

Robber killed in 'shootout'

A CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

An alleged robber was killed and four policemen were injured in a 'shootout' between his cohorts and law enforcers in Moheshkhali upazila of Cox's Bazar district early yesterday.

The deceased Giasuddin, 30, was the ringleader of a robbery gang and an accused in three robbery cases filed with Moheshkhali Police Station, said Ranjit Kumar Barua, officer-in-charge of the police station.

Giasuddin, son of Amir Sultan, was a resident of Uttar Muhurighona village in the upazila.

Following a tip-off, a team of police raided the house of Giasuddin where a gang of bandits was holding a secret meeting at about 2:00am for committing robbery in a trawler, the OC said.

Sensing presence of policemen, the gang opened fire, prompting the law enforcers to retaliate, he said.

After around an hour-long gunfight, the robbers managed to flee the spot leaving bullet-hit Giasuddin behind. Police at first rushed him to Moheshkhali Upazila Health Complex.

As his condition deteriorated, he was referred to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital where he died around 10:30am, the OC said.

Abdur Rahman, an assistant sub-inspector of the police station, and three police constables Kamruzzaman, Tushar Chowdhury and M Russel sustained bullet wounds during the gunfight.

The injured policemen were admitted to the upazila health complex, the OC added.

90pc concerns

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bank) is all in for the remaining ones," he said.

Muhith also said these organisations have no operations in rural areas although the main objective of the bank was to work in villages.

He claimed that Grameen Bank had not been properly regulated under the previous management. The bank has been functioning better in the last one year, he added.

Bangladesh Bank removed Yunus from the post of managing director of Grameen Bank on March 2, 2011 as he passed the retirement age.

Grameen Bank has 83.5 lakh members, of them 96 percent are women.

47 cops

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The promoted ASPs are Shafiqul Islam, Sarder Raqibul Islam, Pankaj Bhattacharyya, Rakhfar Sultana Khanam, Nahid Hossain, Shamima Begum, Salma Begum, Farhat Ahmed, Muhammad Shahidullah Chowdhury, Rezaul Karim, AKM Nahidul Islam, Ashiq Sayeed, Miraz Uddin Ahammed, AKM Ehsan Ullah, Shah Mizan Shafiqur Rahman, Sarwar Morshed Shamim, Tabarak Ullah, Mollah Nazrul Islam, SM Mostak Ahmed Khan, Zihadul Kabir, Mainul Huq, TM Mozahidul Islam, Shyamal Kumer Nath, Nure Alam Mina, Anwar Hossain Khan, Ashrafal Islam, Shah Abid Hossain, Mohammad Maniruzzaman, Mohammad Abdullahi Baki, Mohammad Zamil Hasan, Atiqur Rahman, Habibur Rahman, Altaf Hossain, Mostafizur Rahman, Mehmed Karim, Saiful Islam, Alamgir Kabir, M o h a m m a d Maniruzzaman, Syed Nurul Islam, Kaniz Fatema, Hamidul Alam, Anisur Rahman, Biplob Bijoy Talukder, Abdur Rahim Shah Chowdhury, Sanjay Kumer Kundu, M o h a m m a d Harunur Rashid and M o h a m m a d Maniruzzaman.

Six other officials, who were transferred without promotion, are Additional DIG Manjur Kader Khan, SP Mohammad Zamsher Ali, SP Mozammel Huq, Deputy Commissioner Amena Begum, SP Anwar Kamal and SP Mohammad Ali Miah.

The party cast a shadow over a rapid improvement in relations between long-isolated Myanmar and the international community since the Nobel Peace Prize winner and her party achieved a decisive win in the April 1 polls.

Suu Kyi, who was locked up for most of the last two decades, has shown increased confidence in the regime in recent weeks, calling for European Union sanctions to be suspended and planning her first international trip in 24 years.

Thein Sein is currently on a visit to Japan and on Saturday held talks with Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda, who announced Tokyo had agreed to waive Myanmar's \$3.7 billion debt and resume suspended financial assistance.

Myanmar, which was left impoverished and isolated after nearly half a century of military dictatorship, has announced a series of reforms since a civilian, but army-backed, government took power last year.

The regime has freed hundreds of political prisoners and signed tentative peace deals with a number of rebel groups, although fighting continues in the far north.

The NLD became the main opposition force when it secured 43 of the 44 seats it contested in this month's elections, which were largely praised as a step towards democracy by the international community.

Observers say the regime needs Suu Kyi in parliament to bolster the legitimacy of its political system as Western nations move to ease sanctions.

