

LOKMAN MURDER
Minister's APS
sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Narsingdi

Masudur Rahman Murad, an assistant personal secretary (APS) of the telecommunications minister, and another were sent to jail yesterday in connection with the Narsingdi municipal mayor Lokman Hossain murder case.

A Narsingdi court turned down the bail prayers of Murad and Miah Mohammad Manju, the convener of the district town Swachh Chhasebak League, and sent them to jail.

Narsingdi Chief Judicial Magistrate Naita Chandra Saha also ordered the investigation officer to question the duo for fair investigation of the case.

Mamunur Rashid Mandal, investigation officer of the Lokman murder case, yesterday produced Murad and Manju before the court on completion of a two-day and a one-day remand respectively.

Lokman, a two time gold medalist for best mayor, was shot on November 1 last year. Hours later he succumbed to his injuries at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Jamaat men

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brought out processions in the capital's Motijheel, Purana Paltan and Ramna areas, witnesses said.

Police chased after them and foiled their demonstrations. Besides, 17 leaders and activists of Jamaat and Shibir were detained-- 10 by Ramna police, five by Paltan police and two by Motijheel police, Masudur Rahman, additional deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star.

Our correspondent from Chittagong reported that about 20 to 25 Shibir activists brought out a procession in the city's Probartak intersection at 1:00pm.

They were students of Chittagong Government College and Hazi Muhammad Mohsin College, said Ismail Hossain, officer-in-charge of Panchnalish Police Station.

Shibir men tried to bring out another procession at Naya Bazar intersection at about 1:30pm, but they dispersed as police chased them, said SM Tanvir Arafat, assistant commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police.

A sub-inspector of Halishahar Police Station sustained injuries when the Shibir men pelted the law enforcers with brick chips.

Meanwhile, pro-Jamaat lawyers demonstrated on the Supreme Court premises after the tribunal passed the order. Also, Jamaat leaning lawyers of the High Court and the lower courts marched to the Supreme Court Bar Association and staged a protest rally in front of the association's building.

Prison cell

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admission section at the jail entrance," said Golam Haider, deputy inspector general of prisons (DIG-prisons) of Dhaka division. He, however, was taken to an adjacent room for some time for medical checkup which was conducted by doctors of the jail.

The Jamaat leader there sought admission to a hospital citing his old-age complications, said the DIG-prisons. Also, his family members submitted a prayer in this regard to the International Crimes Tribunal that ordered his arrest in the morning.

He was then sent to the BSMU hospital around 3:50pm at his request and his family's and also because the jail doctors suggested doing so, said Golam Haider.

BSMMU Director Brig Gen Abdul Majid Bhuiyan said they had kept Ghulam Azam at a prison cell for a physical checkup. "We will conduct physical tests tonight, and tomorrow senior doctors will decide whether it is necessary to keep him at the prison cell or should he be sent back to Dhaka Central Jail.

"He is now under our medical observation and in the protection of jail guards," said the BSMU director.

Brig Gen Abdul Majid Bhuiyan, a doctor of the medical corps of the Bangladesh Army, said, "He [Ghulam Azam] is now almost okay. The condition of his sugar level [in blood] and kidney is normal. However, his pressure is a little bit high."

Ghulam Azam lands in jail

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of arrest against Azam.

The courtroom was brimming with lawyers, observers and journalists yesterday. Several groups formed human chains and brought out processions outside the tribunal premises demanding Azam's arrest.

Several hundred lawyers and ordinary people were also eagerly waiting outside the courtroom to know of the tribunal's decision.

Ghulam Azam, one of the front men who actively helped the Pakistani occupation forces' attempt to foil the birth of Bangladesh in 1971, comes under the spotlight once again after yesterday's development.

The trial of individuals who committed crimes during the war under the leadership of Ghulam Azam and some other leaders has been a long-standing demand of the nation. The demand for Azam's arrest has become even more powerful since the tribunal was set up in March 2010.

Expectations of his arrest ran high after the prosecution submitted charges against him before the tribunal last December. Many considered the arrest to be a big challenge for the government given that Jamaat activists could let chaos loose over the issue.

Against such a backdrop, Azam seemed to have appeared before the tribunal prepared for going to jail, thinking ahead of time that his bail petition might get rejected. His private secretary brought a black suitcase containing his personal belongings.

