

## RAJUK LAND ALLOCATION

# Abbas, Kabir face arrest orders

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued arrest warrants against five people, including former housing and public works minister Mirza Abbas and state minister Alamgir Kabir, in a case filed for causing the state a loss of Tk 16 crore.

The case was filed with Shahbagh Police Station on March 6 last year against Alamgir and four others on charge of allocating seven acres of land of Rajuk to a journalists' cooperative society at a rate lower than the actual.

The other accused are: former joint secretary of housing and public works ministry Bijon Kanti Sarker, National Housing Authority Cashier Mansur Alam and Assistant Cashier Motiar Rahman.

After accepting the charge sheet,

Judge KM Imrul Kayes of the Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka passed the order.

The court directed the officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station to submit a report on execution of arrest warrant by March 25.

Hamidul Hassan, deputy director of the Anti-Corruption Commission and also investigation officer of the case, on February 16, submitted the charge sheet against the five accused to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka, showing 17 people as prosecution witnesses.

The IO showed all the five accused fugitives and appealed to the court to issue arrest warrants against them.

Later, the case was transferred to the Special Court of Dhaka for its next course of action.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina hands over a certificate to a graduating officer of the Defence Services Command and Staff College (DSCSC) in the Mirpur Cantonment during the graduation ceremony of the "DSCSC 2014-2015 Course" yesterday morning.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

## LAUNCH CAPSIZE

## Death toll 71

STAR REPORT

Another body was recovered from the Padma river last evening, almost fifty-five hours after the launch accident on Sunday, bringing the death toll in the disaster to a total of 71.

The body was recovered from Mandrakhola area under Shibalaya upazila, about three kilometres from the accident site, at around 7:00pm, fire service officials carrying out the rescue operation said.

The deceased was identified as Shubal Sutradhar, a carpenter by profession and a resident of Boalia area of the upazila.

Five people are still missing, according to officials at the district administration control room.

Of the recovered bodies, 69 were handed over to their families while one remained unidentified. The unidentified body of a female was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for DNA tests.

# Hindus' death angel

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Hindus, and the International Crimes Tribunal-1 in its judgment yesterday said it had found his "genocidal intention" from those attacks and his inciting speeches had aimed at destroying the community.

Santosh Kumar Mitra, sixth prosecution witness in the case against the fugitive convict, yesterday told The Daily Star, "The Hindus feared him as if he were an angel of death."

The witness during the trial said Jabbar accompanied by Razakars had attacked their Angulkata village on October 6, 1971. He had woken up that morning by the sound of whistles blown by the Razakars, he added.

Eight families used to live in their house and the intruders had detained all the men on Jabbar's instruction. They looted jewellery, money and other valuables and tied Santosh and his father Surendra Nath Mitra with a rope, he further said.

As many as 37 people were detained and taken to the municipality office of Mathbaria that day.

Of them, seven including the victim's cousin Monindra Master were released and the rest were taken to an area near the sluice gate of Surjamoni village, the witness said.

Twenty-two people including his father and brother were shot dead

later that day.

"The detainees were taken beside a canal one after another and shot dead from behind. My brother Foni Mitra and I were tied to each other and shot. My brother died on the spot and I was injured," said Santosh, who is still carrying marks of injury on his back and below his right chest.

The witness received primary treatment at his brother-in-law's pharmacy in Duatola Bazar and later went to the Sundarbans camp of freedom fighters to get further treatment.

Asked about his reaction to the verdict, a visibly frustrated Santosh just commented, "I have nothing to say."

Jabbar used to address the collaborators of the Pakistani invading army at different rallies in Pirojpur to incite them.

"Wealth and property of the Hindus are war booty and thus belong to the Muslims. If the Hindus want to live in this country, they will have to become Muslims," Shobur Rahman Golder, first prosecution witness, quoted Jabbar as saying at a rally in Tushkhali on May 16, 1971.

The next day Jabbar along with 30-35 members of the Pakistani army had gone to the village.

He had asked the army to kill

Sarda Kanto Paik, who was running for his life.

Paik had been shot dead on the spot.

About 360 houses of the village had also been looted before they were set on fire.

About eight to 10 days later, on Jabbar's instructions, Razakars forced 200 Hindus of Paikbari to convert to Islam.

"The Hindus were given Muslim names and forced to eat beef," the witness added.

Nineteenth prosecution witness Santosh Kumar Kharati said Razakars led by Jabbar attacked their Noli village on May 22, 1971.