European Union diplomats told AFP Thursday that the 27-nation bloc had reached an agreement in principle to suspend all sanctions, except an arms embargo, for a year.

Hartal again

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hartal ended.

On Wednesday, police found Ilias's private car abandoned near his Banani residence in the capital. The main opposition that day called a dawn-to-dusk hartal for yesterday.

Yesterday's hartal was observed without any major incidents.

However, yesterday night two buses were set ablaze—one at Maghbazar and another at Nardabazar in the capital.

Opposition activists could not take to the streets in Dhaka due to police obstruction. Whenever they tried to bring out processions, law enforcers chased them or baton-charged them.

BNP central office in the capital's Nayapalant was cordoned off. Party men, except for some senior leaders, were not allowed to enter the office.

However, activists of the ruling Awami League, its front and associate bodies marched through Dhaka city and held rallies, protesting the hartal.

Huge contingents of law enforcers were seen patrolling the streets at all key points of the city to maintain law and order during the hartal hours.

Sporadic clashes took place across the country. Several incidents of fighting between police and the opposition were reported in Sylhet, home of Ilias Ali. At least 30 people were injured and more than 50 detained there.

Mirza Alamgir alleged that at least 726 BNP activists, including former lawmaker Sohrab Hossain, were arrested and 666 sustained injuries across the country during yesterday's hartal.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police said they had picked up 31 people, including city BNP leader Kazi Abul Bashar.

Traffic movement was thin in the capital. Most shops, business houses and educational institutions remained closed. Long-distance bus and launch services were badly hampered by the hartal. Government offices, however, were open.

A few CNG-run three-wheelers and other motor vehicles were seen plying across the capital. Rickshaws were dominating the major thoroughfares like other hartal days.

Pro-hartal activists exploded two handmade bombs in front of the BNP office, five at Fakirapool and two at Science Laboratory intersection.

Police barred several BNP lawmakers from coming out

of Sangsad Bhaban complex at about 9:45am. A brief scuffle broke out between law enforcers and the opposition lawmakers, including MK Anwar, Shahid Uddin Chowdhury Anee, Syeda Asifa Ashrafi Papiya and Mahbub Uddin Khokon. In the face of police obstruction, they staged a demonstration in the area.

Police detained Jewel Rana at Amtali intersection in Mohakhali around 10:45am when pickets torched a motor vehicle there. Two more vehicles were set on fire at Dholaikhalatnoon.

Police obstructed another rally led by BNP leader ASM Hannan Shah at Amtali.

Khurshid Hossain, deputy police commissioner of Lalbagh division, said policemen had picked up 15 activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, a pro-BNP student body, after they were chased to the chamber of advocate Sanaullah Miah, a leader of Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Forum, in the Judge Court area.

Meanwhile, a case was filed yesterday with Khilgaon Police Station against 31 identified and 30-35 unidentified people in connection with torching a bus of Eagle Paribahan on Saturday, in which the driver was burnt to death.

Suranjit's son

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yesterday that Suranjit's son Soumen Sengupta "has been asked to appear with the evidence required and to face an interview by investigators".

Soumen was served the notice by ACC officials assigned to investigate the matter, he said.

The ACC move came following the haul of Tk 70 lakh from the microbus of Suranjit's assistant personal secretary (APS) at Border Guard Bangladesh Headquarters on the night of April 9. BGB detained the APS along with his driver and two top railway officials and reportedly released them the next morning.

Suranjit stepped down as the railway minister following the incident and was made minister without portfolio.

Meanwhile, the ACC is investigating the sources of Tk 70 lakh along with the assets of APS Omar Faruq Talukder, Bangladesh Railway's General Manager (East) Yusuf Ali Mridha and Dhaka Division Security Commandant Enamul Haque, who were in the microbus.

Suu Kyi's party

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Authorities have rejected the party's appeal to change "safeguard" to "respect" the constitution in the oath and a letter to the office of Myanmar's reformist President Thein Sein on the issue was sent too late for the row to be resolved before the next session of parliament begins today.

But party spokesman Nyan Win downplayed the issue, saying it was "not a problem".

"I believe we will overcome it soon," he told AFP, declining to estimate a timeframe for the wording to be changed.

"The NLD decided to contest the by-elections because we wanted to enter parliament. We will enter parliament. This issue can be solved through legal means," he added.

The party, which boycotted a controversial 2010 election, agreed to rejoin the political mainstream last year after authorities changed a similar phrase in party registration laws.

Suu Kyi has said one of her priorities as a politician is to push for an amendment of the 2008 constitution, under which one quarter of the seats in parliament are reserved for unelected military officials.

