



WAR CRIMES SC verdict on Mir Quasem's review plea tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court is set to deliver its verdict tomorrow on a petition filed by war criminal Mir Quasem Ali seeking review of an earlier verdict that upheld his death penalty.

A five-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha fixed the date for passing the judgement after concluding hearing arguments placed by both the state and the defence counsels yesterday.

During the hearing, defence counsel Khandker Mahbub Hossain told the apex court that his client could not be sentenced to death as the prosecution had "miserably failed"

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This area of Sreerampur near T-groyen dam in Rajshahi city was inundated as the water level of the Padma continued to rise in the district yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Padma water keeps rising in Rajshahi

STAR REPORT

A small portion of T-groyen dam in Rajshahi city's Sreerampur area was washed away due to strong current in the Padma yesterday. The river water continued to rise.

However, flood situation in Kushtia slightly improved yesterday as water of the river was flowing around 4cm below than that on Saturday.

"Some bricks of right part of the T-groyen were washed away around 8:00am after the steel net over the dam got loose due to strong current, reports our Rajshahi correspondent quoting Mahabub Rasel, an on-duty section officer of the dam.

Later, staffers of Water Development Board (WDB) in Rajshahi repaired the damaged part by dumping around 150 sandbags there, said Rasel, adding that about 500 sandbags were kept ready near the dam to deal with any bad situation.

"The dam is now safe," he claimed. The WDB sealed the T-groyen area and prohibited public gathering in and around it. Police were deployed near the dam gate to check people's entrance.

The river water was flowing around 4cm below the danger level yesterday noon, said WDB officials.

On August 22, the Padma water began to rise after India started releasing water through the Farakka Barrage to tackle their flood situation in Bihar, according to the WDB.

The swelling Padma water entered the city's Fudkipara through a drain connected with the river yesterday, flooding Martyr Suresh Pandey Road.

The river water also inundated some of the city's recreation centers like Simante Obokash, Simante Nongor, Padma Garden, Shimla Park and Lalon Shah Mancha.

The flood situation in Bagha upazila is the worst. Some 10,000 people of Chalkrajapur union of the upazila were affected by flood.

Mokhlesur Rahman, executive engineer of Rajshahi WDB, said the water level increased by 6 centimetres in the last 24 hours and it remained static at 18.46 metres since the morning.

"When the rise of water stops, it will recede quickly within days as the Jamuna is flowing much below the danger level," he said.

Our Kushtia correspondent adds according to WDB sources, water flowing in the Padma was recorded at 14.03cm at Hardinge Bridge point in Bheramara around 3:30pm yesterday. It was 14.07cm around 2:00pm Saturday.

WDB sources added that sudden rise of water level in the river left around 60,000 people in 30 villages of Daulatpur upazila marooned on Friday.

It has been primarily estimated that crops of around 1,800 hectares of land went under water.

Toufiqur Rahman, Daulatpur upazila nirbahi officer, said the local administration allocated 20 metric tonnes of rice to Ramkrishnapur union, whose 20,000 people were hit by the sudden flood.

A tale of 2 militants

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honours student of Physics at Jessore MM College.

Police officials said they confirmed Rabbi's identity from his National Identity Card found at the scene.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Rabbi's father Kazi Habibullah said he learnt about his son's death on Saturday afternoon.

Bangladeshi-Canadian Tamim, a Neo JMB kingpin and alleged mastermind of the Gulshan attack, who had holed up at a Narayanganj flat, was killed along with his two cohorts in a police operation codenamed "Hit Strong 27" on Saturday morning.

TAWSIF'S BACKGROUND

Tawsif, who was a student of an English medium school in the capital, studied with Nibras at Monash University in Malaysia. Both of them left home on February 3 and had been missing since then, said police.

Another Gulshan attacker, Rohan Imtiaz, also studied at Monash University.

"We suspect that one of the youths killed in Narayanganj is Tawsif Hossain, who lived in Dhanmondi," Monirul Islam, chief of counter terrorism (CT) unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told reporters yesterday.

Around 4:30pm, this correspon-

dent went to the Dhanmondi flat where Tawsif's parents live but found it locked.

Md Shahid, caretaker of the building, said Tawsif's parents left the building on Saturday night, about an hour after some of their relatives arrived at the place.

The July 1 Holey Artisan terror attack brought Tawsif to police's attention as his disappearance was linked with that of Nibras.

After Tawsif went missing, his father Ajmal Hossain filed a general diary with Dhanmondi Police Station, saying his son had left home for having lunch with his friends and didn't return.

Ajmal, a physician by profession, had spent 10 years in Saudi Arabia before returning home a few years ago.

