

BOMB BLASTS IN 2012 Fakhrul, 72 other BNP men charged

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Paltan police yesterday pressed charges against 73 leaders and activists of the then BNP-led 18-party alliance, including BNP spokesperson Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, in a case filed for bomb blasts and vandalism in December 2012 during a road blockade.

Abu Zafar, sub-inspector of Paltan Police Station and also the investigating officer (IO) of the case, submitted two separate charge sheets -- one for vandalism and the other for hurling bombs at policemen -- to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka.

The IO said though the name of Fakhrul was not in the first information report (FIR), his involvement was found during the investigation and he was included in the charge sheets of the case.

According to the charge sheets, around 300 leaders and activists of the then BNP-led 18-party alliance brought out a procession from Fakirapool area and marched towards the BNP's Nayapaltan central office during the blockade on December 9, 2012.

At one point, the agitators threw bombs at policemen that left several

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Tk 31 lakh

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in hands, legs and other parts of their bodies, hospital sources said.

Altaf told The Daily Star the five company staff along with some others headed on foot towards Moghbazar branch of National Credit and Commerce Bank, around 70 yards from their office on Dilu Road, around 10:20am to deposit the money.

The money was in a steel box attached to the carrier of a bicycle that Altaf was pulling while the others were guarding him from front and behind.

As they moved a few steps from the office, three youths, one carrying a black bag, rushed there, blasted 10 to 15 crude bombs and fired several bullets injuring them, Altaf said.

The criminals then took away the money breaking open the box, the security guard said, adding that he had been hacked as he had tried to capture one of the muggers. They then fled the scene on a motorcycle that had been parked nearby.

Sub-inspector of Ramna Police Station AK Azad said it was a pre-planned operation by the muggers and that police were investigating it.

Police recovered three unexploded crude bombs from the spot.



Jute plants dry for lack of water in Ramjiban union of Sundarganj, Gaibandha.

PHOTO: STAR

Weather goes haywire

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mid-August, causing substantial rainfall. Met officials, however, say there is nothing unusual about this rain pattern.

"If the Asian monsoon becomes active, rainy weather in Bangladesh can continue till mid-September," said Hafizur Rahman, duty forecast officer of the Met office, last Friday.

But some experts link this pattern with climate variability and climate change.

"We are noticing this kind of climate variability repeatedly here, said Dr Atiq Rahman. "The present behaviour of the weather in Teknaf is not common and such behaviour is accentuating the extreme weather events."

Article 1 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change defines "climate change" as: "a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods".

The UNFCCC thus makes a distinction between "climate change"

attributable to human activities altering the atmospheric composition, and "climate variability" attributable to natural causes.

Another key difference between climate variability and change is in persistence of "anomalous" conditions, in other words, events that used to be rare occur more frequently, according to the World Meteorological Organisation website.

A never-seen-before event or sequence of events, such as the exceptional hurricane season in the Atlantic in 2005, could be part of natural climate variability.

If such a season does not recur within the next 30 years, 2005 will be considered an exceptional year. But its recurrence will suggest a potential change in climate.

UNEVEN RAIN DISTRIBUTION

From August 1 to 17, Naogaon got 56.5mm rain, Gaibandha 64mm and Dinajpur 99mm. Maximum and normal rain for these places are 690mm and 265mm, 528mm and 236mm, 891mm and 349mm respectively.

"I am yet to plant Aman saplings. It is already late. Farmers are facing difficulties in rotting jute plants

because of the lack of water," said Saidur Rahman of Khilkhet in Gaibandha Sadar upazila.

On the other hand, rains have disrupted life in the capital and in Chittagong city.

There has been huge rainfall in parts of India too. Some rivers were flowing above the danger level while a rising trend was recorded at 59 monitoring stations out of 81 on Sunday.

Prof Dr Ainun Nishat, a key member of the government's climate change negotiation team, said the unusual pattern of rain was an impact of climate change.

Lack of rain in the northern region means farmers would have to depend on groundwater for Aman cultivation, leading to a fall in the water table, he said.

"The situation will get worse in future and we need to take preparations for that." The management of the flood protection embankment and drainage system in the capital has to be improved, he added.

If the authorities just keep providing some relief after flood and river erosion, and do nothing else, "it will be hard to face the situation."

Climate change

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inundate the coastline and affect 95 million people. And another 100 million would be affected if there were any storm surges, the ADB said.

