

ARSON CASES Abbas faces arrest order

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued arrest warrants for BNP leader Mirza Abbas and 19 others in connection with two arson cases filed with Mirpur Police Station in June 2010.

Metropolitan Magistrate Md Mahbubur Rahman passed the order after framing charges against 46 people, including the 20.

The court issued the arrest warrants as the 20 accused failed to appear before it yesterday. The court also directed the officer-in-charge of Mirpur Police Station to submit reports on the execution of the order by November 25.

According to the prosecution, on June 26, 2010, leaders and activists of the then BNP-led 18-party alliance brought out a procession and carried out vandalism and arson attacks in front of German Technical and Swadhin Bangla Market in the city's Mirpur area.

Meanwhile, another Dhaka court yesterday rejected a bail petition for BNP leader Amanullah Aman in connection with 10 arson cases filed with Paltan, Lalbagh and Motijheel police stations.

Judge Kamrul Hossain Mollah of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka passed the order after Aman's lawyer moved the bail petitions against the rejection order of the lower court on August 2.

On that day, the BNP leader was sent to jail as his bail petitions in 47 out of 55 arson cases were denied.

CASE AGAINST TARIQUE

Another Dhaka court yesterday again asked officer-in-charge of Paltan Police Station to submit a progress report by October 19 on the arrest warrant for BNP Senior Vice Chairman Tarique Rahman in a case filed for calling Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman a "big Razakar".

Metropolitan Magistrate Amit Kumar Dey passed the order after police failed to submit any report.

On December 15 last year, Tarique said Sheikh Mujib was a "big Razakar for having banned the Awami League himself dubbing it a party of thieves".

MEDITERRANEAN TRAGEDY

6 Bangladeshi survivors sick

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least six people among the 54 Bangladeshi survivors of the boat capsize in the Mediterranean Sea are sick but out of danger, says a Bangladeshi diplomat.

"They had swum up to 15 kilometres. Some were injured while some fainted later. So, they are now going through some form of physical and psychological trauma," ASM Ashraful Islam, counsellor (labour) of Bangladesh embassy in Libya, told The Daily Star over the phone yesterday.

However, Ashraful, who is leading a Bangladesh mission to provide medical and humanitarian support to the migrants, said the sick were given treatment.

He also confirmed that 24 Bangladeshis died in the Mediterranean as two rickety boats sank off the coast of Libya on Thursday.

"Of the 78 Bangladeshis who were on board, 24 were confirmed dead," he said.

The dead include Azad, Shupan, Swapan of Shariatpur; Gazul of Keraniganj; Ziaur Rahman of Jessore; Islam and Faruk of Comilla; Karim of Chittagong; Zakir of Satkhira; Mahmud of Narayanganj; Faiz of Madaripur, Badal and Babul of Tangail and Mofiz of Rajbari.

Among the deceased, two children are Rimat Abdul Azim, 5, Raisa Abdul Azim (eight months old), and Rubel, Shahabuddin, Sohail and Salahuddin of Noakhali. The name of the districts of four other victims -- Abul Bashar, 47, Ramzan Ali, 58, Sanwara Khatun, 42, and Yusuf -- could not be known immediately.

Of the 54 survivors, 11 children and women of four families were kept at two Bangladeshi expatriates' houses in Tripoli, and the other 43 people were in a Tripoli detention centre, said Ashraful.

The labour counsellor said the Bangladesh mission was in touch with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on the repatriation of the survivors.

"Many of them, however, don't want to return to Bangladesh. So far, only 15 of the survivors have opted to come back home," Ashraful said.

Two vessels with some 500 migrants from Africa and Asia sank after leaving Zuwara off the Libyan coast for Italy, amid internal conflicts among rival governments in the North African country.

At least 198 people were rescued, 30 to 40 remained missing and 112 were confirmed dead, according to CNN.

Hundreds of migrants have attempted to reach Europe by land and sea. So far this year, at least 2,373 have died as of this week, as per the IOM.



On the International Day of the Disappeared yesterday, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia talks to the daughter of JCD leader Parvez, who has been missing since 2013. Families of 26 victims of enforced disappearances met the BNP chief at her Gulshan office. Inset, police deployed at the Jatiya Press Club auditorium where a discussion arranged by rights body Odhikar was scheduled to be held. The programme was postponed as the venue authorities cancelled the booking.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



HC rejects plea

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freedom of speech, expression and the freedom of the press. The editor's council alongside others has demanded cancellation of the provision.