"The accused [now a convict] shot dead my elder brother Sokha Nath Kharati," said the witness.

Kharati added, "Upon Jabbar's instruction, Razakars shot dead 11 people including Jitendra Nath Biswas, Ganesh Chandra Mistri, Nepal Chandra Mistri, Upendra Nath Mistri and Bosonto Haldar."

Another prosecution witness, Dilip Kumar Paik, said he and his father had been detained and given a proposal to convert to Islam or else they would be handed over to the Pakistani army.

"We gave silent consent to save our lives," said Kharati, who was

along with around 150 to 200 Hindus of Phuljhuri village at that moment.

"Against our will, they forced us to recite kalma [one of Islam's pillars] and say prayers," he said, adding that the Hindus had also been given Muslim names.

"My father was named Kaiyum Khan, while I was named Delwar Hossain Khan," he said, adding that some days later, two to three Hindus were forced to eat beef, while others had rejected it.

All the witnesses testified before the tribunal that more than 500 houses, mostly belonging to the Hindus, were plundered and destroyed by Jabbar's men.

While delivering the judgment, the tribunal said, "It is well proved that accused Md Abdul Jabbar Engineer had direct complicity and substantially contributed and facilitated in the commission of such barbarous types of crimes and as such no punishment other than death will be equal to the said horrendous crimes for which the accused has been found guilty beyond reasonable doubt."

The tribunal, however, took lenient view in the matter of awarding punishment to the accused, considering his old age.

## Editors worried

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coming under attacks and falling victim to violence perpetrated in the name of political programmes while discharging their professional duties, and on the other hand, attempts are being made to curb freedom of the press and media," states the resolution, signed by the council's General Secretary Mahfuz Anam.

"The government is interfering with the rights of the media. The government and the administration are obstructing collection and presentation of news in an independent and unbiased manner.

"At times, some newspapers or television channels are being unjustly branded as the mouthpieces of a particular party or group. Especially the reaction given in the Jatiya Sangsad over the publication of a photograph and a caption in The Daily Star recently is an expression of hostile attitude towards the media which is not expected from any government.

"Provocative statements against the editors and publishers have been made in parliament which threatens their safety. Several editors and publishers are already being harassed with false cases against them.

Incident like harassment of journalists by police in the name of raid in the office of English daily the New Age has already occurred. We strongly condemn these above mentioned incidents.

"Besides, an environment of panic has been created by arresting owners of more than one TV channel. TV talk shows are also being interfered with in various ways. Some talk shows have already been stopped. The lists of guests on the talk shows are being specified. Interference is also being made in live programmes," the council continued.

"We think telephone instructions on what can be aired and what can not also infringes on the right to freedom of expression. Some journalists are being barred from collecting news of different government programmes and party events. Placing the media and other groups as rival forces of the government and unnecessarily harassing them cannot be favourable to an independent media.

"We expect more responsible and cooperative behaviour from the government in upholding the freedom, objectivity and non-partisanship of all media, including newspapers," the Editors' Council said in its resolution.

Jabbar was elected a member of Pakistan's Provincial Assembly from the Muslim League in 1964, and a member of Bangladesh parliament from the JP in 1986 and 1988.

He is the fifth person to have been convicted in absentia on war crimes charges.

Sanaul Huq, a senior member of the tribunal's investigation agency, told The Daily Star that they had no information on his whereabouts.

Quoting Jabbar's relative Laiju, our Pirojpur Correspondent reported that the JP leader was last seen at his village home in Mathbaria upazila after cyclone Sidr hit the country in November 2007.

The prosecution yesterday said it didn't get "the expected judgment". The victims' families also expressed dissatisfaction at the "lenient" sentence.

"We have to accept the judgment though we expected capital punishment," said Jahid Imam, conducting prosecutor of the case.

He said they would decide in a day or two on whether to challenge the verdict.

In his reaction, state-appointed defence counsel Abul Hasan said, "There is nothing to be satisfied."

According to the law, a war crimes convict can file an appeal with the apex court within 30 days from the date of pronouncement of the verdict.

Jabbar can file an appeal if he surrenders or is arrested within that period, said Jahid.

On the expiry of the deadline, if he wishes to lodge an appeal, he will have to file an application giving reasons of the delay. It is the apex court's discretion as to whether it will allow him to file an appeal, he said.

Prosecutor Tureen Afroz said, "We are getting two types of verdict from two tribunals. The tribunal-1 took Ghulam Azam's age into consideration whereas the tribunal-2 didn't take into account Subhan's age."

