

Gaibandha MP to face trial

Says home boss about shooting of 10-year-old boy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal yesterday said that Gaibandha-1 lawmaker Manzurul Islam Liton, who allegedly shot a 10-year-old boy, would have to face trial.

"A case was filed against him. His firearms were seized. He has to appear before the court and face trial," Kamal told reporters after emerging from a programme at the capital's Khamarbari.

Asked whether the MP has not yet been arrested for being a ruling party lawmaker, the home boss said the lawmaker would not be spared if found guilty.

On Friday morning, Sourav Mia, a class IV student, was shot in the legs at Sundarganj allegedly by Liton for "no reason".

Though five days have passed since the shooting incident, police could not arrest Liton as yet.

Law enforcers had been claiming that he was "traceless".

However, police seized two of his licensed firearms a day after the shooting incident. Sourav's father Saju Mia filed a case against the ruling party lawmaker with Sundarganj Police Station that night.

Replying to a query on whether any militant outfit was responsible for the killing of former PDB chairman Khijir Khan, the home minister said intelligence agencies were working on this, keeping different aspects in mind.

Although militant outfits like Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) were trying to regroup, the law enforcers could successfully control their activities, he said.

Law enforcers have been regularly nabbing suspected militants, he added.

Asked about security agencies' failure so far to find the killers of the two foreigners, he said they were working on it to find the killers as well.

GATHERING DISPERSED IN GAIBANDHA

Gaibandha police yesterday prevented Sunderganj Nashokota O Santrash Protirodh Committee members from holding a meeting at Bamondanga. Law enforcers also dispersed MP Liton's supporters who gathered there to "foil the committee's meeting", reports our Gaibandha correspondent.

Appreciating the prime minister's directives to take lawful steps against Liton for shooting Sourav, the protirodh committee organised a meeting in the eastern side of Bamondanga Railway Station at noon yesterday.

However, supporters of Liton then started gathering near the venue.

Sensing a probable confrontation between the two groups, police dispersed the gathering and prevented the groups from holding meetings.

Bisnuram Das, joint convener of the committee, said police intervened in their peaceful meeting.

However, Israil Hossain, officer-in-charge of Sunderganj Police Station, said the area is a Jamaat-Shibir stronghold and they could have incited violence.

"So, we stopped them from holding any agitation to maintain law and order," he said.

Poura Nagorik Sangram Parishad, a platform of upazila Awami League and locals, on Tuesday launched a mass signature campaign at the Bangabandhu Chattar in the upazila to gather public support against Liton for shooting an innocent schoolboy.

It also demanded immediate arrest and punishment of Liton.

Meanwhile, on Tuesday, a relative of Liton went to Rangpur Medical College Hospital to give Tk 10,000 for Sourav's treatment, but Sourav's father refused the money.

"People will extend all possible help for better treatment of my son. I cannot take any help from such a person who shot my son without any reason," Saju Mia told The Daily Star over the phone.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina handing over the keys of an apartment to a family member of one of the late armed forces officials at a function at Defence Services Command and Staff College in the capital yesterday. PHOTO: PMO

None can destabilise country

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Japanese man had converted to Islam, but he was killed. "We've already condemned the killings and taken steps for hunting down those involved in the incidents and ensuring their punishment."

She said whenever Bangladesh achieves something and is internationally acclaimed for that, such incidents are carried out to tarnish the country's image.

The country, said the PM, has to tackle terrorism, militancy and conspiracies every now and then. "We've to spend energy and working hours on tackling conspiracies...if we didn't have to do that, then it would have been possible for us to further develop the country."

She said the role and scope of duty of the Armed Forces has increased a lot due to the new dimension to the present global security situation. "So, in the changing context, necessary revision and addition of newer subjects to the academic and training programmes of the Armed Forces are needed."

Recalling the killings of 59 army officials in the Pilkhona carnage on February 25-26, 2009, the PM said her government took steps for holding the trial of the then BDR members who were involved in the mutiny.

She alleged that her government had to face various barriers in holding the trial. "The BNP-Jamaat-backed lawyers stood beside over

850 accused."

Referring to co-chairing of a UN peacekeeping event on the sidelines of the just concluded 70th session of the UNGA, the premier said she pledged there to provide peacekeeping missions with more female peacekeepers since Bangladesh is always ready in this regard.

The work on framing the draft National Defence Policy and Forces Goal 2030 has been underway in line with the development pace of the Armed Forces, she added.

