

## War crimes court releases Rwandan rebel leader

AFP, The Hague

Rwandan rebel leader Callixte Mbarushimana was released in France yesterday after the International Criminal Court last week dropped charges against him, the court announced.

"Thanks to the full cooperation of the Netherlands, the host state of the ICC, and of France, Mr Mbarushimana was released on French territory, as he requested," it said in a statement issued in The Hague.

Mbarushimana's lawyer earlier told AFP his client would be released later yesterday and be flown to France from the Netherlands, where he has been in ICC custody for almost a year, facing crimes against humanity and warcrimes charges.

## Cargo vessel

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Secretary Farhad Uddin Ahmed, however, said before Hanjin Semarang got stuck, 11 vessels crossed the channel.

He hoped that the vessel could be pulled to the jetty during the high tide in the night.

## Arrested six

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locals handed over the six to the police.

Five of them confessed to their involvement in the killing during primary interrogations, police said.

SUST students Diponkar Ghosh Anik and Khairul Kabir were beaten to death by alleged muggers during a cruise on the river Chenger Khal. Their bodies were recovered from the river the next day.

Police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) raided Nalot, Nilgaon and other neighbouring villages of Badaghat areas almost every night since. They surrounded Nalot on Thursday morning to catch the suspects.

Villagers then caught the six and handed over them to police.

The suspects are Abdus Shahid and Abdur Rouf of Nilgaon and Shahin Ahmed, Jamal Miah, Lal Miah and Saim Ahmed of Nalot.

Earlier, police arrested a boatman, Gulzar Miah, and three others in connection with the killing.

## BNP protests

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price will bring in a disaster for the people," he said at a party meeting at its Naya Paltan office in the capital.

The government on Thursday increased electricity price by 21.28 percent.

Industries are closing down due to gas and power crises but the government has no headache, he said, adding that the government is busy increasing prices.

Referring to incidents of secret killing, Fakhru said the government is doing those to eliminate the opposition. Militancy and terrorism rose during the previous AL government rule, he added.

He also held the government responsible for the street violence on December 18 in the capital and elsewhere in the country.

"The finance minister himself on Wednesday said that the country's economy is in danger," he said.

He alleged that the current government is an autocratic one that has snatched the democratic rights of the opposition party and foiled its programmes by using the law enforcement agencies.

Fakhru also directed the party leaders and activists to reorganise themselves for a tougher movement to "oust the government".

The party will hold protest rallies today in all the thanas and municipalities across the country against the police action on the partymen.

Similar programmes will be held in district towns on December 26.

## Intra-party conflict

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BNP leaders are confident that Sakku, also the last mayor of Comilla municipality, will win the polls race as he is a popular leader and the ruling AL is divided into many factions.

Nine candidates are fighting for the post of mayor of the newly-formed city corporation.

Talking to The Daily Star, many voters pointed finger at the role of local lawmaker trio AKM Bahauddin Bahar, Whip Mujibul Haque and AHM Mustafa Kamal, saying that much will depend on these influential persons.

The trio has long-running disputes with Afzal, joint convener of Comilla (south) AL unit.

Contacted, Bahar denied any conflict of interest in the party. "There is no conflict among us. I am working for him [Afzal] for a long time now."

Kamal, convener of Comilla (south) AL, said they have asked all their party leaders to work jointly for Afzal.

Many AL leaders, however, said mayoral hopeful Noor-ur-Rahman Mahmud Tanin is blessed by Kamal.

At a party meeting at his

residence in Nangalkot on Thursday night, Kamal categorically denied the allegation.

According to party insiders, another candidate Anisur Rahman Mithu is enjoying support from Whip Mujibul, who refuted the allegation.

"The prime minister has backed Afzal Khan and that is why we will do our best to ensure his victory," he said.

Both Tanin and Mithu have taken a strong stance against Afzal. Even they have turned down a party request made by Thursday's meeting for withdrawing from the mayoral race in favour of Afzal.

"There is no scope to quit the race. Rather Afzal Khan should quit as he is sick," Tanin said yesterday.

Citizens of Comilla have decided not to vote him due to his family's bad reputation, mentioned Mithu.

Earlier, Afzal branded both of them as dummy candidates.

Meanwhile, Afzal yesterday campaigned in Nurpur Housing Estate area while Sakku was busy meeting people in Thakurpara, Ashoktola, Kasharipotti and Unaishar areas.

## Abdur Razzak

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was little hope of recovery once he had gone into a deep coma. He died at 9:40pm Bangladeshi time.

A pall of gloom and grief descended on senior AL leaders, noted politicians and his well-wishers and admirers as soon as news of his passing reached Bangladesh.

