

Road blocked over killing of AL men

Another dies; 8 suspects held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

One more Awami League activist, shot by armed men in Pabna Sadar upazila on Saturday night, succumbed to his injuries early yesterday.

With the death of Rafiqul Islam, 36, the number of casualties from the attack on the ruling party men in Pushpopara Bazar rose to four.

Protesting the killing, activists of AL and locals put up barricades on roads at Dharmagram, Pushpopara and Jalalpur by placing logs.

Vehicular movement on the Dhaka-Pabna highway remained halted for eight hours, beginning at 6:00am, yesterday.

Eight suspects were detained from different areas of the district in connection with their alleged involvement in the killing, police said.

All shops and business houses in the bazaar remained closed since Saturday night's incident.

A gang of armed men shot three activists of the AL dead and injured a few others in Pabna Sadar on that night.

The victims were identified as Abdus Salam, 35, Fazlur Rahman, 32,

and Sultan Mahmud, 30. Rafiqul and Mamun sustained bullet injuries in the attack.

They all hailed from Dharmagram village and were members of the ruling party, Russell Ali Masud, organising secretary of Pabna Sadar AL, told The Daily Star.

Local AL leaders have blamed the BNP-Jamaat for the attack. A ward-level AL meeting was in progress at the bazar of Atailkula when the attack was made.

Akram Hossain, officer-in-charge of Atailkula Police Station, said Rafiqul breathed his last on his way to Dhaka from Rajshahi Medical College Hospital around 6:00am yesterday.

"Some 20 to 25 armed men attacked us when we were in a meeting with party men at Pushpopara Bazar," Md Moznu Mia, who escaped unhurt, told The Daily Star.

Criminals of an outlawed faction backed by the BNP-Jamaat made the attack to take revenge, he added.

AKM Musa, president of Pabna Sadar upazila unit of BNP, refuted the allegation that BNP men were involved in the attack.

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The body of BGB Nayek Mizanur Rahman being brought on a boat to BGB Lemuchhari camp yesterday from the remote area of Painchhari of Naikkhanchhari in Bandarban where he was killed in an attack by Myanmar border police on Wednesday.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Kuakata people

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saline water. Water purification tablets clear the water of germs but cannot eliminate salinity.

Locals said at least 70 per cent of the ponds in Latachalee and Mohipur unions under Kalapara upazila have dried up. River and canal water also become salty in the dry season.

Mongthon Talukder, member of the Rakhain community in Amkholapara in Latachalee union, said, "The Shibbaria river flows right past us but we can't drink its water in the dry season."

"To meet the drinking water shortage, we now store rainwater."

At least 78 tanks have been set up in Rakhain houses in Karanipara, Kalachandpara, Amkholapara under the "Integrated Agricultural Activity" project funded by Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation.

HM Milon, community facilitator of the project, said at least 2,000 litres of water could be stored in each tank.

They cost around Tk 50,000 to Tk 60,000 to set up including all equipment. It was a sustainable and safe system, he said.

To collect rainwater, plastic pipes were attached to the tin roofs of the houses, which carry the water into the plastic reservoirs. There is a locking mechanism where the pipes enter the reservoirs.

After rainwater is stored, it is used for all household purposes as well as drinking.

Housewife Akhaichin, who uses such a tank, said the process is simple and easy to use.

A local NGO, Nazrul Smriti Sangsad, also runs a similar project with financial help from the European Union and technical assistance from NGO Forum.

Under the project, concrete tanks are built at a cost of around Tk 27,000.

Shahabuddin Panna, executive director of Nazrul Smriti Sangsad, said, "We plan to set up rainwater reservoirs in every household in the area."

Presidential clemency

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"The president shall have the power to grant pardons, reprieves and respites and to remit, suspend or commute any sentence passed by any court, tribunal or other authority," the provision says.

As many as 21 death-row convicts have reportedly got presidential mercy in just three years from 2009 to 2011 while 25 others were relieved of their sentences in 39 years between 1972 and 2011, the rights organisation cited in the petition.

In every case, the president's power was misused to pardon convicts on political consideration, it said.

The petitioner also said there were huge loopholes in the article, and a group of privileged people had enjoyed the presidential clemency to the frustration of the victims who had

been deprived of justice.

Everybody is equal in the eye of the law and has the right to justice, which is violated when a convict gets mercy from the president, it added.

The rights organisation has prayed to the HC to issue a rule upon the government, asking it to explain why the article should not be declared unconstitutional and against the fundamental rights.

The senior secretary to the president's office, principal secretary to the Prime Minister's Office, secretaries to the cabinet division, Jatiya Sangsad and legislative and drafting division of the law ministry and the home ministry have been made respondents to the rule.

A hearing on the petition is likely to be held before an HC bench today, petitioner's counsel Manzill Murshid told The Daily Star.

BGB warns Myanmar

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the flag meeting with BGP scheduled for June 5 at Bangdhu district of Myanmar.

Brig Gen Syed Ahmed Ali said the family of Mizanur would get government facilities as per the rules and an additional Tk 5 lakh from BGB.

After police inquest, the body of Mizanur was taken to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital for an autopsy.