The party cast a shadow over a rapid improvement in relations between long-isolated Myanmar and the international community since the Nobel Peace Prize winner and her party achieved a decisive win in the April 1 polls.

Black money

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black money in the first year of this government. In the following year, it was stopped but allowed again in the stockmarket in the third year.

"I do not know what will happen this year," he said.

Black money becomes a topic of debate almost every year before the announcement of the national budget. The BNP-led governments from 1991 to 1996 and from 2001 to 2006 also legalised black money.

Surprisingly, Muhith pinned the blame on foreign currency earners for generation of black money, without considering bribery and corruption that are believed to be its major sources. But the minister did not explain how remittances generate black money.

Finance Secretary Mohammad Tareque said there is no economy without black money in the world, and profiteering by individuals generates black money.

"It (black money) will be there in capitalism," he said.

India has long been trying to control black money, but has not succeeded yet, said the secretary.

In his introductory speech, Muhith said the upcoming budget for fiscal 2012-13 would be around Tk 190,000 crore, of which Tk 54,000 crore is meant for development programmes.

The minister said the budget is likely to be tabled in parliament on June 7 and to be approved on June 28.

He said containment of inflation and bank borrowing would remain as two major challenges in the coming year.

Muhith said he is optimistic about attaining GDP growth target of 7 percent.

He also said that Bangladesh's budget deficit remains within the limit.

Muhith said multi-level marketing (MLM) has been in operation in many countries across the globe for the last 30 years, but it requires special laws.

"The problem with MLM here is, it gets involved in banking operations cashing in on loopholes of cooperative laws."

The minister said initiatives will be taken to change cooperative laws.

ERF President Khawza Mainuddin and General Secretary Abdur Rahim Harmachi also spoke at the discussion.

AL asks BNP

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At the same time, they urged the opposition to help the government find BNP leader Ilias Ali, who went out of trace on Wednesday.

The ruling party's call came at a rally on Bangabandhu Avenue held to protest BNP's "destructive action" during the hartal yesterday. Party leaders Matia Chowdhury, Mahbubul Alam Hanif and Qamrul Islam spoke on the occasion.

Talking to The Daily Star, Hanif, a special assistant to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, said it is unacceptable that BNP should enforce a hartal on ground of the disappearance of one of its leaders.

"They [BNP] can't kill yet another person by setting fire to a bus just because one of their leaders cannot be found."

"Their duty is to assist the government to find him. Otherwise we will understand they have a different agenda behind enforcing hartals," the AL leader said. He expressed hope that BNP would withdraw Monday's hartal.

Earlier in the morning, the ruling party and pro-AL organisations brought out several anti-hartal processions across the capital. Bangladesh Chhatra League's processions were formed at Kakrail, Bangabandhu Avenue and in front of Dhaka College, among other places. AL lawmaker Aslamul Haque Aslam's supporters took to several Mirpur streets in the capital.

Ilias picked up by govt

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Police on Saturday said Ilias Ali's wife Tahsina Rushdi Luna was present during the drive, a claim Luna rejected following a meeting with BNP chief Khaleda Zia that night.

Yesterday, the rumours spread further after a Rab team held a meeting with Luna at the latter's Banani residence in the capital.

Following the 40-minute talks that began around 1:40pm, Luna refused to talk to the press in a total contrast to her frankness with the media only a day before.

Asked about media reports that some BNP leaders held meetings with the government high-ups and the whereabouts of Ilias have been known, Mirza Fakhru said, "There is no basis of this rumour."

For his opposition to the proposed construction of Tipaimukh Dam by India, Ilias became an enemy to many, Fakhru added.

Ilias, 51, went missing around midnight of April 17 when he was on his way

to his Banani residence by his private car. Ansar Ali, the driver of the car, also remains traceless since. The car was found abandoned near Amtali of Banani with all its four doors wide open.

The BNP chairperson on Thursday alleged some government agencies had picked up Ilias. On the same day, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina termed the incident a "drama" and said Ilias might be hiding himself on Khaleda Zia's instructions.

In another development, police yesterday submitted a report before a Dhaka court, saying they could not make a breakthrough in tracing Ilias, an organising secretary of BNP and a former lawmaker from Sylhet-2.

Kazi Mainul Islam, officer-in-charge of Banani Police Station, submitted the report to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, which had directed the police on Thursday to keep it informing every 48 hours on the progress of the

investigation into the disappearance incident.

The report said police had tried their best but could not rescue Ilias and his driver, and that the investigation would continue.