President Zillur Rahman, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Opposition Leader Khaleda Zia expressed their deep sense of shock at his death.

The eminent political leader left behind his wife, two sons, and a host of friends, followers, well-wishers and admirers to mourn his death.

Talking to The Daily Star, many senior politicians remarked that Razzak's death was the "fall of a star" from Bangladesh's political firmament.

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After the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, Razzak was arrested again along with several other followers of Bangabandhu. He was jailed again in 1987 by the Ershad military regime.

Razzak did his MA in political science from Dhaka University in 1964 and LLB in 1967 from the same university.

He quit Awami League in 1983 and formed Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (BAKSAL). He became the presidium member of AL in 1992 when the two parties merged.

**REACTION** "He [Razzak] was very popular among his followers. When he was involved in Chhatra League politics, and played a vital role in the Six Point movement of 1966 and the mass upsurge of 1969.

Following liberation, Razzak was closely linked with Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and was never to waver in his loyalty to the principles of the Father of the Nation.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, Razzak's participation in the movement against HM Ershad's autocratic rule was vibrant. As a freedom fighter, he was ever vocal in raising the demand for the trial of the war criminals of 1971.

He served the party in different positions and was very much sincere in carrying out his responsibilities," said senior AL leader Amir Hossain Amu, who first met Razzak in 1961 and became close to him over the years.

He served twice as AL general secretary, besides serving the party as organising secretary. Razzak was also an influential presidium member of the party.

He was twice general secretary of Bangladesh Chhatra League. Earlier in 1967, he served the East Pakistan Chhatra League as a "loss for the nation and also the party".

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## Commuters

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village residence in Nangalkot on Thursday night, Kamal categorically denied the allegation.

MA Mojed, a leader of the ruling party, said five others were injured in the clash.

The strike was, however, called off as law enforcement agencies assured them that the miscreants responsible for the attack on Mojed would be brought to book, police said.

Meanwhile, the strike added to sufferings of the people of Thakurgaon amid cold snap, reports our district correspondent.

Thakurgaon District Transport Workers' Union also observed the strike.

People in hundreds including women and children were seen waiting at the Thakurgaon bus stand for pick-up vans, human haulers and other vehicles to return home.

Several BRTC buses were obstructed to ply on Thakurgaon-Panchagarh and other routes by unruly transport workers that also added miseries to passengers.

Amena Begum of Baraon village under the Sadar upazila was forced to travel 18 kilometres in rickshaw and Nosimon, an improvised vehicle, with her nine-month-old ailing child to see a doctor in the district town.

However, she could not see the doctor as there were many patients and she arrived too late to take a serial number. "Now it is very difficult for me to go back home," she said.

Another mother, Rashida Khatun, of Jhathibanga village, also suffered greatly as she travelled 20 kilometres by rickshaw with her one-and-a-half-year-old son, who has been suffering from fever for the last two days. She also expressed anxiety for returning home with the minor.

**Road crash**

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Traffic resumed at about 12:00 noon with police intervention.

Police said they confiscated the bus but the driver fled the spot.

## Does president

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major political parties.

However, we observed some serious anomalies between the president's claim and the provisions of the constitution.

The president in his written speech referred to article 118 of the constitution as the source of his power to appoint the EC.

But article 118 cannot be read in isolation from the constitution's article 48 (3) that clearly says: "In the exercise of all his functions, save only that of appointing the Prime Minister pursuant to clause (3) of article 56 and the Chief Justice pursuant to clause (1) of article 95, the President shall act in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister."

Even in these two cases, his discretionary power is very nominal. Because he has no option but to appoint the leader of the majority party in parliament as the prime minister.

And in case of the appointment of chief justice, the president is expected to appoint the senior most judge of the Appellate Division.

When article 118 is read along with article 48 (3), it becomes clear that the president's claim that the constitution empowers him to appoint the CEC and other EC members is misconstrued.

His statement that after discussions with political leaders he "will decide..." is also beyond his power, as he must act on the advice of the prime minister in all cases except the two mentioned above.

It is only natural that the president's written statement was drafted by his staff. So we want to ask did the president's staff do their homework, and are they well versed in the constitution?

We feel that the president was misguided in this matter which should be immediately looked into, as otherwise the president might be dragged into unnecessary and undesirable controversies that must be avoided to maintain the prestige of the high office that he holds.

Razzak was one of those leaders who had played a significant role in organising the AL after the assassination of Bangabandhu on August 15, 1971.

AL Presidium Member Obaidul Quader said, "We have lost a politician who practised value-based politics throughout his life."

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