When security personnel had the suitcase opened, Azam's towels, lungi, pink napkins, medicines, shaving kit, toothpaste and toothbrush were noticed among the contents in it.

Meanwhile, security was beefed up across the country, especially on and around the tribunal premises, hours before Azam was scheduled to appear before the court.

After yesterday's court proceedings, Azam was taken to a lockup on the ground

floor of the tribunal where he waited for a prison van to take him to Dhaka Central Jail.

Around noon, another Jamaat leader, Delwar Hossain Sayedee, was brought into that lockup where he waited before being produced at the tribunal for his trial in connection with similar war crimes charges.

Azam and Sayedee greeted each other in the lockup.

A few minutes later, Sayedee was taken to court while a prison van took Azam to jail. Azam's son, former Brig Gen Abdullahil Aman Azmi, boarded the guard chamber of the van to accompany his father to jail.

After a three-hour wait at the admission section of Dhaka Central Jail, Azam was sent to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University for a medical check-up.

COURT PROCEEDINGS
Ghulam Azam reached the tribunal set up in the old High Court building by a green SUV at 9:48am.

In the moments of his arrival, journalists and TV cameramen surrounded the SUV to get a shot of the 89-year-old, who sat in the back seat with his son. He came in an off-white shawlani and trousers, sky blue cardigan, a light grey Jinnah cap (so named after the founder of Pakistan) and black shoes.

Azam had to wait in the car for about five minutes as police tried to clear the way for him to enter the courtroom. He was escorted inside on a wheelchair at 9:53am with dozens of cameras flashing all around him.

Over two dozen cameramen and other journalists almost followed Azam into the building. Police tried to clear the way and pushed them back, which prompted a light scuffle between the law enforcers and the newsmen. However, the situation soon calmed down.

At least 60 lawyers were waiting before of the tribunal building. The number of the lawyers overwhelmingly increased within a few minutes, as many joined the gathering from the High Court nearby. They were soon joined

by riot police, who were deployed to avoid possible violence.

The main gate of the tribunal was kept closed the whole time Azam was inside the court.

Azam entered the courtroom on the first floor of the building at 9:55am with the help of some of his lawyers and relatives. He was seated on a bench generally used by lawyers, observers, journalists and visitors.

A few minutes later, a security official requested Azam to sit in the dock, adding that it was an instruction from the tribunal registrar.

The lawyers then took him to the dock where his son Abdullahil Aman Azmi also sat beside him. They spoke to each other for a while until the judges entered the court.

Azmi came out of the dock after security officials asked him to. He told them that his father needed help to stand up and salute the judges.

Some defence lawyers, including Tajul Islam, then consulted with Ghulam Azam for some time. During that time, Azam looked calm and confident. At one point he brought out a small comb from his pocket and ran it through his beard.

When the three judges entered the court at 10:30am, a court official helped Azam stand up. As per his son's prompt advice, Azam greeted the court saying Assalamu Alaikum (Peace be upon you).

Interestingly, he stood up without any support when the judges left the courtroom at around 11:30am.

During the hearing, defence counsel Abdur Razzaq prayed to the tribunal to grant bail to the ex-ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami on medical and humanitarian grounds, as it had been done in the case of Abdul Alim, another accused in the war crimes trial and former BNP lawmaker from Joypurhat.

Razzaq told the court that Ghulam Azam, author of many books, left politics eleven years ago and had motor difficulties due to old-age complications such as diabetes and back pain. He

said Ghulam Azam should obtain bail as he would not flee the country and would face trial.

He said Ghulam Azam's doctors had advised him to take complete rest, restrict his movements, and take medicines regularly.

Chief Prosecutor Ghulam Arief Tipoo then stood up and opposed the bail petition submitted by Ghulam Azam on January 10. He said Ghulam Azam had been the "pioneer of all atrocities committed during the Liberation War in 1971".

The cases against Ghulam Azam and Abdul Alim are very different, said Tipoo.

The tribunal had taken the formal charges against Ghulam Azam into cognisance for trial, he said, but it had granted bail to Abdul Alim as the investigation into the allegations against him were yet to be completed.

