

3 abductees freed

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The trio were kidnapped on their way to Baishari from Eidgarh in Cox's Bazar in a passenger bus named Hill Line at around 9:30pm on Monday.

A gang of 15-16 armed men -- all in masks -- stopped the bus near Eidgarh, took the three out of the bus at gunpoint and left, said Saiful Islam Chowdhury, officer-in-charge of Ramu Police Station.

Quoting the victims, the SI from Baishari said the captors beat them up for money. "They kept them deep inside a jungle without any food all night."

Saifur Rahman, assistant sub-inspector of the Baishari police camp, said the family members sent the money through bKash, a mobile phone-based money transfer service.

The three were taken to Ramu Police Station last night and kept there for interrogation as of filing the report at 1:00am today.

Meanwhile, three more people, including two schoolboys, were

abducted in Cox's Bazar and Gazipur in the last six days. Police could not make any headway.

They are Obaidul Haque Tuku, owner of a rice mill in Ukhiya of Cox's Bazar, and Morshed Alam, a class-IX student of Eidgarh High School in Cox's Bazar, and Al Amin, a class-VII student of Araiganj Azimuddin High School in Gazipur. The children's families said the abductors had demanded ransom by phone for their release.

Tuku was picked up from Link Road in Cox's Bazar town on Saturday when he was returning to his residence at Ukilpara of Tarabaniarchhara, reports our Cox's Bazar Correspondent.

His wife Sanwara Begum said she filed a case the next day with Cox's Bazar sadar police station, accusing three people, including her brother Shah Alam.

The police are yet to make any headway in the case.

Morshed was kidnapped on Sunday from Painyarsia village in Eidgarh of

Cox's Bazar. The kidnappers demanded Tk 2 lakh over the phone, his elder brother Shafiqul Alam said yesterday.

"They (kidnappers) threatened to kill my brother if we don't give them the money."

The family lodged a general diary with Ramu Police Station yesterday, Shafiqul added. The office-in-charge of the police station, however, said the police had not received any such complaint.

Meanwhile, some unidentified criminals kidnapped 13-year-old Amin, son of Alamgir Hossain of Dhaljora village in Kaliakoir upazila, on May 22, reported our Gazipur correspondent.

Receiving a phone call, he left home and has been missing since then, said Atikur Rahman, a sub-inspector of Kaliakoir Police Station.

Amin's mother Aleya Akter filed a case with the police station on Monday night.

Later, the family received a phone call by the abductors who demanded Tk 5 lakh to release the boy.

Feni BNP leader Minar arrested

FROM PAGE 1
The SP also said police, in primary investigation, received information that Ekram had been murdered over a row between him and Jihad Chowdhury, also known as Jahid, centring on this year's upazila polls.

Jihad is a close aide of Feni-2 Awami League lawmaker Nizam Hazari, who is widely being blamed for the gruesome murder of Ekram on May 20.

According to local AL insiders, Ekram's rivalry with Jihad, joint general secretary of Phulgazi AL, intensified in 2011 when Ekram supported the rival candidate of Jihad in Anandapur union parishad election.

In retaliation, Jihad supported Minar, instead of Ekram, in this year's upazila polls.

Irked by this, Ekram, president of Phulgazi upazila AL, recommended his suspension from the party but it was withdrawn in the face of pressure from Nizam Hazari, general secretary of Feni district unit of the ruling party.

Supporters of Minar and Ekram locked in clashes surrounding the upazila polls, locals say.

Meanwhile, after his defeat in the upazila election, Minar started living in the capital, where he runs an apparel business.

Following the murder, Ekram's brother Rezaul Haq filed a case with Feni Model Police Station accusing Minar and 34 unnamed people.

Talking to The Daily Star at his Feni residence on May 22, Rezaul said the decision of naming Minar in the case was taken by the local AL, not his family.

Sources in the district AL said Nizam Hazari took the decision. Nizam, however, refuted the allegation.

Locals said Jahidul Islam Saikat, one of the eight people arrested by the Rab in connection with the killing, is a nephew of Minar.