"Vast crop losses, disappearing arable land, displaced communities and poisoned groundwater -- this is not a horror tale but a very real possibility in future [for Bangladesh] unless current destructive global resource use patterns are changed," Bindu Lohani, ADB vice president for knowledge management and sustainable development, said at the launching ceremony at a city hotel.

With an economic loss of up to 9.4 percent by 2100, Bangladesh could be one of the hardest-hit countries in South Asia after the Maldives and Nepal, which might lose up to 12.6 percent and 9.9 percent of their economies every year.

The loss for India could be 8.7 percent, Bhutan 6.6 percent and Sri Lanka 6.5 percent, said the ADB.

The average collective loss for six South Asian countries -- Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka -- could be 1.8 percent by 2050 and 8.8 percent by 2100.

RIVER EROSION

Ferry services on Mawa-Kawrakandi route suspended

STAR REPORT

Ferry services on the Mawa-Kawrakandi route in the Padma were suspended last night due to river erosion, severing road communications between the capital and many southern districts for an indefinite period.

The erosion of the river bank completely destroyed jetty no 3 at Mawa ferry terminal around 9:00pm, said AKM Ashikuzzaman Chowdhury, assistant director general of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation.

Erosion wiped away nine shops at the terminal until late last night, he told our Munshiganj correspondent.

The suspension of ferry services left hundreds of passengers stranded on either bank of the river as ferries could not ply the route. Some 400 vehicles were waiting to cross the river.

Deputy Commissioner Saiful Hasan of Munshiganj said they were trying hard to restore the ferry services soon.

FLOOD SITUATION TURNS GRIM

A seven-month-old child drowned in floodwater in Sariakandi upazila of Bogra yesterday as downpours and onrush of water from rivers upstream continued inundating more areas in the country's north and north-east.

The dead is Shakib, son of Mizanur

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Dhaka 2nd worst city

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second from the bottom of the GLI index in 2012 and 2011.

Australia's Melbourne has retained its status as the world's most liveable city for the fourth consecutive year, outscoring three other Australian cities in the top 10. It also scored a perfect 100 points in the sub-category of sport.

Economist and urban researcher Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman said there was nothing surprising about Dhaka's position at the bottom of the GLI index time and again as the quality of life and urban governance in Dhaka have been worsening over the years.

Dhaka has been suffering from perennial traffic gridlock, destruction of wetland and green spaces and encroachment of pedestrian space, he pointed out.

Moreover, it lacks an efficient waste management system, an efficient public transportation system and a functional cultural life, stated Zillur, who is executive director of private think-tank Power and Participation Research Centre.

"Over the years, public resources have been allocated to vanity projects, which would not improve the quality of urban life," he added.

Urbanisation expert Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury lamented the fact that nobody around was taking care of the parameters related with the quality of life in the capital.

He sarcastically said the other way of dealing with the situation is to challenge and sue those who had conducted the liveability survey for dishing out "wrong information" about Bangladesh.

The other least liveable cities in the list are Abidjan (Cote d'Ivoire), Tripoli (Libya), Douala (Cameroon), Harare (Zimbabwe), Algiers (Algeria), Karachi (Pakistan), Lagos (Nigeria), and Port Moresby (Papua New Guinea).

The top ranking cities are Vienna (Austria), Vancouver (Canada), Toronto (Canada), Adelaide (Australia), Calgary (Canada), Sydney (Australia), Helsinki (Finland), Perth (Australia), and Auckland (New Zealand).

TOP 10

MELBOURNE, Australia
VIENNA, Austria
VANCOUVER, Canada
TORONTO, Canada
ADELAIDE, Australia
CALGARY, Canada
SYDNEY, Australia
HELSINKI, Finland
PERTH, Australia
AUCKLAND, New Zealand

BOTTOM 10

ABIDJAN, Cote d'Ivoire
TRIPOLI, Libya
DOUALA, Cameroon
HARARE, Zimbabwe
ALGIERS, Algeria
KARACHI, Pakistan
LAGOS, Nigeria
PORT MORESBY, Papua New Guinea
DHAKA, Bangladesh
DAMASCUS, Syria

US cannot lecture on human rights

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- sentiments astonishingly shared by Iran, Egypt and China.

The campaigners have criticised the over-militarised response to protests that erupted after unarmed black teenager Michael Brown was shot dead by police on 9 August.

Fierce clashes between residents and officers resulted in the deployment of the National Guard yesterday, while this past week has seen tear gas and flash grenades hurled by police as well as the arrest of a number of journalists.

In a tweet this morning, Amnesty International said: "US can't tell other countries to improve their records on policing and peaceful assembly if it won't clean up its own human rights record."