Citing the trials of John Demjanjuk, a Ukrainian-born US citizen in Germany, and Egypt's ex-president Hosni Mubarak, Ghulam Arief Tipoo argued that the health and age related problems of Ghulam Azam did not justify granting him bail.

On May 12, 2011, John Demjanjuk at the age of 91 was convicted as an accessory to the murder of 27,900 Jews from March 27, 1943 to mid September 1943 and sentenced to five years in prison, he said, adding that throughout the course of his two year trial, John Demjanjuk was held in custody at the Stadelheim Prison in Munich, Germany.

Tipoo said Ghulam Azam spearheaded the formation of the Shanti Committee, Razakar, Al-Badr and Al-Shams as auxiliary forces of the then Pakistani occupation army and instigated them into committing atrocities and crimes against humanity.

Ghulam Azam was not incapable of movement and he even frequently talked to the media against the allegations brought against him, said Tipoo, adding that the scope for granting him bail was very limited.

After hearing the argu-

ments of the two sides, the tribunal comprising its chair, Justice Md Nizamul Huq, Justice ATM Fazle Kabir and AKM Zaheer Ahmed at around 11:20am ordered that Azam be sent to prison.

The tribunal fixed February 15 for hearing the charge framing against the ex-Jamaat chief.

It directed the prosecution to submit the copies of the formal charge and relevant documents to its registrar's office by today, and ordered the defence to collect those copies from the office by January 15.

Following the order, Abdur Razzaq repeatedly requested the judges to direct the jail authorities to provide division facilities to Ghulam Azam.

The tribunal said it had no jurisdiction to pass such an order.

It said the tribunal believed that the jail authorities would keep the health condition of Ghulam Azam in mind.

After the proceedings, prosecution lawyer Tipoo told reporters at his office that the tribunal's order against Ghulam Azam was absolutely correct and lawful.

"The order has fulfilled the expectations and desire of the nation. We are happy with the order and also with the fact that we have discharged our duties rightly. We have won," he said.

Prosecutor Rana Dasgupta told The Daily Star that the trial of Ghulam Azam might end in three months if everything went well.

Meanwhile, Abdur Razzaq told journalists that the tribunal's order was absolutely "incorrect" as it had rejected his client's bail petition.

"We still do not know the allegations brought against Ghulam Azam," Razzaq told reporters at the entrance of the tribunal.

"He [Ghulam Azam] is innocent until proven guilty. It is unfortunate that we cannot move any appeal with the High Court and the Supreme Court against any order of the tribunal," he said.

(Rizanuzzaman Laskar and Tuhin Shubhra Adhikary also contributed to this report)



HARUN-AR-RASHID

A step forward

The process of establishing rule of law in the country has taken a step forward with the arrest of Ghulam Azam, said Harun-Ar-Rashid, general secretary of Sector Commanders' Forum.

"The nation has waited for 40 years for this day," he told The Daily Star, "I hope his deserved punishment is ensured through a proper trial."

He said this is a special trial and therefore it should be completed as soon as possible to relieve the nation of a stigma.

Nation feels

FROM PAGE 1
of Ghulam Azam.

"We feel extremely relieved. The whole nation feels relieved," said the eminent journalist in his immediate reaction on the tribunal premises.

Shahriar said Ghulam Azam was the main perpetrator of the war crimes during the Liberation War of Bangladesh. It would not be possible to hold proper trials of war criminals, even the trial of Ghulam Azam, if he was kept outside the jail.

"Because he could have destroyed the evidence, threaten the witnesses of the case," he said adding, "They [Jamaat-e-Islami] have been hatching multi-dimensional conspiracies at home and abroad to foil the trial."

"The conspiracies will be somewhat discouraged after his arrest," Shahriar said. He said, "Although Ghulam Azam's arrest fulfilled a long-standing expectation, still we will wait to see the end of the trial."

"We want the trial of top war criminals including Ghulam Azam to be completed by 2013," he said adding, "The government has to provide all logistical support and the required manpower to the prosecution to complete this trial by that time."

A long wait

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Teachers' Association.

The tribunal rejected the bail petition of Ghulam Azam and sent him to prison for the whole nation has been waiting for this moment, it has finally come," said Anwar who was also a freedom fighter.