Earlier on her arrival at Mirpur DOHS, Hasina was received by Army Chief Gen Abu Belal Muhammad Shafiul Huq and Quartermaster General of Bangladesh Army Lt Gen Anwar Hussain.

Cox's Bazar AL leader murdered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

President of Pekua upazila unit Awami League was found murdered in remote Malgara area yesterday.

Police recovered the body of freedom fighter AKM Shahab Uddin Farayazi, 72. Unidentified criminals stabbed him to death and left the body at the spot.

Mehedi Hasan, son of the deceased, said he last talked to his father over mobile phone around 8:30pm on Tuesday.

Sensing something wrong during the conversation, around 10 minutes later, Mehedi again called his father over mobile phone, but he found his father's mobile phone switched off.

Locals said they saw Farayazi drinking tea at a stall in Toitong Hajibazar on Tuesday evening.

Local AL leaders and activists said the criminals picked up Farayazi in a CNG-run auto-rickshaw at night and then killed him.

There were several stab injury marks on the body of Farayazi. Face and upper part of the body were burnt, Masud Alam, senior assistant superintendent of Chakarai police circle, told The Daily Star.

The body was sent to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital morgue for an autopsy, he added.

Police detained Jasim Uddin, the CNG driver, for interrogation.

The motive behind the killing could not be known immediately.

At the function, keys of apartments were handed over to the family members of late Armed Forces officials who died during the 2009 BDR mutiny, on UN peacekeeping missions and in other accidents.

Some 74 flats were handed over to the family members of 68 martyred members of the Army, Navy and Air Force. Sena Kalyan Sangstha built the multi-storey building that houses the flats.

The army chief delivered the welcome speech at the programme. PM's Security Affairs Adviser Maj Gen Tarique Ahmed Siddique (ret'd) and Air Chief Air Marshal Abu Esrar were present, among others.

Bogra medical college shut

7 hurt as BCL factions clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College (SZMC) in Bogra has been closed for an indefinite period following a clash between two factions of pro-ruling party Chhatra League reportedly over control of a dorm canteen.

Students were asked to vacate their dormitories by 4:00pm yesterday.

Principal AKM Ahsan Habib told The Daily Star an emergency meeting of the college's academic council took the decision earlier in the day to avoid further untoward incident. "Decision regarding examinations will be taken later," he said.

Witnesses said the clash broke out around 10:00pm Tuesday after some activists of two SZMC Chhatra League factions got involved in an altercation inside the canteen of the hostel for male students.

Later, they attacked each other with sticks, said the witnesses, adding that there had been a longstanding dispute between the two groups over control of the canteen.

The factions are led by SZMC BCL president Ali Ahad and former secre-

tary of the unit Atiqur Rahman.

Three rooms of the hostel were vandalised during the clash.

On information, members of Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital (SZMCH) Police Outpost went to the spot but did not find any of the activists there, said Sub-Inspector Shah Alam of the outpost.

Seven students were injured in the clash and they received treatment at SZMCH, said sources at the hospital.

The Daily Star could not reach anyone from the two BCL factions for comments.

However, Naimur Razzak Titas, president of Bogra BCL, said the clash broke out due to a "misunderstanding" and they were trying to resolve the issue.

Arifur Rahman Mondal, additional superintendent of Bogra police (East), said adequate police members had been deployed on the campus.

Meanwhile, many students, while leaving their dormitories, feared that their academic activities would be greatly hampered if the situation did not become normal quickly.



BIRRI scientists inspecting Golden Rice at a transgenic screen house.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF BIRRI

World's first 'Golden Rice' ready for trial

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multi-location trials will be conducted afterwards, setting into motion the last stage for its release to the farmers.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury told The Daily Star that BIRRI scientists will go for confined field trials of Golden Rice soon. She said the National Technical Committee on Crop Biotechnology, upon a request from BIRRI, gave consent to the field trials in its September 20 meeting.

BIRRI Dhan-29, one of Bangladesh's most productive rice varieties, IR-64, a variety developed by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), and RC-28, a Filipino variety, have been genetically engineered to have greater expressions of a com gene responsible for producing beta carotene (also known as pro-vitamin A).

Rice does not contain any beta carotene. Dependence on rice as the predominant food source, therefore, necessarily leads to Vitamin A deficiency (VAD), most severely affecting small children and pregnant women.

