed.

The University of Dhaka, being the bastion of protracted struggle of the repressed of the country, faced severe wrath of the Pakistani army as students, teachers and employees were exterminated in their hundreds.

On March 26, the nation waged an armed struggle against the Pakistani forces following the declaration of independence by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The nine-month Liberation War culminated in emergence of Bangladesh.

No innocent

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now heads the three-member tribunal.

"During the trial, the accused persons will appear before us, while the memories of people killed during the Liberation War will remain in our minds," he said.

"Ensuring justice in the war crimes cases is a challenge for the tribunal," Justice Nizamul said at his HC chamber.

"As a judge of the High Court, I have to face the challenge of ensuring justice everyday, but I am always curious to take such challenge," he said.

LIFESKETCH
Nizamul Huq was born in Patuakhali on March 15, 1950.

He obtained LLB degree from Dhaka University. He was enrolled as a lawyer of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court on January 13, 1979, and of the Appellate Division of the SC in 1999.

He was made an additional judge of the HC for two years on July 3, 2001.

Justice Nizamul was appointed a regular judge of the HC on March 25 last year.

Jamaat to wait

FROM PAGE 1
formation of the war crimes tribunal.

Cellphones of the party's secretary general and senior joint secretary general were found switched off last night.

Contacted, aides of BNP Secretary General Khondakar Delwar Hossain told The Daily Star he was sleeping.

Standing committee member Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, who is also an alleged war criminal, in his reaction told The Daily Star that the trial is aimed at "victimising" him and "weakening" his party.

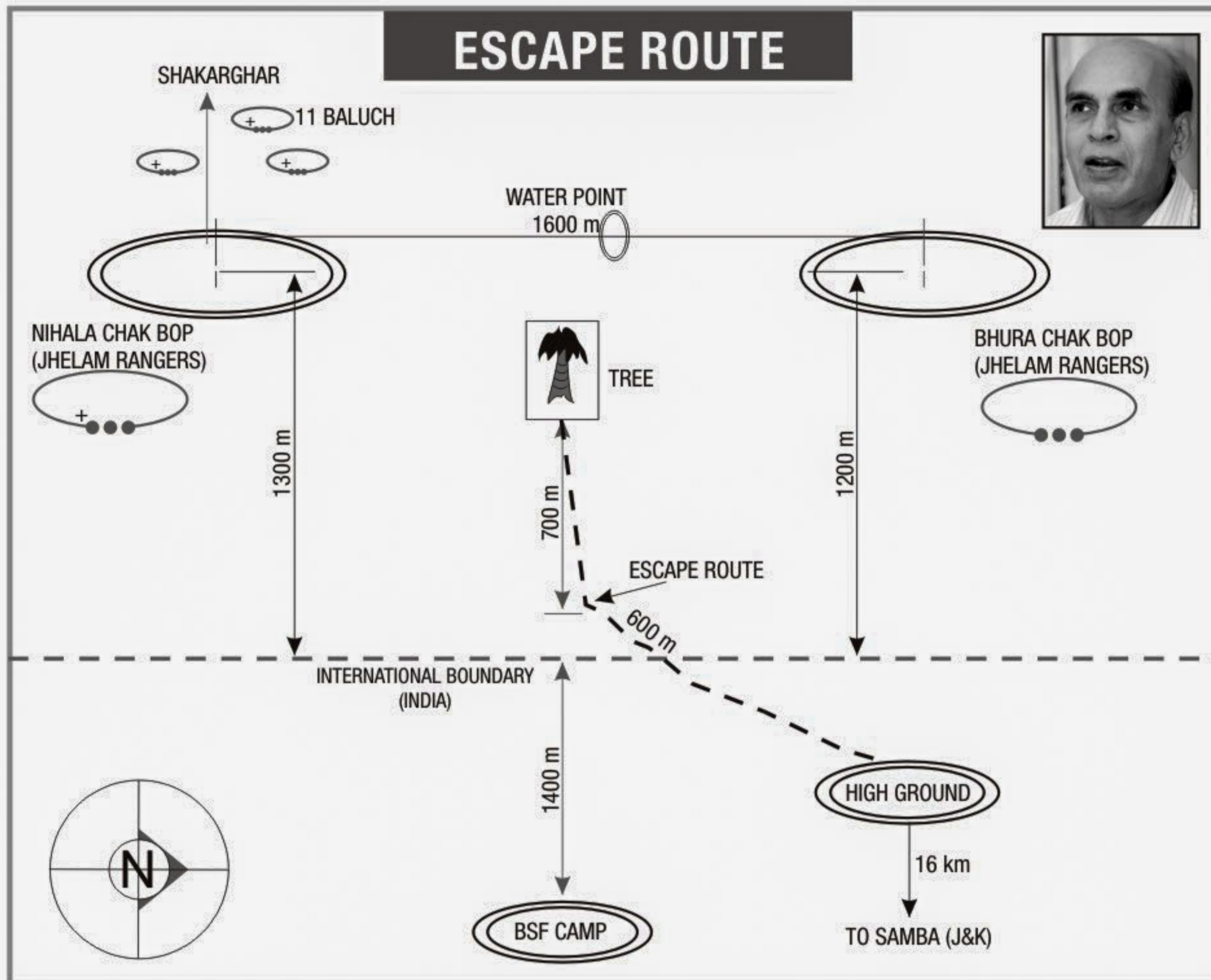
"It is an attempt to embarrass my party. The issue of trying the war criminals is the issue of political persecution. My party will address the issue politically and I personally will handle it legally," Chowdhury said.