On February 18, the tribunal-2 handed down capital punishment to 79-year-old Jamaat leader Abdus Subhan for war crimes, saying, "Advanced age of an accused does not readily warrant some mitigation of the sentence."

Tribunal-1 in 2013 handed down 90 years' imprisonment to former Jamaat ameer Ghulam Azam, considering his age. Ninety-one-year-old Ghulam, however, deserved death penalty, said the court in its verdict.

Our Pirojpur Correspondent Habibur Rahman contributed to this report.

# Jail until death

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time his old age saved him from the gallows.

A special tribunal, which tried the JP leader in absentia, yesterday sentenced him to imprisonment until death for committing an act of genocide and crimes against humanity during the 1971 Liberation War.

Though the 82-year-old deserved death penalty, the International Crimes Tribunal-1 gave him relatively lenient punishment considering his old age.

"It is well proved that accused Abdul Jabbar Engineer had direct complicity and substantially contributed and facilitated the commission of such barbarous types of crimes and as such no punishment other than death will be equal to the said horrendous crimes," said tribunal-1 Chairman Justice M Enayetur Rahim.

"But in the same breath, we cannot overlook the advanced age of the accused, the mitigating factor, which has come up before us for its due consideration," said Justice Rahim while reading out the summary of the 141-page judgment.

Two other tribunal members are Justice Jahangir Hossain and Justice Anwarul Haque.

The court found Jabbar, the then chairman of Pirojpur's Mathbaria Peace Committee, an anti-liberation force, guilty on all five charges brought against him.

It handed down "imprisonment for life till his natural death" on four charges and 20 years' rigorous imprisonment and Tk 10 lakh fine on the other charge.

If he fails to pay the fine, he will have to spend two more years in jail.

It was the first time the tribunal imposed a fine on a war crimes convict.

The four charges that brought Jabbar jail until death are abetting and instigating the killing of two freedom fighters, and looting and torching of 150 Hindu houses in Kulupara and Nathpara on May 16; participation in the murder of a Hindu man and arson attacks in Phuljhuri on May 17; participation in an act of genocide that left 11 Hindus dead at Naligram on May 22; conspiring and abetting the abduction of 37 Hindus in Angulkata and Mathbaria on October 6 night and the killing of 22 of them.

The other charge he faced is for involvement in forced conversion of around 200 Hindu men to Islam in Phuljhuri in the last week of May 1971.

The sentences would run concurrently, said the court.

## CHARGES & PUNISHMENT

1. Killing of two people at Phuljhuri village in Pirojpur on May 16 on Jabbar's instruction

**IMPRISONMENT UNTIL NATURAL DEATH**

2. Killing of Sarda Kanto Paik, looting 360 houses of Phuljhuri on May 17

**IMPRISONMENT UNTIL NATURAL DEATH**

3. Killing of 11 Hindus at village Nali on May 22

**IMPRISONMENT UNTIL NATURAL DEATH**

4. Forced conversion of 200 Hindus of village Phuljhuri in last week of May

**20-YEAR RIGOROUS IMPRISONMENT AND TK 10 LAKH FINE**

5. Killing of 22 Hindus of Mathbaria and Angulkata villages on Oct 6-7

**IMPRISONMENT UNTIL NATURAL DEATH**

"All the crimes listed in the said four charges [charge 1, 2, 3 and 5] relating to genocide and crimes against humanity were massive human rights violations.

"The fierceness of the events of genocide and crimes against humanity were extremely detrimental to basic humanness. It deserves to be evaluated as 'crimes of serious gravity' intending to demean the human civilisation," said Justice Rahim.

The tribunal tried Jabbar in absentia, as its attempts to have him in the dock failed. It said the accused absconded to evade the process of justice.

"It may be presumed that had the accused not been involved in the crime, he would have certainly appeared before the tribunal to face the trial," said the court.

It directed the home secretary and the inspector general of police to arrest Jabbar, taking the help of the Interpol, if necessary.

# No link with Burdwan blast

## Times of India reports on Saradha scam fund

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India's National Investigation Agency in its charge sheet to be submitted to a court may not mention the alleged involvement of Saradha chit fund scam money in Burdwan blasts, The Times of India reported yesterday.

"There is no money trail between Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), which carried out the blasts, and Saradha scam money or any member of Trinamool Congress. It would be too far-fetched to link any contribution, if at all, made to Jamaat-e-Islami in Bangladesh by anyone in India even though Jamaat-e-Islami and JMB are known to have links," the newspaper said, quoting an unidentified NIA officer privy to investigation details.

