

# Villagers suffer as Barisal bridge lies damaged for 4 years

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

An iron bridge on Bisharkandi canal in Banaripara upazila has been lying broken for around four years, causing immense sufferings to the people of 11 villages in two unions.

Built around two decades ago, a portion of the bridge collapsed in 2012, snapping road communications between Bisharkandi and Baithakatha unions of Nazirpur upazila in Pirojpur.

Mohammad Kalam, headmaster of Bisharkandi Government Primary School, said around 5,000 people, including students of four educational institutions, use the bridge every day, but no step has been taken yet to repair it.

Locals also use boats to cross the canal.

Around 60,000 people of the two unions are facing difficulties to go to Banaripara and Nazirpur upazila towns and their other destinations.

In the rainy season, sometimes kids fall into the canal while crossing the bridge, said Babul Miah, a teacher of the primary school.

The bridge was broken as one of its pillars was damaged after being hit by a small launch and trawler, he added.

While visiting the spot on July 12, this correspondent saw that some kids were going to school, crossing the damaged bridge.

"We face trouble to go to school regularly. We urge the authorities concerned to mend the bridge as soon as possible," said Nizam, a class-V student of Bisharkandi Government Primary School.

Farmers and traders said they appealed to the local administration several times to build a concrete bridge over the canal, but their appeal went unheard.

Contacted, Mizanur Rahman, sub-assistant engineer of the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) in Banaripara, said they sent a proposal to the LGED office in Dhaka to build a bridge there around two years ago, but did not get any response to this end.

Saiful Islam, chairman of Bisharkandi union, said he already sent

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Children crossing a damaged bridge over Bisharkandi canal in Barisal's Banaripara recently. Locals are suffering as the bridge has been lying broken for around four years.

PHOTO: ARIFUR RAHMAN

# Another hideout at Shewrapara

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Shewrapara flat, Nurul Islam, 68, for allegedly not collecting tenants' information and sheltering militants.

The police move came hours after the arrest of Gias Uddin Ahsan, dean of North South University's School of Health and Life Sciences, and two others for renting out a flat to suspected Gulshan café attackers in Bashundhara Residential Area and withholding tenants' information from the police.

Later in the day, Inspector Humayun Kabir of the counterterrorism unit of the DMP, also the investigation officer of the case,

out the attack on Holey Artisan Bakery when they were staying in the flat."

He also claimed to have secret information that the militants might have stayed at the flat of the NSU teacher Gias Uddin.

"The militants fled the flats after the attack, leaving behind their belongings," he added in the remand prayer.

Police claimed to have recovered a hand grenade and three black dresses of militants from the flat at Shewrapara.

During the court proceedings, a defence lawyer for the NSU teacher opposed the remand prayer, saying his client had been staying in his Mohammadpur flat and had not been

Nurul, the flat owner. Later, the law enforcers and the handcuffed man left.

However, police came again yesterday and took Nurul with them, said several neighbours.

Talking to The Daily Star, a neighbour said the Bashundhara flat was rented by a family having children. Perhaps, the family left and the militants moved in, he added.

There was no security camera on the ground floor of the building in the Bashundhara Residential Area.

"We have just decided to install security cameras at all buildings and notify all the flat owners not to rent out apartments to bachelors," he told The

# Bail blessings for radicals

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bail and walked out of jail. He answered, "Ask the law minister."

Faced with the same question from journalists, the law minister on July 10 urged the judges to be more circumspect in granting bail to militant suspects, considering the judiciary's responsibility in maintaining law and order.

The prime minister herself made a similar plea to the judges from the floor of parliament on November 11 last year. She said police arrest these militants after months of hard work and spending a lot of money. It may take six months to a year to arrest one militant. Then, after 15 days, that militant is being set free on bail.

Meanwhile, in the eight months between the appeals of the prime minister and that of the law minister, more than a hundred suspects came out on bail, and they are now alleged to have been involved in militant activities, said a senior police officer.

It all begs the question: Where is the gap between law enforcement and the prosecution process?