It's another

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of the 1971 war crimes, told

The Daily Star that people were angry because Ghulam Azam was not being arrested.

"We took to the streets demanding his arrest," she said, "Even though late, that anger has been ameliorated now."

She said Ghulam was the "mastermind" of the crimes committed during the war.

"As a representative of the four lakh women who were tortured during the Liberation War, I demand his quick trial and stringent punishment," said Priyabhashini, who is also a renowned sculptor.

"His arrest was needed for the Bangladesh to rise as a civilised nation," she said, requesting the judges not to allow bail for the former Jamaat-e-Islami ameer.

"There can be no allegation more serious than what the honourable prime minister has leveled against COAS (army chief General Ashfaq Kayani) and DG ISI (spy chief Lieutenant General Ahmad Shuja Pasha) and has unfortunately charged the officers for violation of the constitution of the country," said the army's statement.

"This has very serious ramifications with potentially grievous consequences for the country."

Pakistan has seen three military coups since independence in 1947. It has spent about half of its life under military dictatorships.

The current civilian administration headed by Zardari has lurched from crisis to crisis since coming to power in 2008 following elections held a month after the assassination of his wife, former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.



MUNTASSIR MAMOON

Trial should end quickly

Expressing satisfaction over Ghulam Azam's arrest Dhaka University's Prof Muntassir Mamoon said "We have waited 40 years for this day. Children and wives of martyrs have been waiting for this day."

"Now we feel relieved as the top Rajakar [collaborator of the Pakistani army] has been arrested, but it is far from over," said the eminent historian adding, "The trial should be completed quickly."

"If the trial of Nuremberg could be held within a year, why can't this trial be completed within a year," said Mamoon.

Claiming that Jamaat-e-Islami has been campaigning across the world to save Ghulam Azam, he urged the government to immediately take actions to prevent such attempts.

Trial must

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She said the arrest has been a

long-standing demand of everyone working for the trial of war criminals.

"This has been one of our most important and significant demands over the years," said the executive director of Ain O Salish Kendra.

The fact that Ghulam Azam committed crimes against humanity during the Liberation War of 1971 is well known to everyone, she said adding that even Ghulam himself did not shy away from admitting to the crimes.

She said now his trial should be held in a transparent manner.

It will ensure

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Azam as the mastermind of

the war crimes she said, "We had sadness and discomfort in our hearts thinking how the trial would be completed with Ghulam Azam outside the prison."

Ghulam Azam has been conspiring to foil the trial of war criminals, she said adding that people are feeling reassured with the arrest as the trial proceedings will face less hindrance now.

"We waged a movement for his arrest, and through his arrest today our demand has been fulfilled," said Nasrin, widow of martyred Dr Alim Chowdhury, an eminent physician, who was killed at the end of the Liberation War.

She hoped the present government will complete the trial within its tenure, as she thinks the next government will not hold the trial.

Want to see

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Hasan, convener of War

Crimes Facts Finding Committee (WCFFC).

"This is only the beginning. We want to see the end of the trial, and want to see the perpetrators get due punishment," he said.

Stressing the need for increasing the number of tribunals, he said, "At least one tribunal should be set up at every district to speed up the trial process."

Dr Hasan also emphasised on enriching the prosecution team, and improving the quality of prosecutors.

The interviews were taken by Tuhin Shubhra Adhikary, Rizanuzzaman Laskar, and Pankaj Karmakar

BCL-Shibir

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brought the situation under

control using tear gas, said Selim Hossain, officer-in-charge of Jhalalabad Police Station.

According to campus sources, BCL men held a rally around 5:00pm and announced that they would force Jamaat-backed student front Shibir out of the campus.

The members of BCL then went on to vandalise halls of residence of Shibir activists, where the two student fronts clashed. Sust Shibir general secretary Zakir Hossain, Shibir president Muzahidul Islam and Sust BCL joint convener Kamruzzaman Khan Sweet were among the injured.

BCL activist Mostafa was admitted to Osmani Medical College hospital, said campus sources.

On information, police reached the scene and diffused the situation.

Sust BCL unit chief Shamsuzzaman claimed Shibir men had attacked them while they were holding the rally.

However, refuting the allegation, Shibir said BCL men made a planned attack on them and set their furniture on fire.