Meanwhile, Abid narrated before Senior Judicial Magistrate Md Khairul Amin of Feni how the killing was executed in broad daylight on May 20.

The night before the murder, a meeting was held at Salam Community Centre in Feni town around 8:30pm.

He along with Jihad, "Ruti" Sohel, Bakkar, Sifat, Shipon, Anik and Shanan were in the meeting and ward councillor Shiblu joined at the last moment.

They initially decided to publicly humiliate Ekram.

However, around 11:30pm, he along with Bakkar, Jihad and Sohel

held another meeting and came up with the decision of killing Ekram.

Quoting Abid, police sources said he knew 20-25 people would be in the killing mission. But the following morning, he saw around 60 people and most of them were unknown to him.

The whole gang split into smaller groups and took positions in four to five points. Abid, Shipon and Sifat positioned themselves on Afzal Rahman road.

Abid confessed that Jihad had sent three pistols to him in a bag through a relative.

While escaping after the killing, Abid saw Jihad and Shiblu standing in front of the latter's house.

Following the incident, Abid tried to reach his cousin Nizam Hazari over the phone but failed.

That night, Abid met Jihad at the rail station. Jihad told him that Minar had given him around Tk 1 lakh and gave Tk 20,000 to Abid, Sifat and Shipon. Then the trio headed for Dhaka the same night.

In another development, Feni police recovered a pistol, believed to have been used in Ekram murder, and four bullets from Jihad's office yesterday.

Outlaw killed in Satkhira 'shootout'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A leader of an outlawed party was killed and his associate injured in a "shootout" with police in Tala upazila of Satkhira early yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Abdul Gaffar Par, 45, regional commander of Purba Bangla Communist Party (ML- Janajuddha).

He was wanted in 16 cases, including murder cases, police said.

The injured, Kazi Saiful Islam, 42, is a prime accused in a case filed in connection with the murder of SM Alauddin, editor of local daily Patradut.

Sheikh Abu Bakar Siddique, officer-in-charge of Tala Police Station, said police received a tip-off that Gaffar was holding a secret meeting with his cohorts near Tengra Bill around 1:30am.

As police reached the spot around 2:30am, the outlaws opened fire on the law enforcers forcing them to retaliate that triggered a 15-minute "gunfight".

The outlaws later fled the scene and police found Gaffar and Saiful lying on the ground with bullet injuries.

Police rushed the duo to Tala Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared Gaffar dead.

20 conditions

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The government earlier denied permission to Khaleda to hold rallies in the capital's Jatrabari, Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh, at the High Court premises and in Narayanganj.

Asked whether the government was creating any obstacles to the Munshiganj rally, Rizvi said the party had so far not faced any obstacles from the district administration.

Khaleda will leave her Gulshan residence for Munshiganj around 1:30pm. This will be her first visit to the district in the last 14 years.

The district unit of the BNP has made preparations to ensure a huge participation at the rally, party insiders said.

FAKHRUL ON RALLY IN CITY
BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said Khaleda Zia would hold a rally in the capital along with the people whenever she wanted to do so.

He made the comment while pointing to a report run by the Bangla daily Prothom Alo yesterday. The report noted that the government would not allow Khaleda to hold any rally in the capital.

Fakhrul was speaking at a discussion at the Jatiya Press Club. The pro-BNP physicians' platform, Doctors Association of Bangladesh, organised the programme to mark the 33rd death anniversary of late president Ziaur Rahman, the founder of the BNP.

He called upon the government to shun its evil design to block the opposition's rally in the city. "Don't be arrogant. None among Hitler, Namrud, Pheraon and Yahya were able to cling to power. Neither will you be able to do so," he added.

Later in the afternoon, Fakhrul opened a three-day book display programme on the ground floor of the party's Nayapaltna central office.

Jatiyatabadi Prokashana Sangstha organised the programme marking the death anniversary of Ziaur Rahman.