Talking to The Daily Star, Rab Director General Mokhlesur Rahman last night echoed the police report, but said the search was on.

The BNP high command has been making all-out efforts to know Ilias' whereabouts through using all its contacts in the government and law enforcement agencies, party insiders said.

The party has also communicated with some foreign embassies in Dhaka in this regard, they added.

But the outcome of the efforts could not be known. State Minister for Home Shamsul Haque Tuku yesterday termed "unexpected" the incident of Ilias Ali going missing.

"We're sorry for that and we're trying our best to rescue him," he told journalists at his secretariat office.

Baby returns

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with milk.

Witnesses told The Daily Star that the baby, wrapped in a towel, was crying and sometimes sucking on the bottle.

Mobasshira Alam Maisha is the only child of Shah Alam and Khaleda Begum.

Apart from abducting her, a gang of five youths also took away Tk 1.5 lakh and 20 tolas of gold ornaments from the Khilgaon residence of Alam, a bank employee.

On Saturday around 7:15pm, there was a knock on the flat's door, said the baby's uncle, Humayun Kabir, who shares a flat in the same building with Maisha's parents.

As he opened, thinking it was Maisha's father, five youths in jeans and carrying sharp weapons burst into the room.

They tied the hands of Humayun, his wife and four kids, Maisha's mother and a minor domestic help with ropes and blindfolded all.

The robbers asked the family to pay a ransom of Tk 20 lakh within a week "to see Maisha alive" and left around 8:15pm. Before leaving, they wanted to know the uncle's mobile phone number.

Humayun gave out the number to the gang, which had gagged all the residents of the house but him.

The parents informed the matter to law enforcers and

waited for the call from the kidnappers, to no avail.

Kazi Wazed Ali, officer-in-charge of Mirpur Police Station, told this correspondent that Fazila Khatun, a forty-year-old maid, first saw Maisha when she came out of the ground floor of a four-storey building at South Paikpara, hearing a baby crying yesterday noon.

The woman cooks in a student mess of the building. She drew attention of others and inquired if the baby belonged to anybody around there.

The onlookers noticed the writing on the white vest of the girl.

Mohammad Rubel, a Paikpara resident, said as somebody dialled the number written on the baby's vest, Humayun received the call and came along with Maisha's father to the spot.

Police, who already arrived on information, handed over the baby to her father, said Kazi Wazed.

The father, uncle and the baby then went to Khilgaon Police Station, where Maisha finally reunited with her mother Khaleda Begum.

Detective Branch of police interrogated Fazila yesterday.

After the return of the girl to her parents, several hundred people thronged Shah Alam's house to have a glimpse of her. Most of them shot pictures of the baby on their mobile phones.

'Disappearances'

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The law enforcement agencies are losing their credibility as victims' families are pointing an accusing finger at law enforcers. The law enforcement agencies, however, have been denying responsibility all along.

Rab's Director General Mokhlesur Rahman rejected the allegation of the elite force's involvement in any such case.

"We are designated to maintain law and order by ensuring security of people. And we always try to rescue abducted people. Why would we be involved in such acts?" Mokhlesur told The Daily Star.

"It's true in many cases that law enforcers could not rescue the victims. But it's not true that we were behind the abductions," he added.

However, people's speculations about law enforcers' involvement were renewed after former lawmaker and BNP Organising Secretary M Ilias Ali along with his driver Ansar Ali went missing around April 17 midnight.

Ilias' wife Tahsina Rushdir and Ansar's wife Mukta Begum in separate public statements urged the government and different law enforcement agencies to return their husbands.

The main opposition BNP alleged that the government and different intelligence and law-enforcement agencies were involved in the April 17 incident.

new.

Jesmin Akhter, daughter of Habibur Hawlader, a fisherman at Morelganjin Bagerhat, said police picked up her father at their house on June 6 last year. The family is still clueless about him.

Talking to The Daily Star on December 10 last year, Jesmin said, "Even death in crossfire is better than disappearance, because the victim's family at least gets the body. But I do not even know whether my father is dead or alive."

Like Tahsina Rushdir, Mukta Begum, and Jesmin, many others are spending their days and nights with uncertainty about the state of their beloved ones.

On October 2, Awami League leader Abdul Karim was picked up at his Pallabi house; on November 28, Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal leaders Shamim Hasan Sohel and Ismail Hossain were picked up at Hatirpool; on November 17, seven people were picked up at Malibagh; on December 8, four vendors were picked up at Mirpur; on September 29, Bangladesh Students Union leader Shamim Hasan was picked up at Purana Paltan; on October 20, ward-20 unit Awami League leader Nur Mohammad was picked up at Savar; and on December 3, his son-in-law Abdul Mannan at Shyamoli.