It will be taken to the BGB camp of Naikkhanchhari where the first namaz-e-janaza will be held at 9:00am today, BGB Cox's Bazar Sector Commander Col Khandakar Farid Hasan told The

Daily Star.

Mizanur, son of a martyred freedom fighter, will be laid to rest at his home village Bholanagar in Debidwar upazila of Comilla today with the highest BGB honour after his second namaz-e-janaza there.

Government and BGB high officials are expected to attend the janaza.

Mizanur is expected to get the highest BGB award.

Meanwhile, Myanmar deployed its army alongside their border police at the border while the BGB had reinforcement with heavy weapons since the skirmish

on Wednesday.

State Minister for Home Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal yesterday said Myanmar had assured Bangladesh of withdrawing its army deployed along the Naikkhanchhari border soon.

Talking to reporters following a meeting at his secretariat office, he also said the killing of the BGB nayek on Wednesday and the firing on a BGB team on Friday were due to some misunderstanding.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali yesterday said, "Tension in the border has already cooled down ... we are carrying forward regular activi-

ties with Myanmar. Things with Myanmar are moving on as usual."

He said a delegation led by the director general of BGB would go to Myanmar on June 9 to have discussions with the Myanmar side.

He also said the foreign office consultations between Bangladesh and Myanmar would be held in Dhaka on 18 June and the issues would be discussed at length there.

Our correspondents in Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Bandarban and our diplomatic correspondent contributed to this report.

Expatriates in Malaysia set to get MRPs

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The expatriates, mostly workers living across Malaysia, were ambitiously waiting for the launch of the enrolment as they had been carrying hand-written passports.

The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) set a deadline to convert all handwritten passports to MRPs by March 31, 2015.

Bangladeshi expatriates can take the help of hotlines that are available at the centres.

To apply for MRPs, applicants will have to make appointments before heading to application centres.

After getting MRP enrolment, their information will be sent to the Agargaon office for printing of MRPs.

Finally, the printed MRPs will be sent to Malaysia through the high commission for distribution by Dataedge-iPeople.

Earlier in February, the Bangladesh government appointed Dataedge-iPeople for the enrolment job to issue MRPs for those staying in Malaysia.

But the work could not begin due to problems in integration of the enrolment centres with the Agargaon office.

The Malaysia-government appointed IRIS that operates the Agargaon software system was blamed for blocking the integration process through undisclosed keys.

IRIS, however, denied the allegation, terming Dataedge-iPeople ineligible for the enrolment job.

However, the successful enrolment and printing of MRPs proved that the software of Dataedge-iPeople matched with the central system.

It was done using the system code which the high commission had used for enrolment of its staff for issuance of MRPs.

Currently, MRPs are being issued from 31 districts in Bangladesh and 44 foreign missions -- all are integrated with the central system.

Although the Malaysia problem has been solved, the issuance of MRPs could not be possible from the enrolment centres set up in the remaining 33 districts due to integration issues.

In December last, the government inked a deal with the Polish PWPW and Dataedge-iPeople to launch the

enrolment of MRPs from 33 districts.

The home ministry last week asked the IRIS and Dataedge-iPeople to resolve the integration problem which will be verified by an independent panel of IT experts.

An independent IT expert recently detected that there was a validation process in the central system. For this, the data could not be matched and the printing of MRPs was not possible.

A validation process ensures that the data conform to acceptable formats.

Under the contract, IRIS is obliged to allow use of central system for integration. The government bought the system when MRPs were launched in Bangladesh in 2010.

Gangnam makes internet history

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in a day with 38million for his Gangnam Style follow-up Gentleman.

No other video comes close to Gangnam on the streaming service's list of top videos.

Justin Bieber's Baby is the only other billion-plus video at 1.04billion views. Cute kid video Charlie bit my finger - again! is a

distant third with 711million views.

Psy has three of the top 15 videos on the site. As of Saturday afternoon, Gangnam, which was released July 15, 2012, had 2,001,009,716 views, and counting.

Psy, 36, addressed the impressive milestone in a series of tweets and retweets written in both English and Korean Friday night.

"Very honourable and burdensome numbers," he wrote to his 3.46million followers. "With the appreciation, I'll come back soon with more joyful one! #THX"

YouTube marked the occasion by posting a congratulatory message on its Google+ page.

"The most-viewed video on YouTube just hit another jaw-dropping milestone. Congrats on

your 2 billionth view, PSY!" YouTube stated.

MTV News jokingly calculated that at 4 minutes and 13 seconds, it would take a single viewer more than 16,045 years to watch Gangnam Style 2billion times in a row.

The video earned Psy a long list of accolades, including MTV Europe, American Music and World Music video awards in 2012 and 2013.

Ershad biggest beneficiary

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Ershad had also directed some of his close aides, including two brigadier generals in the Chittagong cantonment, to finish Manzur off anyhow. In line with Ershad's order, they murdered Gen Manzur on the night of June 1, 1981 inside Chittagong cantonment.