Ershad asks

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party had already issued a warning over your anti-party statement in an interview titled 'One cannot be in the opposition and the ruling party simultaneously' published in the daily Prothom Alo on May 25. But you again made the same remarks in your post-editorial published in the Bangladesh Protidin today (yesterday). It goes against the party discipline."

Meanwhile, Quader, who was a cabinet member of the previous Awami League-led grand alliance government, said in both articles that according to the constitution, a party cannot be both in the government and the opposition. He was referring to the JP's current state in parliament.

Quader also questioned the appointment of Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu as secretary general of the party.

In a surprise move on April 11, Ershad removed Ruhul Amin Hawlader as the party's secretary general and appointed Bablu as the new second-in-command.

In the notice yesterday, Ershad said if Quader has any reservation about any decision of the party, he should discuss it in the party forum.

Ershad also reminded his younger brother that Quader had earlier been temporarily relieved from his party position for taking anti-party stance.

The JP relieved Quader from the presidium body last year after he had refused to resign from the polls-time government led by Sheikh Hasina.

India to consider actively

FROM PAGE 1
In the letter dated May 26, Hasina made an apparent reference to Teesta water-sharing deal and the LBA, and called for a "speedy final resolution" of all pending issues between the two countries.

The Daily Star has obtained a copy of the letter.

Hasina wrote, "I do believe that under your dynamic leadership we shall be able to resolve amicably, at the earliest, the pending issues that have remained in suspended animation for the last several years."

"It is my conviction that their speedy final resolution will pave the way for focusing on how best we can further deepen and broaden our existing cooperative ventures", Hasina said without specifying any pending issues.

The Bangladesh PM said she was "committed to working in close partnership" with Modi and his government "for the utmost benefit of our two peoples".

Asked about the Teesta and land boundary issues, the Speaker said, "I am sure there will be a change because the present government has come to power with landslide victory in elections whereas the previous government was hamstrung by coalition compulsions".

A deal on Teesta water sharing has remained stalled ever since West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee opposed it shortly before former Indian PM Manmohan Singh's visit to Dhaka in September, 2011.

Despite the signing of the Land

Boundary Agreement (LBA) and necessary protocol, the Manmohanned government failed to have the LBA ratified in the Indian parliament due to opposition from the BJP, Asom Gana Parishad and Trinamool Congress.

An amendment to the Indian constitution is required to implement the LBA as it involves exchange of adversely possessed lands and 161 adversely-held enclaves, and the issue of 6.5 kilometre undemarcated boundary between the two countries.

Asked about apprehensions in Bangladesh about a Modi-led BJP government in India, she said, "We did not go to today's meeting with any preconceived notion ... we went with an open mind".

Describing her meeting with Modi as "very fruitful", she said, "It went off very well."

They discussed issues of bilateral cooperation in security, connectivity, economic development, and power and energy sectors, said Shirin.

The Speaker said she pointed out to Modi that Bangladesh-India relations saw an unprecedented upswing in the last five years, and if this continues, the ties can grow from strength to strength.

In reply to a question, Shirin said Modi didn't raise at the meeting the issue of illegal migration from Bangladesh, which he had repeatedly raised during his election campaign.

India's new External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Tariq A Karim and Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pankaj Saran were also

Shamim never helped

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Shamim and Nur.

After the leak, Nazrul's brother Abdus Salam said the lawmaker might have helped Nur flee the country as he was heard discussing with Nur an escape plan. Shamim assured Nur of safe escape saying, "There will be no problem."

Nazrul's wife Selina Islam Beauty had earlier hinted at Shamim's involvement. She, however, declined to make any comment on the issue when The Daily Star reached her on May 18.

At the press meet, Shahid alleged an "intelligence agency" which leaked the phone conversation between Shamim and Nur had assisted the latter in fleeing the country.

Earlier on Saturday night, family members and supporters of Nazrul brought out a procession demanding the arrest and punishment of Shamim. Shahid Chairman was also present there, but kept quiet.

Yesterday's statement by Shahid was similar to the one made by Shamim after the leak. The AL lawmaker claimed it was not him; rather those who leaked the conversation had assisted Nur to escape. He argued that Nur could have been easily traced and arrested.