The NIA officer, according to The Times of India, said, "The agency is also charge-sheeting the accused for conspiracy to execute terror attacks in India. There is no evidence to prove that the bombs were meant for attacks in Bangladesh except for the fact that the JMB is an outfit opposed to the

Hasina government and has carried out attacks in Bangladesh earlier."

The charge sheet, set to be filed next month, is likely to also remain silent on the alleged transport of bombs from West Bengal to Bangladesh for there is little evidence to make such claims, it said.

After five months of investigations and having arrested 17 people, including a Bangladeshi national, the NIA has reached a conclusion that there is no link between Saradha scam money and the Burdwan blast. It has also not found any proof of transportation of bombs from India to Bangladesh for alleged destabilisation of the Sheikh Hasina government as was suspected earlier, the newspaper said.

On November 30 last year, BJP President Amit Shah had claimed in a public meeting in Kolkata that Saradha scam money had funded Burdwan blasts. Three days later, the government denied the charge in reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha. It had triggered bitter exchanges between the BJP and the ruling Trinamool Congress in West Bengal.

# Rab hands over Manna

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from his niece's residence at the capital's Banani around 3:30am yesterday.

But DB officials and Banani police throughout the day denied detaining the Nagorik Oikya convener.

Amid controversy over leaked phone conversations with BNP leader Sadeque Hossain Khoka and an unnamed person, Manna went to his niece's house on Road 17/A in Banani on Monday evening, family sources said.

"Around 3:00am, a group of people knocked at the door. They said they were from the Detective Branch," his niece Shahnama Sharmin told reporters at her house yesterday.

As she opened the door, five to six persons went to Manna's room. "Before leaving around 3:30am, the plain-clothes officials told us that Manna was being taken to the DB headquarters," she added.

Manna's wife Meher Nigar alleged the detectives dragged away her husband without showing an arrest warrant.

"They even did not give him time to change clothes and take his necessary medicines," she told The Daily Star based on Sharmin's account as she was at her own house at the time of the arrest.

Talking to reporters at his office around noon yesterday, Monirul Islam, joint commissioner of DMP's Detective Branch, said they have no information about the detention.

He added detectives were looking into the family's claim as well as the two leaked phone tapes, which surfaced in the media on Sunday.

In one of the conversations, Manna, also a former organising secretary of the Awami League, was heard talking to Khoka about strengthening the anti-government movement, among other issues.

The other call was made to an unknown person. Manna was asked by the man if he would like to sit with army generals purportedly about bringing a changeover in the country.

Also yesterday, Nagorik Oikya leaders held a press briefing on the Jatiya Press Club premises, demanding an end to "propaganda" against Manna and also sought an explanation from the government over his arrest.

They said leaking out a private conversation is a violation of one's constitutional rights.

Meanwhile, Chhatra League activists erased the name of Manna from

the honour boards of Dhaka University Central Students Union (DUCSU) and Chittagong University Central Students Union (CUCSU).

Manna was the general secretary of CUCSU in 1972-1973 session. Later, he went to the DU and became the vice-president of DUCSU.

Chhatra League men also removed his photo from the CUCSU archive and declared him persona non grata at the CU campus. Also at Dhaka University, some members of the pro-government student organisation burnt posters containing his photo.

## 'Criminal' killed in 'shootout' with cops

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

A suspected criminal was killed in a "gunfight" with police in Sreenagar upazila here yesterday.

The dead, Shaheen, 26, was from Rudrapara village in the upazila. Police said he was a member of a criminal gang named after its leader Tazul.

Police constable Al Amin received a bullet in his right hand during the "shootout" and was undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Sheikh Mahbubur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Sreenagar Police Station, said a police team launched a drive at Rudrapara village around 1:30pm acting on intelligence that a group of armed thugs gathered there to commit criminal activities.

Sensing the presence of cops, criminals opened fire on law enforcers, leaving Al Amin injured.

On information, an additional police force went to the spot and cordoned off the area. Criminals at that time again opened fire on cops, prompting retaliatory police fire that left Shaheen dead on the spot.

The other criminals managed to flee the scene. Shaheen was accused in at least six cases, said the OC.

With Shaheen, 37 people are known to have been killed in such "shootouts" with law enforcement agencies across the country since the BNP-led alliance called a nationwide indefinite blockade on January 5.

Of them, 24 people were killed in "gunfights" with police, 11 with Rapid Action Battalion, one with Border Guard Bangladesh and one with police-BGB joint force.