Police blame the public prosecutors and the prosecutors blame police. The judges blame both; while hearing bail petitions, they often express annoyance at poor performance of both the investigators and the prosecutors.

Independent analysts say flawed investigation, faulty legal process in filing cases and delayed judicial process are to blame for the failure to keep militants behind bars.

The government, they note, urgently needs to enhance the capacity of the investigators and improve coordination between the police and prosecutors at all stages.

Legal experts say the process of case preparations must be improved. Often judges complain that prosecution presents a case so shoddily and with so many legal loopholes that a judge has no option but to grant bail.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam on Saturday told The Daily Star the police write case statements in such a manner that the accused do not appear to be militant suspects.

He also said it is the duty and responsibility of the prosecutors to inform the Attorney General's Office when a militant suspect gets bail from any court. But the public prosecutors do not inform his office about suspected militants getting bail from lower courts. It they did, his office could take steps by appealing to the High Court.

He added that sometimes some law officers at the higher court too do not inform him about HC bail to militant suspects. Sometimes, files on militant

suspects' bail go missing from offices concerned at the SC. Therefore, his office could not move appeals before the Appellate Division against HC bail orders to militants.

Not much has been done on the home ministry side as well. Three years back, the ministry talked about forming a committee headed by a joint secretary to monitor bail to high profile criminals and militants. That committee was never formed.

Monirul Islam, chief of the police's counter terror unit, said, "We spend so much time and effort in detaining militants. We produce them before courts with sufficient evidence."

"This is entirely the jurisdiction of the court. Police have nothing to say in this regard."

He added, "We see that those on bail get involved in militancy again by flouting bail conditions. When we move to detain them for the second time, it proves even harder as they become more alert."

Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Abdullah Abu yesterday said they perform their duties properly. The allegations that they are negligent, lack skills and have other weakness are not true.

However, he added, sometimes special, additional and assistant prosecutors at different lower courts do not inform him about militant suspects coming out on bail. If he is informed, he can file appeals to have bail orders scrapped.

He said PPs at Dhaka courts will meet in a day or two to take stock of the situation in the wake of the Gulshan and Sholakia attacks. In particular, they would discuss how to make sure high-profile militant suspects do not get bail.

Law Minister Anisul Huq recently said his ministry has instructed the public prosecutors to place strong arguments against bail prayers of militant accused.

The following examples give insights into how crucial it can be to keep militants and militant suspects behind bars.

A leader of the banned Jama'atul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB), Torikul Islam, was arrested from Chittagong in connection with the 2005 countrywide bomb blasts. He was released on bail in 2013. Torikul was arrested again on October 5, 2014, in connection with the killing of former PDB chairman and so-called pir Khijir Khan in the capital's Badda. On October 25 last year, he confessed to court that he murdered Khijir.

Four operatives of another banned militant outfit, Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) -- Saad Al Nahin, Kamal Hossain Sardar, Kawsar Hossain and Kamal

Uddin -- were arrested on January 26, 2013. They were accused of attempting to murder blogger Asif Mohiuddin in Uttara earlier on January 14 that year. They admitted their crime to the court. Then on July 28 of the same year, Nahin obtained bail. Shortly afterwards, the remaining three also secured bail.

On August 7 last year, members of the ABT killed blogger Niladri Chatterjee Niloy at his rented house in East Ghoran of Khilgaon. The police again arrested Nahin, Kawsar and Kamal Hossain Sardar in this case.

On March 30 last year, Zikrullah and Mohammad Ariful Islam were arrested with the help of two transgender persons and locals when the two were fleeing after hacking blogger Oyasiqur Rahman Babu to death at South Begunbari.

Ariful was previously arrested in 2012 at Raipur of Narsingdi under the anti-terrorist act. He came out on bail and got involved in militancy again.

On December 21, 2013, militants slaughtered six people including a "pir" in Gopibagh in the city. In this case, the police claimed to have arrested JMB's second-in-command Golam Sarwar and one Mohammad Ajmeer. Ajmeer secured bail on April 26 and Sarwar secured his from the High Court on June 14.