"Shamim Osman talked to Nur Hossain over the mobile phone several times between April 27 and 29. But their conversations don't prove he assisted Nur in fleeing the country. Rather, the people who leaked the record of their conversation helped Nur," Shahid told the press conference.

"A vested quarter has been playing dirty politics by raising allegations against Shamim Osman in connection with the incident," he claimed.

He questioned, "If those people who leaked the phone record knew about Nur's whereabouts, why didn't they arrest him?"

Shahid added that phone records of

contractor Abu Sufian, a supporter of Narayanganj Mayor Selina Hayat Ivy, trader Chan Mia, suspected killer Selim and Nur Hossain's bodyguard Hasan have also been leaked, but there is no discussion about those records.

He asked, "Why Sufian is not being quizzed as yet? Does this mean that they were the masterminds behind the incident and suppliers of money? Is that vested quarter trying to save them?"

Shamim earlier had indicated that the Rapid Action Battalion was involved in the gruesome seven-murder. Shahid also complained that Rab men were hired for the job in exchange for Tk 6 crore.

PROBE PROGRESS DISAPPOINTING
Nazrul's wife Selina Islam Beauty expressed disappointment at the progress of the investigation in the seven-murder case in the last one month.

"Although the kidnappers were wandering around after the abduction of my husband, the law enforcers did not arrest them. Now, the administration raises different issues over the involvement of different people in the murder without identifying and arresting the killers," she told The Daily Star last evening.

Speaking at a press conference at his office yesterday, Khandker Mahid Uddin, police super of Narayanganj, claimed police had made progress in the investigation as 23 people had been arrested in this connection.

Meanwhile, two factions of the Narayanganj District Bar Association yesterday staged demonstrations demanding the arrest of the killers of lawyer Chandan Sarkar and six others and their trial.

In another development, police yesterday rounded up one Moshir Rahman for allegedly assisting prime accused Nur Hossain flee to India, confirmed Mahid Uddin.

Man rescued from DU hall

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Karim, 4th-year student of sociology department, and Alamgir, a student of world religion department, on charges of abducting Sohel and torturing him for Tk 4 lakh.

The victim filed a case against the two for abduction and extortion, said Md Habil Hussain, Inspector (Investigation) of Shahbagh Police Station.

"We will produce them before court tomorrow," he added.

Wishing anonymity, a police official said Sohel was picked up earlier for his alleged involvement in drug peddling. He was later released for lack of proof, and no case was filed.

Sohel, who bore injury marks in his throat, neck, hands and legs, gave his account of the incident to our DU correspondent.

"As it started raining, I was waiting on my motorbike at the SM Hall gate yesterday afternoon, the duo arrived and started assaulting me, calling me a drug peddler," he said.

"The two took away my mobile phone and dragged me inside the hall,

leaving my motorbike at the gate," he said.

Sohel claimed that the duo drove away from the scene others students, who witnessed the incident.

"While hitting me with an iron rod, one of them claimed himself as the president of SM Hall Chhatra League unit," he alleged.

"Begging for mercy, I offered them Tk 4,000. But they demanded Tk 4 lakh, and threatened to hand me over to Shahbagh police branding me as a drug peddler if I failed to do so," he added.

Prof Amzad said when he along with the policemen reached the room around 7:30pm, they found the victim blind-folded. Nazmul and Alamgir had iron rods in their hands at that time.

One of the arrestees, Nazmul, told The Daily Star that, he and Alamgir noticed Sohel moving suspiciously around SM hall on a motorbike.

Nazmul said when they approached him, he tried to flee. But they stopped him.

"Then we searched him and found cannabis in his trouser pocket. He claimed that he knew top BCL leaders at SM Hall, but could not name anyone," he said.

"Some ex-BCL leaders present there suggested that he should be interrogated to find out whether he was an activist of Islami Chhatra Shibir or Chhatra Dal," said Nazmul.