He labelled the war crimes tribunal with "kangaroo court" during the past caretaker government.

"What the government is doing is a classic case of tail wagging of the dog. The tail is represented by some super patriots, who are materially advised by forces beyond the border," he commented.

He also said the government wants to divert people's attention from its failure in various issues.

Standing committee member Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman said they are not against the trial but stressed the need for maintaining its international standard.



Flight to freedom

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end of August.

It was a long struggle for Sajjad, a Bangalee teenager, to get into Pakistan Army in 1969. He was sent to Pakistan Military Academy in Kakul, Abbotabad in the North West Frontier of former West Pakistan for officers' training. While he was engrossed in training, the war broke out in East Pakistan.

"But we did not know much about the war. We were somewhat in the dark," Sajjad recalls. "We had no idea what had happened in Dhaka on March 26 or of the enormity of the massacre. We just heard that the army had gone into action and a few people had died. That was all the Pakistan army shared with us."

He only came to know about the extent of the atrocities when he visited his Punjabi friend's family in Rawalpindi in April. The friend, who was the son of a retired senior civil servant, and he was in the army.

"A lot has happened in East Pakistan," the friend's father said. "The army has killed thousands of Bengalees. Tikka (martial law administrator in East Pakistan) should not have done it. This is wrong."

Sajjad shuddered in horror. He had no idea if his family were alive. He returned to the academy with a heavy heart, determined to desert the Pakistan Army and fight the monstrous killers. He started planning his escape. The first chance to do so came fast.

He graduated from the academy in August as a second lieutenant in the artillery corps and was posted to Shialkot under the 14 para brigade. On the way to his posting, Sajjad stopped at Rawalpindi to visit his uncle, who was also in the Pakistan Army. There he met some Bangalee army officers at the officers' mess.

Sajjad sought support from his seniors. "We have to fight the Pakistani forces. There are some Bangalee soldiers in Shialkot, where we can group together and fight the first battle on the Pakistan soil and retreat to India."

The response was disheartening. They eyed him with suspicion, because of his uncle's posting in the military intelligence department.

Only one officer came forward. "If you can organise the soldiers in Shialkot, we can come, fight the first battle and enter India."

He joined his unit in Shialkot and further discussed his plan with other Bangalee officers but they were too scared of his plan.

Sajjad kept up his spirits. One August evening, he rode a bicycle to the garrison cinema. A romantic movie 'Nail Laila, na Majnu' was showing. He bought a ticket and entered the hall at 9:00pm. But the love scenes on the screen failed to touch his heart. A bigger plot was brewing in his mind.

An hour and a half later, he quietly came out of the hall. The Indian border was about seven kilometres from Shialkot. He started pushing his bicycle through the dark towards the border following the village tracks. His plan was to get within two kilometres of the border, then abandon the cycle and make it across on foot.

Sajjad was a master in night navigation. He could find his way just by watching the positions of stars. So crossing

the border would not be a problem.

He had travelled about five kilometres -- excited by the prospect of getting out of Pakistan. A dark bush loomed by the trackside. Suddenly, four dark figures appeared from behind it.

"Halt! Hands up!" the orders came.

In the starlight, the muzzles of their guns glinted at him. As Sajjad slowly raised his hands, he realised they were field intelligence personnel guarding the border. They talked into walkie-talkies and a jeep wheeled in.

Sajjad sat still in the vehicle, trying to cook up a defence for his overnight venture to the border. The jeep stopped at a camp around 12pm.

The interrogation started. Punches and kicks rained down on him.

"You were escaping -- you bloody Bangalee."

"No, I was not."

"Then why were you heading for the border, you Bangalee?" More blows and kicks. Blood streamed out of his nose.

"I am new here. I just lost my way."

The next morning he was taken to the brigade commander at the headquarters. Sajjad repeated his story and showed him the movie ticket. A plain land guy may get lost in this wild frontier, he argued.