Kazi Saifuddin Yahia was arrested from Uttara as a suspect who recruited and provided finance for Islamic State. Although there was categorical allegation against him, he obtained bail on January 16 last.

Besides, the chief coordinator of the banned militant organisation Hizb-ut-Tahrir, Mohiuddin Ahmed, senior adviser Golam Maola and other operatives are all on bail.

Observers say that while in no way should the fundamental rights of the citizens be curbed, the instances of bailed accused committing crimes again and again are too frequent to ignore.

This cat and mouse game of arrest and release has cost too many lives and encouraged both criminality and militancy. All efforts to contain militancy will fail if the legal process is not made more effective, while keeping innocent people's fundamental rights intact, they caution.

The ministries concerned, especially home and law, must work together on an urgent basis on how to prosecute militant suspects more effectively and at the same time prevent harassment of the innocent.

And also, it must be ensured that trial does not take too long, add the observers.



Dresses of "militants" and a grenade, inset, that police recovered from a flat in Pashchim Shewrapara in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: DMP MEDIA

produced the four before a Dhaka Court, showing them arrested under Section-54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

The court granted eight-day remand for each of them following a 10-day remand appeal.

In the remand prayer, the police officer said, "The accused were shown arrested as it was being suspected that they might have sheltered the militants and were involved in the incident [Gulshan attack]."

"A 10-day remand is necessary to interrogate them to know about their involvement [in the crime] and to trace out and arrest other terrorists," he added.

He also said, "Nurul Islam rented out his flat to the militants. It appears that the militants might have carried

to his Bashundhara flat. His nephew Alam Chowdhury, one of the arrestees, used to negotiate the deal for renting out the flat.

A defence lawyer for Nurul told the court that his client had provided information about his tenants to the local Mirpur Police Station.

Our correspondents visited the two flats yesterday and had accounts of the people in the neighbourhoods.

They said four youths, introducing themselves as students, rented a flat on the ground floor of a building at Pashchim Shewrapara in February.

They hardly used to come out, said one neighbor. They were not seen after the Eid, added the person.

In the early hours of Wednesday, police brought a handcuffed man to the flat and searched it in presence of

Daily Star.

On July 1, armed militants attacked the Holey Artisan Bakery in Gulshan's diplomatic zone and killed 20 hostages -- nine Italian, seven Japanese, two Bangladeshis, one Indian and one Bangladesh-born US citizen. Two police officers were also killed.

**ANOTHER MAN REMANDED**  
A Dhaka court yesterday placed another man, who is believed to be a close friend of a suspected Gulshan café attacker Shafiqul Islam, on a five-day remand.

Police arrested the man, Milon Hossain, at Ashulia, on the outskirts of the city, on Saturday.

Shafiqul used to teach at a kindergarten school at Ashulia for long. Milon had managed him the job, said police sources.

# Gulshan cafes see few customers

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in place to prevent unnecessary vehicular movement into the premises, hospital sources said.

"I think people are still in fear," said a staff of Sbarro restaurant on Gulshan Avenue, referring to the incident, in which militants killed 20 people, mostly foreigners.

Wishing not to be named, he added that a good number of people, including some 50 foreigners, used to visit the place every day before the incident. Now, hardly 15 foreigners come to the restaurant each day.

According to the staff of the United Hospital very close to the cafe, the hospital has received a few patients in the last couple of days.

One of them said there were multiple layers of security checks, even for them, before entering the hospital.

The Lake View Clinic next to the Holey Artisan was shut after the unprecedented terror attack. It is yet to open, said policemen deployed at the place.

The police have been forbidding people to walk on the footpaths by the Gulshan Lake as it is just behind the cafe attacked.

Militants equipped with heavy firearms stormed

the Holey Artisan restaurant at Gulshan-2 on the evening of July 1 and held hostage its guests and employees.

The hostage standoff ended with a military commando operation the next morning killing five militants and a cafe's employee suspected of having been involved.