When The Daily Star correspondent last month visited the flat of Tawsif's parents, caretaker Shahid said Tawsif used to come back to Bangladesh occasionally and spend most of the time at home.

Referring to the GD filed by Ajmal, Dhanmondi police had then said Tawsif along with Nibras returned to Bangladesh from Malaysia on November 3 last year.

Nibras was one of the accused in the case filed with Shahbagh Police Station under the Anti-Terrorism Act

on February 9 for planning subversive activities. The name of one Tawsif was mentioned in the first information report.

Around noon on February 3, Tawsif, the youngest among three siblings, left home with a bag telling his mother that he was going out to have lunch with his friends, including Nibras.

As he didn't return home at night, his family members called Nibras' grandfather and learnt that he also didn't return home. They then found that his passport was missing, Dhanmondi police said last month.

On February 9, Abul Bashar, sub-inspector of the Detective Branch (South) of the DMP, filed a case against 12 people with Shahbagh Police Station under the Anti-Terrorism Act for conspiring to commit subversive activities.

On that day, police conducted a drive in Shahbagh area on information that some suspected militants were plotting to carry out subversive activities there, according to the case document.

Police arrested three alleged militants from the spot and learnt from them that their nine accomplices managed to escape, it reads.

In the case document, the names of Nibras and Tawsif were mentioned as

fugitives but their addresses were not there.

RABBI'S BACKGROUND

Monirul Islam told reporters that they confirmed Rabbi's identity from a NID card found at the militant hideout in Narayanganj.

According to sources, Jessore police published posters with the names and photographs of five militants last month in the district town. And 22-year-old Rabbi was one of them.

Rabbi left home on April 5, telling his family members that he would join "jihad", said police.

He had been missing since then.

Rabbi's father Kazi Habibullah, a retired principal of Jessore Upashahar Degree College, filed a GD with Jessore Kotwali Police Station about his missing son on April 7 and had advertisements published in a couple of national dailies.

Habibullah said Rabbi had collected his educational certificates from his college before leaving home.

He said he learnt about his son's death on Saturday afternoon and later saw his photo in the media. "But I couldn't understand how he got involved in militancy."

He said he would receive his son's body. He urged the government to track down the terror network that

turned his son into a militant.

Habibullah said Rabbi wanted to study engineering at a private university but he couldn't afford it, and that his son left home out of anger.

Rabbi got CGPA 5 in SSC and CGPA 4.6 in HSC from the science group.

Rabbi's neighbours said he was a shy person and used to talk very little. He got close to a local imam, who indoctrinated him into extremist views.

According to sources at Rab-6 in Jessore, Rabbi used six mobile SIM cards and changed mobile phones at times.

Anisur Rahman, superintendent of police in Jessore, confirmed the filing of the GD with local police about Rabbi going missing.

He said they had initially learnt that Rabbi left home without informing his family. But later they came to know from the District Special Branch that Rabbi had told his family that he would join militancy.

Anisur said they were trying to hunt down those who radicalised and financed Rabbi, and gave him shelter.

All of them would be brought to book, added the police official.

[Our Benapole correspondent and a correspondent from Jessore contributed to this report]

70 hajj aspirants

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arrangements. Maulana Ruhul Amin, director, finance of Mawna Travels, gave them a money receipt in return, he added.

According to the Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh, the licence number of Mawna Travels owned by Ali Ashraf is 1373.

Both the cell phone numbers of Ashraf were found switched off.

Momtaz said that with bitter experience of cheating by hajj agencies, "I at first didn't have faith in Mawna Travels. But when police went to hajjis' houses to do their background checks after pre-registration, my confusion was gone."

As the police verification was done, Ruhul said, the travel agent pressed them to pay whatever was left of the money charged to make the necessary arrangements for the annual pilgrimage.

The two muallims then paid off the money along with the hajjis' passports. The travel agent forwarded papers to Mymensingh and Jamalpur civil surgeon offices for carrying out medical check-ups and vaccination of the hajjis.

"After that they didn't have any distrust left of the travel agency," Momtaz said.

But soon after when the muallims started asking about plane tickets and flight schedules, the agency began dillydallying and gave several flight schedules, he added.

Tomiz Uddin, a retired police officer of Trishal, among the 70 aspirant hajjis, accused Momtaz of deceiving them.

"From the beginning, we didn't find similarities between his [Momtaz] activities and words.

"Yesterday [Saturday] he told me

that he was going to Dhaka to the minister's [religious affairs minister Motiur Rahman elected from Mymensingh] house along with the hajj agency's official to resolve the matter," Tomiz said.

To verify this information, the correspondent tried to contact Momtaz yesterday evening but his phone was switched off.

