

Siblings held on charges of war crimes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Detectives yesterday arrested two war crimes suspects at Nabiganj upazila in Habiganj for their alleged crimes against humanity during the Liberation War in 1971.

The arrestees are identified as Mahibur Rahman Boromian, 70, former chairman of Khagaura Union Parishad, and his younger brother Majibur Rahman Angur Mian, 65, incumbent chairman of the same union council.

Sources say the two brothers formed a Razakar force in the area and used to hand over freedom fighters to the Pakistani occupation army.

Investigation officer in the case Nur Hossain told The Daily Star he had got primary evidence that the siblings had allegedly killed freedom fighters Akal Ali and Rajab Ali in 1971.

He added after getting the primary evidence they had sought a warrant of arrest against the duo from the International Crimes

Tribunal-2 last week.

Accepting their prayer, the tribunal issued an arrest warrant to that end.

Earlier in 2009, Akal's wife Bhingraj Bibi filed a case against the brothers with a judicial magistrate's court in Habiganj accusing them of collaborating with the Pakistani occupation forces during the war.

They were also accused of setting fire and looting the house of Maj Gen MA Rob, deputy commander of the pro-liberation forces.

The court took the case into cognisance and ordered Baniachang police to investigate the matter.

The case was later transferred to the International Crimes Tribunal formed in 2009 to try the war criminals.

A probe body led by Sanaul Haque, coordinator of an investigation agency designated to investigate war crimes, visited the places of alleged occurrences in the district on November 26 last year.



The Sarak Paribahan Malik-Sramik Oikya Parishad, a joint platform of owners and workers, organised a rally to protest the ongoing blockade and arson attacks on vehicles. As the turnout was poor, activists of the organisation were dragging pedestrians to the gathering, like what they do to draw passengers to their buses. The photo was taken at Phulbaria bus terminal yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



BJP mauled in Delhi elections

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released hours after Modi conceded defeat and promised the city's new leader his government's "complete support".

Analysts said the result was a blow for a prime minister who has enjoyed an extended honeymoon with voters since his landslide general election victory.

Kejriwal's win marks a stunning comeback for the anti-graft champion and self-styled anarchist, who resigned following a chaotic 49-day spell in charge of the Delhi state government a year ago.

"Thanks for the unprecedented victory," Kejriwal, a former tax official-turned politician, told hundreds of cheering supporters outside AAP headquarters in Delhi.

"But it's very scary, the kind of support the people of Delhi have extended and the mandate we have been given, I appeal to the AAP workers and leaders not to be arrogant," Kejriwal said, as supporters showered him in petals.

After apologising this month for leaving voters without an elected government for a year, Kejriwal was the star of the election campaign, outshining a former policewoman who was the BJP's pick for chief minister.

Rattled by Kejriwal's popularity, Modi headlined several major rallies, portraying his rival as a "back-stabber" who betrayed voters last time round by quitting so early.

But Kejriwal's pledges to tackle entrenched corruption and lower utility bills won over legions of work-

ing-class voters willing to give him a second chance. He will be sworn in as chief minister on Saturday.

Congress, which has dominated politics since India's independence, suffered another mauling after being thumped at the general election, winning no seats.

AAP supporters massed in the streets, dancing, singing and waving national flags along with ones picturing Kejriwal.

"Kejriwal represents pure hard work, dedication. He focuses on doing the ground work first, not just making tall claims," school basketball coach Sukhdarshan Singh said.

Poulomi Gupta, a 36-year-old accountant, said Kejriwal was a "hero" for the common man.

"It's not about money or fame for him. He's put everything on the line for people like you and me and everyone else here," he said.

MODI 'REJECTION'

However, the BJP, which won 31 seats out of 68 the last time around, managed to keep its share of the vote intact at 32.2 percent. In 2013, its share was 33.07 percent.

"We have not lost this election. Our vote share is more or less intact... we have been defeated by polarisation of pseudo-secular forces," said Giriraj Singh, a prominent BJP MP.

The BJP has won three state polls since May and could share power following a fourth, mostly on the back of Modi's popularity.

Modi needs to win even more this year and next to gain control of both houses of the national parliament,

where he is attempting to push through reforms on land acquisition, tax and other issues to revive the economy.

States are allocated seats in the upper house, where the BJP lacks a majority.

A BJP spokesman denied the results were a sign of anti-Modi sentiment, saying the election had been fought solely on local issues.

"There is not an iota of negativity against the NDA (national) government anywhere in the country let alone in Delhi," spokesman GVL Narasimha Rao told NDTV.

But analyst Amulya Ganguli said people were tired of waiting for the reforms the BJP had promised ahead of last year's general election.

"There is no doubt that Modi's popularity has dwindled," he said.

"People in Delhi want development and Modi has nationally failed to deliver on his promises. There is a likelihood Delhi voters didn't fall for him again."

Kejriwal famously declared himself an anarchist during his brief tenure last year and staged several street protests outside government offices.

After winning plaudits for rejecting the VIP culture of Indian politics, including by taking the metro to his inauguration, his administration lost its sheen, with a raid on a largely African neighbourhood sparking claims of racism.

But Kejriwal won Delhi voters round this time with campaign promises such as free Wi-Fi for the capital's 17 million residents.

Talks, not force, hold solution

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complete contrast to those of their party top brass.

