

3 killed in gunfight

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Noakhali

At least three people, including a UP chairman, were killed and 25 others injured in a battle for supremacy between two groups of people at Jamirtoli village in Laxmipur Sadar upazila yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Nur Hossain Shamim, 35, Dattapara Union Parishad chairman, his bodyguard Delwar Hossain, 30, and one villager Muslim Uddin, 40.

Quoting locals, Altaf Hossain, officer-in-charge of Laxmipur Sadar Police Station, said there had been a longstanding conflict between Asaduzzaman Babul of Jamirtoli village and UP Chairman Nur Hossain Shamim.

Following the conflict, supporters of the two groups clashed and traded bullets yesterday noon.

At one stage, Shamim shot Muslim Uddin, who is a loyal to Asaduzzaman Babul, dead. Several people received bullets.

Later, wounded Shamim and his bodyguard Delwar took shelter in a house of Jamirtoli village.

The locals caught them and beat them to death, added the police officer.

Bullet-hit Lokman, Sohag, Azad, Rakib, Jamal, Kamal, Shahid, Sumon, and Shanto were admitted to Laxmipur Sadar Hospital in a critical condition.

On information, police rushed to the spot and fired rubber bullets to bring the situation under control.

Additional police have been deployed in and around the area to ward off any trouble.

Police also held nine people in this connection.

Husband kills wife in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A husband strangled his wife at Swamibagh in the capital yesterday morning allegedly for not getting dowry.

Nuri Begum, 25, was a garment worker and the mother of a three-year-old.

Police recovered her body from her home at Swamibagh and sent it to Sir Salimullah Medical College morgue for autopsy.

Locals captured husband Mohammad Mozammel and handed him over to Gendaria police.

Sub-Inspector Hari Das Roy of Gendaria Police Station said Mozammel had admitted before police that he had killed Nuri.

Hari said, "He [Mozammel] said they got married five years ago. He had been asking for Tk 20,000 for a year to buy a rickshaw. He also said he suspected Nuri of having an affair with one of her colleagues. He and Nuri were having a row over the affair issue this [yesterday] morning and at one point he attacked his wife."

Nuri's relatives have filed a murder case against Mozammel. They claimed that Nuri was murdered for dowry.

Wal-Mart

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Meanwhile, Gap released another statement, saying, "We take our commitment to improving working conditions in Bangladesh very seriously."

However, the company said it would sign the agreement only if it is not legally binding.

"There is a serious gap in Gap's credibility," it says so, said Taren Stinebrickner-Kauffman, executive director of SumOfUs.org, a corporate watchdog.

"Gap's argument that it is unable to sign the agreement because of US liability rules is ridiculous. PVH, the American owners of Tommy Hilfiger and other global brands has already proven that it is possible."

Backed by the International Labour Organisation, European right group IndustriALL devised a plan to ensure fire and building safety at Bangladeshi factories. The body has already published a document regarding the move.

Non-partisan

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"Come to parliament and place whatever proposal you have. Resolve problems through discussion," the premier said. "We want to hold a free, fair and credible election through talks and mutual cooperation."

She urged the opposition leader to give up what she said was the practice of issuing threats and resorting to destructive activities and killings, and looking for alternative ways to go to state power.

The AL chief said people will choose the next government through a democratic way as is done in all democracies across the world. "There is no problem if they don't vote for us. It's their choice. But we want to ensure the democratic system to continue," she added.

"But please don't bring (to power) any undemocratic element," the premier urged her political rival and leader of the opposition in parliament.

In an oblique reference to the caretaker government's rule in 2007-08, Hasina said, "If you (Khaleda) dig a canal and bring in a crocodile, it will definitely bite you."

The premier blasted a Bangla daily for its recent public opinion polls that said 90 percent people in the country are in favour of a non-partisan election-time government.

"This newspaper wants to mislead the people by giving misleading information," Hasina said without naming it.

She urged people believing in democracy to be cautious about this newspaper.

Nation braces for disaster

FROM PAGE 1

The 2007 Sidr and the 1991 Chittagong cyclones were category-5 super cyclones, having up to 260kmph wind speed. The 1970 Bhola cyclone was a category-3 tropical cyclone with maximum 205kmph wind speed, while the 2009 Aila was a category-1 cyclone with maximum 110kmph wind speed.

At midnight last night, the BMD bulletin said, Mahasen was lying in the West Central Bay -- some 555km southwest of Chittagong Port, 500km southwest of Cox's Bazar Port and 445km southwest of Mongla Port.

The storm may cross the

region between Patuakhali and Teknaf coast near Chittagong by this morning, but squally wind started to affect the coastal region last night.

The danger level is below seven in the coastal districts of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Noakhali, Laxmipur, Feni, Chandpur, Bhola, Barguna, Patuakhali, Barisal and the offshore islands of these districts.