Manzur was murdered hurriedly as part of the plan to hide the conspiracy behind the assassination of Zia as Gen Manzur was aware of the conspiracy and he had wanted to make a statement before the court regarding the Zia murder. He had also asked the police to place him before a court.

Before Manzur's murder, two other army officers, who also knew many things about the conspiracy, were also killed. Of the two, one was Lt Col Motiur Rahman. Ershad himself had met Moti in Chittagong cantonment and had a one-to-one conversation with him on May 26, 1981, just four days before Zia's assassination at Chittagong circuit house. Moti shot the president to death.

During his visits to different cantonments, then army chief Ershad had also repeatedly announced that those who were involved in the assassination of Zia would not be spared and must be punished.

He made it possible by conducting a farcical court of inquiry and court martial led by army officers who had been repatriated from Pakistan after the country's liberation war.

In the face of protests against the controversial court martial, Ershad in early September 1981 circulated a message to all cantonments, announcing that those who had been sentenced to death by court martial would be hanged.

Thirteen army officers, almost of all of whom were freedom fighters, were hanged in September 1981 accordingly.

During his visit to Savar cantonment on June 17, 1981, Ershad even told soldiers and officers that Khaleda Zia had congratulated those army men who had destroyed the "killers" of her husband. He also claimed that Khaleda Zia had sent her greetings and congratulatory message to the army.

Ershad favoured Khaleda after Zia's death. He allocated the cantonment house on 168 kathas of lands to Khaleda. Zia had lived in the house as the deputy chief of army staff and also as the country's president.

In addition, the then BNP-led government also allocated Khaleda another house of her choice in the posh Gulshan area on 32 kathas of

land.

Khaleda opted to reside in her cantonment house, which appeared as a blessing for Ershad and his men, who felt they had easily convinced Khaleda that Gen Manzur and his men had been behind the assassination of Zia.

Ershad and officers loyal to him even launched a campaign in the cantonments that Khaleda Zia had been pressing for a quick execution of the death sentences delivered by the court martial.

Khaleda Zia had, however, revealed the truth later to Major General Moynul Hossain Chowdhury, who was forcibly sent off to the Philippines in early 1982 as Bangladesh's ambassador there as part of Ershad's plan to eliminate freedom fighter officers from the army.

Before leaving country, Gen Moin, a veteran freedom fighter, met Khaleda. She told him that she now understood everything well.

She told Moin that Gen Manzur was not involved in the assassination of Zia. She had now understood the motives of those who had misled her by giving false information on the Zia killing.

But by that time Ershad had consolidated his position in the army and succeeded in exercising his influence

on the Sattar-led BNP government.

After Zia's assassination, he had repeatedly announced that he would remain loyal to the constitution and the country's democratic process.

But Ershad, who had wanted to grab power immediately after the president's assassination, had led the army to stand by acting President Sattar in the presidential election to fill the vacancy in the presidency. He even announced that there was no other political party which could replace the BNP. Ershad forced the BNP to pick Sattar as its presidential candidate.

Sattar, who had been repatriated from Pakistan after the country's liberation war, did not understand why the army was so keen to see him elected. But things became clearer after his election.

The army chief had openly demanded the army's share in power. Sattar had denied the army's demand, which had made the situation further complicated.

And finally Ershad seized power on March 24, 1982 by overthrowing the Sattar government. He took over as chief martial law administrator by declaring martial law.

After he assumed power, he promised his colleagues, Holy Quran in hand, that he would never become involved in politics. He further promised that he would not assume the office of President.

But he ignored his own promises. He was not satisfied with the power and office he already held. He forced President Ahsanuddin to resign on December 11, 1983 and himself assumed the office of president the same day in addition to keeping the position of CMLA.

Ershad also went back on his promise not to get involved in politics. He formed the Jatiya Party by using state facilities. He ruled the country for around nine years until he was forced to resign in December 1990.

His rise in the Bangladesh army was also much interesting.

He was promoted to the rank of major in the Pakistan army in 1965, thirteen years after he had joined the army. He joined Bangladesh army in 1973. He was a Lt. Col when he was repatriated from Pakistan after the country's liberation war.

He, however, managed to get three promotions very quickly and become a major general, which was unusual in a peacetime government.

Ershad also held the post of adju-

tant general of Bangladesh army during Bangabandhu's government and was sent to India for military training in 1975.

During his stay in India, he managed support from then President Mustaque Ahmed, who seized the presidency following the August 15, 1975 bloody changeover and the perpetrators who made the changeover to become the deputy chief of staff of the army.

When General Zia was in power, Ershad was chief advisor of the Muktiyoddha Sangsad.

Ershad was chief coordinator of the coordination cell established by the Zia government to fight corruption.

Zia made Ershad the chief of staff on April 29, 1977, promoting him to the rank of Lt. Gen.

And Zia's death finally opened the window for Ershad to commandeer the state within less than 10 years of his return from Pakistan. #

[The report has been prepared on the depositions of the witnesses and accused in the Gen Manzur murder case, books " Democracy and Challenges " by Moudud Ahmed, " Silent Witness of a General " by Major General Moynul Hossain Chowdhury and " Zia and Manzur Murder and the Aftermath " by ASM Shamsul Arefin.]