Consumption of only 150 gram of Golden Rice a day is expected to supply half of the recommended daily intake (RDA) of vitamin A for an adult. People

in Bangladesh depend on rice for 70 percent of their daily calorie intakes.

According to World Health Organisation (WHO) global database on vitamin A deficiency, one in every five pre-school children in Bangladesh is vitamin A-deficient. Among pregnant women, 23.7 percent suffer the deficiency.

IRRI says VAD is the main cause of preventable blindness in children and globally, some 6.7 million children die every year and another 3,50,000 go blind because they are vitamin A-deficient.

BIRRI Director General Dr Jiban K Biswas told this correspondent that they would go for confined field trials of GR-2 E BIRRI dhan29 at the adjoining field of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) in Gazipur.

BARI Director General Dr Md Rafiqul Islam Mondal said BIRRI would use BARI's facilities to keep the under-trial Golden Rice isolated from other rice varieties grown in BIRRI fields.

Partha S Biswas, a principal scientific officer of BIRRI Plant Breeding Division who is also overseeing the Golden Rice programme, told The Daily Star that they have just reaped some grains of Golden Rice grown in the transgenic screen house

and expecting over 12 µg/g (micrograms/gram) of beta carotene in them.

The genetic engineering technology to derive vitamin A in rice was first applied by Prof Ingo Potrykus of Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, and Prof Peter Beyer of the University of Freiburg, Germany back in 1999. Subsequently, the Golden Rice caught global attention when Time Magazine, Science did cover stories on it.

First generation Golden Rice (known as GR-1) was developed through infusing a gene from daffodil but later the second generation variety -- known as GR-2 -- has been developed by taking a gene from corn as it gave much better output of pro-vitamin A.

Some six lines (or types) of GR-2 (scientifically called 'events') were developed and IRRI chose to work on one called GR-2 R, which it developed and subsequently released as a Golden Rice variety.

BIRRI also did carry out screen house and field trials on this type (GR-2 R) for three years but eventually stopped upon an IRRI advice that Event GR-2 E will work better.

Prof Peter Beyer told The Daily Star that there were some problems with the

Event GR-2 R and hoped the new Event should work well.

Dr Alamgir Hossain, a BIRRI Chief Scientific Officer who worked with former IRRI biotechnologist Swapan K Datta on Golden Rice programme, hoped release of the transgenic rice will revolutionise fighting vitamin A deficiency in the rice-eating Asian countries where the poor have confined access to vitamin A sources.

Born in Sirajganj of Bangladesh, Swapan K Datta was the first to infuse beta carotene-producing gene into BIRRI Dhan-29 over a decade back.

In April 2011, Seattle-based Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation sanctioned a grant of over \$10 million to IRRI to fund, develop and evaluate Golden Rice varieties for Bangladesh and the Philippines.

Officials concerned at IRRI and Gates Foundation confirmed that as the Golden Rice inventors and subsequent technology developer Syngenta allowed a royalty-free access to the patents, the new rice when released for commercial farming in Bangladesh will be of the same price as other rice varieties, and farmers will be able to share and replant the seeds as they wish.

15 IS suspects

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in Dhaka to recruit fighters for IS, a global militant organisation based in Syria and Iraq. He was shown arrested two days later.

"From his passport we came to know that he [Samiun] went to Syria in September last year," Joint Commissioner Monirul Islam of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) then told journalists.

Samiun took part in a demonstration against Bashar al-Assad, added Monirul, also the DMP spokesperson.

On January 18 this year, detectives arrested four others -- Sakhawatul Kabir, Anwar Hossain alias Baten, Rabiul Islam and Nazrul Islam -- in the capital's Jatrabari for their suspected links with IS, also known as ISIS or ISIL.

Following their interrogation, police said Sakhawatul was

working as the IS coordinator in Bangladesh.

On May 24, cops arrested a regional coordinator of JMB named Aminul Islam Beg and his associate Sakib bin Kamal. They had allegedly been trying to send operatives to Iraq and Syria from Bangladesh.

Police told the press that Aminul had so far selected 20 people from among the JMB operatives across the country; many of them were ready to leave the country to join IS.

Later on May 30, Abdullah Al Ghalib, a suspected IS recruiter and militant trainer, was detained. During interrogation, Ghalib said he was an assistant coordinator of Ansarullah Bangla Team and member of banned radical Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir.

Police had informed the media about all those arrests through press statements and briefings.