In the face of protests, Law Minister Anisul Huq has recently said the government would consider revising the section as many have raised questions about it.

Senior ruling Awami League leader Suranjit Sengupta, also the chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the law ministry, has advocated for the cancellation.

Eunus Ali Akond in his petition also challenged section 86 of the ICT Act, which states that the government employees could not be sued for offences under section 57.

Another HC bench yesterday began hearing another petition challenging the legality of section 57.

The HC bench of Justice Farah Mahbub and Justice Kazi Md Ejarul Haque Akondo would resume the hearing today. Attorney General Mahbubey Alam is likely to explain the government's stance on the section in his argument before the court today.

Zakir Hossain, an accused in a case filed under this section with a cyber tribunal in Dhaka, moved the petition on August 26 urging the HC to declare the section unconstitutional.

During yesterday's hearing, Zakir's lawyer Emran Siddiq argued that section 57 provides the administration "unfettered discretion".

Emran told the court that the maximum punishment for crimes, to be dealt with under the section, is 14 years in jail while it is two-year imprisonment under the Penal Code and five-year's jail under the pornography act.

Therefore, the government could pick and choose any law to try any accused, he told the court.

It is arbitrary and discriminatory, and it squarely violates the constitutional provisions regarding equality before law, right to protection of law, protection of life and personal liberty, and freedom of thought, conscience and free speech, the counsel argued.

Goodbye, little Casper

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until it resumed on Friday, he said. Paediatric surgeon Prof Shafiqul Hoque, who led the surgery, said, "The reason behind the bleeding was an ulcer in one of the trickiest parts of the intestine. Its removal took hours."

He added the operation was successful, but the postoperative complication that caused Casper's death began more than five hours later.

The complication known as aspiration pneumonia, he explained, is a situation in which liquid secreted in the intestines reaches the respiratory tract causing breathing difficulty and lung infection. Children and older people usually suffer from this complication after surgeries.

According to medical textbooks, Prof Shafiq said, about two percent of the children are born with some forms of ulcer in the intestines. "We conduct around 10 such surgeries every year."

Muhammad Sadman Casper, quite popular among the trekker community for his love for expeditions at this tender age, wanted to be like his adventurous

father Apu, a trekker since 2002 and a member of trekking group "Living with Forest".

One of his favourite activities was pitching his small tent. Ropes and various trekking equipment were his toys, his father earlier told this newspaper. He already has under his belt the experience of camping with his father in the hills of Sitakunda and Kaptai.

Such a fun-loving kid suddenly fell ill on August 19. With complaints of rectal bleeding, he was admitted to Royal Hospital, a private clinic in the port city.

As numerous tests failed to find the reason behind the bleeding, doctors suggested moving him to the capital.

The family and members of "Living with Forest" opened a Facebook page Casper-er Jonno Cholun Kichhu Kori (Let's Do Something for Casper).

Through the social media platform and other networks, they were trying to contact doctors and specialists at home and abroad, who might come up with an explanation and cure for the child's ailment.

GAS, POWER PRICE HIKE

20-party demo this week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led 20-party alliance will stage countrywide demonstrations this week protesting the recent move to increase the prices of power and gas.

The decision was made in a meeting of the representatives of the 20-party alliance last night. BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia chaired the one-and-a-half-hour-long meeting at her Gulshan office, alliance sources told The Daily Star.

Even though the day for the demonstrations is yet to be finalised, the alliance prefers September 2 or 3, said

source in the alliance.

There was no formal briefing after the meeting, but sources told The Daily Star that the alliance might brief the media about it today.

On Thursday, Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) announced a new tariff structure. Retail customers would have to spend on average 2.93 percent more on electricity and Tk 200 more for their gas stoves from tomorrow.

Factories that use gas to generate electricity will see gas tariff double to Tk 8.36 from Tk 4.18 per cubic metre.

Teachers' sit-in foiled

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for his alleged irregularities and misbehaviour with the teachers.

As part of the agitation, the teachers were to stage a pre-scheduled sit-in at the administrative building from 9:00am yesterday to stop the VC from entering his office.