"If we wanted to abduct him, why would we drag him inside the hall in front of everyone in broad daylight," he questioned.

Asked about the duo, Mehedi Hasan Mollah, president of DU Chhatra League, said none of them holds any BCL post.

"Chhatra League will not take responsibility if someone uses its name to cover up his misdeeds," he added.

On May 9, police rescued trader Farhad Islam, 25, from Jagannath Hall, around 15 hours after he was picked up allegedly by four BCL men of DU.

They were later suspended from the university and expelled by BCL.

No govt action yet to end deadlock

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A seven-member prosecution team dealing with the Jamaat case stopped working on May 19 after receiving a notice from acting chief prosecutor Syed Haider Ali.

Ali in his notice issued on May 15 has asked the prosecutors to give him all documents of the case, "ignoring" the fact that Tipoo had joined work after passing a medical leave.

Tureen Afroz, who led the seven-member team, on May 19 wrote to Tipoo that the case documents were in his [Tipoo's] custody and they could not hand over the documents. She also sought directives from Tipoo to that end.

An investigation agency of the tribunal has completed its probe into Jamaat's alleged war crimes and submitted its report to the prosecution on March 27 with a recommendation to ban the Islamist party.

The team was assigned to scrutinise the probe report and other documents so that formal charges could be filed and the team's work was at the final stage.

Tipoo, who has been leading the prosecution team since its inception in March 2010, went on leave on April 13 for medical treatment and the government, through a gazette, appointed Haider Ali as the interim chief prosecutor.

Tipoo said there was no legal provision that justified the government's action of appointing "an acting chief prosecutor". Besides, how there could be an acting chief prosecutor in presence of the chief prosecutor, asked Tipoo, who returned from leave on April 30.

However, Haider Ali on Monday told The Daily Star that the law minis-

try had yet to tell him anything and until the ministry asked him to step down as "acting chief prosecutor", he would continue in his position.

Tipoo said: "The government's decision has created the problem so the government has to solve it.... I can't understand how long the government will keep it hanging."

"A crisis has been created to halt progress of preparations for the case against Jamaat," said Tipoo, adding, "But, we have already taken a decision that we will go with the [Jamaat] case and we hope we will get over the standoff."

Besides trial of individuals, justice seekers and war crimes victims and their families have long been demanding trial of Jamaat as a party.

The demand gained momentum in February last year when youths occupied the Shahbagh intersection in the capital calling for capital punishment to be handed down on war criminals and a ban on Jamaat and its associate student body Islami Chhatra Shibir.

Following the protest, the government amended the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, allowing the state to appeal against inadequate sentencing and paving the way for trial of organisations on charges of war crimes.

The investigation agency started a probe into the alleged crimes of Islamist party in August last year and after completing its seven-month probe on March 25, the agency said it found involvement of Jamaat and its six associated bodies in grievous crimes during the Liberation War and recommended banning the anti-

liberation platforms.

The agency also suggested that assets of these organisations be confiscated. The six organisations are Jamaat's then student body Islami Chhatra Sangha, Peace Committee, Razakar Bahini, Al-Badr Bahini, Al-Shams Bahini and Jamaat's mouth-piece daily Sangram.

Inedible food

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Tulip. Both hotels are in Rio de Janeiro.

As part of a wider campaign by the 'State Secretariat for the Defense and Protection of Consumers', officials visited 13 restaurants, supermarkets, bakeries, shops and hotels, and notified eight of them for irregularities.

"In total, 218kg of food unfit for consumption was discarded," the Secretariat said in a statement.

One of the biggest raids came on Monday at Italy's hotel in Mangaratiba, just outside the city of Rio. Officials there discovered 25kg of seafood and margarine past the sell by date, and another 24kg of meat, sauces, cheese and sugar that had no visible sell-by date.

They also removed 2.6kg of salmon, parma ham and butter after visiting England's hotel.

Both hotels were also warned for not providing condoms to guests, as is required under Brazilian law.

Agents also visited the Hotel Caesar Park where the Netherlands squad will be based but found no irregularities there.