The Mongla Port authorities have been advised to keep its danger level at 5, with the same being applied to Pirojpur, Jhalakathi, Bagerhat, Khulna and Satkhira.

Under the influence of the storm, the low-lying

areas of Cox's Bazar, Chittagong, Noakhali, Laxmipur, Feni, Chandpur, Barguna, Bhola, Patuakhali, Barisal, Pirojpur, Jhalakathi, Bagerhat, Khulna, Satkhira and the offshore lands of these districts are likely to be inundated by a surge eight to 10 feet higher than the normal tide.

Due to heavy rainfall, landslides may occur at places over the hilly regions of Chittagong division, the Met office warned.

All fishing boats, trawlers and marine vessels over the North Bay have been advised to remain in safer places till further notice.

The coastal districts of

Cox's Bazar, Chittagong, Noakhali, Laxmipur, Feni, Chandpur, Barguna, Patuakhali, Barisal, Bhola, Pirojpur and their offshore islands are likely to experience wind speed of up to 90-100kmph with heavy to very heavy rain during the storm.

Jhalakathi, Bagerhat, Khulna, Satkhira and their offshore islands are likely to experience wind speed of up to 80-90kmph with heavy to heavy rain.

Meanwhile, officials of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority and launch owners association said no long-route launches left the Sadarghat terminal for coastal districts yesterday.

Till 8:30pm, train communication was normal, while some private bus companies suspended their operations from Dhaka to different coastal districts.

An integrated control and monitoring cell has been set up at the Armed Forces Division to provide information and other necessary support round the clock, said a statement of Inter Services Public Relations. Helpline numbers are 9834358, 9834399 and 01769014314.

Besides, 22 vessels of Bangladesh Navy have been kept on alert for relief distribution and rescue operations.



People leave the shores of Cox's Bazar with their belongings yesterday as cyclone Mahasen heads towards Bangladesh.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Ex-minister

FROM PAGE 1

Justice Obaidul Hassan with members Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Judge Md Shahinur Islam, ordered the police to immediately arrest Qaisar, a former state-minister of former military dictator HM Ershad's regime.

Prosecutor Rana Dasgupta said Qaisar, as a local Peace Committee leader, had formed "Qaisar Force" in Habiganj and in collaboration with the Pakistani army committed "a lot of crimes against humanity and genocide" in Habiganj and Brahmanbaria subdivisions.

Qaisar is an influential person and due to this witnesses are afraid to speak the truth, said Rana, adding that he was a flight risk and if he goes on the run it could delay and prejudice the investigation and trial.

The investigation agency, designated to probe war crimes, started an enquiry against Qaisar on March 28, 2012, and received "sufficient evidence" against him, said Rana, adding that the agency is hopeful of completing the probe within two months.

The tribunal yesterday directed the inspector general of police and Dhaka metropolitan police commissioner to arrest Qaisar immediately and submit a compliance report within 24 hours of his arrest.

It also directed the investigation agency to submit a progress report on the probe through the prosecution within one month and fixed June 17 for further orders in this regard.

QAI SAR

Seventy-three-year-old Qaisar, of Itakhola under Madhabpur Police Station of Habiganj, is the son of late Syed Sayed Uddin Ahmed. He lives in the capital's West Nakhalpara of Tejgaon, according to the prosecution and investigation agency.

Even though Sayed Uddin and Qaisar's maternal uncle Abu Rashid Manjur Ali were elected member of East Pakistani Provincial Assembly with Convention Muslim League ticket, Qaisar took part in 1970's election as an independent candidate.

After the Pakistani army entered Habiganj, he formed "Qaisar Force" comprising

500-700 of his loyalists, Rana Dasgupta told reporters yesterday.

His force allegedly committed genocide, murder, rape, arson, looting and had forced people of other religions to convert to Islam during the 1971 war.

At the latter part of the Liberation War, he fled to London and returned to the country after 1975.

Qaisar, as an independent candidate, was elected in 1979's election, joined BNP and subsequently became the president of Habiganj BNP, agency sources said, adding that he joined Jatiya Party in 1986 and became the state minister for agriculture in 1989.

He took part in 2001's election with Jatiya Party ticket but a staff of Jatiya Party chairman's office yesterday claimed that Qaisar has not been involved in Jatiya Party since 1990.

Rana again

FROM PAGE 1

Senior Judicial Magistrate Tajul Islam, meanwhile, placed him on an eight-day remand in two separate cases for possession of an illegal firearm and drugs, filed with the Dhamrai police station on May 6.

Rana was produced before the courts after expiry of his previous 13-day remand in connection with the deaths of 1,127 garment workers, and the other for violation of the building code filed by the Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha.

Detective Branch Inspector Mir Shahin Shah Parvez, investigation officer of the cases, primarily sought a seven-day fresh remand in the death and damage case.

