

They found a new way to fight poverty

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Driven by acute poverty, many women of five Lalmonirhat villages have started oyster collection from a local river to support the livelihood of their families.

More than a hundred women belonging to ultra poor families of Dalalpara, Sarkertari, Majhipara, Daspara and Gokunda of Lalmonirhat Sadar are forced to scabble about in the Sati river for oysters and make some money by selling them as they find no other jobs at the moment.

"I work as a labourer in crop fields but I become jobless this time of the year," said Rasheda Begum, 44, of Sarkertari village.

She said she was doing this to support her rickshaw-puller husband in running the family expenses.

She sells the oysters collected from the river to local poultry feed and lime producers at Tk 3 per kilogram. This way she makes between Tk 70 to Tk 100 a day, depending on the catch.

Like her, Shikha Rani Das of Daspara too does this job to add to the family income.

"My husband is a fish hawker and he earns between Tk 120 and

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Women bring in oysters collected from Sati river in Gokunda village of Lalmonirhat. Underprivileged people of the area have been collecting and selling oysters to earn a little more to support their families.

PHOTO: STAR

MINISTER'S VISIT No work at land port for 3 hrs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Loading and unloading at Sonamasjid land port in Chapainawabganj was hampered for three hours yesterday due to the shipping minister's visit there.

Several hundred trucks on both sides of the port remain stranded between 10:00am and 1:00pm as Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan was attending different programmes at the port during this time.

The driver of a Bangladeshi truck, parked beside the highway near Koilabari terminal, said, "We are waiting for the minister's programmes to be over. Only then loading and offloading will begin, we heard."

When all the economic activities of the port remained halted, Shahjahan Khan was giving a speech, in which he said, "Sonamasjid land port has been playing a vital role in the economy of the country."

He said this in a meeting with the businessmen, transport owners and workers and labourers of the port.

The minister also said, "This government is labourer- and business-friendly", adding that the business sector develops only when the Awami League is in the government.

Shahjahan Khan also laid foundation stones of some buildings, held meetings with officials of the customs, border guard, police and district administration and addressed a rally at Abbas Bazar in Shibganj upazila.

Drama over enquiry

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Moin that the assassination was perpetrated under Manzur's leadership.

"A conspiracy is being hatched here to implicate General Manzur [in Zia killing]", Shawkat and Moin told Air Vice Marshal Sadar Uddin as the air force chief was leaving the army chief's office.

The air chief, who had flown to Dhaka from Jessore airbase in the morning, went directly to the army headquarters to meet Ershad. The army chief early on May 30 informed Sadar uddin over the phone about the killing of Zia and asked him to return to Dhaka as soon as possible.

Sadar Uddin stayed for around 20 minutes at the army chief's office. While he was leaving, Shawkat and Moin followed him. At the corridor, both the army generals expressed their fears about implicating Manzur in the killing of the president.

"I don't think Manzur could have done it," said Shawkat, who later joined the BNP founded by Zia after his retirement and became a minister in the Khaleda Zia-led government [1991-1996].

Sadar Uddin did not say anything and left the army headquarters for his office at the air force headquarters.

The conspiracy against Manzur was revealed to some extent the next day before Sadar Uddin. During a meeting with acting President Abdus Sattar at the Bangabhaban, DGFI chief Major

General Mohabbat Jan Chowdhury had shown the air chief a piece of paper carrying a few lines written in pencil.

"This message has come for you," the DGFI chief told the air chief.

Sadar Uddin went through the message sent to him by Manzur in which Manzur reportedly acknowledged his responsibility for the coup in Chittagong and sought air force help.

"How have you got this message," the air chief asked the DGFI chief, who later became a minister in the Ershad regime.

"The message has come through police radio."

The air chief had found the message unbelievable, destroyed it and threw it into the wastepaper basket.

A dead man never speaks. This truth appeared to be a blessing for those who had designed the plan to implicate Manzur in the Zia killing. So they inaugurated a new chapter after the murder of Manzur to implicate him formally in Zia's assassination through a stage-managed court of inquiry into the circumstances of the killing of Zia and Manzur.

The DGFI chief visited Chittagong on June 3 or 4. During his visit, he met Brigadier Abdul Latif and advised him to maintain communications with Brigadier Azizul Islam regarding making identical statements on the Manzur murder before the inquiry committee. The committee was

formed a few days later. Ershad had ordered the two brigadier generals to finish Manzur.

"Police were too involved in this," Latif told Mohabbat Jan.

"Mostafiz [home minister] will look into the police side," replied Mohabbat Jan.

One day, Aziz made a phone call to Latif and spoke to him about the statements.

The inquiry committee was formed. It was headed by Major General Muzammel Hossain. Latif had given the statement as per Aziz's directive. He told the inquiry committee that soldiers had snatched Manzur and killed him. The same story Aziz told the chief of general staff Major General Nur Uddin over telephone after the murder of Manzur.

Aziz was active again, this time to manipulate the inquiry court.