The commander heard him through. "You are a damn good officer in the making," he said.

"They tortured you a lot, but you did not let out a single scream. Well, we can't prove anything against you. You were caught three kilometres inside the border on a cycle. And we don't believe that you would attempt to cross the border without a weapon. Be a good Pakistani. You are a damn good chap and have very good records. You have a bright future in army. Don't ever disclose this incident to anyone."

Sajjad heaved a sigh of relief. "My first attempt failed. Next time I will be more careful and make it," he thought.

"Have I made it this time?" Sajjad thought lying in the narrow channel. "I must make it because this time there will be no excuse. They know I tied up a Pakistani army officer to a tree and ran away. They know I dashed for the border. They will put a bullet in my head if they find me."

Sajjad knew the Pakistani soldiers very close. The firing had stopped. The Indians also held back. It was getting dark and the Pakistani soldiers knew they must find him before dark. Sajjad knew he must stay holed in until the dusk fell.

It was going to be a game of patience. He thought about his two other failed attempts to escape.

A team from Sajjad's regiment was supposed to go on a border familiarisation patrol near an enclave called Sakkar Gar on the north of Shialkot. Capt Munir was leading the team. Lt Fashahad Beg was there too. He was a kind friend to Sajjad. They had nine soldiers with them.

They came and put up with the Jhelam Rangers who were the border security forces stationed in Sakkar Gar area.

Sajjad was given a Sten gun and two magazines. From the moment of taking up the

weapon, he knew it was a big opportunity he must not blow.

He had already chalked out the plan and gone over it for the umpteenth time in his brain. They would walk in a single file on patrol and he would have to be at the end of it. The plan was simple: he would just draw his carbine and mow them down, and then take off to the border.

But luck was against Sajjad. Capt Munir took the lead and ordered Sajjad behind him. The rest of the bunch followed.

Sajjad was racking his brain to find a way of tackling the situation. Somehow he had to be at the end of the file or this chance would go in vain again.

An idea popped in his mind. "I wanna pee," he uttered loudly. He stepped out and went behind a small hill.

He urinated for real and went over his plan for the last time. Then suddenly on impulse he quickly disassembled the Sten gun. His heart froze. The weapon did not have the firing pin, and without the firing pin it would not fire.

It took him a few seconds to realise why his gun had no firing pin. It was a deliberate trap laid out for him. Had he tried to implement his plan, he would be dead without doubt.

Sajjad reassembled his Sten gun as quickly as possible and joined the advancing patrol team as if nothing had happened. His heart was burning all the time as the second chance was wasted. He broke out in a cold sweat.

That night Sajjad went to sleep early in his tent. Around midnight, he woke up. He must take this chance. He lifted the flap of his tent and stepped out. It was not too dark. He could make out the other tents.

Sajjad took a deep breath and was ready to head for the border.

A voice sounded in from the watchtower in front. "Sir, are you okay? A soldier was on guard."

"Yup. Just wanted to take a leak," Sajjad walked toward the toilet, his heart heavy with frustration.

The deep channel felt stuffy to Sajjad. It was already a hot evening and the narrow hole was making it even hotter. He reflected on what had happened only the night before and where he was now. If last night was a failure, tonight must be a success.

"There is no other way," he spoke to himself. "I must succeed." Then he remembered how he had planned today's escape attempt, and laughed.

Sajjad stepped out of the tent to a bright Sunday morning. Last night's soldier was still there on the watchtower.

He had a new plan and must execute it cautiously. He spent the lazy Sunday in light conversation with the platoon commander of the Jhelam Rangers, a Pathan, and waited for noon to come. He knew Capt Munir loved to take an afternoon siesta and other soldiers would also rest on Sunday. That was the time he chose. He drew a small map of the area and calculated the time and space to reach the border. He knew how to make an accurate field sketching.

After lunch, Sajjad offered a special prayer seeking suc-

cess. He put on khaki trousers and a T-shirt and quietly stepped out of his tent. Capt Munir was sleeping as usual in the next tent.

He approached the tent of his friend Lt Fashahad Beg.

"What's up?" Fashahad asked as Sajjad stepped in.

"Nothing. It's too boring here."

"True my friend. I am bored to death!"

Sajjad looked around the tent and saw pictures of a film actress. Fashahad's love for women was well known and Sajjad wanted to exploit that.

"Well," Sajjad said. "I know a place where you can watch beautiful women bathing."

"Really?" Fashahad's eyes lit up. "Where?"

"There is a stream over there, where village girls come to bathe."

"Have you seen them?"

"Oh yes. I have seen the place during patrol and we can go there."