DB Inspector Wahiduzzaman Molla and Sub Inspector Towhidul Alam from Dhamrai, on the other hand, had asked for five and seven days separately to grill the suspect.

Rana could not appoint a lawyer to defend him in court as the Dhaka Bar Association decided earlier not to provide him with any legal support after considering the gravity of the offences.

Rab arrested Rana from Benapole on April 28 -- four days after the collapse.

The police, so far, have arrested 11 others in connection with the disaster.

Lanka

FROM PAGE 1

Kataragama.

"As such, it should not be linked to a storm," Mahindananda Amaraweera, disaster management minister of Sri Lanka, was quoted as saying by Ceylon Today on Tuesday.

The online Colombo Page said the Meteorology Department's announcement came following protests by the Sinhala Buddhist organisation, Ravana Power, over the use of the king's name for the cyclone.

Venittakanda Saddhathissa Thero, secretary of Ravana Power, termed the decision to use the name for the cyclone as foolish.

He further said the organisation would not oppose the naming of the cyclone as 'Prabhakaran', after the slain leader of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the Tamil Tiger terrorist organisation which led a three-decade war till its defeat in 2009.

S R Jayasekara, director in-charge of weather forecasting, however, defended the concept, saying the name was suitable since cyclones rendered a service by taking away heat from the tropical areas and causing rainfall to provide water for cultivation.

Mahasen ruled Sri Lanka from 277 to 304 AD. He pioneered the construction of large irrigation reservoirs in the country.

Obama condemns 'intolerable' tax agency scandal

AFP, Washington

US President Barack Obama Tuesday condemned "intolerable" behavior by tax agency staff after a watchdog investigation found they unfairly targeted conservative groups opposed to his administration.

Obama swiftly responded to the report by a Treasury Department inspector general into allegations that Internal Revenue Service staff singled out grass roots groups, including some affiliated with the ultra-conservative Tea Party.

Mom goes

FROM PAGE 1

joy, of two of Momtaj's daughters have now become a cruel irony in their life.

Her three daughters -- seven-year-old Meem, five-year-old Hashi and two-and-a-half-year Khushi -- are too young to realise what they have lost forever.

They have waited for their mother for 20 days of the rescue operations. They became extremely tired, traumatised and remained unfed on those dreadful days while their father Abul Kalam was frantically looking for their mother.

They were still looking for Momtaj's body when official rescuers were handing over the site to the district administration yesterday after wrapping up the rescue operation.

Khushi, the youngest of them, was hungry and weeping from time to time clinging to her father's lap.

"Momtaj had mysteriously insisted on taking her photo in my cellphone on that morning before she set out for New Wave Bottoms where she

used to work," said Kalam, showing the photo to this correspondent.

His house at Radio Colony Jaleswar is now empty, wearing a dismal look with the doors wide open. He pointed to a pot of rotting rice in the kitchen saying his daughters had lived on that for ten days.

The family waited at Adhar Chandra High School playground until Monday in the hope of finding Momtaj's body. But the hope has now petered out with the rescue operation drawing to an end.

"I am left helpless and penniless and do not how to look after the three minor daughters," said Kalam.

Twenty-five-year-old Sonabhan in her advanced pregnancy period went to the disaster site yesterday one last time in search of her husband Abdul Karim, who used to work as an iron man at Ether Textile Ltd on the sixth floor of Rana Plaza.

The couple, hailing from Ghoraghat in Dinajpur, got married seven years ago and have a six-year-old daughter.

Motherless Sonabhan has an invalid father back at their village, unable to support her.

"I ran and searched for my husband every day at Adhar Chandra High School playground and Enam Medical College Hospital since the building collapsed. Now I do not know what to do or where to take refuge."

"It would be my only solace had I found his body," said Sonabhan, with a blank look. She is now staying at her brother-in-law's place at Taltala in the capital.

Official records say 234 unidentified victims have been buried at Jurain graveyard in the capital, while 59 unidentified bodies are kept at the mortuary.

State Minister for LGRD Jahangir Kabir Nanak said relatives of the missing persons should contact the Office of Dhaka Deputy Commissioner and go for DNA tests at Dhaka Medical College Hospital to help identify the bodies of their lost ones in case they are among those buried as unidentified.

Over 8m

FROM PAGE 1

In Barguna, a 100-km stretch of the dyke remains extremely vulnerable to even a moderate surge. Water Development Board officials blamed poor allocation of funds for the failure to repair the dykes.

Hundreds of volunteers and officials have been put on alert there.

The cyclone might generate a tidal surge of up to eight feet high, and inundate the char areas, said Prodip Kumar of Kalapara meteorological radar centre.

Officials of Cyclone Preparedness Programme of Barisal Red Crescent said they were in constant contact with the remote char areas over wireless.