BCL men of the university unit gathered near the administrative building gate around 6:00am and the teachers began to arrive around 7:30am, witnesses said.

SUST Academic Council was scheduled to meet at the same building.

As the VC came in front of the building around 8:30am, the agitating teachers tried to block his way. In no time, the Chhatra League men entered the scene and got involved in an altercation with the teachers, according to eyewitnesses.

Soon, the activists were locked in a scuffle with the teachers and helped the VC get into his office on the first floor of the building. Some of the activists took away the banner from the teachers and shoved and pushed them away, the witnesses added.

Yasmeen Haque, who teaches physics, was seen in the middle of the chaos and was later rescued by teachers.

Aktar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Jalalabad Police Station, was standing between the teachers and the BCL activists, pleading everyone to calm down. His team finally took control of the situation.

Rights body Ain o Salish Kendra in a statement strongly condemned the attack and demanded stern actions against those responsible.

Syed Shamsul Haque, convener of the teachers' platform, said 10 teachers, including Prof Yasmeen and Prof Mohammad Yunus, were assaulted.

Prof Yasmeen blamed the BCL men for the attack.

"Chhatra League men carried out the physical assault on the teachers. It never happened on this campus in the last 25 years. What is the source of so much audacity? It is the VC," she said.

Prof Zafar Iqbal was on the campus during the incident. After the incident he was seen sitting on the campus, shell-shocked, saddened.

In protest of the attack, the agitating teachers will abstain from work from 9:00am to 12:00noon today and will then hold a rally on the campus wearing black badges.

Proctor Qumruzzaman Chowdhury, however, said no one was

FIRE AT POWER PLANT

Blackout in 20 Ctg villages

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A transformer of a 60MW power plant at Shikalbaha of Patiya upazila, Chittagong, was damaged in a fire yesterday afternoon leading to a blackout in more than 200 villages of five southern upazilas of the district.

The fire started in the transformer around 3:30pm, said Moniruzzaman, senior assistant director (PR) of Power Development Board (PDB), Chittagong.

Six fire engines managed to douse the flames within an hour, said Mohamamd Yahya, assistant director of Fire Service and Civil Defence Chittagong.

Power produced by three plants in the area was being supplied through the transformer.

Abdur Razzak, a resident at Patiya upazila, told The Daily Star that power supply stopped in the upazila around 3:30pm and it was not restored as of 6:20pm.

Contacted, Bhuban Bijoy Butta, superintendent engineer of PDB and project director of Shikalbaha plant, said electric short circuit was primarily assumed as the reason of the fire.

"At that time, the loop fell on the transformer making the situation worse," he said, adding, "The transformer was heavily damaged in the fire."

"We are working relentlessly to resume the power supply to the upazilas in the southern part of Chittagong through alternative ways."

Experts of PDB went to the plant and had started work, he added.

Over 20 lakh people live in the 200 villages.



Agitating teachers, including Dr Yasmeen Haque, take position at the gate to bar the vice-chancellor (not seen in the frame) from entering the SUST administrative building yesterday. Police apparently were requesting the teachers to move away.

PHOTO COURTESY: SHEIKH NASIR

Zafar Iqbal shell-shocked

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witness such an incident," said the professor of Computer Science and Engineering at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST).

Only a while back, some alleged Chhatra League activists had physically assaulted a group of his colleagues who were demonstrating against Vice Chancellor Aminul Haque Bhuiyan.

What perhaps came as a bigger blow to Zafar Iqbal, an active pro-Liberation War voice, was that the attackers were

shouting "Joy Bangla" when they pounced on the teachers.

"With this 'Joy Bangla' slogan, the Liberation War was fought. I never saw such a humiliation of the slogan in my entire life," said the professor, now in his early 60s.

"The way the students attacked our teachers, if they were my students, I should hang myself [because] you [I] have made these kinds of students."

"I am suffering from an excruciating pain. How my university students could show such behaviour with the

teachers!"

He believed it was the VC Aminul who had let the alleged pro-ruling party activists loose on the teachers.

"But if you [the VC] think that the movement can be stopped this way, then you are making a big mistake. That is not going to happen because the teachers are waging the movement not to avail any post or position. They are in the movement to save the university, which they had built, not the vice-chancellor," Zafar Iqbal added.