Their comments come as Egypt's Foreign Ministry appeals for restraint and asks the US to "respect the right of assembly and peaceful expression of opinion".

According to Daily News Egypt, an Egyptian spokesman supported comments made UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon on Monday, which called for the US authorities to deal with the situa-

tion as per "international and American standards".

UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters that Ban "calls on all to exercise restraint, for law enforcement officials to abide by US and international standards in dealing with demonstrators".

China's state-run news agency Xinhua also published a scathing commentary yesterday, observing that while there is a mixed-raced president in power and though it has been 50 years since Martin Luther King's rousing speech, racial discrimination is still ubiquitous.

It said that the racial divide "remains a deeply-rooted chronic disease that keeps tearing US society apart", before the piece then censured the US for hacking into the telephones of ordinary citizens as shown by whistleblower Edward Snowden.

The article reads: "The Ferguson incident once again demonstrates that even if in a country that has for years tried to play the role of an international human rights judge and defender, there is still much room for improvement at home."

"In its annual human rights report

issued in February, the United States assaulted almost 200 countries across the world for their so-called poor human rights records."

Amnesty International has also called for an investigation into the police tactics used during the unrest, as fresh violence continues to threaten the calm as developments occur.

"Our delegation travelled to Missouri to let the authorities in Ferguson know that the world is watching," said Steven W Hawkins, Executive Director of Amnesty International USA.

"We want a thorough investigation into Michael Brown's death and the series of events that followed."

Amnesty's criticism is echoed by Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, strangely, who also laid into the US for "committing crimes against its own people".

He has issued a series of tweets over the last week highlighting how "racial discrimination's still a dilemma in US", as well as denouncing the country's support of the Israeli government despite the deaths happening in Palestine, and the "illegal prisons & massacred #prisoners" in Afghanistan under President George W Bush.

New scheme to give villages a new look

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'C' type flats would have two bedrooms and a balcony, and would cost Tk 7.38 lakh each. The 'D' type flats of 365sqft would have a single bedroom and a balcony and will be available for Tk 5.85 lakh each.

The value per sqft has been set at Tk 1,603 for each flat, which would also have dining, kitchen and bathroom facilities.

The planning minister said there would also be some common facilities free of cost.

The model villages would have shops, dairy or poultry farms, solar panels, biogas, ATM booths, mobile banking outlets, and playgrounds. Apart from these, Tk 1 crore seed

money would be given to each village for training facilities to create self-employment opportunities, Kamal said.

The minister said it was a new concept of compact housing project, which would include residential facilities alongside agriculture and forestation.

"Our idea is to keep people in the villages and provide them with urban facilities so that they don't migrate to the cities and towns."

Quoting Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's deliberations at the ECNEC meeting, the planning minister said it was a dream of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Hasina said when Bangabandhu

had gone to the UK in 1969, he visited a village there and thought of introducing the model in Bangladesh.

She also expressed her intention to give some of the land she owns at Tungipara in Gopalganj for constructing flats under the project, planning ministry officials said.

Around 3 acres of land would be required for each model village, they added.

The villages for the pilot project would be selected based on some criteria, including inhabitants having a higher tendency towards building houses on agricultural land, a good number of them working abroad and sending handsome amounts of

remittance, and scope for acquiring necessary land for the project.

The land at the villages would still be in possession of the owners but would be cultivated as cooperatives through organic farming.

Ferrocement and Sandwich panels would be used for constructing the proposed buildings, which would save 37 percent of the cost of traditional building construction.

Ferrocement is a mixture of cement and sand, while Sandwich panel is a type of flat panel comprising two thin aluminium sheets bonded together with a non-aluminium core.

Each of the model villages would save about 13.05 acres of land

needed for traditional housing. Besides, 16.26 acres of agricultural land would be saved, as the families would be provided with civic facilities through a single approach road, the project proposal said.

According to the proposal, Bangladesh is losing one percent of its agricultural land every year due to various reasons including population boom.

Binayak Sen, research director of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, told The Daily Star, "To me, the projects seems interesting ... If successful, it will be a major breakthrough."

Sen said the idea had originated from the concept of cluster villages,

which would provide urban facilities to villagers and save agriculture land.

Stressing the need for consulting the local people for the project's implementation, he observed the poor and low-income group would welcome the initiative, while the richer section might stand against it.

The planning minister said none would be forcibly brought under the project. It would be implemented with consent from everyone concerned.

The Rural Development Academy (RDA), which is implementing the project, has already conducted a survey in a village in Bogra, said MA Matin, director general of the RDA.