A resident of Char Kukri Mukri, a char in the Meghna estuary close to the Bay of Bengal, said many of them failed to take refuge in the cyclone shelter. "The only cyclone shelter here has already been occupied by more than 2,000 workers, who migrated here from other places for work."

"Most of the char's 5,000 people have no option but to stay in their houses," he said. People in adjacent chars also face a similar situation.

Evacuation was hampered for lack of vessels in vulnerable

places like nearby Kachia. Around 5,000 people had been evacuated from the area, while many were still left there.

PREPAREDNESS

In the coastal areas, concrete structures, educational institutions and government buildings have been turned into cyclone shelters. The deputy commissioner of Cox's Bazar said the administration has set up 534 emergency shelters. "If necessary, we shall compel people to evacuate," he said.

In Bagerhat, forest department officials of 35 camps in the Sundarbans have been asked to move to safer places. Forest officials from Katka, along with many fishermen, were moved to cyclone shelters.

Officials in Chittagong said hundreds of people had been evacuated to nearby cyclone shelters.

A total of 479 shelters are available in the district that can accommodate about 4.5 lakh people.

Dozens of schools in six coastal upazilas -- Sandwip, Sitakunda, Banskhali, Mirsarai, Anwara, and Patiya - are being used as emergency shelters.

Chittagong City Corporation has declared 14 of its wards vulnerable to the

cyclone, and asked more than 70,000 people on the banks of the Karnaphuli river and in coastal areas to move to nearby shelters.

At least 3,500 volunteers of CCC, Red Crescent and other organisations were engaged in the evacuation drive, and they would be ready for any rescue or relief operation, said CCC Secretary Md Shamsuddoha.

Mahbub Alam, director of Ansar and VDP in Chittagong, said nearly 14,000 Ansar and VDP personnel were prepared to conduct rescue operations in the district.

Squadron Leader Md Jahangir Hossain of Bangladesh Air Force said aircraft at BAF Jahurul Haq Base in Chittagong would be available for rescue operations.

Besides, fire-fighters at eight stations -- six in the city and one each in Satkania and Patiya upazilas -- were prepared to join any rescue operation, said Shawkat Hasan, assistant director of Fire Service and Civil Defence in Chittagong.

Bangladesh Navy Captain Sohail said 22 naval vessels had been kept on standby for search, rescue and relief operations in Chittagong and Khulna.

Signal

9: Great danger. The port is experiencing severe weather from a sea storm of great intensity with maximum wind speed of 89km per hour. The storm will cross the coast to the right of the port.

8: Great danger. The port may experience severe weather from a storm of great intensity with maximum wind speed of 89km per hour. The storm will cross the coast to the left of the port.

7: Danger. The port is experiencing severe weather from a storm of slight or moderate intensity with steady wind speed of 62-88km per hour which is expected to cross over or near the port.

6: Danger. The port is experiencing severe weather from a storm of slight or moderate intensity with steady wind speed of 62-88km per hour. The storm will cross the coast to the right of the port.

5: Danger. The port is experiencing severe weather from a storm of slight or moderate intensity with steady wind speed of 62-88km per hour. The storm will cross the coast to the left of the port.

4: Local Cautionary. The port is hit by a storm with possible wind speed of 51-61km per hour, but it does not appear that the danger is as yet sufficiently great to take up extreme precautionary measures.

3: Distant Cautionary. The port and the ships harboured in the port are likely to be threatened by squally weather. Gusty wind may sweep across the port and the wind speed may be 40-50km per hour.

2: Distant Cautionary. A storm has formed in the distant sea where the constant wind speed is 62-88km per hour.

1: Distant Cautionary. In the distance sea, there is region of squally weather with a wind speed of 61km per hour which can turn into a sea storm.

BNP lawmaker

FROM PAGE 16

alliance to hold a rally in the capital must hinder the proposed dialogue between the government and the opposition over the polls-time government.

The government is blocking the way for holding talks by arresting and harassing the opposition leaders, complained Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abdin Farroque at a press conference at the Media Centre of the Jatiya Sangsad.

"The government on one hand is calling for a dialogue and on the other blocking the path by arresting opposition leaders and resorting to repressive activities against them," he said.

The opposition wants to join the upcoming session of parliament, but it is the government that has always crated an "adverse atmosphere" ahead of any session of the House so that the opposition cannot join, mentioned Farroque.

Bulu had gone to the party office to attend a press briefing and was nabbed by detectives when he came out of the office after the briefing. Earlier, he walked free from Kashimpur Central Jail in Gazipur on April 22, 15 days after he along with several other senior BNP leaders landed in jail.

A Dhaka court had sent them to jail in connection with eight cases filed with the capital's Paltan, Ramna and Shahjahanpur police stations on charges of torching vehicles, assaulting police and obstructing cops in the discharge of their duties during the opposition's agitation programmes.