"Let's go my friend." Fashahad quickly put on his trousers and shirt. Through the gap in the tent, Sajjad saw Fashahad tucking a pistol in his waist. It meant that the Pakistani was not trusting Sajjad much.

Together they left the tent. The guards did not say a word as Fashahad was with him. Sajjad knew, without Fashahad, the guards would not allow him to go out alone.

They walked about 700 metres from the camp towards the stream. Sajjad tried to recall the map of the area that he had studied in the morning when he was talking to the Jhelam Rangers platoon commander.

They were now close to a large tree near the stream. In the meantime, a routine patrol from Bhura Chak was going toward Nihala Chak side across the tree and Fashahad waved to the patrol indicating everything was okay.

The girls were there in the stream, frolicking in the water.

"Fashahad, let's climb a tree. We can have a clear view from up there," Sajjad suggested.

Fashahad's eyes glittered. "But I don't know how to climb a tree."

"I will help you." Sajjad quickly climbed up the tree. Being a Bangalee it was not a difficult task. He then pulled Fashahad up. Slowly they made their way up the branches until they found a suitable place with a clear view of the stream. From there, the Indian border was visible -- about 1,300 metres away.

About 700 metres away from the tree, a deep gorge ran through the border into India. This area from the map was studied by Sajjad. He knew he must cross this stretch in about three minutes, giving minimum reaction time to Pakistani soldiers. An additional setback was the patrol that just crossed the area. Sajjad decided to go slow, letting the patrol leave the area.

"We should tie ourselves to the branch, or we might fall," Sajjad said. Both were carrying coils of long ropes at their waists.

First, he tied himself with the tree and, then Fashahad, so that he would not doubt the move.

But Sajjad tied himself with a special knot that would allow him to untie himself and slide down quickly. Fashahad's was a different knot, difficult to

untie.

"You turn this way to have a better look," he said and turned Fashahad with a jerk. In an instant, he brushed his hand against the pistol. The pistol dislodged from Fashahad's waist and dropped to the ground.

"My pistol! My pistol! It's gone. Mera pistol gir gia."

"Don't worry. I will get it for you." Sajjad swung down his rope in a jiffy. He picked up the pistol and waited for a moment. "Should I shoot Fashahad and run?" The thought burned in him. But he turned around and started running.

"Stop! Stop! Guards! The Bengali gaddar is fleeing. Catch him! Fire koro usko vag gia," he heard Fashahad shouting from the treetop.

Sajjad stopped for a second and waved the pistol toward Fashahad before tossing it near a bush so that Fashahad could locate it.

"Thank you my friend!" he yelled back. He could not shoot his friend in cold blood. That was not the rule of the game. That was the human aspect of the war. He knew that if the pistol was lost, Fashahad would face court martial and might lose his job.

But the friend in Fashahad did not have the same feeling. He kept on shouting to open fire on Sajjad.

Just then he heard the first shot. Bullets were ping-pong around him. The Pakistani guards were running toward him.

Sajjad started running hard. The gorge was just a hundred feet away now, but could he make it? Just as he had calculated, the BSF opened fire. That was both a blessing and a clear danger for him as he was now running through a hail of bullets.

He did not know how he reached the gorge, but he jumped into it, rolling about 15 feet down the slope. Now he was safe. The Pakistani soldiers could not come looking for him because of the BSF firing. Now was the time for him to cover as much distance as possible.

He crouched and ran. The firing stopped and he heard excited voices -- the Pakistani soldiers were searching for him. He heard Capt Munir's voice, "Find that bastard! We must find him!"

Sajjad looked for a place to hide and saw the deep channel running alongside of the gorge. He moved into it and waited until the dark descended.

The disappointed Pakistan army had returned to their camp. Sajjad came out of his hiding and started walking along the gorge. He knew he was now on the Indian side and so climbed up the gorge. There was a high ground, which he had to climb to get the direction to the nearest bus stop in the Jammu-Kashmir highway called Samba.

As darkness fell, Sajjad headed to Samba town with the help of his accurate night navigation.

Unfortunately for Sajjad, before he could reach Samba he was caught by Indian Central Reserve Police and taken into custody.

His defection as an officer of Pakistan Army was aired by Jammu Radio, and hearing that Humayun Rashid Chowdhury, who was the acting high commissioner of the new Bangladesh government there, tried to contact him. But Rashid was denied access and he passed the information to General Osmany. Osmany called Indian army chief General Sam Manekshaw, asking for Sajjad's release.

Sajjad was then put on a train with a Gorkha guard, brought to Kolkata and handed over to Osmany at 8 Theatre Road, the makeshift office of the Bangladesh government.

"You've done a fascinating job. You are only 19 years old and you did it all by yourself. I am now confident that Bangladesh will be independent with the efforts of young people like you," Osmany said. "When do