A tea-stall vendor near the Gulshan-2 intersection said security was previously beefed up following the murder of Italian aid worker Cesare Tavella in October last year.

Back then an additional number of law enforcers were deployed in the area. "But things returned to normalcy after a few days," he added.

The tea seller further said he observed that policemen had been lax in carrying out their duties during the month of Ramadan, especially after iftar, as public movement was thin at the time.

Employees at the United Hospital also said they had seen relaxed security arrangements in the area at the end of Ramadan.

During a recent visit to the area, the correspondents saw policemen search people at different checkpoints. They were also barring rickshaws from entering the area.

Vehicular and public movements were thin at Gulshan-1 and Gulshan-2 intersections even on the weekday, contrasting with the usual scene of long tailbacks in the busy area before the attack.

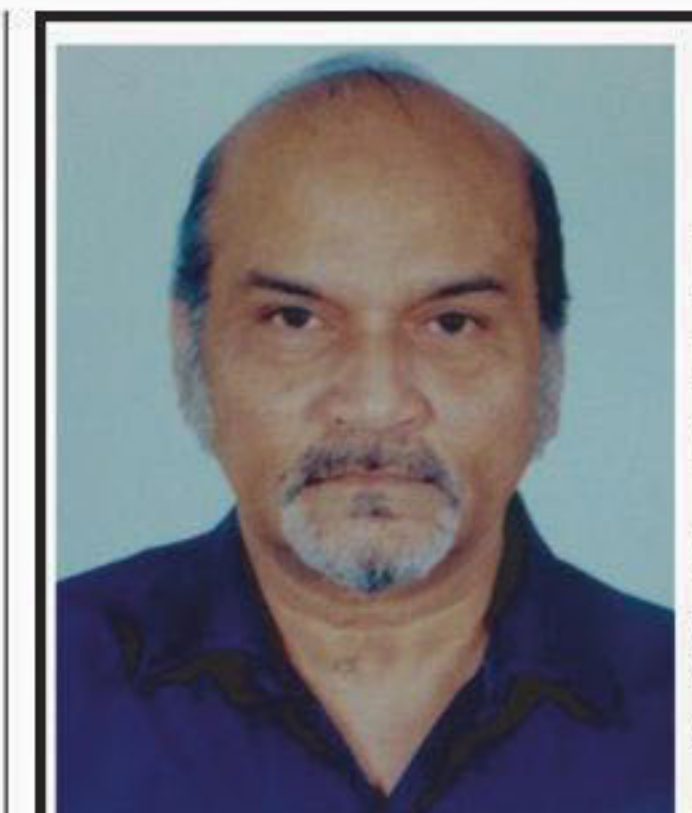
Local people said security arrangements were tightened in the area only after the July 1 attack.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) now monitors some 600 security cameras installed in Gulshan, police sources said.

Moreover, there are numerous close circuit cameras installed by embassies, schools and apartment owners there.

Assistant Commissioner Rafiqul Islam (Gulshan zone) of the DMP said law enforcers had placed six additional checkpoints increasing the number of checkpoints to 18. Seventeen patrol teams have been deployed at the diplomatic zone.

Rafiqul rejected the allegation of lax security in the area before the terror attack.



## Obituary

**Mizanur Rahman**, son of late Mr A F Mujibur Rahman ICS of Gerda, Faridpur and late Msmt Zohra Khatoon of Phulsuti, Faridpur passed away yesterday. He leaves behind his beloved daughter and son, Mehrangez and Altamash, as well as his daughter-in-law,

Marlene, his only granddaughter, Leah, a sister, Ruby Ghuznavi, and a brother, Masihur Rahman. His namaz-e-janaza will be held at Banani Mosque after A r prayers on 18 July 2016, and he will be buried at Banani graveyard. His Qulkhani will be held at **Gulshan Azad Mosque** after Asr prayers on 20 July 2016. Friends, relatives and well wishers are requested to attend. **Mehrangez and Altamash Musa Rahman**