"We don't know anything about the travel agent. We know only Momtaz," Tomiz said.

The hajjis gave Momtaz Tk 30,000 each for pre-registration and later Tk 2.70 lakh each, said Zahirul, another resident of Trishal, who paid the money.

"Momtaz today [yesterday] told me that we will not be able to perform hajj this year and that he was trying to get back our passports and money from the travel agent," he said.

Ibrahim Bahar, president of the Hajj Agencies Association, said it would take punitive action if the allegation of fraudulence against Mawna Travels was proved to be true.

He also advised the aspirant hajjis to communicate the matter to the hajj camp at Ashkona.

The holy hajj is likely to be performed on September 12, subject to the sighting of the moon. A total of 101,758 Bangladeshis are expected to perform hajj this year under the government and private arrangements.

The deadline for submitting pilgrims' passports to the Saudi Arabian Embassy for hajj visas ended yesterday, the embassy in Dhaka informed the religious affairs ministry.

The last date of the outgoing hajj flights from Dhaka is September 5 and the return flights will begin on September 17, sources said.

Stabbed by stalker, schoolgirl Risha dies

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Her mother, Tania Hossain, said other students saw a youth, aged around 20 to 22, running away from the scene. They, however, could not see his face.

She alleged that a youth -- Obaidul Khan -- from a tailoring shop on Elephant Road "stalked" her daughter over phone around three months ago.

Later, Tania filed a case against Obaidul under the women and children repression prevention act with Ramna Police Station. He is on the run, said police.

Eldest among three siblings, Risha had undergone a surgery at the DMCH on the day she was stabbed. She was moved to the ICU after her condition worsened, said doctors at the hospital.

"A large portion of her gullet was severely cut due to stabbing, and she had heavily bled before being taken to the hospital," said Jesmin Nahar, resident surgeon at casualty block of the DMCH.

Risha's lung and kidneys was not functioning properly, said the doctor, adding that a three-member medical board was formed for her treatment on Saturday.

After Risha died, her body was taken

to her school.

She was buried at Azimpur graveyard last night.

Her father, Ramjan Hossain, who runs a clothing store at Siddique Bazar, was sobbing constantly while talking to this correspondent.

"She was everything for our family," he said. "We used to escort her to and from the school. But we could not do that recently as we also have two other school going children."

His son reads in class-III while his other daughter in class-I.

Earlier talking to The Daily Star, Risha's mother Tania Hossain had said around three months ago, Obaidul got her daughter's mobile phone number after she gave her contact number and address to the tailoring shop at Eastern Mollika Shopping Complex.

Obaidul then started to stalk Risha over phone. He, however, stopped that a week later after Tania complained about the matter to shop owners at the mall.

Risha also changed her number.

On Tuesday, Obaidul intercepted the girl's way from school and tried to talk to her, said the mother, quoting Risha.



Surrounded by friends and relatives trying to console her, deceased Risha's mother Tania Hossain cries in front of the Dhaka Medical College morgue yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Ramna Police Station Sub-inspector Mosharaf Hossain, also the investigation officer of the case, said police were trying to arrest Obaidul, who is from Thakurgaon.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad in a press release yesterday condemned the murder and demanded immediate arrest of the killer.

A novel trick to lift cattle

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near bordering area of Sharifpur, only to notice its colour had been changed to black, Nazrul told this correspondent.

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) on August 11 confiscated a total of 12 stolen cattle and five of the animal's original skin colours were found to have tampered with, said Rafiqul Islam, BGB commander of Chatlapur check post under 46 battalion in Kulaura upazila.

Those five cows could not be returned to their owners as their owners could not identify them, he added.

Shamsuduha, officer-in-charge of Kulaura Police Station, said on August 14 they retrieved two cows with tampered skin colour and handed them over to the owners with the help of one of their informants who received details of the cattle after the theft.

Mohammad Akram from Namuja village near Sharifpur border area said, "Two of my cows were stolen within

one month's time."

The rustlers usually operate at night time, but lately they have been stealing cattle grazing in the field in broad day light, locals said.

Junab Ali, chairman of Sharifpur union in Kulaura upazila, said even though a few of the stolen cattle have been identified and returned to their owners, the theft continues unabated.

The theft is rampant mostly in Kulaura, Kamalganj, Rajnagar, Juri and surrounding upazilas of Moulvibazar,

having borders with India and nearly a hundred cattle have been stolen from this region over the last month.

Police, having inadequate personnel, are trying to prevent the alarming increase in the cattle theft by setting up more check posts and patrolling in the area, the OC of Kulaura Police Station said.

Mohammad Shahjalal, superintendent of police in Moulvibazar, said police are working relentlessly to bring an end to the crime.