Ain O Salish Kendra Investigation Cell Director Noor Khan said, "We find it alarming that the cases of disappearances are rising. We

Khaleda Begum said the white vest and the feeding bottle do not belong to them.

"It's like I'm in a dream," she said, when asked how it feels to get back her daughter.

The mother was in tears.

Red Cross worker kidnapped in Yemen

AFP, Geneva

A French man working for the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) was kidnapped in Yemen Saturday on his way to the port city of Hudaida, an ICRC spokeswoman told AFP yesterday.

The ICRC employee was snatched late Saturday afternoon on the road around 30 to 40 kilometres from Hudaida. He was on his way to the airport.

The two drivers with him were captured but freed shortly after.

Foreigners are frequently kidnapped in Yemen by heavily armed tribesmen, who use them as bargaining chips with the authorities. More than 200 people have been abducted in Yemen over the past 15 years. The majority have been freed alive and well.

urge the government to take action to prevent the law-enforcement agencies from engaging in such incidents and to rescue the abducted people."

National Human Rights Commission Chairman Mizanur Rahman at a function on Saturday said the commission had probed a number of cases of disappearance and found law enforcers' involvement in one or two cases.

Yemen air strikes kill 17 Qaeda militants

AFP, Sanaa

Seventeen suspected al-Qaeda militants were killed in an air raid that struck one of their hideouts in the southern town of Loder, the defence ministry said yesterday.

The late Sunday attack brought to 57 the number of Islamist insurgents reportedly killed in south Yemen over the past three days, according to the defence ministry. AFP could not independently verify the toll.

"Seventeen al-Qaeda terrorists were killed in an air raid that targeted one of their positions southeast of Loder," the defence ministry's news website 26sep.net reported.

Caught

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Chittagong city on Friday around 2:30am and left the place in the morning leaving the dead body there, Saiful told police during primary interrogation.

On Saturday, Saiful returned to his house and cut the body into four parts, kept the lower parts of the body in a refrigerator and put the other two parts in two boxes and set for his village home in Chhagalnaiya of Feni district with those, Saiful added during his confession.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Chhagalnaiya Police Station Mainul Absar said, "Police on suspicion stopped a CNG-run three wheeler carrying Saiful at Shuvapur bridge area near Chhagalnaiya upazila around 9:00pm on Saturday as they were stopping vehicles at a checkpoint on the eve of Sunday's hartal."

During a search of the vehicle, police found the two parts of Mili's body in two boxes, the OC said adding that police arrested Saiful and handed him over to Chittagong Bandar Police Station with the recovered body parts.

A team of Bandar Police recovered the lower parts of Mili's body from their residence on Sunday morning, said Nurul Absar Bhuiyan, officer-in-charge (OC) of the police station.

The whole body was sent to Chittagong Medical College Hospital for autopsy, the OC said.

A correspondent from Feni reported, Saiful told police that he and Mili were having problems in their conjugal life over Saiful's second marriage to a college girl over a year ago.

A case was lodged with Chittagong Bandar Police Station in connection with the killing.

Woman's body

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The woman, aged between 25 and 30, was wearing a nightgown. She was found in a sitting position. There appear to be some dark stains on the first floor of the two-storey building -- situated on the northeastern side of the parliament building. Lawmakers use this block mostly in the daytime. They do not spend night there.

Sources said the policemen on duty called in the hostel's caretaker as soon as they became aware of an awful stench around 2:00pm. The cops do not usually go inside the MP hostels.

After discovering the body at the staircase, the caretaker informed Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station of the matter around 5:00pm.

Shahidul Islam, senior assistant commissioner of Tejgaon zone of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star that whether it was a case of murder could be said once the autopsy report was available.

Shahidul added that police had examined the place but could not yet be sure if the stains on the first floor were of blood. Further examinations were needed to ascertain that. The Criminal Investigation Department has already collected evidence from the scene.

Abdul Hye Sarder, an inspector in charge of security of the Sangsad Bhaban area, said that they were responsible for ensuring security at the gates and the adjacent roads and that they had no authority inside the Sangsad Bhaban complex.

He, however, said nobody stays there after 10:00pm. Some MPs and their staff go there during the daytime but nobody stays at night.

Caretaker of the hostel, Anwar Hossain, told journalists that he had been on duty at NAM Bhaban on Manik Mia Avenue for the last three days. He had no idea about what happened in the hostel during that time, he said.

It was not the first time there