With violence escalating and the crisis deepening, the government and top AL leaders refuse to hold talks with the BNP, which wants the government to step down to make way for a fresh election under a nonparty administration.

To press home its demands, Khaleda Zia's BNP and its allies have been enforcing a nonstop blockade since January 6 and are showing no sign of backing off. The agitation has turned deadly, with about 70 already killed.

BREAKING THE DEADLOCK

This newspaper has spoken to 30 grassroots leaders of the ruling party, and most of them are in favour of talks.

Some, however, support the rigid stance of the party and government high-ups while several others declined to comment.

"Administrative measures alone cannot stop the ongoing violence. Political initiatives are also needed to break the deadlock," said Afzalul Karim, general secretary of Barisal city AL.

He said police were using authorised weapons to contain violence, but miscreants were using illegal arms to destabilise the country.

Mainuddin Mondal, president of Chapainawabganj district AL, supports Karim's view on curbing violence.

"The way criminals are carrying out ambush, the administration may not be able to stop it.... If dialogue could bring peace, that would be good," he added.

Abdur Rahman, president of Feni district AL, also favours a fruitful discussion while Matiur Rahman, acting president of Sunamganj district AL, highlighted people's sufferings due to the impasse.

"People care little about which party is in power. They want peace and security," Matiur said. "Every day people want to know when they will get relief."

For him, talks can solve it all.

Abul Basher, president of Ramna Thana unit AL, agrees. "Discussions will bring solution to the political crisis in a short time."

But Afzalul, Basher and Matiur held the BNP responsible for the violence and said the BNP must stop it for the dialogue to start.

Some local leaders in Nilphamari, Khulna and Jessore also prefer talks. They spoke on condition of anonymity.

But Zafar Ali, general secretary of Kurigram district AL, SM Jaglul Haidar, president of Shyamnagar upazila AL of Satkhira and also a

lawmaker, Zahedul Alam, general secretary of Khagrachhari district AL, and Azizur Rahman, general secretary of Jhenidah district AL, oppose the idea of dialogue.

"If the government agrees to sit with the BNP, every other political party will resort to violence to have its demands met in future," says Zahedul.

Anol Kumar Dey of Shariatpur supported his view, but said there could be talks if violence stopped.

Contacted for his reaction, Kazi Zafarullah, an AL presidium member, said grassroots leaders echoed the views of the party central leaders.

"Dialogue is just one way of resolv-

hurdles we are facing," said Nazrul Islam Manju, president of Khulna city BNP.

Mahbub Hossain Piaru, president of Sonadanga Thana Jubo Dal unit in Khulna and also a member of the city BNP, expressed his frustration.

"The party top brass hasn't been able to give us any hope so far about the success of the movement. How more days will it continue?" he said.

Sohrab Uddin, general secretary of Kushtia district BNP, said most of the leaders and activists have been arrested over the last one month while the rest are on the run.

"In this situation, we find it really hard to mobilise our men," he added.

ANTI-TALKS TALK



Those who are talking about dialogue instead of taking a stand against hostility are the actors of 1/11. Civil society members only offer advice. They are like a cancer on the society. This parasite ... the cancer named civil society must be uprooted from the society.

QUMRUL ISLAM,
food minister, at a rally on Feb 8

We aren't giving importance to the initiative for talks at the moment as the roles of the persons involved in this process are questionable, except for ATM Shamsul Huda. You cannot sit for talks with the people who are carrying out attacks, killing innocent people and destroying the country's economy.

HT IMAM,
PM's political affairs adviser, to BBC on Feb 9



ing the crisis, but not a mandatory means," he added.

'LEADERS DON'T UNDERSTAND'
Most of the 20 grassroots BNP leaders this paper has spoken to have said the party high command seems oblivious to the condition of the local leaders and activists who are finding it difficult to continue the agitation. Many are on the run to avoid arrest.

"The party high-ups have instructed us to carry on the movement till our demand is met. But the reality is different in grassroots. They [high command] are not aware of the

Preferring to remain unnamed, a Bagerhat BNP leader said, "We're really tired of staying in hideout, away from our families. But our central leaders don't seem to understand this."

Asked, Salahuddin Ahmed, BNP spokesperson and also a joint secretary general, said: "We've instructed all our men to cross this thorny roads with thunder-strong determination and to face the situation with patience and responsibility... to ensure victory of the people's movement."

Ministers, AL leaders slam

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mandate," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed termed the civil society members' proposal "unrealistic and unacceptable". He said the present government could not hold talks with the political parties that were carrying out violence and terrorist activities, killing people and destroying national property.

"Any such dialogue would be a compromise with terrorism and violence, and would only encourage further terrorism in the country," he

said while speaking at a press conference in the Secretariat yesterday.

In another scathing remark on the civil society, Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Rashed Khan Menon said those talking about a dialogue were the actors behind the 1/11 changeover and they would not be found on the streets a few days later.

"Those who stay abroad when the country goes through a critical period are basically shedding crocodile tears for a dialogue," he said at a programme in front of Motijheel Ideal School and

College.

Dismissing the possibility of a dialogue with the BNP-led 20-party alliance, Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu said, "There can be no rapprochement between Razakars and freedom fighters, between war criminals and patriots, between fire-terrorists and the government. The fire-terrorists too have to surrender like the Razakars and the war criminals."

He was speaking at a programme at Ramesh Chandra auditorium at Dhaka University yesterday, BSS reports.

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