He summoned Lt Col Shamsur Rahman, who along with Major Kamal had put pressure on Captain Emdad to execute Manzur without delay, to appear before him at his office in the evening on either June 4 or 5 in 1981.

Aziz dictated to Shams a deposition about the murder of Manzur for Captain Emdad, Nayeb Subedar Ashraf, Havildar Malek, driver Sadaruddin and for himself as all of them would have to testify before the inquiry committee.

Lt Col Shams followed his dictation and completed writing it. Aziz gave it

to his personal assistant for typing. On completion, Aziz handed over all the copies of the deposition to Shams.

Shams kept his one to himself and handed over the rest to Emdad and the others. He asked them to sign their names in their own copies. Next day, Emdad returned all the copies on receiving the respective person's signature. Shams signed his deposition copy. And he handed over all the copies to Aziz.

In the depositions, all of them unequivocally claimed that some unruly soldiers had snatched Manzur from them, while they were returning from Hathazari to the cantonment, and killed the general.

Aziz later sent all the copies to Major General Mozammel, who was chief of the inquiry court.

Shams did not need to appear before the inquiry court. Emdad, however, did and submitted his written deposition. At one stage, two members of the inquiry court started questioning Emdad on his written deposition. But the inquiry court chief prevented the two members from examining Emdad.

Emdad had also submitted the same copy of his deposition to another inquiry committee, headed by a judge, to investigate the killing of the president.

Major General Moin, then adjutant general, had proposed investigating the reasons behind the mutiny. But

Ershad refused to include this in the terms of reference of the army inquiry court.

In protest, Moin had not signed the order of inquiry though being the adjutant general he was supposed to do so. But Ershad himself had signed the order. And the inquiry committee was formed hurriedly.

Ershad had also rejected a proposal to engage British Military Intelligence-5 in investigating in the assassination of Ziaur Rahman. At that time the MI-5 had earned appreciation by unearthing the mystery of many sensational killings in different countries.

More interestingly, then army chief General Ershad had also directed Brigadier Aziz to investigate the murder of Manzur and submit a report. Aziz, who was ordered by Ershad to take Manzur into army custody from police custody and kill him, submitted an inquiry report. But he failed to identify any of those who were involved in the killing of Manzur.

The army inquiry committee, which was the forerunner of the court martial, had registered the depositions of most of those who were military personnel. The civil inquiry commission, led by a Supreme Court judge, Justice Ruhul Islam, was a sham. Justice Ruhul's commission could neither summon any military officer, nor could it point fingers at anyone for the assassination. The probe reports were never made public.

The inquiry committee recommended holding a court martial of 31 officers and two junior commissioned officers. Most of them were freedom fighters. The camera trial held Manzur responsible for masterminding the rebellion and assassination of President Zia.

In the trial, the first court martial had ordered the death penalty for 12 officers and various terms of jail sentence for 14 others. The remaining defendants were acquitted but they were dismissed from service.

Later, another court martial was formed to try an officer who was ill during the functioning of the first court martial. And he was also sentenced to death.

On completion of the trial, the government published a white paper in August 1981 which was in fact based on the proceedings of the court martial. The whitepaper labelled Manzur as the leader of the failed rebellion and the person responsible for the conspiracy behind Zia's assassination. Manzur was branded posthumously as the leader of the conspiracy to kill Zia.

[The report has been prepared on the basis of the depositions of witnesses and persons accused in the Manzur murder case, and the book, "Silent Witness of a General", by Major General Moinul Hossain Chowdhury and the book on "Zia and Manzur murder and the aftermath" edited by ASM Shamsul Arefin]

US urged to cut duty

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percent are garment items. The average duty Bangladesh pays the US is more than 16 percent and the tariff on garment products is 15.62 percent, the minister told journalists after a meeting with Michael J Delaney, assistant US trade representative for South Asia, at his secretariat office in the capital.

Delaney has come to Dhaka to attend the first meeting of the Trade and Investment Cooperation Forum Agreement (Ticfa) scheduled for today.

Ticfa is a platform for settling trade disputes between the two countries. The deal was signed in Washington in November last year.

Bangladesh paid \$828 million in taxes to the US customs last year and \$3.38 billion over the last five years

| DUTY STRUCTURE ON EXPORTS TO US | |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| COUNTRIES | PERCENTAGE |
| Bangladesh | 16 |
| Vietnam | 8.38 |
| Indonesia | 6.36 |
| Germany | 1.16 |
| India | 2.29 |
| Turkey | 3.57 |
| China | 3 |
| Hong Kong | 1.25 |

SOURCE: COMMERCE MINISTRY

since 2009, Tofail said.

Before the US scrapped Bangladesh's

GSP (Generalised System of Preferences) privileges, the country enjoyed duty-free access for 97 percent of its export items. The main apparel item was not included in this duty structure.

Vietnam pays 8.38 percent tax, Indonesia pays 6.36 percent, China 3 percent, Germany 1.16 percent, India 2.29 percent, Turkey 3.57 percent and Hong Kong 1.25 percent on export of goods to the US market, the ministers said.

"Now we are more careful regarding the workplace safety. After the Rana Plaza building collapse, no more industrial disaster took place across the country."

"We made substantial progress towards fulfilling the 16 conditions [set by the US] for regaining the GSP status. We have discussed the progress in the meeting," the minister said.

'Shootout', again

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48, of Shiali Ghona of the upazila.

With the death of the two, the number of people killed in "shootouts" since January now totals to 55, according to The Daily Star and Ain O Salish Kendra statistics.

Interestingly, two versions of the "shootout" story were given by the law enforcers following the incident.

According to a press release of the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), members of the border forces and the Rapid Action Battalion set up a check-post near Damdamia Nature Park on information that a group of criminals, carrying contraband Yaba and arms was passing through the area

in a microbus.

As the microbus reached the check-post around 4:15am, the law enforcers signalled it to stop. But the vehicle took a U-turn and criminals started firing at the BGB and the Rab members. The law enforcers in retaliation opened fire too. After the gunfight, Zakku and Farid's bullet-hit bodies were found inside the vehicle while their cohorts managed to flee, added the press release.

According to the BGB press release issued around 11:00am, two locally made guns, a pipe gun, 12 cartridges and 1,475 Yaba tablets were recovered from the microbus.

However, a source in the BGB told this correspondent earlier in the

morning that Zakku and Farid were listed Yaba smugglers and a joint team of the Rab and the BGB picked them up from their residences around 12:30am yesterday after raiding the areas.

When the law enforcers took the duo to Damdamia Nature Park to recover Yaba tablets hidden by them, cohorts of Zakku and Farid opened fire on them triggering a "gunfight". Zakku and Farid were caught in the line of fire and died on the spot at about 4:00am, said the source.

This correspondent found four bullet wounds in each of the bodies when they were taken to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsies.

S Korean PM resigns over ferry sinking

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resignation appears to be symbolic. Presidential spokesman Min Kyung-wook said President Park Geun-hye would accept the resignation, but did not say when Chung would leave office.

Chung's resignation comes amid rising indignation over claims by the victims' relatives that the government did not do enough to rescue or protect their loved ones. Most of the dead and missing were high school students on a school trip.

Officials have taken into custody all 15 people involved in navigating the ferry Sewol, which sank April 16. A prosecutor revealed that investigators were also looking into communications made as the ship sank between a crew member and the

company that owns the ferry.

Chung was heckled by victims' relatives and his car was blocked when he visited a shelter on an island near the site of the sinking a week ago. He gave his reasoning for the resignation yesterday to reporters in Seoul.

"As I saw grieving families suffering with the pain of losing their loved ones and the sadness and resentment of the public, I thought I should take all responsibility as prime minister," Chung said. "There have been so many varieties of irregularities that have continued in every corner of our society and practices that have gone wrong. I hope these deep-rooted evils get corrected this time and this kind of accident never happens again."

Meanwhile, senior prosecutor Yang Jung-jin said that two helmsmen and

two members of the steering crew who were detained Saturday had been formally arrested. Eleven other crew members, including the captain, had been arrested earlier.

Yang also said that a crew member called the ship's owner, Chonghaejin Marine Co Ltd, as the ferry was listing, but declined to disclose whether the caller was the captain. Prosecutors said they are analyzing the content of communications between the ship and the company.

The arrested crew members are accused of negligence and of failing to help passengers in need. Capt Lee Joon-seok initially told passengers to stay in their rooms and took half an hour to issue an evacuation order, by which time the ship was tilting too severely for many people to get out.

Divers have recovered 188 bodies

and 114 people are believed to be missing, though the government-wide emergency task force has said the ship's passengers list could be inaccurate. Only 174 people survived, including 22 of the 29 crew members.

The Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries said it would soon change ferry systems so that passenger, vehicle and cargo information is processed electronically.

The ferry was carrying an estimated 3,608 tons of cargo, according to an executive of the company that loaded it. That far exceeds what the captain claimed in paperwork — 150 cars and 657 tons of other cargo, according to the coast guard — and is more than three times what an inspector who examined the vessel during a redesign last year said it could safely carry.

No more MPO listing

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said the government would provide financial assistance to the new non-government educational institutions.

The education ministry has been asked to prepare a new financial assistance scheme and it will be introduced in the budget for the fiscal year 2015-16, he said.

Various criteria, including the necessity of a school in a particular area, will be taken into consideration while preparing the new scheme, Muhith said, adding that a survey had already been conducted to this end.

The qualification of teachers and the number of students of a school will determine the scope of assistance, he said.

At the meeting, the chairmen of the standing committees demanded inclu-

sion of more schools under the MPO scheme. Muhith, however, rejected their demand.

"In North Bengal, there are some schools where only five teachers and ten students exist, and they have been included in the MPO list," he said.

The MPO scheme was first introduced in 1989 and the number of secondary educational institutions was 11,000 at that time. The figure has now risen to 26,000, Muhith told the meeting.

A large number of schools have mushroomed and were included in the MPO list through lobbying from different influential quarters, he said.

Muhith sought cooperation of the lawmakers to introduce the new financial assistance scheme.